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Christians' Attitudes Toward Racial Diversity

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# Divided by Age?: Generational Shifts in White Evangelical Christians' Attitudes Toward Racial Diversity

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## Abstract

This article examines whether there are generational differences among white evangelicals in their perceptions of race-related issues in the United States. Younger white evangelicals are compared to older white evangelicals and to younger white nonevangelicals. Differences are measured in three broad areas: valuing diversity, racial solidarity, and race-related public policy. These comparisons indicate that there are clear differences in the post-Baby Boom cohorts of evangelicals on important issues of valuing diversity and of racial solidarity. At the same time, younger white evangelicals share with older evangelicals an opposition to structural approaches for addressing racial problems. Detailed analysis uncovers several factors that contribute to these similarities and differences. Among other things, the younger cohort's stronger adherence to a contractual view of social solidarity contributes significantly to the generational shifts in attitudes.

It is generally accepted that growing older leads to adjustments in people's religious attitudes (Stoltzenberg, Blair-Loy and Waite 1995). However, recent research has highlighted a religious shift that moves beyond the age component itself, with indications that there are unique characteristics in generational cohorts. Robert Wuthnow's (2007) study of the post-Baby Boom generation, which he defines as Americans born after 1957, suggests that this group tends to be more loosely connected to religious institutions and more critical of traditional religious authorities than its predecessors were. Wuthnow also contends that religious post-Boomers are much more comfortable with various forms of religious and social diversity and that they are less easy to categorize on political issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage. If these changes are real, they may have implications for religious, social, and racial solidarity in the United States.

In this article, I look specifically at one group in the post-Baby Boom cohort: evangelical Christians. Using survey data gathered from the American Mosaic Project, I will seek to determine whether younger generations of white evangelical Christians in the United States are significantly different from older evangelicals and whether they differ from the general population of whites born after the Boomers. Differences will be measured in three broad areas: valuing diversity, racial solidarity, and race-related public policy. These comparisons will indicate whether the post-Boomer cohort of evangelicals is different from the other groups on important issues related to diversity and racial reconciliation. I will also seek to determine what factors might contribute to any differences that emerge.

Since the publication in 1987 of James Hunter's book *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, generational shifts have been of keen interest to those who study conservative Protestants. Hunter contended that the fundamental attitudes and beliefs of up-and-coming evangelicals were changing significantly and that the changes would diminish their commitment to traditional Protestant orthodoxy and affect their responses to the world around them. Most notably, Hunter argued that the students in his study were adopting a more progressive view of authority based on Enlightenment principles and a much more tolerant attitude toward people who held views that were different from their own. Although subsequent research by Penning and Smidt (2002) called into question Hunter's thesis that evangelicals' theological and moral commitments will erode as post-Boomer generations come to prominence, their study also affirmed this younger cohort's commitment to tolerance and civility. However, the studies by Hunter and by Penning and Smidt focus mainly on tolerance for those who differ morally or politically; they say little or nothing about younger evangelicals and race.

Perhaps the definitive sociological research on evangelical attitudes toward race is the book *Divided by Faith* by Emerson and Smith (2000). Their work shows that white evangelicals generally believe that racism, which they usually define as individual-level prejudice or discrimination, should be an important

issue for the church to address. However, Smith and Emerson (2000: 170) argue that in spite of best intentions, “white evangelicalism likely does more to perpetuate the racialized society than to reduce it.” This is because evangelicals tend to gather in racially and culturally similar congregations, a situation that reinforces the racial isolation that evangelicals experience in their daily lives. White evangelicals also tend to individualize the race problem in the United States, laying blame for white racism on personal prejudice and discrimination and attributing racial inequality to a lack of effort by members of racial minorities.

The racial isolation that Emerson and Smith highlight is important because it limits white evangelicals’ opportunities to witness firsthand the pervasiveness and severity of racial problems. Contact theory, first proposed by Gordon Allport (1954), asserts that extensive and extended intergroup contact changes racial perspectives and opens the door to new interpretations of racial problems. Limited contact, by contrast, tends to intensify conflict, prejudice, and social stereotypes. (See Emerson, Kimbro and Yancey 2002 for an extensive review of the contact theory literature.) Since, on the whole, white evangelicals tend to have limited contact with members of minorities, they are more likely to downplay racial issues, underestimate the level of prejudice in society, and lay the blame for racial problems on the minorities themselves (Emerson and Smith 2000). Wuthnow (2007) contends that evangelical Christian exclusivism and isolation are significant reasons why evangelical Christianity is the major religious tradition in the United States that is least welcoming toward Hispanics and Asians.

The tendency of white evangelicals to individualize racial issues is another important factor. Equipped with a tool kit made up of a number of different theological, political, and cultural values, evangelicals are “resolutely committed to a social-change strategy which maintains that the only truly effective way to change the world is one-individual-at-a-time through the influence of interpersonal relationships” (Smith 1998: 187). Because they subscribe to this “accountable freewill individualism,” evangelicals have a propensity to explain racial inequality as an issue that is rooted in problems with individuals and their relationships. Evangelicals tend to deny the role of social structures in explanations of inequality (Emerson, Smith and Sikkink 1999). These findings have been supported by several follow-up studies (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Eitle and Steffens 2009; Hinojosa and Park 2004; Hunt 2007).

Although existing research on racial attitudes of evangelical Christians makes a compelling case, these studies do not take into account generational differences in evangelicals’ attitudes. Generational theories contend that cohorts of individuals who are born and raised in the same historical and social context are likely to share a common set of values. (See Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins 2005 for a thorough review.) Demographers note that the generations following the Baby Boomers have grown up in a post-civil rights era in which greater emphasis is

placed on diversity, pluralism, and tolerance in the educational, workplace, and media contexts in which they are raised (Wuthnow 2007). In addition, rapid growth rates among minority populations all over the country have exposed these generations to much more diversity than the preceding generations experienced (New Strategist 2005). As a result, post-Boomer cohorts are more open to change and less concerned about social stability than their predecessors were (Barnard, Cosgrove, and Welsh 1998). These new realities have also affected the younger generations' attitudes about race, as is evidenced by young whites' higher levels of support for structural responses to racial inequality than is common for their older white counterparts (Hunt 2007).

These broader societal shifts raise questions about the attitudes of younger evangelicals. Might these changes have affected them? Could their general openness to toleration of people who are different from themselves politically, noted above, also apply to issues of race? As part of a cohort that has much greater exposure to diversity, could younger evangelicals have developed different racial attitudes than their older coreligionists? These potential changes have not been adequately addressed in the existing literature.

In this article I explore these issues in two stages. First, I seek to determine whether there have been any generational shifts in white evangelicals' racial attitudes. Next, having uncovered significant shifts, I try to discern what factors might account for the changes and what factors might cause other racial attitudes to remain constant across the generations. Results from this analysis will provide insight into ongoing efforts to address racial divisions in the United States. They will also offer a perspective on religious change and its effect on social issues.

#### *DATA*

For this research, I use data from the American Mosaic Project (AMP), which is a multiyear, multimethod study of the basis of solidarity and diversity in American life. The first phase of the project was a nationally representative telephone survey of attitudes, understandings, and experiences of race, religion, and diversity in the United States. The second phase, which I did not use for this study, involved fieldwork and intensive face-to-face interviewing by teams of graduate student researchers in four major metropolitan areas.

The random-digit-dial (RDD) telephone survey ( $N = 2,081$ ) component of the AMP was conducted during fall 2003 by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. Households were randomly selected, and then respondents were randomly chosen within households. The survey took slightly more than thirty minutes to complete, on average. The 36 percent response rate that this survey achieved compares favorably with the rates that most RDD surveys currently achieve. The Council on Market and Opinion Research, which monitors survey response rates,

reports that the mean response rate for RDD telephone surveys in 2003 was 10.16 percent (Council on Market and Opinion Research 2003). The RDD component of the 2002 American National Election Study, which compensated respondents, had a response rate of about 35 percent (National Election Studies 2002).<sup>1</sup> In analysis that is not presented in this article, careful comparisons of key demographic, belief, and behavior measures with results of other major national surveys reveal no evidence of systematic nonresponse bias in the sample.<sup>2</sup>

### *DEPENDENT VARIABLES*

I selected eight dichotomous dependent variables for this article and arranged them into three sets of analytical models. These models provide a means for assessing generational differences between whites on a wide variety of racial issues. The first set of variables, listed in Table 1, assesses the degree to which white respondents value diversity in general. The first question approaches the issue at the community level, asking whether respondents value diversity in their city or town. The other question is more specifically oriented to individual relationships, asking whether respondents value having friends who are different from themselves.

The second variable set more directly addresses the issue of race and the degree to which respondents feel a sense of solidarity with people from other racial groups. The three variables in this set address attitudes toward people from specific minority groups by asking whether African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans share the respondent's vision of American society. These questions assess the level of conflict and cohesion that the respondent has with members of various minority groups. Taken together, the first two variable sets provide a limited view of white respondents' racial attitudes and the ways in which white respondents relate to people of other races.

The last set of dependent variables in Table 1 examines respondents' perspectives on the causes of racial inequality. The initial questions address structural responses to inequality. They ask first about affirmative action and whether or not African-Americans should receive special considerations in job hiring and school admissions. Second, they ask whether or not African-Americans should receive more economic assistance from the government. The final question in this set asks whether or not African-Americans experience disadvantage in society because of their own lack of effort and hard work. These variables will help in assessing any changes in evangelicals' established tendency to reject structural approaches to racial problems in favor of more individualized explanations for inequality.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures for the CMOR-reported mean response rate reported by the Council on Market and Opinion Research, the rate computed by the American National Election Study, and the AMP response rate are calculated identically. Respondents for the AMP were not compensated.

<sup>2</sup> Results available on request, or see Edgell and Tranby (2007).

**Table 1: Bivariate Descriptives for Dependent Variables**

Variable	Younger Cohort	Evan-gelical	Entire Sample*
<b>Valuing Racial Diversity</b>			
<b>Value community diversity:</b> I value having people who are different from me in my city or town. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree; 1 and 2 coded 1)	93.47%	92.15%	91.56%
<b>Value diverse friendships:</b> I value having friends who are different from me. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree; 1 and 2 coded 1)	79.51%	63.82%	69.10%
<b>Racial Solidarity</b>			
<b>Share vision—Black:</b> African-Americans share my vision of American society. (1 = almost completely agree; 4 = not at all; 1 and 2 coded 1)	46.64%	41.30%	43.52%
<b>Share vision—Hispanic:</b> Hispanics share my vision of American society. (1 = almost completely agree; 4 = not at all; 1 and 2 coded 1)	43.47%	40.27%	41.39%
<b>Share vision—Asian:</b> Asian-Americans share my vision of American society. (1 = almost completely agree; 4 = not at all; 1 and 2 coded 1)	48.13%	42.66%	46.15%
<b>Race-Related Public Policy</b>			
<b>Affirmative action:</b> African-Americans should receive special considerations in job hiring and school admissions. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree; 1 and 2 coded 1)	25.51%	14.68%	21.98%
<b>Government assistance:</b> African-Americans should get more economic assistance from the government. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree; 1 and 2 coded 1)	16.78%	9.22%	15.25%
<b>Effort:</b> African-Americans fare worse economically because of lack of effort and hard work. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree; 1 and 2 coded 1)	29.29%	34.47%	31.07%

\*All respondents included in the sample are white.

In the models presented in this article, younger white evangelicals are compared to their older counterparts. Comparisons are also made between younger white evangelicals and white nonevangelicals in the same age group. For this project, evangelicals were defined on the basis of denominational affiliation, using the taxonomy developed by Steensland and his coauthors (2000). Thirty percent ( $N = 608$ ) of respondents in the AMP survey were classified as evangelicals, and a little fewer than half of that group ( $N = 293$ ) were white. Following Wuthnow (2007), the younger generation in this study is designated as those who were born after 1957. Fifty-one percent ( $N = 1069$ ) of the sample were born after 1957, and 6 percent of the entire sample ( $N = 125$ ) were younger white evangelical Protestants. Table 1 provides a breakdown of each dependent variable with percentage responses for younger white respondents born after 1957, for white evangelical Protestants, as well as for the entire sample of white Americans. These provide a reference point for comparing the percentage responses of the more specific groups listed in the comparison charts below.

#### *GENERATIONAL SHIFTS IN RACIAL ATTITUDES*

Using the dependent variables described above, the first analytical step was to conduct a bivariate comparison of younger white evangelicals to older white evangelicals and younger white evangelicals to younger white nonevangelicals. The comparison of younger and older evangelicals will indicate whether or not generational shifts in racial attitudes have occurred among white evangelicals. The comparison of younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals will help to determine whether any such shifts are mostly related to broader generational changes or whether there are distinct factors about younger evangelicals that should be considered. The latter comparison will also highlight ways in which younger white evangelicals differ from other whites in their age cohort.

Table 2 shows the output for the two variables that relate to valuing diversity. The first thing to notice is that younger white evangelicals do not significantly differ from younger white nonevangelicals on any of the measures. Younger white evangelicals mirror the attitudes toward diversity that are held by others in their age cohort. However, there is a significant difference between younger and older evangelicals in the value that they place on diversity in their communities and a wide gap between the values that these two groups assign to diverse friendships. Although overall support for diversity is fairly high, these findings bolster the notion that younger cohorts are more likely to value diversity in their communities and their personal relationships. Adherence to evangelicalism seems to have little if any effect on this trend.



**Table 2: Valuing Diversity**

	<b>Value Community Diversity</b>	<b>Value Diverse Friendships</b>
Younger evangelicals	96.80%*	72.80%**
Older evangelicals	88.69%*	57.14%**
Younger evangelicals	96.80%	72.80%
Younger nonevangelicals	92.77%	74.31%

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Generational differences between white evangelicals are even more apparent in the second set of models, which look specifically at attitudes toward racial solidarity. Table 3 demonstrates that younger white evangelicals are much more likely than their older coreligionists to agree that African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans share the respondents' vision for American society. By contrast, comparisons between younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals on these measures reveal no notable differences. This result appears to conflict with the study by Wuthnow (2007), which showed that younger evangelicals are less likely than others in their age cohort to be welcoming to Asians and Hispanics. This seeming contradiction raises interesting questions that will be revisited in the more in-depth analysis that follows.

**Table 3: Racial Solidarity**

	<b>Black Vision</b>	<b>Hispanic Vision</b>	<b>Asian Vision</b>
Younger evangelicals	48.00%*	48.00%*	49.60%*
Older evangelicals	36.31%*	34.52%*	37.50%*
Younger evangelicals	48.00%	48.00%	49.60%
Younger nonevangelicals	46.13%	42.14%	48.13%

\* $p < 0.05$ .

The last set of models is strikingly different from the first two sets. Whereas in the first two sets of models, younger white evangelicals were more likely to agree with other members of their age cohort and to hold opinions that differ from those of their older coreligionists, the opposite is true in this last set. As Table 4 shows, younger evangelicals offer similarly low support for issues such as affirmative action and increased government assistance to African-Americans. While support for these initiatives is also low among younger white nonevangelicals,

they offer significantly higher support than their evangelical counterparts do. Interestingly, there are no quantifiable differences between any of the groups on the black effort variable. This result is not what would have been predicted in light of consistent findings in previous research that evangelicals are more likely than others to cite lack of effort as a cause for racial inequality (Eitle and Steffens 2009; Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 1999; Hunt 2007).

**Table 4: Race-Related Public Policy**

	<b>Black Affirmative Action</b>	<b>Black Government Assistance</b>	<b>Black Effort</b>
Younger evangelicals	16.80%	10.40%	32.00%
Older evangelicals	13.10%	8.33%	36.31%
Younger evangelicals	16.80%*	10.40%*	32.00%
Younger nonevangelicals	25.44%*	18.70%*	28.18%

\* $p < 0.05$ .

Taken together, these sets of models provide an interesting portrait of generational changes in racial attitudes among evangelicals. First, we can see that on the whole, a significantly higher percentage of younger white evangelicals place a strong value on diversity in their communities and among their friends. A significantly higher percentage also indicate that their vision for society is similar to that of African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans. This suggests that there is a real generational shift in racial attitudes among evangelicals. Younger evangelicals are much more comfortable with racial differences than their older counterparts are, and they are more likely to put a higher value on having diverse communities and pursuing friendships with others who are different.

On the other hand, these findings suggest that younger evangelicals maintain the previous generation's individualistic perspective on social problems. A significantly lower percentage of younger white evangelicals support broad social interventions such as affirmative action or governmental economic assistance than do nonevangelicals in their age cohort. Thus the stronger commitment to diversity and increased sense of solidarity with minority groups that younger evangelicals have do not translate into an increased willingness to undertake structural changes to address racial problems.

These findings are important in light of ongoing efforts to address racial divisions in American society. The implications of these results will be explored in greater detail later in this article, but first, we will delve deeper to gain more insight into the factors that may contribute to the attitudinal shifts that have

occurred in younger white evangelicals. We will also seek to discover more about why these shifts in racial attitudes are not accompanied by increased support for structural change.

### *CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO GENERATIONAL SHIFTS*

Why do younger white evangelicals value diversity more than older evangelicals do? Why do more younger white evangelicals have a greater sense of solidarity with members of different racial groups? Can these findings be explained simply by recent cultural shifts in attitudes toward diversity, or are there key demographic differences or differences in political commitments that might explain these disparities? Do younger evangelicals have more contact with minorities, or have they adopted different approaches to dealing with American pluralism? Furthermore, what accounts for younger evangelicals' lack of commitment to structural approaches to dealing with racial problems? Is there some aspect of their religious or political outlook that differentiates them from others in their age cohort?

To get a clearer understanding of these questions, I have chosen a number of independent variables from the AMP survey to construct models that will help to explain key differences between the comparison groups on these issues.<sup>3</sup> These variables are listed in Table 5. The first five independent variables represent basic demographic features: gender, marital status, having children, education, and income. The next variable in the list is a regional variable. Because evangelicals have such a strong presence in the South, this variable will be used to determine whether racial attitudes in that area of the country could account for differences between groups in the analysis.<sup>4</sup>

The next two variables are included to account for potential religious differences between groups. Church attendance serves as a rough measure of commitment to the church and of exposure to its influence. Biblical literalism indicates commitment to a key aspect of evangelical orthodoxy. These demographic and religious variables have been connected to variations in people's racial attitudes (Edgell and Tranby 2007).

Next, to account for the potential impact of political viewpoints, a Republican variable has been added to the models. This is an important variable because of evangelicals' strong connections to the Republican Party and the findings that political conservatism is a significant predictor of affirmations for individualist explanations and denial of structural explanations for racial inequality (Hinojosa

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<sup>3</sup> Missing data on some of the independent variables was imputed by using hotdeck or regression-based imputation, depending on the variable type.

<sup>4</sup> Urban and rural measures were also used in initial analysis for this project, but they yielded no significant results.

and Park 2004). Including the Republican variable in the model will help to differentiate between evangelicals' religious and political beliefs.

**Table 5: Bivariate Descriptives for Independent Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Younger Cohort (Mean or Percent)</b>	<b>Evangelical (Mean or Percent)</b>	<b>Evangelical Younger Cohort (Mean or Percent)</b>	<b>Entire Sample (Mean or Percent)*</b>
Female	50.19%	52.22%	56.80%	52.46%
Married	50.75%	60.07%	59.20%	53.52%
Children (children under 18 in the household)	52.80%	77.13%	64.80%	70.00%
Education (1 = some high school or less; 6 = postgraduate)	3.97 (0.063)	3.60 (0.090)	3.66 (0.126)	3.94 (0.044)
Income (1 = less than \$10,000; 8 = over \$100,000)	5.55 (0.077)	5.07 (0.101)	5.12 (0.154)	5.40 (0.053)
South	33.02%	49.49%	44.00%	37.21%
Church attendance (1 = never; 7 = more than once/week)	2.58 (0.092)	3.96 (0.111)	3.81 (0.174)	2.87 (0.062)
Biblical literalism (The Bible is the literal word of God.)	27.80%	60.75%	61.60%	28.44%
Republican	41.60%	59.04%	57.60%	40.49%
Follow rules—It's fine for Americans to have different lifestyles and values so long as they follow the same rules. (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree)	3.28 (0.037)	3.16 (0.056)	3.30 (0.069)	3.23 (0.026)
Diverse friendships—There is a lot of social and cultural diversity among my friends. (1 = strongly agree; 4 = strongly disagree)	2.87 (0.043)	2.75 (0.062)	2.82 (0.093)	2.86 (0.028)

\*All respondents included in the sample are white. Standard error in parentheses.

The last two variables have been included because they relate directly to issues of orientation toward pluralism and diversity. The follow rules variable is derived from a question that asks whether it is fine for Americans to have different lifestyles and values as long as they follow the same rules. This variable is used to measure respondents' approaches to dealing with the pluralistic situation in the United States today. It serves to differentiate between two different perspectives on social cohesion: a group that insists that shared values are essential for maintaining social cohesion and another group that sees this vision as impractical or undesirable, emphasizing instead simple adherence to a common set of rules and norms. This distinction between what Rhys Williams (1999) calls covenantal and contractual visions of the good society is a key aspect of people's perspectives on multiculturalism in the United States (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005). It will also help to determine whether the increased sense of political tolerance among younger evangelicals (Hunter 1987; Penning and Smidt 2002) has any effect on their racial attitudes.

The diverse friendships variable asks whether there is a lot of social and cultural diversity among the respondent's friends. This measure of exposure to difference will be used to test contact theory's assertion that interaction with individuals from other races can change racial perspectives. Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for each of these variables.

The independent variables in Table 5 will first be used to make a general comparison between younger evangelicals and two comparison groups: older evangelicals and younger nonevangelicals. This analysis will reveal any basic demographic or attitudinal differences that exist between these groups. After this, the independent variables will be used again, this time in models that are designed to explain differences between the comparison groups in the specific measures of racial attitudes that were highlighted in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

All of the statistical models that follow have been developed by using dichotomous dependent variables. Therefore logistic regression has been used as the main tool for analysis. Because odds ratios are easier to interpret than logits, the resulting logit coefficients have been reexponentiated into odds ratios for presentation in this article. Tests have been conducted to ensure that independent variables are not highly correlated, and results for each model have been checked to ensure that outliers do not have an undue impact on coefficients. Finally, tests of model fit indicate that these models effectively predict variable outcomes. In the full logistic models listed below, 58 to 87 percent of the cases are correctly classified.

Before we begin analyzing the models related to specific racial attitudes, it is important to get a general sense of the main similarities and differences between the three comparison groups: younger evangelicals, older evangelicals, and younger nonevangelicals. Table 6 provides the comparative results. First, we see that

while younger and older white evangelicals are fairly similar in measures of education, income, politics, and religion, they are significantly different in a few areas. Younger evangelicals are more likely to be female and married and are much less likely to have children in their households. They are also more likely to take an approach to social cohesion that emphasizes shared procedural rules over shared values. One striking finding from this analysis is that younger evangelicals do not report significantly higher levels of friendship diversity than that reported by their older coreligionists.

**Table 6: Young Conservative Protestant Comparisons**

Young Evangelical Protestants Compared to:	Younger Nonevangelical Protestants		Younger Nonevangelical Protestants	
	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.
Female	2.366**	(0.911)	0.911	(0.233)
Married	1.952*	(1.333)	1.333	(0.473)
Children	0.170***	(1.688)	1.688	(0.581)
Education	1.005	(0.945)	0.945	(0.085)
Income	1.059	(0.792)	0.792**	(0.069)
South	0.694	(1.701)	1.701*	(0.452)
Church attendance	0.897	(1.308)	1.308***	(0.081)
Biblical literalism	1.375	(5.181)	5.181***	(1.430)
Republican	0.917	(1.998)	1.998*	(0.544)
Follow rules	1.428*	(1.079)	1.079	(0.163)
Diverse friendships	1.252	(1.107)	1.107	(0.139)
<i>N</i>	286		515	
$\chi^2$	43.61		136.48	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.12		0.27	
% correctly classified	63.64		75.34	

S.E. = standard error.

\* $p < .005$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

The comparison between younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals in the same age cohort reveals little that is surprising. Younger evangelicals on average have slightly lower incomes than nonevangelicals and are more likely to live in the South. They are also much more likely to attend church regularly and five times more likely than nonevangelicals to hold to a belief in biblical literalism. Another key and expected difference is evangelicals' greater likelihood of associ-

ating themselves politically with the Republican Party. Each of these distinctions will be included in the analysis of the models to determine whether they might provide insight into differences between younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals in their support for structural approaches to racial inequality. Finally, younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals are similar in two key ways: They report similar levels of racial diversity in the social circles, and they agree that shared values are not important as long as people follow the same rules.

Now that we have a general sense of the central differences between the main comparison groups, we can proceed with a more in-depth analysis of the key factors contributing to generational shifts in racial attitudes. The models presented below are extensions of the bivariate results shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Because the main focus of this article is on areas of difference with regard to racial attitudes, full models will not be developed for all the bivariate comparisons listed in the previous tables. Instead the models will focus on the key areas of difference highlighted above.

The analysis in Table 2 revealed that the only significant differences in the valuing diversity variables exist between younger and older evangelicals. Younger evangelicals and their nonevangelical age mates have very similar attitudes on each of these measures. Therefore in the next set of models, our main interest will be in comparing younger and older evangelicals. Table 7 presents models for the dependent variables "value community diversity" and "value diverse friendships" in the valuing diversity set.

The first thing to notice in the "value community diversity" model is that the significance level drops for the younger cohort variable when the controls are added. Although younger white evangelicals are predicted to be four times more open to diversity than their older coreligionists are, the high standard error for this estimate produces an insignificant result. Controls for having children and a higher income are positive predictors, while being from the South and, interestingly, having higher levels of education are negative predictors. The follow rules variable and the diverse friendships variable are two other key variables in this model. Both are positive predictors. It should be noted from separate analysis that without the follow rules variable in the model, the younger cohort variable remains significant. This suggests that it is younger evangelicals' prevailing attitudes toward social solidarity that contributes most to the finding in bivariate analyses that they value community diversity more than older evangelicals do.

In the "value diverse friendships" model, results for younger evangelicals remain significant even when the controls are added. Aside from the finding that southerners are significantly less likely to value diverse friendships than are other white evangelicals while females and those with higher incomes are more likely to value such relationships, the most salient result in this model is that people who have diverse friendships are three times more likely to value those relationships.

**Table 7: Valuing Racial Diversity—White Evangelicals**

	Value Community Diversity		Value Diverse Friendships	
	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.
Younger cohort	4.768	(4.370)	2.980**	(1.012)
Female	1.070	(0.767)	2.094*	(1.131)
Married	0.330	(0.246)	0.789	(0.691)
Children	6.394*	(5.225)	1.315	(1.111)
Education	0.634*	(0.138)	0.822	(1.041)
Income	2.543***	(0.576)	1.478**	(1.269)
South	0.249*	(0.157)	0.213***	(0.418)
Church attendance	1.145	(0.202)	0.886	(1.122)
Biblical literalism	0.339	(0.262)	0.872	(0.670)
Republican	1.444	(0.960)	0.639	(0.961)
Follow rules	2.329**	(0.698)	0.977	(1.186)
Diverse friendships	5.177***	(1.873)	3.268***	(0.573)
<i>N</i>	285		276	
$\chi^2$	62.47		74.56	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.43		0.27	
% correctly classified	87.37		73.55	

S.E. = standard error.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

The next set of models further explores generational differences in respondents' sense of solidarity with people who are racially different from themselves. The main focus of these models will again be on the significant discrepancies between older and younger white evangelicals in Table 3. The three main models in Table 8 measure respondents' sense that African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans share their own vision for American society. Across the board in the bivariate models of Table 3, we saw that younger white evangelicals are significantly more likely to agree with these statements than older evangelicals are. However, this relationship becomes insignificant when the control variables are added to the black and Asian vision models in Table 8. In the "share black vision" model, adding either the follow rules variable or the diverse friendship variable significantly diminishes the correlation for the younger cohort variable. Further analysis of the "share Asian vision" model indicates that education and the follow rules variable are positively correlated with a shared sense of vision between whites and Asian-Americans. The South variable is negatively correlated. Any of these variables on its own absorbs the significance level associated with



being in the younger cohort. While other controls are clearly important, this analysis highlights the key significance of the follow rules variable in these racial solidarity models.

**Table 8: Racial Solidarity—White Evangelicals**

	Share Black Vision		Share Hispanic Vision		Share Asian Vision	
	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.
Younger cohort	1.226	(0.339)	2.081**	(0.572)	1.410	(0.426)
Female	1.624	(0.459)	0.715	(0.198)	0.955	(0.295)
Married	0.989	(0.307)	1.067	(0.328)	1.159	(0.382)
Children	0.585	(0.202)	1.457	(0.520)	0.719	(0.257)
Education	1.079	(0.105)	1.039	(0.104)	1.599***	(0.177)
Income	1.077	(0.097)	1.139	(0.105)	1.155	(0.113)
South	0.731	(0.192)	0.666	(0.174)	0.291***	(0.083)
Church attendance	1.036	(0.078)	1.064	(0.085)	0.876	(0.074)
Biblical literalism	1.585	(0.477)	0.659	(0.198)	1.086	(0.349)
Republican	0.721	(0.192)	1.019	(0.280)	0.971	(0.294)
Follow rules	1.458*	(0.217)	1.672**	(0.254)	1.919***	(0.336)
Diverse friendships	1.485**	(0.199)	1.266	(0.169)	1.346*	(0.200)
<i>N</i>	286		287		282	
$\chi^2$	32.65		38.92		72.58	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.08		0.10		0.21	
% correctly classified	58.39		64.11		68.44	

S.E. = standard error.

\**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01; \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

We now turn to the last set of models, which examine the ways in which younger white evangelicals have attitudes that are similar to those of older evangelicals and different from those of nonevangelicals in their perspectives on racial inequality. Here, the key independent variable is the evangelical variable, since we are comparing younger white evangelicals to nonevangelical agemates.

**Table 9: Racial Inequality—Younger Whites**

	Black Affirmative Action		Black Government Assistance		Black Effort	
	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.	Odds Ratio	S.E.
Evangelicals	0.821	(0.267)	0.645	(0.256)	0.841	(0.216)
Female	1.561*	(0.349)	0.968	(0.250)	0.934	(0.196)
Married	1.261	(0.363)	0.929	(0.320)	0.837	(0.224)
Children	0.626	(0.175)	0.591	(0.199)	1.501	(0.382)
Education	1.285**	(0.110)	1.133	(0.109)	0.822*	(0.063)
Income	1.040	(0.079)	0.943	(0.081)	1.093	(0.072)
South	0.604*	(0.150)	0.391**	(0.122)	1.214	(0.261)
Church attendance	0.947	(0.055)	0.936	(0.065)	1.017	(0.054)
Biblical literalism	1.468	(0.454)	1.205	(0.432)	1.285	(0.344)
Republican	0.337***	(0.087)	0.369**	(0.113)	1.560*	(0.335)
Follow rules	1.208	(0.151)	0.986	(0.135)	1.606**	(0.219)
Diverse friendships	1.173	(0.132)	1.266	(0.173)	1.147	(0.121)
<i>N</i>	524		521		521	
$\chi^2$	48.88		54.14		36.29	
Pseudo- <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.10		0.10		0.06	
% correctly classified	65.65		63.34		61.04	

S.E. = standard error.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

The first two models in Table 9 address race-related public policies aimed at creating structural change. In the “black affirmative action” and “black government assistance” models, the bivariate analysis in Table 4 indicated that younger white evangelicals are significantly less likely to support these types of initiatives than are white nonevangelicals in the same age cohort. However, these negative associations become insignificant when other controls are added. In both models, being from the South and being a member of the Republican Party have significant negative correlations with these types of initiatives. Either one of these

variables absorbs the significance of the evangelical variable on its own.<sup>5</sup> The last model in this set further explores the surprising finding that younger evangelicals and nonevangelicals do not differ significantly in their perceptions about effort as a potential cause of African-American inequality. The full model shows that Republicans are more likely to support this notion, while those with more education are less likely to endorse it. Once again, the follow rules variable is a key predictor, which, interestingly, has a positive correlation.

### *CONCLUSION*

Taken as a whole, the analysis of these models reveals several important points about evangelicals' racial attitudes. First, there are indeed significant generational differences in perspectives on race issues in the United States. Even when we control for a host of other factors, younger evangelicals are significantly more likely than their older religious counterparts to value having diverse friends. They are also more likely to feel a sense of solidarity with Hispanics in the United States. These findings suggest that younger evangelicals are much more open to difference and that they feel able to reach across racial lines to find commonalities.

Furthermore, as Table 6 indicates, younger evangelicals are much more likely to feel that shared values and lifestyles are not important as long as people follow the same rules. This contractual response to American pluralism is a shift from the covenantal approach of the older generation of evangelicals. Whereas older evangelicals are more likely to hold to a kind of mechanical solidarity based on shared substantive values, symbols, and identities, younger evangelicals tend to accept a more individualistic, organic solidarity based more on shared and uniformly applied rules and procedures (Durkheim 1984 [1893]; Williams 1999). This shift in viewpoints is noteworthy because it is an important predictor for having a sense of solidarity with racial minorities, for valuing diversity in one's community, and even for respondent's judgments about the role that individual effort plays in racial inequality. However, it does not have any significant effect on views regarding structural interventions.

In other areas, white evangelicals' attitudes and perspectives have not changed at all across generational lines. This is particularly clear in their attitudes toward racial inequality. The two generations have similar opinions about the role that hard work and individual effort play in racial inequality. Furthermore, both younger and older evangelicals seem to oppose structural remedies, such as affirmative action measures and direct government assistance to African-Americans.

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<sup>5</sup> Interaction terms (evangelical  $\times$  Republican and evangelical  $\times$  South) were tested on each racial inequality model. These variables were never significant and had little significant effect on the rest of the models.

Although initiatives like these are generally unpopular in American society, younger evangelicals are significantly less likely than younger nonevangelicals to support such policies. Findings in this study show that these differences are closely connected to evangelicals' regional concentration in the South and their strong associations with the Republican Party.

Overall, the findings paint a picture of a group of younger evangelicals who are much more open to diversity and who find more in common with members of other races than has been true of older evangelicals. On the other hand, little has changed with regard to evangelicalism's traditional opposition to structural solutions for racial issues. This fits well with the evangelicals' cultural tool kit described earlier. Because evangelicals tend to emphasize individualism and relationships, changes in race relations across generational cohorts is a real possibility. Successive generations of evangelicals are likely to deal with racial issues by concentrating on their own racial attitudes and by improving their relationships with members of other minorities. However, because evangelicals generally do not perceive structural inequality to be an issue and because their tool kit does not allow for structural thinking, generational shifts in attitudes toward broader social interventions are much less probable.

### *DISCUSSION*

Although this study's findings about younger evangelicals' greater propensity to change their relational attitudes rather than their structural attitudes toward race are simply an extension of what we already know, some of the results were unexpected and warrant further consideration. First and most important, the finding that younger evangelicals are more likely to emphasize the need for a shared set of social norms as opposed to a shared set of values needs more attention. It is generally assumed that the shared value (or covenantal) approach to social solidarity is most compatible with evangelical Christianity because this perspective is often rooted in the notion that society is a moral community that is obligated to live out godly values (Williams 1999). Furthermore, the strength of evangelicalism is often attributed to its firmly held distinct moral collective identity (Smith 1998). The contractual (shared norms) approach, by contrast, is rooted in Enlightenment liberalism and serves as a foundation for many contemporary approaches to pluralistic engagement (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005; Williams 1999). While contractualism fits well with evangelical individualism, it seems incompatible with evangelicalism's emphasis on God's transcendent moral authority. Such a shift in moral vision could have major implications for evangelical theology, social identity, and social engagement.

These implications are borne out in some of this study's results, which show that a contractual vision is associated with placing increased value on community

diversity and a greater sense of social solidarity with members of different races. But what do these findings mean? Are younger evangelicals really more connected to racial minorities and others who are different from themselves, or do younger evangelicals just have a new perspective on what it means to be connected? Perhaps having the same vision for American society does not mean that others share most of one's own social values. Instead, it could mean that members of other races share one's vision for a society that allows individuals to pursue their own values within a prescribed set of procedural norms. This distinction might help to make sense of some of the discrepancies that were raised earlier in this article. For instance, the finding that younger evangelicals are not different from younger nonevangelicals in their sense of racial solidarity seems to contradict Wuthnow's (2007) claim that younger evangelicals are much less open than other Americans to having a stronger Asian and Hispanic presence in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Could it be that younger evangelicals have a shared abstract vision with people who are different while remaining less willing to share the values of these others more concretely? This contractual shift would also explain Penning and Smidt's (2002) conclusion that while younger evangelicals have maintained their traditional moral commitments, they are at the same time more tolerant of other perspectives.

Next, the findings from the "black effort" models in Tables 4 and 9 raise questions about commonly held assumptions that evangelicals are more prone to attribute racial inequality to person-centered explanations, such as a lack of motivation and effort on the part of African-Americans. While research by Emerson, Smith and Sikkink (1999), Hunt (2007), and Eitle and Steffens (2009) affirm that evangelicals are more likely to uphold explanations of lack of effort or motivation, this study finds no significant difference between younger white evangelicals and other younger whites on a similar variable. There are several potential explanations for this discrepancy. First, because this study's comparisons are between younger white evangelicals and their nonevangelical agemates, it is conceivable that younger generations of whites are more in agreement on this issue than previous generations were.<sup>7</sup> A second reason for the discrepancy could lie in the wording of the survey questions. Whereas the question in this study focused on "lack of effort and hard work," the other studies were concerned about "lack of motivation and will power." Perhaps evangelicals believe that African-Americans are working hard but that their lack of motivation is holding them back. Next, Eitle and Steffens' study, which draws from a different dataset than the General Social Survey used by Hunt and by Emerson and his coauthors, finds

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that while evangelicals are less welcoming than members of other religious and nonreligious groups are, more than 75 percent of evangelicals would still be open to a stronger Asian and Hispanic presence in the United States (Wuthnow 2007).

<sup>7</sup> A cursory analysis using the AMP data does not support this possibility.

that evangelicals actually differ little from mainline Protestants, suggesting that person-centered explanations are more of a Protestant phenomenon than a specific evangelical one. Finally, none of the studies mentioned included controls for political affiliation. Because a majority of evangelicals align themselves with political conservatism, this is an important factor to consider if we want to know more about the impact of evangelicalism in relation to conservative political ideology. Although the preponderance of evidence seems to indicate that evangelicals do favor person-centered explanations for inequality, the questions raised above suggest that more work needs to be done to refine our understanding of this issue.

Finally, it is clear from this study that there are generational differences in racial attitudes. However, because of sample size limitations, the analysis here divided respondents rather crudely into two generational cohorts. This is problematic because we know that finer generational distinctions exist. The Millennial, Generation X, Baby Boom, Swing and World War II generations all present unique cultural distinctions that could affect racial attitudes. In addition, it is difficult to justify the bright line dividing the two cohorts in this study. Can we really claim that the 45- and 46-year-olds who were split in this study's analysis are that different? Given these issues, it would be helpful for future generational studies on this issue to take a more nuanced approach to age divisions.

Throughout its history, evangelicalism has maintained a core set of theological and social distinctions, yet each succeeding generation has put its stamp on the movement. In the realm of race relations, it seems that younger cohorts of evangelicals are steering their religious tradition in a direction that is more tolerant and open to diversity. Although these changes give reason to hope for improved racial relationships, evangelicals' continued lack of support for structural changes suggests that, on the whole, their religious tradition is not likely to make major contributions toward reducing racial inequality in the generations to come.

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