Measuring Racial Prejudice: Black Anti-Semitism in *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*

This paper offers an alternative interpretation of Sniderman's and Piazza's data on black anti-Semitism (*Black Pride and Black Prejudice*, 2002). This alternative interpretation has two sources: one, the theoretical schema of racial ordering Kim offers in *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (2000), and, two, the political tolerance measures developed by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979). Rather than construing black stereotyping of Jews as anti-Semitic, as Sniderman and Piazza do, this paper will argue that, when we read the "anti-Semitic" data in conjunction with the "College Editor experiment," black stereotyping in fact indicates a high level of black political tolerance. I argue it is important to distinguish between racial stereotyping, racial prejudice, and political tolerance. Kim's theoretical schema helps us understand why these analytical wedges are necessary, and, I claim, should force us to reconsider how and why we measure racial prejudice.

This paper begins by reviewing Chapter 3 of *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*. I then summarize Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus's article on measuring political tolerance, and show how their measurement theory can help us understand Sniderman's and Piazza's data in Chapter 3. Finally, I explain Kim's theoretical schema, before concluding with my argument on measuring racial prejudice.

In *Black Pride and Black Prejudice*, Sniderman and Piazza ask if in-group identity (the "black pride" of his title) contributes to out-group animosity (black prejudice). At the end of Chapter 3, his position is ambiguous. Writes Sniderman and Piazze, "There are many currents of thought in the contemporary black community.

Some flow in a common direction. Some run in different, even conflicting, directions" (108). Chapter 3 reviews several studies Sniderman and Piazza undertook to examine black prejudice; here, I focus on two studies.

The first study I will discuss (the second study in the chapter) compares black anti-Semitism to white anti-Semitism. The data, as Sniderman and Piazza argue, indicates blacks "are markedly more anti-Semitic than whites" (108). The study was conducted by asking respondents, over the phone, to say whether "they agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with" each of the 5 questions, questions Sniderman and Piazza culled from other studies of anti-Semitism:

"Most Jews are ambitious and work hard to succeed.

Most Jews are more willing than other people to use shady practices to get ahead in life.

Most Jews believe that they are better than other people.

Most Jews are inclined to be more loyal to Israel than to America.

Most Jews don't care what happens to people who aren't Jewish."

Sniderman and Piazza, p70.

As should be clear, and as Sniderman and Piazza acknowledge (p69), these statements are indicators of racial stereotyping. Whether or not stereotyping is the equivalent of racial prejudice depends on one's conceptualization of prejudice – if we understand racial prejudice to simply be the act of pre-judging others according to their race, than stereotyping would seem to be a component of racial prejudice. However, if we understand racial prejudice to be more than judging, including judging and acting on those judgments, Sniderman's and Piazza's measurement schema would fall short.

The second study of Sniderman and Piazza relevant to this paper regards the firing of a college newspaper editor. Half of the (all black) sample were told the college newspaper editor is Jewish, and criticized black students, while the other half of the sample were told that the editor was black, and criticized Jewish students. Respondents were asked whether they strongly favored, somewhat favored, opposed somewhat, or opposed strongly the firing of the editor (pp. 90-93). While there is a 4 point difference between the two groups of respondents, with 41% saying the Jewish editor should be fired, and 37% saying the black editor should be fired, the difference, as Sniderman and Piazza note is "so slight a one as to fail to be statistically, let alone substantively, significant" (p93). While Sniderman and Piazza seem to reverse this claim of substantive *in*significance in the next paragraph ("Yet is also clear from the figure that blacks more strongly favor firing the Jewish editor and more strongly oppose firing the black editor"), it appears the evidence – the measly 4 point difference – supports Sniderman and Piazza's initial conclusion: there is little difference between the black sample's reaction to the firing of a Jewish editor versus a black editor (p93).

Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus's article on measuring political tolerance suggests how we might gather these two studies, which contradict each other from Sniderman and Piazza's perspective, into one coherent, theoretical framework. Sullivan et al. begin their article by offering what was, at the time, a new conception of political tolerance. "Tolearnce implies a willingness to 'put up with' those things that one rejects," they write (p784). Therefore, they note, "tolerance presumes opposition or disagreement. If there is no reason to oppose, then there is no occasion for one to be tolerant or intolerant" (p784). So, they claim, "tolerance is conceptually 'content-free' in that the content of the ideas

that one opposes are irrelevant to the principle itself" (p784). To study political tolerance, then, Sullivan et al. develop a two-step measurement schema. First, they ask respondents to indicate their feelings toward a large number of groups. Then, looking at what groups the respondent found most distasteful, Sullivan and his colleagues asked the respondent whether or not members of that group should be politically tolerated. For example, the respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statements:

"Members of the _____ should be banned from being president of the United States.

Members of the _____ should be allowed to teach in the public schools.

Members of the _____ should be outlawed.

Members of the _____ should be allowed to make a speech in this city.

The _____ should have their phones tapped by our government.

The _____ should be allowed to hold public rallies in our city."

Sullivan et al, p785.

I suggest we look at the two studies of Sniderman and Piazza (the Jewish stereotyping study and the College Editor experiment) as comparable to the two-step study of tolerance conducted by Sullivan et al. If we take the above stereotyping to indicate distance from (if not moderated hostility towards) Jews, than we could take Sniderman's and Piazza's stereotyping study as indication of (possibly mild) black opposition to Jews. But if this opposition to Jews is limited to stereotyping and does not, as the College experiment suggest, translate into inequitable treatment, might not Sniderman and Piazza's work be evidence of a high level of tolerance for Jews? And if

blacks have a high level of tolerance for Jews, does it make sense, intuitively, for us to claim that blacks are anti-Semitic, racially prejudiced against Jews? This question is not merely rhetorical; it seems to me, to depend upon how we define racial prejudice – whether, to repeat myself, we understand prejudice to incorporate only pre-judgment, or whether prejudice, to be prejudice, must involve acting on those pre-judgments.

I suggest the theoretical framework Kim lays out in *Bitter Fruits* gives us reason to think racial prejudice might not be the most useful concept for understanding racial animus. Kim "start[s] with the assumption that racial categories and meanings are continuously being reproduced and challenged with profound social-structural implications" (8). Race, for Kim, is a social construction that varies across time and place. Beyond this "central" concept of race as a social construction, Kim emphasizes two adjunct concepts: "racial power" and "racial ordering." "We might thing of racial power as the systemic tendency of the racial status quo to reproduce itself," writes Kim (9). Here, Kim follows Foucault, arguing that the expansion and solidification of power can be both intentional and non-intentional. She "conceive[s] of racial power not as something that an individual or group exercises directly and intentionally over another individual or group but rather as a systemic property, permeating, circulating throughout, and continuously constituting society" (9). Writes Kim, "… Whites, too, are constituted *qua* Whites by the operation of racial power" (9). Racial power reproduces itself in a distinct "racial order" (10). In America, Kim writes, the racial order is "a field structured by at least two axes: that of superior/ inferior and that of insider/ foreigner. Blacks and Whites constitute the major anchors (bottom and top, respectively) of this order, and incoming immigrants and other groups get positioned relative to these two loci" (10).

This field "is a discursively constructed, shared cognitive map that serves as a normative blueprint for who should get what in American society" (10).

According to Kim's theoretical framework, then, the racial stereotyping Sniderman and Piazza detect in their "anti-Semite" study is not an anomaly; rather, racial stereotyping can be understood as one of the processes that constructs race. If race is a "cognitive map" (which is not to deny that it has its material components, e.g., the capital Korean immigrants bring with them to the U.S., or the highly segregated neighborhoods of New York City), cognitive constructs can be understood as equivalent to stereotypes. And if we are embedded in a racial order, as Kim argues, such "stereotypes" are unavoidable: they are among the cognitive tools we use to classify and comprehend our world, and our place within it.

If, then, "stereotypes" are omnipresent, what are we measuring when we measure racial stereotyping? We might be measuring racial prejudice, in the thin sense of pre-judgment, but, then – according to this extension of Kim's argument – we are really only measuring the existence of a "race" itself. So, I suggest, a more useful conceptualization of racial prejudice would examine whether or not racial animus is translated into actions against an individual or a group because of their race. We might understand and measure this alternative conceptualization as Sullivan and his colleagues' notion of "tolerance." And if we are to use this alternative conceptualization, Sniderman and Piazza's work shows blacks, as I argued above, to be highly tolerant towards Jews.

An argument against this alternative conceptualization might proceed as follows: one could claim, is not there something to be learned about how one group feels about another? Is it not relevant that blacks do not only see Jews *qua* Jews, but that blacks –

and blacks more so than whites, according to Sniderman and Piazza's data – see Jews as "shady," disloyal Americans, elitists, and unconcerned with non-Jews? There are two general responses to these objections. First, and most simply: yes, it is important to understand how one group might feel about another, but if such information is the goal of a study, pre-written statements and a Likert scale do not seem to be the most suitable research tool. Secondly, Kim's theoretical framework would indicate that racial construction is often negatively constructed. If, as she argues, race is always constructed along ordered dimensions – where "order" is hierarchal – race is always going to contain negative pre-judgments; otherwise, there would be no "order" in the racial order. Finally, as far as the discrepancy between white and black racial attitudes in Sniderman's and Piazza's study, there are two explanations that would work within Kim's theoretical framework. One explanation is simply sloppy social science. Sniderman and Piazza fail to control for religiosity in their analysis, and most blacks are Protestant, and next to none are Jewish. Another explanation parallels the central argument of Kim's book: because of the often mutually constitutive character of race, different races have different racial attitudes. And, furthermore, subjugated groups are often pitted against each other in order to shore up the dominant power structure, which, according to Kim's Foucualtian logic, always has a tendency to reproduce itself.

To conclude: racial stereotyping, racial prejudice, and racial tolerance are all valuable objects of social science research. However, it is important that we recognize that these concepts are distinct. Before applying one or more of these concepts, we must first consider what questions we are asking, and to what purpose. If we agree with Kim's theory of racial construction, measuring racial stereotyping does not help us answer

questions of "on-the-ground racism": in other words, stereotyping is not in itself an indicator of whether one would discriminate for or against a member of a racial group because they are a member of that racial group. Stereotyping, in Kim's schema, is merely an indicator of the existence of "race" (which is always a social construction). Furthermore, racial prejudice has shown itself to be a slippery concept. On the one hand, we might understand prejudice to be the equivalence of stereotyping, in which case we should be as wary of our application of "prejudice" as we are of "stereotyping." On the other hand, if we understand racial prejudice to be something more robust – where prejudice incorporates actions against members of other groups based upon their race – then we should consider whether or not what we are really discussing is tolerance. And, if it is indeed tolerance, we need consider, as Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus demonstrate, a two-step measurement schema.

Works Cited:

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