The Origins of Symbolic Racism

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The theory of symbolic racism places its origins in a blend of anti-Black affect and conservative values, particularly individualism. We clarify that hypothesis, test it directly, and report several findings consistent with it. Study 1 shows that racial prejudice and general political conservatism fall into 2 separate factors, with symbolic racism loading about equally on both. Study 2 found that the anti-Black affect and individualism significantly explain symbolic racism. The best-fitting model both fuses those 2 elements into a single construct (*Black individualism*) and includes them separately. The effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences are mostly mediated by symbolic racism. Study 3 shows that Black individualism is distinctively racial, with effects distinctly different from either an analogous gender individualism or race-neutral individualism.

Racial conflicts have plagued the United States from its very beginnings, in particular driven by racial prejudice against Blacks. The civil rights movement triggered the elimination of Jim Crow segregationism several decades ago, and Whites' opinions about many racial issues have subsequently liberalized (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997). However, the substantial disadvantages experienced by Blacks in most domains of life have not disappeared (Sears, Hetts, Sidanius, & Bobo, 2000). Proponents of Blacks' interests have therefore continued to push for further advances, efforts that have often met with substantial White opposition.

Such opposition has generated considerable research interest. Theoretical explanations fall into three main categories. The first is that some new form of racism has taken over the political role played in pre–civil rights days by the "old-fashioned," "redneck," or "Jim Crow" racism that incorporated social distance between the races, beliefs in the biological inferiority of Blacks, and support for formal discrimination and segregation. One version of a new racism has variously been described as *symbolic racism* (Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears & Kinder, 1971), *modern racism* (McConahay, 1986), or *racial resentment* (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). Although these have some slight conceptual differences, they have been operationalized similarly, and we will not distinguish among them here. Related concepts include *subtle prejudice* (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), *racial ambivalence* (Katz, 1981), *aversive racism* (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), and *laissez-faire racism* (Bobo & Smith, 1998). These all have distinctive features, but they share the broad assumptions that Whites have become racially egalitarian in principle and that new forms of prejudice, embodying both negative feelings toward Blacks as a group and some conservative nonracial values, have become politically dominant.

A second theoretical approach emphasizes the inevitable group conflicts that stem from structural inequalities, such as realistic conflicts of interest (Bobo, 1988), or from Whites' desire for social dominance (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999), threatened "sense of group position" (Bobo, 1999), or use of a "dominant ideology" to legitimatize privilege (Kluegel & Smith, 1986). A third approach treats contemporary racial politics as a largely unexceptional case of normal political processes, in which the key ingredients are elites' agenda control and their appeals to the mass public's political ideologies and values rather than to their racial prejudices (Sniderman & Piazza, 1993).

Symbolic Racism

Our focus is on symbolic racism, the first of these "new" racisms. It is usually described as a coherent political belief system

whose content embodies four specific themes: the beliefs that (a) Blacks no longer face much prejudice or discrimination, (b) Blacks' failure to progress results from their unwillingness to work hard enough, (c) Blacks are demanding too much too fast, and (d) Blacks have gotten more than they deserve (Henry & Sears, 2002; Sears, Henry, & Kosterman, 2000; Tarman & Sears, 2003).[1] The term *racism* reflects the hypothesis that symbolic racism includes underlying prejudice toward Blacks. The term *symbolic* highlights both symbolic racism's targeting Blacks as an abstract collectivity rather than specific Black individuals and its presumed roots in abstract moral values rather than concrete self-interest or personal experience.

Numerous studies conducted by proponents and critics alike have shown that symbolic racism is strongly associated with Whites' opposition to racially targeted policy proposals. Its explanatory power typically outweighs that of older and more traditional racial attitudes, such as beliefs in Blacks' genetic inferiority, support for racial segregation, negative stereotypes, or simple dislike of Blacks, as well as that of important political attitudes with no manifest racial content, such as ideology, party identification, and attitudes toward the size of the federal government (e.g., Bobo, 2000; Hughes, 1997; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears et al., 1997; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992; Sidanius et al., 1999). It has also been demonstrated to have systematic effects on Whites' candidate preferences in racialized election campaigns (e.g., Howell, 1994; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears et al., 1997).

The Origins of Symbolic Racism

Our main question here concerns the origins of symbolic racism. The original theory speculated that "'white racism' . . . is a long-standing matter within each individual's life, dating from preadult acquisition of attitudes and gradually evolving into the 'symbolic racism' currently expressed" (Sears & Kinder, 1971, p. 70) and that symbolic racism itself reflects "a blend of strong, traditional American moral values with mild amounts of racial anxiety and antagonism"; a "blend of moral traditionalism and racism" (Sears & McConahay, 1973, p. 140); or "a blend of antiblack affect and the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant Ethic . . . rooted in deep-seated feelings of social morality and propriety and in early-learned racial fears and stereotypes . . . more likely traceable to preadult socialization than to current racial threat" (Kinder & Sears, 1981, p. 416).

The theory, then, specifies that symbolic racism stems from some combination of anti-Black affect and traditional values (most notably individualism). Consistent with the more general symbolic politics theory out of which it grew (see Sears, 1983, 1993), primitive group affects and common cultural values are presumed to be acquired in the preadult years. They then form a psychological substrate that predisposes the individual later to accept off-the-shelf political belief systems that are both widely communicated in the individual's environment and cognitively consistent with that racially focused substrate. Symbolic racism is hypothesized to be just such a widespread contemporary political belief system and so can give political meaning to these primitive psychological predispositions. Such attitudes vary in their enduringness and political power. At the high end of both dimensions,

they have been described as "symbolic predispositions" (e.g., Sears, 1993).

This theory of the origins of symbolic racism has been challenged on three essential points: the nature and role of that supposed racial affect, the nature of those traditional values, and the way in which these two elements are supposed to combine to form symbolic racism (Hughes, 1997; Sidanius et al., 1992; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986a, b; for an overview, see Wood, 1994). Our view too is that the original hypothesis was not always clearly specified. Moreover, empirical work (some of it our own) has operationalized it inconsistently. As a result, this theory about the origins of symbolic racism has never been tested systematically. Our primary goal is to present the results of such a direct test, but first we need to review previous conceptualizations and empirical research.

Anti-Black Affect

The first component was originally described as "racial anxiety and antagonism," "unacknowledged, negative feelings toward blacks" (McConahay & Hough, 1976, p. 39), or "antiblack affect" (Kinder & Sears, 1981, p. 416). This underlying negative affect was thought to be acquired in preadult life (see Aboud, 1988; Proshansky, 1966). It was not necessarily thought to be conscious but a spontaneous and direct affect, perhaps without strong cognitive mediation (Sears, 1988). Similar accounts of primitive, largely unconscious and automatic negative affects have been presented in connection with implicit or automatic prejudice (see Devine, 1989; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Fazio et al., 1995). Moreover, at a manifest level anti-Black affect might or might not be reflected in feelings of dislike and hostility: "It may be experienced subjectively as fear, avoidance and a desire for distance, anger, distaste, disgust, contempt, apprehension, unease, or simple dislike" (Sears, 1988, p. 70). The anti-Black affect in aversive racism has been described in similar terms: "The negative feelings that aversive racists have for blacks do not reflect open hostility or hate. Instead, their reactions involve discomfort, uneasiness, disgust, and sometimes fear" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998, p. 5). The hypothetical underlying negative evaluation of Blacks might then yield a wide variety of manifest negative emotions toward Blacks.

This very general and pluralistic conceptual definition contrasts with the quite specific and narrow operational measures of anti-Black affect most often deployed in empirical research. One is the "feeling thermometer" that assesses "warm" or "cold" feelings about Blacks. The other measure is based on ratings of conventional stereotypes about Blacks. Stereotypes are often conceptualized as primarily cognitive rather than affective. Empirically they show strong evaluative underpinnings, however (e.g., Mackie & Hamilton, 1993), and so have often been used as an operational

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[1] In some studies, such affects toward Blacks as anger or a lack of sympathy or admiration have also been included (McConahay, 1986; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997).

index of this general evaluative dimension (e.g., Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Sniderman, Crosby, & Howell, 2000).[2]

Traditional Conservative Values

Symbolic racism has also been said to originate in a second component, a conservative "moral code" (Sears & Kinder, 1971, p. 66) or "the traditional religious and value socialization of secular American civil Protestantism" (McConahay & Hough, 1976, pp. 38–39). Later descriptions cited a number of specific Protestant virtues, of which individualism, hard work, and self-reliance came to be mentioned first and most prominently: "moral feelings that blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (Kinder & Sears, 1981, p. 416) as well as "hard work, individualism, thrift, punctuality, sexual repression, and delay of gratification, as opposed to laziness, seeking of favoritism and handouts, impulsivity, and so on" (Sears, 1988, p. 72).[3]

Individualism has been operationalized in the political psychology literature primarily with a scale developed for the National Election Studies (NES; National Election Studies, 1983–2000; Feldman, 1988). This scale focuses specifically on the work ethic, particularly on the belief that hard work brings success. In models that examine simple main effects, this measure has sometimes had small but statistically significant effects on symbolic racism, but in more elaborate models, it has often not even had significant effects (Hughes, 1997; Sears et al., 1997; Sears, Henry, & Kosterman 2000; Sidanius et al., 1992; Sniderman et al., 2000). As a result, a common conclusion has been that general, race-neutral individualism is not, after all, itself so central to symbolic racism (Kinder & Mendelberg, 2000; Sears & Kosterman, 1991; Sniderman et al., 2000).

The Blend of Affect and Values

The third issue concerns the principle by which anti-Black affect and conservative moral values combine to form a foundation for symbolic racism. The original conceptual language, as quoted above, proposed that symbolic racism has origins in a blend of traditional American moral values with anti-Black affect (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears & McConahay, 1973; see also Kinder & Mendelberg, 2000; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears, 1988; Sears et al., 1997). But what does this blend mean? Sometimes the original theoretical language implied that the two elements should be measured separately and their main effects combined additively to explain symbolic racism. For example, McConahay and Hough (1976) suggested that "the *independent* [italics added] effects of these residues of socialization are cumulative" (pp. 38–39); Sears (1988) said that "symbolic racism was . . . a joint function of two *separate* [italics added] factors, antiblack affect and traditional values" (p. 56); and Sears et al. (1997) used an additive combination of affect, values, and conservatism to predict symbolic racism. However, others (e.g., Sears & Kosterman, 1991; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986b) suggested that it could describe either an additive or an interactive combination of affect and values.

Still other interpretations of the theory have held that affect and values must be combined in the same attitude, and so the same measure, to reflect a true blend. For example, Kinder (1986) suggested that symbolic racism had originally been conceptualized

as reflecting "the *conjunction* [italics added] of racial prejudice and traditional American values . . . neither racism, pure and simple, nor traditional values, pure and simple, but rather the blending of the two" (p. 154). This language suggests that symbolic racism reflects a cognitively connected fusion of the two elements into a single attitude: the perception that Blacks violate certain traditional values. If symbolic racism involves perceiving Blacks to be violating some traditional value, the issue may not be how Whites feel about individualism in general but how they feel about Blacks' inadequate individualism. For example, a White man high in symbolic racism might have only a moderate work ethic himself but might feel that Blacks have reprehensibly poor work ethics, which are responsible for many of their problems. If so, perhaps the cognitive connection of the two elements should be measured simultaneously in the same attitude item, with "questions that deliberately mix racist sentiments and traditional American values, particularly individualism" (Kinder, 1986, p. 156). We refer to this interpretation in what follows as the *fusion proposition*.

The umbrella concept of a blend of anti-Black affect and individualism can take several specific forms, then—an additive or interactive combination of those two elements as measured separately, or a fusion of them in an independent construct measured in its own right. What is the empirical evidence about the relative fits of these three models? Some of those who have tested an additive model by regressing symbolic racism on anti-Black affect and individualism (usually with other variables) have concluded that such a model does not explain symbolic racism very well: for example, "the power of these two variables to predict symbolic racism is not extraordinary" (Hughes, 1997, p. 63), and "even if the contribution of both is taken into account—they are responsible only for [explaining] a relatively trivial fraction of [the variation in symbolic racism]" (Sniderman et al., 2000, p. 242). Sears et al. (1997) saw the glass more as half full, reporting that "symbolic racism has substantial origins in antiblack affect as well as some mixture of conservative partisan attitudes and nonracial traditional values" and that "these variables together explain a satisfactory amount of variance in symbolic racism" (p. 36). However, even they conceded that "we cannot attempt to be very precise here about the nature of that contribution" (p. 36).

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[2] Historical anecdotes describing attitudes of benevolent paternalism toward compliant slaves among slave owners in the antebellum South have been used to challenge the idea that negative affect toward Blacks is central to Whites' political responses to them today (e.g., Jackman, 1994; Sidanius et al., 1999). It is difficult at this juncture to assess the prevalence of such behavior in that early era, but the concept of benevolent paternalism would seem of little utility today in understanding Whites' often strident and angry opposition in recent decades to busing, affirmative action, or Black political candidates (e.g., Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens, 1997). It is also contrary to much empirical evidence, as cited above, that dislike for Blacks rather than paternalistic affection for them is associated with symbolic racism and opposition to race-targeted policies.

[3] The importance of values in the theory is illustrated by the fact that Kinder and Sanders (1996) switched to the term *racial resentment* on the grounds that *symbolic racism* did not convey the central role of the violation of values in the theory, leaving the theory open to the misinterpretation that symbolic racism is just racism and that values merely provide an epiphenomenal justification for racial animosity.

Tests of the statistical interaction between the two components, again each measured separately, have generally worked less well. Hughes (1997) found that the "interaction term was nonsignificant and negligible" in two surveys and "indistinguishable from zero" in a third (p. 62); Sniderman et al. (2000) that "the interaction term adds nothing of consequence" (p. 242); and Sears and Kosterman (1991) that "even the significant [interaction] effects are not large, and most effects are non-significant. So we remain skeptical that anything very meaningfully interactive is going on here" (p. 26).

However, there has been no previous direct test of the fusion interpretation that blending negative racial affect and traditional values in a single attitude and measure is the best predictor of symbolic racism. These earlier studies reporting nonconfirmatory evidence did not consider the role of a fusion of anti-Black affect and individualism (e.g., Hughes, 1997; Sears et al., 1997; Sniderman et al., 2000). The closest found that a measure of "economic individualism" that referred exclusively to Blacks had fairly robust associations with racial policy preferences (Carmines & Merriman, 1993). However, focusing the individualism measure on Blacks seems not to have been necessary to its effects, because two other economic individualism measures that referred, respectively, to poor people or to women, also had fairly strong relationships with racial policy preferences. The conclusion, contrary to the symbolic racism hypothesis, was that Whites' opposition to racial policies was due to "classical liberalism," a more general and nonracial economic individualism presumably reflected in all three measures, rather than specifically racially targeted individualism.

This was a useful beginning. However, several methodological ambiguities cloud this null finding. Most obviously, the specific items measuring economic individualism did not rigorously vary group targeting, because their wording differed in a number of respects other than references to Blacks or poor people or women. Second, the items applying individualistic values to poor people may themselves have been racialized, because Whites in that era (the early to mid-1970s) tended to perceive "poor people" as predominantly Black (Gilens, 1999). Third, the items referring to women may also have been racialized because most used the term *discrimination*, which in that era was most closely associated with the Black civil rights movement. Finally, there was no test of whether Black-targeted economic individualism was as successful as the gender-targeted version in explaining attitudes about policies relevant to women, as it should be if both mainly reflected race-neutral individualism.

The origins of symbolic racism therefore remain something of a mystery. The original theory proposed that they lie in a blend of racial prejudice and conservative values. However, the concept of a blend was not specified very precisely. It served instead as something of an umbrella concept including, at the broadest level, prejudice and political conservatism and, at a more specific level, anti-Black affect and traditional values such as individualism. These separate elements could also be interpreted as contributing to symbolic racism (a) separately (whether additively or interactively) or perhaps (b) by being conjoined in the same attitude, such as a form of racialized individualism.

Our primary purpose here is to examine the various concepts of such a blend. We pay particular attention to two hypotheses. The first is that the origins of symbolic racism lie in a blend of anti-Black affect and individualism. The second is that the most parsimonious version of that hypothesis, not tested in previous research, is that they lie in a fusion of those two elements, measured together as one attitude.

The symbolic racism claim is an important one—that the politics of race are not merely a "politics as usual" that pits liberals against conservatives but continue to be significantly influenced by Whites' underlying racial animosities. This claim goes to the core of America's longest-running and most difficult social problem. If the symbolic racism claim is right, much remedial work of a variety of kinds needs to be done on the White side of the racial divide. If it is wrong, and racial conservatives' views about the optimal relative balance of governments and markets in modern societies are largely free of underlying racial prejudice, much obligation would be placed on Blacks to adapt to a society in which they no longer are being treated much less fairly than other Americans. The validity of the theory is therefore of more than mere academic consequence.

Empirical Questions

The present research examined three fundamental empirical implications of this blend proposition about the origins of symbolic racism. First, at the most general political level, the symbolic racism belief system should reflect a blend of racial prejudice with conservative values. If so, factor analysis should separate measures of traditional racial prejudice from those of political conservatism in two different but somewhat correlated factors, and symbolic racism should load about equally on both factors.

Second, we tested whether the more specific psychological origins of symbolic racism lie to a significant degree in anti-Black affect and the traditional value of individualism. We compared three different models. An additive model would explain it as a simple additive combination of those two elements measured separately. An interactive model would combine them in statistical interaction. However, the most parsimonious of these models, a fusion model, would instead invoke a single construct of racialized individualism, *Black individualism*, that could be measured directly. Such a fusion might operate psychologically more or less independently of those two separate elements. It might not be statistically reducible to them, and it might have substantial political effects independent of them. However, such a fusion might not itself have any very concrete manifest political content. So symbolic racism might serve as the manifest content that politicizes it and largely mediates its political effects.

Third, we test the important alternative proposition that Whites' opposition to race-based policies is driven by a general race-free individualism, or classical liberalism, that values individual effort rather than government help. This would not need to be focused specifically on Blacks. Rather, it could be indexed with a general race-free individualism that referred to no one group in particular, or it might be indexed with individualism targeted for some other group, such as women. To test this, we expanded on the comparison with gender-oriented individualism cited above. A general symbolic politics approach would expect a group-specificity outcome: Black individualism should explain racial policy preferences better than should a similarly constructed measure of gender individualism. The reverse should hold for gender policy preferences. In other words, any link between Black individualism and opposition to racial policies should be due largely to their common racial content, not just to support for individualistic values in

general or to individualistic values applied to other, nonracial, groups.

To test these hypotheses, we drew on all the national and local surveys we were aware of that included the measures that we required: symbolic racism, Black individualism, and gender individualism. Because symbolic racism theory and the debates about it have been solely focused on White public opinion, we excluded Black respondents from all analyses.

Study 1

We start with the most general theory of the origins of the symbolic racism belief system, that it blends racial prejudice and ostensibly nonracial conservatism. To test this, we factor analyzed items measuring racial prejudice, conservatism, and symbolic racism. We expected to find one factor composed of traditional racial prejudice, a second factor composed of standard political conservatism, and to find symbolic racism loading about equally on both factors.[4]

Method

Samples

We conducted factor analyses using eight surveys that contained the appropriate measurement. Each survey had to include, at a minimum, a measure of symbolic racism, at least two measures of traditional prejudice, and at least two measures of conservatism (in each case, ideology and party identification). Meeting these criteria were four NES surveys conducted from 1985 to 2000, each with a national sample, and four Los Angeles County Social Surveys (LACSS; Los Angeles County Social Surveys, 1995–2001) conducted from 1995 through 2001. The eight surveys therefore had some range of sampling frames and spanned 16 years.

The first NES survey was the 1985 NES Pilot Survey (White $N = 397$, weighted to compensate for an oversample of respondents over 60 years of age, yielding a weighted White $N = 614$). We also used the 1986 NES (White $N = 922$), 1992 NES (White $N = 2,110$), and 2000 NES (White $N = 1,393$) biennial election surveys, based on representative cross-sectional samples of American adults. Black respondents were excluded from these analyses. We also included data from the 1995 LACSS (White $N = 267$), 1997 LACSS (White $N = 277$), 1998 LACSS (White $N = 282$) and 2001 LACSS (White $N = 223$), which included representative samples of adult residents of Los Angeles County based on random-digit-dial telephone interviews. Only White respondents were included in these analyses.

Measures

Symbolic racism.   Each symbolic racism item reflected one of the four standard themes discussed above: denial of continuing discrimination, Blacks' work ethic and responsibility for outcomes, excessive demands, and undeserved advantage. The 1985, 1986, 1992, and 2000 NES each contained 4 such items, yielding scales with reliabilities of .67, .67, .75, and .75 respectively. The 1995, 1997, and 1998 LACSS contained 3, 7, and 11 symbolic racism items, respectively, forming scales with reliabilities of .69, .77, and .78, respectively. The 2001 LACSS contained 8 symbolic racism items, although a split-sample design was used in which two subsets of 4 symbolic racism items were each administered to half the sample (the reliabilities of the two subsets were .73 and .57, respectively; the pattern of the results was the same in both subsamples in all cases, so we collapsed them in the analyses that follow). The exact items used from all studies are described in the Appendix.[5]

Traditional racial attitudes.   One category of items used to measure traditional racial attitudes consists of feeling-thermometer ratings (on a scale from 0 to 100) of how warmly respondents felt toward social groups. Anti-Black affect is based on differences in ratings of Blacks and Whites to control for individual differences in use of the response scale. The 1986 NES did not have a White thermometer, so only the Black thermometer was used. The 1995 LACSS had neither. A second category consisted of negative stereotypes about Blacks. An unintelligent stereotype item was measured in the 1992 and 2000 NES and the 1995 LACSS, rating Blacks on a 7-point scale with the endpoints *unintelligent* and *intelligent*. This item was subtracted from a similar item that asked the respondent to rate Whites' intelligence. This stereotype was measured in other studies using 4-point Likert scales, in response to statements that Blacks' lower living standards were due to lack of ability (1985 and 1986 NES) or their lesser intellectual ability (1997 and 2001 LACSS), or due to God's will (1985 and 1986 NES). A violence stereotype was measured with a 7-point scale with the endpoints *violent* and *peaceful* (1992 NES and 1995 LACSS), subtracted from a similar item targeting Whites to control for differences in use of the scale. An omnibus group stereotype used three items on the percentages of violent criminals, gang members, and welfare recipients in Los Angeles perceived to be Black minus the percentage perceived to be White (1998 LACSS; Cronbach's $\alpha = .60$).

Political conservatism.   In the NES surveys, political ideology was measured with a 7-point liberal–conservative scale (running from *strong liberal* or *extremely liberal* to *strong conservative* or *extremely conservative*) combined with the difference between the liberal and conservative thermometers. The LACSS included only the 7-point scale anchored at *strong liberal* and *strong conservative*. Party identification in the NES surveys represented the mean of standardized versions of the standard 7-point summary variable running from *strong Democrat* to *strong Republican* and the difference score between the thermometer ratings of the two parties. The LACSS surveys included only the 7-point scale anchored at *strong Republican* and *strong Democrat*.

Results

Symbolic Racism: A Blend of Conservatism and Racial Antagonism?

In its most general form, the original theory of symbolic racism held that it blended racial prejudice with conservative values. As a first test, we conducted exploratory factor analyses using items measuring traditional racial attitudes, political conservatism, and symbolic racism. We extracted factors using the principal-axis extraction method and rotated the factors to allow them to correlate. We expected to find one factor on which the traditional racial attitude items loaded heavily but the conservatism items did not, a

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[4] In doing this, we ignored the common view that conservative ideology and Republican party identification themselves have become racialized, despite their ostensibly nonracial content. We treated both as if they were entirely nonracial in nature in order to provide a conservative test of the symbolic racism theory.

[5] Symbolic racism items that explicitly referred to government action or government policies were excluded because such items have been criticized as complicating the interpretation of associations between symbolic racism and opposition to racial policies (for discussion of this issue, see Henry & Sears, 2002; Sniderman et al., 2000). In the case of the 1995 LACSS, we did use one such item (the last item listed in the Appendix) because it is a key study for later analyses and had only three symbolic racism items in total. As will be seen, the high replicability of our findings across surveys seems to render this exception of little consequence.

second factor on which the standard political conservatism items loaded heavily but the traditional racial attitude items did not, with symbolic racism loading about equally on both factors. These exploratory factor analyses did in fact yield two such factors, and only two factors, in each of the eight surveys, as shown in Table 1. As expected, in each case, the two indicators of political conservatism load heavily only on one factor whereas the two indicators of traditional racial attitudes load heavily only on the other factor. Neither set of items loads strongly on the other factor. It is clear that one factor reflects general political conservatism, and the other reflects traditional racial attitudes. Specifically, on the factor we identify as reflecting political conservatism, ideology and party identification have an average loading of .79, whereas traditional racial attitudes have an average loading of only .11. On the factor we identify as reflecting traditional prejudice, the traditional racial attitude measures have an average loading of .56, whereas ideology and party identification have an average loading of only .19. The general conservatism and traditional racial prejudice factors are positively correlated in each survey, but the two factors are clearly distinct in each case.

The key finding is that as expected, symbolic racism loads quite strongly, and about equally, on both the conservatism factor (average loading of .40) and the racial prejudice factor (average loading of .46). In four surveys it loads slightly more heavily on the prejudice factor, and in four surveys, slightly more heavily on the conservatism factor. These results indicate that general conservatism and traditional racial prejudice are psychologically separable and distinctive, but symbolic racism is grounded about equally in both. That is, symbolic racism is the glue that links political conservatism to racial prejudice among Whites in the contemporary era.

Another way to make the same point compares the factor analyses shown in Table 1 with similar factor analyses done using the same traditional racial attitudes and political predispositions but without symbolic racism. In this case the two factors are again quite separate, with each racial attitude variable loading quite weakly on the political predisposition factor, and each political predisposition loading quite weakly on the traditional racial atti-

tude factor. However, without symbolic racism in the analyses, the interfactor correlations are considerably reduced. The mean interfactor correlation without symbolic racism to hold the two factors together was .18. The interfactor correlation increases when symbolic racism is included, averaging .27 across the eight surveys, as shown in Table 1.

Study 2

Next, we turn to the more specific psychological underpinnings of symbolic racism. As indicated above, the theory of symbolic racism views it at the most general level as a blend of general conservatism with racial prejudice, and our evidence indicates that is so. However, the theory suggests it may be strongly grounded in some more specific conservative values, especially (though not exclusively) individualism. That point has not heretofore been tested adequately. Further, if symbolic racism is indeed grounded in anti-Black affect and individualism, it might simply be an additive or interactive function of those elements measured separately, or it might have origins in a fusion of these separate parts. This fusion construct might reflect the cognitive connection between them, such as the belief that Blacks violate individualism. If so, such a racialized individualism should be measured directly. We describe this independent construct as *Black individualism*. We give this independent fusion construct special attention below both because it is the most parsimonious version of what we have called the "blend" and because it has not heretofore been investigated empirically.

Study 2 had five purposes:

1. We first created a Black individualism index that directly measures the fusion of anti-Black affect and individualistic values, the sense that Blacks violate individualistic values. To do so we racialized the standard general individualism items used by the NES (Feldman, 1988) in a simple, mechanical way, rewording them by changing their referents from *people* to *Blacks*.

2. The relationships of this direct measure of Black individualism to anti-Black affect and general individualism, as measured separately, were explored. There were several possibilities: It

Table 1
Factor Analyses: Symbolic Racism as a Blend of Traditional Racial Attitudes and Conservatism

	NES								LACSS							
	1985		1986		1992		2000		1995		1997		1998		2001	
Measure	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Symbolic racism	**.31**	.29	**.48**	.26	**.34**	**.47**	**.37**	**.54**	**.49**	**.45**	**.47**	**.48**	**.47**	**.66**	**.50**	**.43**
Traditional racial attitudes																
Unintelligent/lack of ability	.03	**.40**	**.55**	.07	.07	**.63**	.10	**.63**	.13	**.66**	.09	**.59**	—	—	.18	**.53**
Violent/group stereotype	—	—	—	—	.11	**.75**	—	—	.17	**.56**	—	—	.08	**.40**	—	—
God's will	.00	**.82**	**.61**	.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Anti-Black affect	.10	**.35**	.29	.00	.14	**.55**	.13	**.67**	—	—	.10	.29	.25	**.53**	.27	**.60**
Political Predispositions																
Ideology	**.74**	.07	.19	**.77**	**.94**	.21	**.84**	.26	**.86**	.17	**.83**	.29	**.68**	.30	**.84**	**.31**
Party identification	**.78**	.05	−.01	**.61**	**.87**	.16	**.77**	.14	**.77**	.19	**.83**	.15	**.83**	.29	**.71**	.26
Interfactor correlation		.16		.12		.23		.26		.28		.30		.38		.41

Note. Data in columns labeled "1" reflect the variable's loading on Factor 1; data in columns labeled "2" reflect its loading on Factor 2. Items are keyed such that higher scores reflect more racial animosity or more conservatism. Boldface indicates loadings > .30. Dashes indicate variables that were not measured in that survey. NES = National Election Studies; LACSS = Los Angeles County Social Surveys.

should be correlated with them if indeed it does reflect a blending of underlying racial affect with individualism, but does it reduce to them, or is there evidence that it is an independent construct? In commonsense language, is this blend more than the sum of its parts?

3. The proposition that the origins of symbolic racism lie to a significant degree in anti-Black affect and individualism was tested comparing three different combinatorial models: (a) an additive model—these two elements, measured separately, have simple main effects on it; (b) an interactive model—a statistical interaction of these two elements explains it; and (c) the fusion model—Black individualism best explains it.

4. A further implication of the fusion model is that Black individualism might have emergent political effects of its own, not simply mediating the effects of anti-Black affect and general individualism, as measured separately. If so, it should be a strong predictor of opposition to racial policies; it should explain such opposition better than would its two constituent elements measured separately; and its predictive power should not be much diminished by simultaneous controls on them.

5. Even if symbolic racism has psychological origins in this fusion of anti-Black affect and individualism, Black individualism might not have any very concrete manifest political content. Rather, symbolic racism might be the contemporary manifest content that politicizes it. If so, symbolic racism should mediate most of the political effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences.

Method

Three surveys have directly measured Black individualism. One was the 1983 NES Pilot Survey, based on a subsample (White $N = 284$) of the national sample initially interviewed in the 1982 NES postelection survey. It used a two-form design, with Black individualism included on only one form, administered to approximately half the sample. The 1995 LACSS and 2001 LACSS were described above in connection with Study 1.

Measures

General individualism. The 1983 NES study contained the standard six-item NES scale ($\alpha = .64$) measuring general (race-neutral) individualism. Two of these items were used in the 1995 LACSS ($\alpha = .43$). In the 2001 LACSS, all six items were used, but they were divided into two parallel three-item subscales, each given to half of the sample (αs = .55 and .52). We return to these reliabilities of these scales later in the article.

Black individualism. The direct measure of the blend of anti-Black affect and individualism was constructed by substituting the word *Black* for *people* in the standard NES general individualism items. In the 1983 NES, this yielded a six-item scale ($\alpha = .79$) and in the 1995 LACSS, a two-item scale ($\alpha = .59$). In the 2001 LACSS, all six items were again used. However, to minimize reactivity between the general individualism and Black individualism items, both sets of six items were divided into two parallel three-item subscales. Each respondent was given three Black individualism items (αs = .46 and .58) that reworded the three general individualism items they did not receive. Again, we return below to these reliabilities. The exact items for both general and Black individualism are shown in the Appendix.

Symbolic racism. The 1995 and 2001 LACSS surveys contained measures of symbolic racism, as described above in connection with Study 1. The 1983 NES had no measure of symbolic racism.

Traditional racial attitudes. The 1983 NES and 2001 LACSS had a single measure of traditional racial attitudes, anti-Black affect. This was based on the difference between the Black and White feeling thermometers (in 1983, averaging across two of each, administered in two waves of the survey). The stereotype scale in the 1995 LACSS combined the unintelligent stereotype and violent stereotype measures described in Study 1 ($\alpha = .54$). The 2001 LACSS included only the unintelligent stereotype.

Political predispositions. In the 1983 NES, ideology was measured with a 7-point liberal–conservative scale (running from *strong* or *extremely liberal* to *strong* or *extremely conservative*) combined with the difference between the liberal and conservative thermometers, and party identification with the mean of standardized versions of the standard 7-point summary variable running from *strong Democrat* to *strong Republican* and the difference score between the thermometer ratings of the two parties. The ideology and party identification measures used in the 1995 and 2001 LACSS studies were described above in connection with Study 1.

Racial policy preferences. Attitudes toward racial policies were grouped into the three general issue domains customarily described in this literature (see Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears et al., 1997; Sears, Henry, & Kosterman, 2000; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993), yielding separate scales for each domain. In the first issue domain, addressing federal assistance to Blacks, items asked (a) whether the government should help Blacks (and other minority groups) or whether they should help themselves (1983 NES, 1995 LACSS); (b) whether federal spending to assist or improve the conditions of Blacks was too little or too much, or should be increased or decreased (1983 NES, 1995 LACSS); (c) the amount of effort and resources that should be devoted to improving the position of Blacks (1983 NES); and (d) whether government spending on "programs to assist blacks" should be increased or decreased (2001 LACSS). The reliabilities were .60 (1983 NES) and .72 (1995 LACSS). In the second issue domain, addressing the obligation of the federal government to guarantee equal opportunity to Blacks, the 1983 NES included two items: (a) the government's role in seeing to it that Black and White children go to the same schools and (b) the amount of effort and resources to be devoted to this goal ($\alpha = .72$); the 1995 LACSS included no items; and the 2001 LACSS included a single item: "Equal opportunity for blacks and whites to succeed is important but it's not really the government's job to guarantee it." In the third issue domain, concerning affirmative action, the 1983 NES had one item on the amount of effort and resources to be used to promote it; the 1995 LACSS had five items that asked about (a) the extent to which affirmative action makes minorities and women feel inferior, (b) the extent to which affirmative action leads to the admission of unqualified individuals to jobs and colleges, as well as (c) support for a ballot measure to eliminate affirmative action, (d) laws to ensure that federal contracts go to Black contractors, and (e) preferential hiring for Blacks ($\alpha = .74$); and the 2001 LACSS had one item on requiring companies with a history of racial discrimination to give Blacks preference in hiring.

Racial policy preferences were highly correlated across domains: Factor analyses of the individual items showed either one-factor solutions or two-factor solutions with eigenvalues for a second factor barely over 1.0 and very high interfactor correlations. Moreover, systematic comparisons of their determinants in other studies have yielded quite uniform effects of symbolic racism across policy domains (e.g., Sears et al., 1997; Tarman & Sears, 2003). Therefore, we also created composite scales combining all racial policy items in each study, yielding reliabilities of .85 (1983 NES, six items), .80 (1995 LACSS, seven items), and .56 (2001 LACSS, three items).

Results

The Blend and Its Parts

We begin with the relationship of Black individualism to anti-Black affect and general individualism.

Individualism. The distinctiveness of Black individualism from general individualism is suggested by exploratory factor analyses of the two sets of items. In two samples they yielded two factors generally separating the two constructs. In the 1995 LACSS, the average loadings of the Black individualism items on the two factors were .68 and .44, whereas they were .36 and .58 for the general individualism items. In the first 2001 LACSS subsample, the average loadings for Black individualism on the two factors were .52 and .34, and for general individualism, .34 and .52. The other two samples, the 1983 NES and the second 2001 LACSS subsample, yielded three-factor solutions that were constrained to two factors. The Black individualism items then quite cleanly loaded on a single factor separate from the general individualism items. In the 1983 NES, all Black individualism items loaded more strongly on the first factor (average loadings of .64 and .19 on the two factors), whereas all general individualism items loaded more strongly on the second factor (.14 and .47). The same pattern held in the second 2001 subsample (mean loadings for Black individualism on the two factors, .59 and .26, and for general individualism, .26 and .52). Over the four samples, then, 12 of the 14 Black individualism items loaded most heavily on a Black individualism factor, and 11 of the 14 general individualism items loaded most heavily on a general individualism factor, suggesting they constituted somewhat different constructs.

These findings justify the use of separate scales for the two constructs. Yet the Black individualism measure was created by a simple rewording of the general individualism items, substituting *Blacks* for the word *people*. For that reason, we might expect them to be very highly correlated. Actually, the correlations are significant but more modest than their very similar wording might lead one to suspect (rs = .22 [1983 NES], .45 [1995 LACSS], and .40 [2001 LACSS]). In a similar vein, the factor analyses described above yielded an average interfactor correlation of ϕ = .37. Black individualism is a construct independent of general individualism then, but they also share some content.

Anti-Black affect. Does Black individualism also embody underlying anti-Black affect as well as being somewhat distinctive from it? Again we have two tests. First, its correlations with anti-Black affect are modest (rs = .21 [1983 NES] and .18 [2001 LACSS]) and with anti-Black stereotypes even smaller (r = .14 [1995 LACSS]). A second test involved a small experiment: Would agreement with Black individualism items be perceived as reflecting anti-Black affect more than would disagreement with them? Non-Black students in an undergraduate psychology class (N = 26) were presented with two White target persons' written responses to the Black individualism items. One target person agreed with the three positively worded items, and the other agreed with the three negatively worded items (order of presentation and gender were also varied but had no effect). Participants then rated the target persons' emotions toward Blacks on 7-point scales for anger, fear, sympathy, liking, respect, comfort, and admiration. These were averaged to form a composite affect scale on which the target person perceived as more anti-Black was the one who agreed with the positive Black individualism items (Ms = 4.2 and 3.4), $t(24)$ = 2.4, p < .05. Black individualism conveys anti-Black affect to others.

We would conclude, then, that Black individualism, the fusion of individualism and anti-Black affect, is partly rooted in those elements but also is a distinctive construct of its own.

Origins of Symbolic Racism in the Blend

The next question is whether anti-Black affect and individualism do explain symbolic racism well and, if so, which combinatorial model of these constructs explains it best: the additive or interactive combination of the two elements measured separately or the fusion of them in the independent construct of Black individualism, measured directly. The relevant data come from the two surveys with these measures available, the 1995 and 2001 LACSS. We estimated simple ordinary least squares regression equations for each model. The additive models are presented in the first data column of Table 2, and have some success in explaining symbolic racism. The four general individualism and traditional racial attitude coefficients are all statistically significant, with an average beta coefficient of .24. Each additive equation explains a significant amount of variance. The interaction models (a multiplicative product of general individualism and traditional racial attitude) fail, however, as shown in the second data column. Both are nonsignificant and indeed trivially small. The fusion model is tested with the Black individualism term considered alone. As shown in the third data column, it seems to be the best-fitting model. The Black individualism coefficients (.37 and .42) are higher than any of the others and are highly significant (p < .001). For the fusion model, R^2 = 13.7% and 17.6%, respectively, larger than those for the other models.

Is the fusion model a significant improvement over the additive model? As seen above, the variables constituting the additive and the fusion models are correlated with each other. As a result, we need to distinguish the variance each model uniquely explains from the shared variance both can explain. To illustrate, the variance uniquely explained by the additive model is equal to the variance explained by all variables together (see the fourth data column of Table 2) minus the variance explained by the fusion and interactive models combined. So the variance uniquely explained by the additive model is 6.2% and 5.6% in the two surveys. The variance uniquely explained by the fusion model is 7.8% and 8.0%, respectively (the jointly explained variance is 5.2% and 9.4%). These differences between the additive and fusion models are not significant.

We have two conclusions here. First, symbolic racism is significantly explained by anti-Black affect and individualistic values, as the original theory proposed. A final model that includes all the terms reflecting these antecedent variables in the two surveys is shown in the fourth data column of Table 2. Almost all the terms in the additive and fusion models are significant, and together they explain 19.2% and 23.0% of the variance in symbolic racism. That is relatively high for research of this kind, especially given the measurement error inherent in measures based on very small numbers of items, and the fact that individualism is only one of several values originally cited as underlying symbolic racism.

Second, we tested for the optimal model by which anti-Black affect and individualism combine to generate symbolic racism. The additive model contributes a significant amount of variance to symbolic racism, with each term having a significant if sometimes modest effect, and it contributes a significant amount of unique explanatory power. The interactive model has no visible role. The

Table 2
Alternative Models of the Origins of Symbolic Racism

Measure	Additive	Interactive	Blend	All
1995 LACSS				
General individualism	.15*			.01
Traditional racial attitudes				
Anti-Black affect	—			—
Stereotypes	.30***			.27***
Interaction term[a]		−.01		.03
Black individualism			.37***	.33***
Adjusted R^2 (%)	11.4	0.0	13.0	19.2
2001 LACSS				
General individualism	.30***			.17*
Traditional racial attitudes				
Anti-Black affect	.20**			.15*
Stereotypes	—			—
Interaction term[a]		.08		.07
Black individualism			.42***	.33***
Adjusted R^2 (%)	14.9	0.1	17.3	23.0

Note. Each column represents a separate multiple regression equation, and entries are standardized regression coefficients. Variables are keyed such that high numbers indicate greater racial antipathy and more individualistic values. A dash indicates the variable was not measured in that sample. Empty cells indicate variables excluded from the model specified in that column. LACSS = Los Angeles County Social Surveys.
[a] Created by multiplying the centered variables of generalized individualism and traditional racial attitudes.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

fusion model has the highest coefficients and contributes the most unique explanatory variance, but its relative advantages in these respects do not attain statistical significance. The model including all five terms together tests whether a combination of models rather than one alone is the best fit. The coefficient for Black individualism is significant, and again the largest in absolute terms, but three of the four additive terms are also significant. This final model adds a significant increment in variance explained to any of the other models in both surveys: 1995 LACSS, $F_\Delta(3, 250) = 7.46$, $p < .001$; 2001 LACSS, $F_\Delta(3, 250) = 5.89$, $p < .01$. Symbolic racism seems best explained by a blend of anti-Black affect and individualistic values, measured by both a single construct reflecting the fusion of those two elements and by each element measured separately. Adding the fusion term, Black individualism, markedly improves the explanation of symbolic racism, then. It adds considerably more support to the theory of the origins of symbolic racism in a blend of anti-Black affect and individualism than did earlier studies that examined only the additive and interaction models (Sears et al., 1997; Sniderman et al., 2000).

The Blend Has Emergent Political Effects of Its Own

Does the fusion model yield a similar improvement over the additive and interactive models in terms of political effects? If so, Black individualism should have emergent predictive powers over racial policy preferences of its own, above and beyond the additive or interactive effects of individualism and anti-Black affect measured separately. The Stage 1 columns of Table 3 present equations in which Black individualism and the constituent elements of the additive and interactive models predict all five dimensions of racial policy preferences measured in the 1995 and 2001 LACSS.

Black individualism proves to be considerably more closely associated with racial policy preferences than are either general individualism or anti-Black affect. For example, in the 1995 NES, predicting opposition to federal assistance for Blacks, the coefficient for Black individualism is .36 ($p < .001$), as against −.08 (*ns*) for general individualism and .05 (*ns*) for anti-Black affect. Considering all five policy preferences, Black individualism yields an average regression coefficient of .26, and all five terms are statistically significant. In contrast, the mean coefficient for traditional racial attitudes is only .08, and for general individualism, .01, and just 2 of their 10 terms are significant. The interaction terms were small (averaging .00) and nonsignificant in all cases. The pattern of the findings is notably similar across the two surveys.

These findings are consistent with the view that the blend has political effects that exceed those of anti-Black affect or individualism measured separately. To assess the statistical significance of that difference, we again turned to the variance explained by these variables. Black individualism explained a significant ($p < .05$) amount of unique variance in all five policy attitudes (averaging 5.8%), whereas general individualism and traditional racial attitudes and their interaction considered together explained a significant amount of unique variance in only one case (averaging 2.0%). In four of five cases, Black individualism explained more variance than did the separate attitudes, though in only one case was the difference statistically significant. Therefore, the fusion model again seems to be somewhat better fitting. The Black individualism term is always statistically significant, it always adds significant unique variance explained, and in almost all cases it explains the most unique variance (though that difference mostly

Table 3
Antecedents of Racial Policy Preferences: The Mediating Role of Symbolic Racism

Measure	Federal assistance		Affirmative action		Equal opportunity	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
1995 LACSS						
Symbolic racism		.58***		.42***		
Black individualism	.36***	.17*	.29***	.15*		
General individualism	−.08	−.08	−.09	−.09		
Traditional racial attitudes						
Anti-Black affect	—	—	—	—		
Stereotypes	.05	−.10	.15*	.04		
Interaction term[a]	−.03	−.05	.02	.00		
Adjusted R^2 (%)	10.4	37.1	8.6	22.7		
2001 LACSS						
Symbolic racism		.35***		.34***		.29***
Black individualism	.28***	.17*	.18*	.07	.21**	.11
General individualism	−.03	−.09	.05	−.01	.21**	.15*
Traditional racial attitudes						
Anti-Black affect	.09	.04	.06	.01	.03	−.01
Stereotypes	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interaction term[a]	−.07	−.05	−.02	.01	.08	.10
Adjusted R^2 (%)	7.5	16.3	3.1	11.5	11.6	17.6

Note. Each column represents one of two different stages of a hierarchical multiple regression. Stage 1 does not include symbolic racism; Stage 2 includes all predictor variables. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Variables are keyed such that high numbers indicate greater policy opposition, greater racial antipathy, and more individualistic values. A dash indicates the variable was not measured in that sample. Attitudes toward equal opportunity were not measured in the 1995 LACSS. LACSS = Los Angeles County Social Surveys.
[a] Created by multiplying the centered variables of generalized individualism and traditional racial attitudes.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

does not attain statistical significance). Anti-Black affect and general individualism measured separately, and combined additively or interactively, generally do not have significant effects.[6]

Symbolic Racism Mediates the Political Effects of the Blend

Next, we turn to the hypothesis that symbolic racism is the contemporary manifest content that politicizes the blend of anti-Black affect and individualism and gives it its political clout. If so, symbolic racism should largely mediate the effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences. This hypothesis could be tested only in the 1995 and 2001 LACSS, because no symbolic racism measures were included in the 1983 NES. We tested it by adding symbolic racism as a second stage to the equations just discussed. If symbolic racism mediates the political effects of Black individualism, the Black individualism terms should be markedly smaller in Stage 2 than they had been in Stage 1, and the symbolic racism terms should be large and significant.

Indeed, symbolic racism explains most of the political effectiveness of Black individualism, as shown in the Stage 2 columns in Table 3. For example, in the 1995 LACSS, the Black individualism coefficient predicting to opposition to federal assistance for Blacks is .36 in Stage 1 and drops to .17 in Stage 2 (though still significant at $p < .05$), whereas the symbolic racism coefficient is much stronger ($\beta = .58$, $p < .001$). This pattern recurs throughout the data. Symbolic racism has an average coefficient of .40, and all

its terms are significant. The coefficients for Black individualism drop from an average of .26, all significant, in Stage 1, to .13, with three of five significant, in Stage 2. The substantial effects of Black individualism appearing in the absence of symbolic racism are largely erased, whereas symbolic racism has much more substantial political effects. Symbolic racism does seem to mediate most of the effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences.

If symbolic racism mainly reflects nonracial conservatism, as some have argued, its strong incremental effects here should be considerably mitigated by controls on ideology and party identification. However, such controls have little effect on this two-stage

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[6] It should be noted that these relatively strong associations of Black individualism with racial policy preferences are not simply due to any confound with conservative ideology, a concern sometimes expressed about symbolic racism (e.g., Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986a, 1986b; Tetlock, 1994). Controls on ideology and party identification diminish the effects of Black individualism on policy preferences only slightly, from an average beta coefficient of .26 to .24, and all 5 coefficients remain statistically significant. The coefficients for ideology and party identification themselves are relatively weaker (mean $\beta = .13$), and only 3 of 10 are significant. Combining ideology and party identification into a single variable to decrease measurement error does not strengthen their effects. So the effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences cannot be explained as spurious effects of a confound with the presumably nonracial (or at least less racialized) general political conservatism.

explanation of racial policy preferences. We added both variables to the equation in a third stage, but only 2 of their 10 terms yielded a significant effect, and the betas averaged only .06. As has been shown in the past (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002; Sears et al., 1997), such putatively nonracial predispositions have little residual explanatory value as predictors of racial policy preferences once symbolic racism is considered. Also, belying a nonracial interpretation of these findings is the fact that symbolic racism has similarly significant effects across diverse racial policies, again. Its average regression coefficient is .40 for federal assistance, .25 for equal opportunity, and .35 for affirmative action. White respondents bring their racial predispositions to bear on all these issues, presumably because what is most salient to them in each case is race.

The Full Model of Symbolic Racism

The full model, then, would predict that Black individualism should be a strong influence on symbolic racism, which in turn should have strong effects on racial policy preferences, mediating all or almost all of the political effects of the anti-Black affect and individualism. Figure 1 depicts the results of path models testing for the relationships among Black individualism, symbolic racism, and our composite measures of racial policy preferences, based on multiple regression equations. The model indeed shows that Black individualism has a strong and highly significant effect on symbolic racism, with an average coefficient of .39 across the two surveys. It also shows that symbolic racism has a strong and highly significant effect on racial policy preferences, with an average

coefficient of .48. Finally, it shows that symbolic racism largely (though not completely) mediates the effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences. The former has a much weaker, though still significant, effect of just .16 when symbolic racism is considered (dropping from an average correlation of .34 between Black individualism and policy). The results as a whole are consistent with the theory that symbolic racism is a central determinant of Whites' racial policy preferences and that symbolic racism originates, at least in part, in Whites' perceptions that Blacks too often violate basic individualistic values.

Discussion

Study 2 tested the proposition that symbolic racism has origins in a blend of anti-Black affect with, particularly, individualism. It also tests how those two elements blend to generate symbolic racism, a term not consistently defined in the past. It could be an additive or interactive combination of those two elements, each measured separately, or it could be a fusion of those two elements in a single attitude, measured directly. We created that fusion in three surveys by rewording individualism items focused on people in general (general individualism) to focus on Blacks instead (Black individualism). We obtained four main findings. First, general individualism and anti-Black affect did correlate with their fusion, but it is clear that Black individualism represents a distinctive psychological construct in its own right. Second, these elements did indeed all significantly affect symbolic racism. The fusion model seemed strongest, but the best-fitting model combined the fusion with an additive mixture of the two constituent
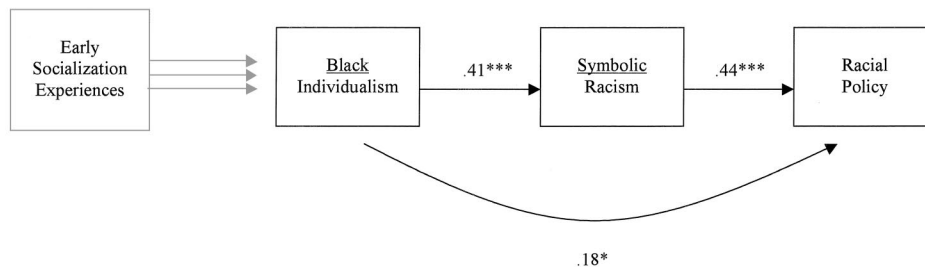
1995 LACSS
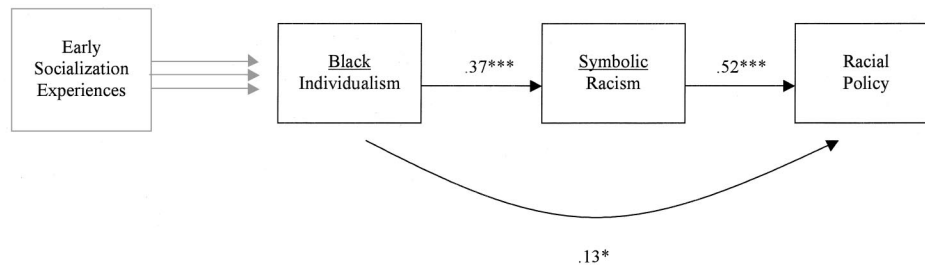
2001 LACSS

Figure 1. Path analysis of the origins of symbolic racism for the 1995 and 2001 Los Angeles County Social Surveys (LACSS). Items are keyed such that higher values indicate more racial antipathy and greater policy opposition. Early socialization experiences are part of the theoretical model but were not tested in the path analysis. *p < .05. *** p < .001.

elements measured separately. Third, Black individualism consistently had strong and significant effects on racial policy preferences and consistently contributed significant unique variance to them, whereas anti-Black affect and general individualism measured separately did neither. However, the difference in unique variance explained by the two models generally did not attain statistical significance. Fourth, symbolic racism largely mediated the effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences, presumably giving political meaning to that more psychological predisposition. In sum, the fusion of anti-Black affect and individualism does indeed seem to contribute to symbolic racism, and the two separate components have some lesser role. The most powerful blend of anti-Black affect and individualism implicates both the fusion of those two elements as well as both measured separately and provides a psychological basis for opposition to race-targeted policies.

Study 3

Perhaps the most prominent counterhypothesis to the theory of symbolic racism is that most White opposition to liberal racial policies, and indeed most support for symbolic racism itself, stems from conservative nonracial attitudes rather than from the continuing effects of racial prejudices. One important ostensibly nonracial attitude is general political ideology (e.g., Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986b; Tetlock, 1994). Others include basic nonracial values, such as fairness or egalitarianism (Sniderman & Carmines, 1997) or economic individualism, drawn from classical liberalism (Carmines & Merriman, 1993).

On the other hand, the more general symbolic politics theory from which symbolic racism theory is drawn (see Sears, 1993) would provide a group specificity hypothesis. It would lead us to expect that symbolic predispositions with clear group-relevant cues, such as Black individualism, would be most influential over policy preferences with clear and similar group cues, such as racial policy preferences.

We have presented three kinds of evidence that a specifically racial element explains racial policy preferences better than race-neutral values. First, ideology has little influence over racial policy preferences once Black individualism and/or symbolic racism are considered (see Study 2; also see Henry & Sears, 2002; Sears et al., 1997). General individualistic values have only weak direct effects on either symbolic racism or racial policy preferences (see Tables 2 and 3 above; also Kinder & Mendelberg, 2000; Sniderman et al., 2000). Moreover, mechanically racializing change in those individualism items by substituting the word *Blacks* for *people* greatly enhanced its explanatory power over racial policy preferences (see Table 3).

On the other hand, Carmines and Merriman (1993) argued that classical liberalism, or race-neutral individualism, not race, drives Whites' opposition to racial policy preferences. Indeed, a key link in our evidentiary chain not yet made here is to demonstrate the group-specificity principle: that a predisposition will be most influential over attitudes that share its group cues. Carmines and Merriman's primary evidence was that measures of economic individualism applied to women or poor people had about the same effects as did a parallel measure framed in terms of Blacks. As noted earlier, that evidence is clouded for two main reasons. The items differed in a number of other respects than merely the groups

they targeted. Also, if classical liberalism were responsible for a general opposition to all government intervention, it should not matter what group the intervention is intended to favor; both race-oriented and gender-oriented individualism should have equivalent effects on gender policy preferences (which were not measured) and racial policy preferences (which were).

Study 3 provided a more rigorous test of the same idea, comparing Black individualism to a similarly constructed gender individualism in terms of their relative effects on racial policy preferences and gender policy preferences. The group specificity hypothesis led us to expect that race-related predispositions should be most influential over race-targeted policy preferences, that gender-related predispositions should be most influential over gender-targeted policy preferences, and that group-neutral individualism should have less effect in both cases.

However, such "symbolic predispositions" vary in their psychological strength, and race-related predispositions have been shown to be unusually strong (Sears, 1983). Group-specificity relationships might be asymmetrical, then, with race-related predispositions having disproportionate influence relative to the influence of comparable gender-related predispositions (a "Black exceptionalism" thesis; see Sears, Citrin, Cheleden, & van Laar, 1999).

Method

Sample

The data used to test these hypotheses come from the 1983 NES Pilot Survey, described above in the context of Study 2. It used a split-form design, each administered to approximately half the sample. Black individualism and gender individualism were each given to only one subsample. All the other variables we used were administered to all respondents.

Measures

Both the general individualism and Black individualism measures were described above in connection with Study 2. A six-item gender individualism scale was created using the same procedure as was used to create the Black individualism scale, by substituting the word *women* for *people* (α = .76). This permits a rigorous comparison of Black individualism and gender individualism, because the only differences between them are the references to Blacks or to women. The measure of anti-Black affect is described above in connection with Study 2. An antiwomen affect variable was based on the difference between the "women, in general" and the "men, in general" feeling thermometers. Measures of ideology and party identification, described in Study 2, were again used as controls in these analyses. The composite scale measuring racial policy preferences was described above in connection with Study 2. A scale of gender policy preferences was based on five items. Three asked how much energy and resources the government in Washington should put into (a) improving the social and economic condition of women; (b) promoting affirmative action programs that help women get ahead; and (c) ensuring equal pay for equal work for women. Two others asked about agreement with the ideas that (d) employers should set aside a certain number of positions for qualified women and (e) women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government versus believing a woman's place is in the home (α = .69).

Results and Discussion

Multiple regression equations tested the relative effects of Black and gender individualism on racial and gender policy preferences.

Table 4
The Selective Effects of Black and Gender Individualism on Opposition to Racial and Gender Policies

Measure	Racial policy preferences		Gender policy preferences	
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 1	Sample 2
Black individualism	.34***	—	.23*	—
Gender individualism	—	.12	—	.32*
General individualism	.07	.08	.02	−.08
Group affect				
Anti-Black	.27	.32***	.03	.07
Antiwomen	−.03	−.01	−.05	−.03
Controls				
Ideology	.17	.23	.22*	.21*
Party identification	.05	.04	.14	.15
Adjusted R^2 (%)	28.9	19.9	14.8	18.4

Note. Data are from the 1983 National Election Studies (National Election Studies, 1983–2000). Each column represents a separate multiple regression equation, and entries are standardized regression coefficients. Variables are keyed such that high numbers indicate greater policy opposition, more individualistic beliefs, more negative affect, and more conservatism. A dash indicates the variable was not measured in that sample.
* $p < .05$.   *** $p < .001$.

To repeat, the Black and gender individualism items were presented to different subsamples, so the models include either one or the other but do not include both. All other items were presented to both subsamples. In Table 4, therefore, we present two models apiece for racial policy preferences and for gender policy preferences, differing only in that one contains Black individualism and the other gender individualism.

The overall pattern of the results is consistent with the group-specificity hypothesis. Black individualism has a strong and significant influence over racial policy preferences ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), whereas gender individualism did not ($\beta = .12$, *ns*). These coefficients were significantly different in terms of confidence intervals (nonoverlapping 95% confidence intervals). Gender individualism has a strong and significant influence over gender policy preferences ($\beta = .32$, $p < .05$) but, as just noted, none on racial policy preferences (nonoverlapping 95% confidence intervals). General individualism has little effect on either type of policy preference (βs ranging from .08 to −.08, all coefficients nonsignificant).[7]

As noted earlier, the probable unusual psychological strength of race-related predispositions might produce asymmetrical effects, such that race-related predispositions would have more influence than expected from the group-specificity hypothesis. Indeed, the main exception to the group-specificity principle is that Black individualism also has a significant effect on gender policy preferences ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$), an effect not significantly weaker than the group-specific effects of Black individualism on racial policy preferences ($\beta = .34$) or of gender individualism on gender policy preferences ($\beta = .32$). This asymmetry does not alter the main point, however: Group targeting matters, especially for race, and race-neutral individualism is by comparison a secondary contributor to these policy preferences.

The interpretation of White opposition to racial policies as primarily being due to nonracial individualism or classical liberalism does not hold up well here, then. It is the specifically racial element of Black individualism that drives its power over racial policy preferences, and the specifically gendered element of gen-

der individualism that links it to gender policy preferences. Group targeting matters. However, there is some asymmetry, such that Black individualism intrudes even into gender-targeted preferences, whereas gender individualism has little effect in the racial domain. We would interpret this as an instance of Black exceptionalism (Sears et al., 1999)—namely, the likelihood that attitudes toward Blacks are an especially powerful political force in America relative to attitudes about most other social groups.

General Discussion

Racial issues have been among the most conflictual in America through the past 4 decades. Much research has shown that divisions among White Americans on these issues are powerfully explained by the construct of symbolic racism. The theory of symbolic racism argues that it, in turn, originates in a blend of anti-Black affect with traditional and conservative values, such as individualism. However, this theory of symbolic racism's origins has not heretofore been consistently specified or thoroughly investigated. Here we provide the first direct test of that proposition and present several complementary kinds of evidence in its favor, adding several new elements to the theory.

The first study presented here has demonstrated systematically, using eight surveys, what has long been suspected but not demonstrated, that symbolic racism is made up about equally of racial prejudice and general conservatism. Symbolic racism is the contemporary political belief system that glues prejudice to conservatism and is itself politically potent. In the second study, we specified and tested the hypothesis that symbolic racism is grounded in anti-Black affect and individualism. We also tested

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[7] Indeed, even at the bivariate level, general individualism has a markedly lower association with either set of policy preferences than does the appropriate group-specific form of individualism: The bivariate correlations with racial policy preferences are $r = .46$ for Black individualism and .21 for general individualism, and with gender policy preferences, $r = .36$ for gender individualism and .15 for general individualism.

alternative hypotheses about how symbolic racism might be so grounded, creating for the first time a direct measure of the blend of those two elements in a single fused construct, Black individualism. Collectively, these constructs do significantly explain symbolic racism. The best-fitting model involves that fusion first and foremost, with lesser contributions from an additive combination of each component measured separately. Finally, the results show that Black individualism has a distinctively racial component and is not just a reflection of the more general race-neutral economic individualism central to classical liberalism. Indeed, such a race-related predisposition has significant political effects even beyond the directly racial arena. Race-neutral individualism had generally weaker effects in all these respects.

These findings suggest that symbolic racism is psychologically grounded to a significant degree in a racialized individualism, a concern that Blacks do not live up to conventional individualistic values. On the face of it, this racialized individualism would seem to be a general psychological predisposition, with little manifest political content or any direct link to political preferences. Symbolic racism, on the other hand, is an explicitly political belief system, expressing beliefs about Blacks' position both in the American social structure and in American politics. It seems therefore to form a primary cognitive linkage between racialized individualism and the political world, such as opposition to liberal racial policies.

One possible alternative explanation for the conclusion that symbolic racism mediates the political effects of Black individualism is that the two are in fact just measuring the same construct. To test this, we conducted a series of exploratory factor analyses, extracted with principal axis and rotated to correlate, to determine if they split statistically into two separate factors, using the surveys with both variables available (the 1995 LACSS and the two split samples of the 2001 LACSS). In all three samples, the two sets of items separated quite cleanly into different factors: 7 of the 9 Black individualism items loaded most heavily on the Black individualism factor, and 10 of the 11 symbolic racism items loaded most heavily on a symbolic racism factor.[8] These results support the idea that the two are generally distinguishable constructs, consistent with the hypothesis that Black individualism is an antecedent to symbolic racism, which in turn mediates its political effects.

One methodological issue is of concern. The statistical reliabilities of our scales are relatively high in some cases and lower in others. Does that distort these results? First, these variations in reliability are largely mundane in origin, stemming mainly from differences in the number of items in each scale. For example, the Cronbach's alpha for symbolic racism measured with 11 items was .78 (1998 LACSS) and averaged .69 in the several surveys with 4 such items; Black individualism yielded an alpha of .79 with 6 items (1983 NES) and of .59 with 2 items (1995 LACSS); and general individualism yielded an alpha of .64 with 6 items (1983 NES) and .43 with 2 items (1995 LACSS). It should be noted that except for the last mentioned, these are fairly standard levels of reliability in costly general-population surveys that lack the lengthy multi-item scales customary in questionnaire studies of captive college students. The tradeoff is between high statistical reliability and sample representativeness. The latter seems essential for this kind of research.

In a few cases the reliabilities are rather low; for example, general individualism in the 1995 LACSS (.43), or Black individ-

ualism in one 2001 LACSS subsample (.46). A few others are marginal. However, these variations in reliability seem not to explain the findings we emphasize. To be sure, Black individualism has stronger effects than general individualism as well as somewhat higher reliabilities. That seems unlikely to explain its greater impact, though. Its greater impact is just as clear in the 2001 LACSS as it is in the 1995 LACSS, despite the fact that the two measures differ in reliability only in the latter survey. Moreover, Table 3 shows that the two surveys yielded very similar results on the two dependent variables they have in common. In the case of the 1983 NES, the differences in their beta coefficients (shown in Table 4) seem far too large to be explained in terms of unreliability. For example, the alphas for Black individualism and general individualism were .79 and .64, but their betas for racial policy preferences were .34 and .07, respectively, and for gender policy preferences, .23 and .02. Overall, these reliability differences across scales and surveys seem in most cases to be too small to explain our most central findings, and where they are larger, they do not seem to generate the systematic differences across surveys that would explain the findings.

We know of no other direct tests of the blend proposition about the origins of symbolic racism. However, various experiments have shown that the conjunction of race and violations of the work ethic has particular political potency (using target persons such as unemployed Black welfare recipients): "The conjunction of race and welfare and considerations of individual effort . . . evokes a powerful counter-reaction to the special disadvantage of blacks" (Sniderman, Carmines, Layman, & Carter, 1996, p. 51; also see Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock, & Kendrick, 1991). In other studies, negative stereotypes about Blacks' work ethics were the strongest predictors of opposition to welfare programs when the potential beneficiaries were both Black and violated individualism (Gilens, 1998; Peffley & Hurwitz, 1998). In all these cases, the blend of individualism with negative evaluations of Blacks affects preferences about policies relevant to race.

We conclude, then, that the original conceptualization of the origins of symbolic racism was imprecise and that the process of critical scholarly scrutiny has sharpened it. Nevertheless, its essential observations appear to have been generally on the mark.

However, we suggest three cautions. One is that individualism is likely to be only one of the traditional values that might blend with underlying racial animosities to generate symbolic racism. The broader philosophical content of individualism also includes such values as individual autonomy, self-reliance, and individual rights (Hochschild, 2000; Kinder & Mendelberg, 2000). Our measures tap only a portion of that broader concept, but the present findings do offer a start. Second, we have here conceptualized the origins of symbolic racism in terms of its grounding in fundamental psychological attributes, such as values or basic attitudes or personality predispositions. Cross-sectional surveys can determine whether a pattern of obtained correlations is consistent with a theory about causal relations among the measured variables and so provide evidence for it or potentially refute it, but they cannot rigorously determine the causal ordering of these elements. A third is that the "origins" of symbolic racism could also be conceptualized in an

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[8] A third factor with symbolic racism content emerged in the second split sample of the 2001 LACSS.

altogether different way, by locating them in a developmental or historical process across the individual's life history. Cross-sectional surveys of adults are generally insufficient for testing such life-history models of an attitude's origins.

Finally, much racial inequality continues to exist, and it seems not to be diminishing rapidly (e.g., Sears, Hetts, et al., 2000). If symbolic racism is a powerful obstacle to the acceptance of race-targeted government programs, how is that inequality to be alleviated? Some have advocated turning instead to policies that benefit Blacks but are not explicitly race targeted, such as tax breaks for creating jobs that are targeted for poverty areas in general. Among Whites, non-race-targeted policies are demonstrably more popular (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Sniderman & Carmines, 1997). However, such ostensibly nonracial programs often become racialized themselves, as welfare and other programs have in the past (Gilens, 1999; Sears & Citrin, 1982). Another suggestion is to demoralize racial issues, framing them instead as just another case of conflicting group interests, promoting ordinary political negotiations and compromises (Bobo, 2000). However, if such issues quickly get sucked into the quicksand of enduring racial animosities, they are not likely to become matters of simple bargaining. A longer and more difficult psychological approach may be necessary, of demonstrating and acknowledging the continuing role of racial prejudice and discrimination in our society and taking the steps necessary to rectify its effects.

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Appendix

Items Used in the Studies

Individualism Items

Wording for the general individualism items used in the 1983 National Election Studies (NES) and the 2001 Los Angeles County Social Surveys (LACSS) is given below (also see Feldman, 1988). Items also used in the 1995 LACSS are starred. Response alternatives were 7-point agree–disagree scales. The rewordings to form Black individualism and gender individualism items are shown in parentheses. (R) indicates items that are reverse keyed.

1. Even if people (blacks, women) try hard they often cannot reach their goals. (R)*

2. Even if people (blacks, women) are ambitious they often cannot succeed. (R)

3. If people (blacks, women) work hard they almost always get what they want.

4. Most people (blacks, women) who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really have only themselves to blame.

5. Hard work offers little guarantee of success (for blacks, for women). (R)*

6. Any person (black, woman) who is willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding.

Symbolic Racism Items

The wordings for the symbolic racism items used in the analyses are given below, organized by which theme of symbolic racism they embody. The surveys in which they were used are also indicated. (R) indicates items that were reverse keyed.

Denial of Continuing Racial Discrimination

1. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class. (R) (1986, 1992, 2000 NES; 1997, 1998, 2001 LACSS)

2. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances to get ahead? Would you say a lot, some, just a little, or none at all? (1985 NES; 1997, 1998, 2001 LACSS)

3. Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States. (1998 LACSS)

4. Has there been a lot of real change in the position of black people in the past few years? (1986, 1992 NES; 1997 LACSS)

Blacks Should Work Harder

1. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites. (1986, 1992, 2000 NES; 1997, 1998, 2001 LACSS)

2. Blacks work just as hard to get ahead as most other Americans. (R) (1998 LACSS)

3. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors. (1985, 1986, 1992, 2000 NES; 1995, 1997, 2001 LACSS)

Demands for Special Favors

1. Some say that the civil rights people have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven't pushed fast enough. How about you: Do you think that civil rights leaders are trying to push too fast, are going too slowly, or are they moving at about the right speed? (1986, 1992 NES; 1997 LACSS)

2. Black leaders have been trying to push things too fast. (1998 LACSS)

3. Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights. (1995, 1997 LACSS)

4. Blacks are demanding too much from the rest of society. (1998, 2001 LACSS)

5. Blacks generally do not complain as much as they should about their situation in society. (R) (1998 LACSS)

6. How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating? All of it, most, some, or not much at all? (1998, 2001 LACSS)

Undeserved Outcomes

1. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve (R) (1985, 1986, 1992, 2000 NES; 1997, 1998, 2001 LACSS)

2. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve. (1998, 2001 LACSS)

3. Do blacks get much more attention from the government than they deserve, more attention, about the right amount, less attention, or much less attention from the government than they deserve? (1995 LACSS)