Equal Opportunity Beliefs beyond Black and White American Christianity

Jerry Z. Park [1,*], **Joyce C. Chang** [1] and **James C. Davidson** [2]

[1] Department of Sociology, Baylor University, Waco, TX 76798, USA; joyce_chang1@baylor.edu
[2] Department of Sociology, California State University, Northridge, CA 91330, USA; james.davidson@csun.edu
[*] Correspondence: jerry_park@baylor.edu

Abstract: Scholars in critical race and the sociology of religion have independently drawn attention to the ways in which cultural ideologies drive beliefs about inequalities between groups. Critical race work on "abstract liberalism" highlights non-racially inflected language that tacitly reinforces White socioeconomic outcomes resulting from an allegedly fair social system. Sociologists of religion have noted that White Evangelical Christian theology promotes an individualist mindset that places blame for racial inequalities on the perceived failings of Blacks. Using data from the National Asian American Survey 2016, we return to this question and ask whether beliefs about the importance of equal opportunity reveal similarities or differences between religious Asian American and Latino Christians and Black and White Christians. The results confirm that White Christians are generally the least supportive of American society providing equal opportunity for all. At the other end, Black Christians were the most supportive. However, with the inclusion of Asian American Christian groups, we note that second generation Asian American and Latino Evangelicals hew closer to the White Christian mean, while most other Asian and Latino Christian groups adhere more closely to the Black Christian mean. This study provides further support for the recent claims of religion's complex relationship with other stratifying identities. It suggests that cultural assimilation among second generation non-Black Evangelical Christians heads more toward the colorblind racist attitudes of many White Christians, whereas potential for new coalitions of Latino and Black Christians could emerge, given their shared perceptions of the persistent inequality in their communities.

Keywords: complex religion; racial hierarchy; second-generation; social attitudes

1. Introduction

Inasmuch as the racial disparities in employment, wealth and housing continue and are worsened by some measures, attitudes about equal opportunity undergird much of the resistance toward policies aimed at ameliorating these inequalities. Pertinent to the collection of studies in this volume is the evident role that cultural scripts play through religious affiliations, as they relate to racial disparities and the very ideals intended to project an exceptionalist or colorblind view of American society. As Wilde and her colleagues have shown and argued, research findings on religious differences always intersect with social characteristics in which our society is typically stratified, namely race, class, and gender (Wilde 2018; Wilde and Glassman 2016). In many cases, it is the responses of White Americans that drive the narratives of "religious effects". Wilde termed this intersectional framing of religion "complex religion", and our study provides another example of how our current understanding of religious cultural scripts renders the views of non-White religious individuals and groups inconsequential or invisible. In the following, we consider the associations of religious affiliations and racial identities with attitudes about equal opportunity. We apply the racial hierarchy framework to the research on religious affiliation's relationship to inequality attitudes using a unique sample of Americans that allow

us to examine White, Black, Asian, and Latino Christian responses on the same measures. Our findings generally support the "racial trichotomy" as it applies to equal opportunity beliefs, but we show that such hierarchies are complicated by generational and religious traditions differences among American Christians. We conclude that complex religion offers a lens that incorporates both colorblind racism and assimilationist framings that themselves primarily focus only on race, religion, or immigrant status. Future research considerations in light of this integrated framing follow.

1.1. Revising the Racial Order

According to a recent survey, more than half of White Americans admit that racism remains an important problem in society (Horowitz et al. 2019). For many Americans, racism is the result of individual acts and practices, but critical race scholars clarify that it is, in fact, more than prejudiced behavior. Racism operates in and through racial structures, or "a network of social relations at social, political, economic and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of various races" (Bonilla-Silva 2015). These structures produce and reproduce a racial hierarchy that benefits the dominant racial group while also placing other minority racial groups at a disadvantage. In America, this reproduction of racial inequality results in a racial hierarchy defined and maintained by White Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Given such power, White Americans create and promote their own culture and interests as the norm to which non-Whites and other subordinate groups must conform or assimilate (Doane 1997). Historically, we see evidence of how some ethnic groups designated as not White were absorbed into the White racial category (Brodkin 1998; Ignatiev 1995). This suggests that whiteness is malleable—capable of extending membership to certain individuals who do not threaten the cultures and structures held in place by White Americans (e.g., European Protestants) (Doane 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 2012).

However, considering the current influx of immigrants primarily from Latin and Asian countries, the Black and White binary is a problematic paradigm insofar as it either fails to account for racialized groups that fit neither category or demands their assimilation to one or the other of the two categories (Alcoff 2003; Perea 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). The Black and White binary essentially forces non-Black minorities to compare their treatment with those of African Americans (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Perea 1997). "Race," in the Black–White paradigm, always refers to the Black community. Consequently, the history, struggles, and complexities of Latino and Asian Americans are marginalized, if not invisible in that racial discourse (Alcoff 2003; Perea 1997). To accommodate these challenges, new scholarship conceptualizes a new racial classification system for American society: a tri-racial system with "Whites" at the top and "collective Blacks" at the bottom (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Examples of those included in the "Whites" category are those who already classify as White, most (White-looking) multiracials, assimilated/urban Native Americans and assimilated White Latinos (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Collective Blacks include Blacks, most Southeast Asians, dark-skinned Latinos and reservation-bound Native Americans (Bonilla-Silva 2004). The remaining racial group—"honorary Whites"—forms the intermediate category and is comprised of different Asian ethnic groups (e.g., Chinese Americans, most multiracials, Middle Eastern Americans) and light-skinned Latinos (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Lee and Bean 2012). Adding Latino and Asian Americans into the racial hierarchy draws much-needed attention to the treatment of these racial minorities in America. It accounts for the various ways in which Asian, Latinx, and Native American groups and individuals are affected in similar and dissimilar ways via discrimination at the individual and structural levels (e.g., Rosenbloom and Way 2004; Wright et al. 2015). As an important clarification, Bonilla-Silva carefully delineated stratification within these racial categories that complicates the way we interpret race and racial ordering; as noted earlier, not all Latinos fit into one of the three main categories of the non-White parts of the hierarchy, and not all Asian American groups fit into one either. For groups in the honorary White and collective Black positions, some experience what Liu (2017) described as "proxy privilege" or limited advantages that aid individual White women and persons of color rather than the group as a whole. This revised racial order incorporates insights from segmented assimilation theory, which posits that many contemporary immigrants and their children experience a bifurcated experience in the

US. Among the newcomers, some are almost immediately cast into the middle class and its attendant upward mobility opportunities, while others arrive in the working class with limited opportunities for mobility (Zhou 1997). This aligns with the collective Black and honorary White categories in Bonilla-Silva's framing. Evidently, Latino and Asian Americans navigate a unique racialized reality as racial groups who experience both privileges (relative to Blacks) and discrimination (Kim 1999; Lee and Tran 2019; Lee and Bean 2012). More pointedly, as different Asian and Latino groups assimilate structurally into different sectors of the American economy, the cultural component of assimilation also takes root (Gordon 1964). This can and often does include assimilation into the dominant racial ideology, colorblind racism.

1.2. Colorblind Racism and the Narrative of Equal Opportunity

Ideology is an important factor within the revised racial order. Sociologists contend that cultural ideologies play an important role in the allocation of resources (Sewell 1992). In the post-Civil Rights Era, direct racial prejudice has largely (although not entirely) fallen by the wayside in favor of what many scholars, such as sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, are calling colorblind racism, which he defined as a new racial ideology which "explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" (Bonilla-Silva 2010, p. 2). The main framework for colorblind racism is abstract liberalism, which employs laissez faire views towards racial issues, while also describing them in an abstract manner (Bonilla-Silva 2015). In other words, while many White Americans avoid overt racist language, they defend their racism by appealing to abstract ideals such as individualism that tacitly asserts that racial differences in social and economic outcomes are a result of personal abilities or failings rather than systemic efforts to disenfranchise entire groups of individuals. This frame of colorblind racism is so embedded in racial ideologies and current structures that minorities also fail to recognize its hidden power (Hunt 1996; Manning et al. 2015; Bobo 2011).

One particular principle within abstract liberalism is the belief in equal opportunity. The narrative of equal opportunity is familiar to most Americans; it imagines an ideal society in which its members are given opportunities for upward mobility, regardless of group affiliations or characteristics (e.g., gender, race, religion etc.). These opportunities therefore are equally available to all individuals without discriminating against class, gender, race and religion. When opportunities are equally available, outcomes can be unequal, since every individual applies her effort in unequal ways. The impact of ethnic, racial or religious systemic bias is minimal based on this view of equal opportunity. As long as society makes opportunity available equitably, alleged "structural differences" must be the result of some other factor in the personal life and decisions of the individual.

Because White Americans believe in abstract liberalism, they project the same expectations on racial minorities. Consequently, many White Americans oppose programs implemented to help racial minorities because they fundamentally believe that equal opportunity is available for all Americans. They further maintain that they have no hidden advantages and that current policies in fact penalize them, as seen in the accusations of 'reverse discrimination' (Bonilla-Silva 2015; Delgado and Stefancic 2012). This belief does not account for structural inequities "baked in" which may result in significant inequalities in the labor market, wealth accrual, and educational attainment. White Americans adhere to this belief that equal opportunity is a reality far more than non-Whites, and their conviction exemplifies their privileged status.

Black Americans, by contrast, are strong advocates for structural change intended to rectify current and past inequities by improving opportunities for all African Americans (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Hunt 1996; Hunt 2007). The visible disparities in equal opportunity between Whites and Blacks leads to greater health inequalities for African Americans (Noonan et al. 2016), large wage gaps and high unemployment rates among Blacks relative to Whites, even when accounting for mass incarceration rates (Western and Pettit 2005). Thus, supporting structural remodeling is inherently necessary for the welfare of the Black community (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Western and Pettit 2005; Golland 2011; Hunt 2007).

Latino and Asian Americans have a unique position in the racial hierarchy, significantly distinguishable from both Black and White Americans (Yancey 2004; Hunt 1996; Hunt 2007). They support both abstract liberalism's individualism as well as sociologically informed structural explanations for racial inequality (Yancey 2004; Hunt 2007). In these studies, scholars did not differentiate skin tone for Latinos and ethnicity for Asian Americans, as Bonilla-Silva has explicated. However, what this research suggests is that without disaggregation of these racial categories, it appears that, over time, Asian and Latino Americans' attitudes hew closer to White Americans' preference for individualist explanations of racial inequality (Yancey 2004; Hunt 2007). With regard to Asians Americans, such ideological adherence to abstract liberalism coincides with their pre-migration educational advantages, socioeconomic mobility, residential integration and racial intermarriage (largely with Whites) (Yancey 2004; Lee and Bean 2012).

From this review, we posit that an examination of abstract liberalist ideology, particularly equal opportunity attitudes, will mirror racial inequality attitude patterns. Namely, we expect that White Americans would be least supportive of the need for greater equal opportunity for all, while Black Americans will be most supportive, and Asian and Latino Americans falling in between.

1.3. Colorblind Racism and American Evangelical Cultural Scripts

Commitment to the abstract liberal ideal of equal opportunity is strongly endorsed by most White Americans, but White Evangelical Christians have received special attention because of their overtly stated convictions. For White Christians, particularly evangelicals, religion, and specifically the cultural tools (Swidler 1986) derived from their combined religious beliefs and social position, plays a significant role in shaping their racial attitudes (Emerson et al. 1999; Edgell and Tranby 2007). As framed by the theory of colorblind racism, White evangelicals also employ abstract liberalism by blaming the problems of racial inequality on African Americans both as individuals and their culture. Emerson and Smith (2000) argued that White evangelicals see the root of the inequality not as structural failure to enforce equal opportunity but as individual inability to maximize one's efforts when opportunities present themselves. Because the problem is not located in society's structures, the solutions must also be individual and non-structural. This focus on non-structural solutions such as cross-racial friendship building, sometimes dubbed "racial reconciliation", helps us understand how White evangelicals can decry racial inequality while also proffering a solution that does nothing to change the root problem. Subsequent research has extended this argument to include all White Christians, regardless of Christian tradition (Taylor and Merino 2011; Hinojosa and Park 2004).

Less well considered are the views of African American Christians, who constitute the majority of African Americans today. How do they understand these inequities and to what extent does religion affect their views? Studies reveal that Black Christians are influenced by their religion and exhibit different perspectives on some social issues from Black non-Christians (Shelton and Emerson 2012; Taylor and Merino 2011). However, unlike their White counterparts who display some variation in perspectives toward racial inequality, Black Christians remain consistent across all denominations (Hinojosa and Park 2004). African American Christians, particularly those from historically Black churches and denominations, show that the script of individualism and the ideology of abstract liberalism do not necessarily emerge from all Christian theology and practice. In African American Christian theology, cultural scripts emphasize liberation and equality (Taylor and Merino 2011; Paris 1985). The Black Church has often been at the forefront of calls for institutional change to further guarantee equal opportunity for all (Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Edgell and Tranby 2007). While Black Christians may accede that racial inequalities may be due in part to differences in individual effort, they emphasize that the primary driver of racial inequalities is structural in nature. Thus, equal opportunity in American society must be pursued and protected.

While scholars of religion have studied extensively the racial attitudes of White and Black Christians, there is sparse literature on the views of Latino Christians, despite the fact that 83 percent of the group claim this religious affiliation, with a majority (62 percent) identifying as Catholic (Taylor

et al. 2012). Studies have suggested a possible Catholic–Protestant divide among Latino Christians; Brown (2009) found that Latino American Christians, regardless of tradition, share similar views toward racial inequality, indicating a regnant racial schema. Edgell and Tranby (2007), however, found that Latino Catholicism provides a distinct set of cultural tools favoring structural explanations and advocacy for institutional resolutions. Asian American Christians, to date, have not been considered on these matters (with the exception of Brown 2009). However, similar to other studies about general racial patterns on racial ideology, Asian American Christians also show a more middling position on racial inequality attitudes, similar to that of Latino Christians. In sum, the current research would lead us to hypothesize the following:

Hypothesize 1a (H1a). *White Christians will express the lowest support for equal opportunity for all.*

Hypothesize 1b (H1b). *Black Christians will express the highest support for equal opportunity for all.*

Hypothesize 2 (H2). *Asian American Christians will express lower support for equal opportunity for all compared to Black Christians.*

Hypothesize 3 (H3). *Latino Christians will express lower support for equal opportunity for all compared to Black Christians.*

1.4. Religio-Racial Consolidation or Generational Cleavage?

According to the racial trichotomy framework, we would expect that the ideological views of American Christians would follow the same hierarchy as the structural position of all Americans in general. However, we have reason to believe that nativity or generational status differences may play an important and complicating role in the ways that religious affiliation can affect commitment to abstract liberalism. For immigrants, much of their understanding of the racial structure in American society is filtered through their exposure to that ideology prior to arrival in the US (Kim 2008; Rodríguez 2018). However, for their children, the second-generation, whether born or raised in the US, their view is informed through a combination of factors while undergoing their primary socialization in the US. Asian and Latino immigrants may not be as attuned to their position as racial minorities compared to the second generation. For these immigrants, including Christian immigrants, we might expect a certain level of optimism and adherence to abstract liberalism. For the second generation, we might expect some conflict in their ideological formation. They may observe their immigrant forebears and peers' belief in abstract liberalism as something they too should embrace or internalize, but they may also interpret such adherence as cultural naiveté, one that does not comport with their daily observations of their social surroundings. Thus, we provisionally suggest that Asian and Latino Christians will diverge in their views about equal opportunity; immigrant Asian and Latino Christians will be nearer to the attitudes of White Christians, while second generation Christians will be nearer to the attitudes of Black Christians.

2. Data and Methods

The data used for our analysis were drawn from the 2016 National Asian American Survey (NAAS) Ramakrishnan et al. (2018). NAAS is a telephone survey (landline and cellphone combined) conducted over the course of four months after the 2016 national elections. About two thirds of the respondents were surveyed over landlines, while the remaining respondents were contacted via cell phone. The survey was also available in ten different Asian languages, in addition to English and Spanish. This was crucial for this survey because 74 percent of Asian adults speak another language at home. Thus, having translation into their native tongue as an option creates a better sample of Asian Americans and removes past biases towards English speaking, higher educated, and younger Asian American adults (Lee and Pérez 2014). Moreover, unlike past surveys, NAAS purposefully targeted previously under-sampled Asian ethnic groups by oversampling ten Asian groups. This includes about 500 Chinese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese

Americans, and between approximately 320 and 400 Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, and Pakistani Americans. The survey had a response rate of 28%. The NAAS included over 6400 respondents from all different racial and religious backgrounds. About 4400 of all respondents were Asian, reporting Asian ancestry or at least one Asian parent. In addition, around 400 non-Latino Whites, 400 non-Latino African Americans and 1125 Latinos (whether White, Black or other) were also included in this survey to allow for interracial comparisons. We limited our analyses only to those 2969 respondents who identified as Christian broadly construed. While the United States remains largely Christian, Asian Americans are the least Christian of all racialized groups. As such, a survey with large oversamples of Asian Americans will produce a sample that is much less Christian than US surveys that sample using conventional sampling techniques and strategies (Funk et al. 2012; Smith et al. 2015).

2.1. Dependent Variable: Need for Equal Opportunity

The main dependent variable is a summed scale derived from three questions out of six regarding perceptions of equal opportunity. These read:

"Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed."

"If people were treated more fairly in this country, we would have fewer problems."

"One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance."

All items included 5-point Likert scale responses where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. These items were reverse-coded such that the summed scale highest value reflects the highest agreement on a need for greater equal opportunity. Table 1 shows that the mean for this summed scale is 11.9, with a range of 3 to 15. Factor analysis with varimax rotation using the original 6 equal opportunity questions identified two significant groupings. The variables that were identified and used in our summed dependent variable for analysis had an average communality of 0.724 and an eigenvalue above 1, thus satisfying Kaiser's criterion and justifying their grouping.

2.2. Primary Independent Variable: Racial/Ethnic, Generational, Religious Identities

Our primary independent variable measure disaggregated racial and generational groupings within religious affiliations by integrating all three characteristics. Race was measured as self-identity with a variety of ethnic and racial labels from which one could identify as many labels as one prefers. The NAAS oversample of Asian Americans introduced a large number of Asian ethnic groups, few of whom selected more than one label. Since the US racial order joins together Asian ethnic groups into the racial category "Asian", we employed this designation to simplify our analyses. However, we created a generation variable where we differentiated those Asian and Latino respondents who had immigrated after age 12 (immigrant generation or first generation) and those who were born in the US or arrived in the US prior to age 13 (the second generation). Inclusion of certain immigrants based on age of arrival signals that primary socialization of the respondent occurred in the US. As such, these immigrants, sometimes called the "1.5 generation", understand American social realities as a lived experience as a racial minority. Other immigrants socialized elsewhere in their formative early years likely experienced society as a member of the majority (Portes and Zhou 1993). In the following analyses, we include the following racialized groups: White, Black, Asian American 1st generation, Asian American 2nd generation, Latino 1st generation, and Latino 2nd generation.

Religious groupings were based on the "RelTrad" classification scheme that combines Protestant Christian religious groups into larger categories that retain cultural and historical significance (Steensland et al. 2000). Utilizing the limited denominational categories, we subdivided these into Evangelical, Mainline, Historic Black Protestant, Other Christian, and Catholic. Where denominations were ambiguous, we utilized the "born-again or Evangelical Christian" to divide these respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	Frequency	Mean or Percent	Range			Frequency	Percent	Range
Dependent Variable				*Age*	<35 years	487	16.4	0–1
… we don't give everyone an equal chance	2969	3.389	1–5		>34 years	2482	83.7	0–1
… fewer problems if people treated equally	2969	4.096	1–5					
… make sure everyone has equal opportunity	2969	4.442	1–5	*Gender*	Women	1661	55.9	0–1
Sum scale ("Need Equal Opportunity")	2969	11.927	3–15		Men	1308	44.1	0–1
Religio-Racial Identities				*Educational*	No schooling	121	4.1	0–1
Evangelical White	90	3.0	0–1	*Attainment*	No GED	351	11.8	0–1
Evangelical Asian American 1st gen	326	11.0	0–1		High school degree	622	20.9	0–1
Evangelical Asian American 2nd gen	153	5.2	0–1		Some college	524	17.6	0–1
NHPI Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath)	79	2.7	0–1		College degree	945	31.8	0–1
Evangelical Latino 1st gen	58	2.0	0–1		Graduate degree	406	13.7	0–1
Evangelical Latino 2nd gen	83	2.8	0–1					
Mainline/OC White	104	3.5	0–1	*Region*	South	658	22.2	0–1
Mainline/OC Asian American 1st gen	188	6.3	0–1		Northeast	287	9.7	0–1
Mainline/OC Asian American 2nd gen	198	6.7	0–1		Midwest	323	10.9	0–1
Mainline/OC Latino	75	2.5	0–1		West (excl. CA)	563	19.0	0–1
Black Church Protestant	272	9.2	0–1		CA	1138	38.3	0–1
Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath) Black	43	1.4	0–1					
Catholic White	91	3.1	0–1	*Employment*	Employed	1422	47.9	0–1
Catholic Asian American 1st gen	376	12.7	0–1	*Status*	Not Employed	1547	52.1	0–1
Catholic Asian American 2nd gen	191	6.4	0–1					
Catholic Latino 1st gen	358	12.1	0–1	*Political*	Republican	807	27.2	0–1
Catholic Latino 2nd gen	284	9.6	0–1	*Affiliation*	Independent	485	16.3	0–1
Total	2969				Democrat	1677	56.5	0–1

Finally, we merged the racial and generational categories with the religious affiliations to create our final list of 17 Christian racialized affiliations. Despite the large overall sample size, some racial-religious groupings were still inadequate for reliable analyses and were merged together. Our main categories included: White Evangelical Protestants, White Mainline and Other Christians, White Catholics, Asian American 1st generation Evangelicals, Asian American 2nd generation Evangelicals, Asian American 1st generation Mainline and Other Christians, Evangelical, Mainline, Other, Catholic combined, Asian American 2nd generation Mainline and Other Christians, Asian American 1st generation Catholics, Asian American 2nd generation Catholics, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Christians (Evangelical, Mainline, Other Christian, Catholic combined), Latino American 1st generation Evangelicals, Latino American 2nd generation Evangelicals, Latino American Mainline and Other Christians (1st and 2nd generations combined), Latino American 1st generation Catholics, Latino American 2nd generation Catholics, Black Church Protestants, and Black Other Christians (Evangelical, Mainline, Other Christian, Catholic combined).

2.3. Controls

We accounted for other possible explanatory factors that may contribute to explaining the responses to our dependent variable in our analyses. Age was a dichotomous measure distinguishing those 35 and older (1) from those younger than 35 (0). Gender was coded dichotomously, where women = 1 and men = 0. Employment status was also coded dichotomously to reflect current employment status (1) from not currently employed (0). Educational attainment was measured along 6 categories reflecting no educational completion (1), no high school completion (2), high school completion or GED equivalent (3), some college course attainment (4), B.A. degree attainment (5), and post-B.A. advanced degree attainment (6). Political affiliation was coded into three dummy variables reflecting Republican, Independent, and Democratic party identities. Region was coded into a system of dummy variables indicating four conventional Census regions, and an indicator for California, which was oversampled. The variable for the western state region excludes this state. Given the oversampling, we felt this was a more rigorous accounting for possible regional effects on the dependent variable.

2.4. Method of Analysis

Table 1 presents an overview of the NAAS variables we used. We examined the dependent variable means across all of our major religio-racial groupings and these are illustrated in Figure 1. Table 2 includes the multivariate coefficients from OLS regressions of the main independent variable and the controls. In Model 1, we included only control measures, and Model 2 includes religio-racial identities, with White Evangelical Protestants as the comparison group. Model 3 re-introduces this group but excludes Black Church Protestants. Models 2 and 3 help to illustrate the primary finding of the relationship between non-Black minority Christians and White as well as Black Christians.
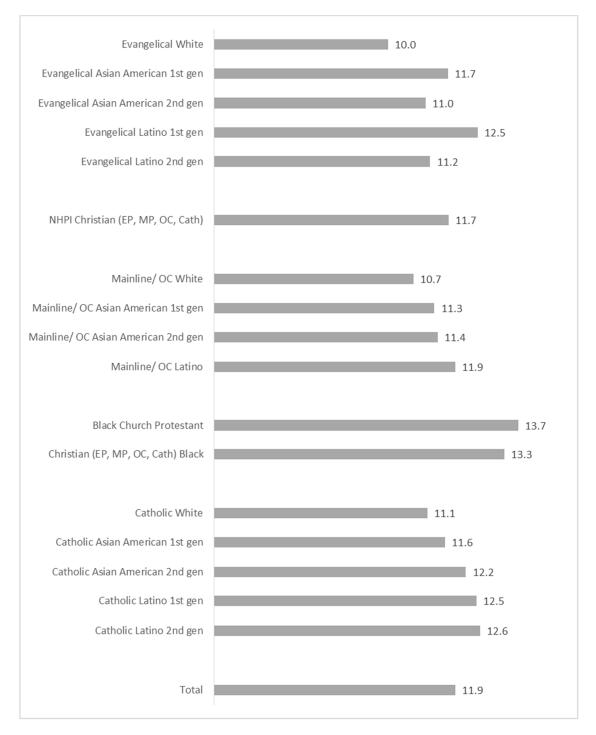
Figure 1. Religio-Racial Affiliation Means For "Need Equal Opportunity" Scale.

Table 2. Predictors of "Need for Equal Opportunity".

		Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
		Unstd. Beta	S.E.	Sig.	Unstd. Beta	S.E.	Sig.	Unstd. Beta	S.E.	Sig.
Religio-Racial Identities										
Evangelical White (M2 contrast)								−3.288	0.314	***
Evangelical Asian American 1st gen					1.614	0.305	***	−1.674	0.213	***
Evangelical Asian American 2nd gen					0.730	0.345	*	−2.558	0.267	***
NHPI Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath)					1.349	0.404	***	−1.939	0.341	***
Evangelical Latino 1st gen					2.343	0.433	***	−0.945	0.371	*
Evangelical Latino 2nd gen					0.918	0.393	*	−2.371	0.323	***
Mainline/OC White					0.574	0.368		−2.715	0.297	***
Mainline/OC Asian American 1st gen					1.049	0.329	***	−2.240	0.245	***
Mainline/OC Asian American 2nd gen					1.146	0.331	***	−2.142	0.250	***
Mainline/OC Latino					1.625	0.402	***	−1.663	0.335	***
Black Church Protestant (M3 Contrast)					3.288	0.314	***			
Christian (EP, MP, OC, Cath) Black					2.880	0.473	***	−0.409	0.417	
Catholic White					0.913	0.379	*	−2.375	0.311	***
Catholic Asian American 1st gen					1.552	0.303	***	−1.736	0.209	***
Catholic Asian American 2nd gen					1.723	0.338	***	−1.565	0.252	***
Catholic Latino 1st gen					2.155	0.313	***	−1.133	0.215	***
Catholic Latino 2nd gen					2.184	0.315	***	−1.105	0.219	***
Age	Over 34 y.o.	−0.688	0.137	***	−0.765	0.143	***	-0.765	0.143	***
Gender	Female	0.449	0.098	***	0.385	0.096	***	0.385	0.096	***
Region	Northeast	0.220	0.186		0.428	0.182	*	0.428	0.182	*
	Midwest	−0.007	0.180		0.446	0.177	*	0.446	0.177	*
	West (except CA)	−0.200	0.151		0.268	0.156		0.268	0.156	
	California	0.007	0.130		0.144	0.129		0.144	0.129	
Educational Attainment		−0.187	0.036	***	−0.103	0.038	**	-0.103	0.038	**
Currently Employed		−0.105	0.102		−0.157	0.099		-0.157	0.099	
Political Affiliation	Democrat	1.402	0.113	***	1.097	0.112	***	1.097	0.112	***
	Independent	0.700	0.152	***	0.596	0.149	***	0.596	0.149	***
(Constant)		12.850	0.353	***	11.018	0.443	***	14.307	0.379	***
Adjusted R2		0.075			0.139			0.139		
N		2968			2968			2968		

* = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the frequencies, means and ranges for our primary variables. Survey respondents expressed the highest levels of agreement with the statement about ensuring equal opportunity. The lowest level of agreement was with the statement "One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance". With regard to the primary independent variable, we note that not one of the religio-racial groupings constitutes more than 13 percent of the entire sample (1st generation Asian American Catholics), and no grouping has an N less than 43 (Black Christians who are not in historically Black Protestant denominations). More than 80 percent of the sample is over the age of 34; women constitute a majority (about 56 percent), as does non-employment status (about 52 percent), and Democrat affiliation (about 57 percent). In terms of educational attainment, the largest category, BA degree attainment, garnered almost one-third (32 percent) of all respondents, followed by about 21 percent with a high school degree or GED equivalent. In terms of region, excluding California, which included 38 percent of the sample, the largest fraction of respondents were from Southern states (about 22 percent). Another 19 percent were from the non-California west and the remaining 21 percent were about evenly divided between Northeast and Midwestern states.

Figure 1 shows us the general pattern of responses to the equal opportunity scale by religio-racial groupings. We grouped findings based on Christian religious traditions with racial disaggregations per religious grouping (with the exception of Native Hawaiian Christians which had no other comparison group within it). Mentioned earlier, Christian responses had an overall mean of 11.9, with a range of 3 to 15. Among Evangelical Whites, Asians, and Latinos, only first generation Latinos had a higher rating than the average (12.5). White Evangelicals showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (10.0). Mainline Protestants show the same pattern: White Mainline respondents showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (10.7), and every other group was nearer to the sample mean (11.3–11.9). Protestants in historically Black denominations were the most supportive of equal opportunity (13.7), followed closely behind by other Black Christians not in this tradition (13.3). No other religio-racial grouping approaches this level of support. Among Catholics, again White Catholics showed the lowest support for equal opportunity (11.1), and they are joined with first generation Asian Americans, who were similarly below the sample mean. The second generation Catholic Asian Americans and Latinos, as well as Latino first generation, had a high level of support compared to the sample mean. This suggests a pattern seen in previous research: White Christian support, regardless of tradition, was lowest for equal opportunity, while Black Christian support was highest. Most every other racial minority Christian group fit somewhere between these two mean positions. Asian American Christian groups, with the exception of second generation Catholics, were between White Christians and the sample mean. Second-generation Asian American evangelicals joined White Christians in expressing some of the lowest support for equal opportunity. Latino Christians, with the exception of second generation Evangelicals were at or above the sample mean. This suggests that opinions about equal opportunity among religio-racial groupings largely fall into a racial hierarchy where White Christians are least supportive, followed by second generation Asian and Latino Protestants. African American Christians were the most supportive and are joined by Latino Christians and second generation Asian American Catholics. All other groups fall somewhere between these two clusters. Notably, our hypothesis regarding generational shifts toward White Christian attitudes applies to second generation Protestants; second generation Catholics, both Asian and Latino, are closer to Black Christian views on average.

The observations in Figure 1 were then placed into OLS regression where we controlled for other possible explanatory factors, including age, gender, educational attainment, employment status, region and political affiliation as shown in Table 2.

Model 1 accounts for these alternative factors and accounts for about 8 percent of the variance in predicting equal opportunity beliefs. In this all-Christian study, women (compared to men), along with Democrats and Independents (compared to Republicans), were more supportive of equal opportunity. Those over 34 years of age and those with greater educational attainment were less favorable. These

effects were consistent across all models. The exception to this pattern was regional effects. Even when accounting for the California oversample as a distinct possible outlier, respondents in the western region were not significantly different from those in southern states. In Model 1, none of the regions were significantly different from the South. In the subsequent models, however, respondents in the Northeast and Midwestern states were more supportive of equal opportunity compared to those in the South. The primary measure of religio-racial affiliations was significant, even with the aforementioned controls included. In Model 2, White Evangelical Christians were the comparison group and every other religio-racial group, except for White Mainline/Other Christians, were statistically significantly more in favor of equal opportunity. While statistically significant, we note also that the smallest coefficients were for White Catholics and second generation Evangelical Asian Americans and Latinos. Standardized Betas (not shown) suggest that, although these groups are different from White evangelicals by a statistically significant margin, they have the smallest effect in comparison to all other groups. In Model 3, we changed the comparison group to affiliates in historically Black Protestant denominations and found that all other religio-racial groupings among Christians, save for Black Christians of other traditions, were significantly less supportive of equal opportunity. Suggestive of Figure 1, second generation Evangelical Latinos stand apart from other Latino Christians in having the largest negative coefficient (−2.371) by one full point in comparison to all other Latino Christian groups in Model 3. Overall, we find that Black Christians are the most supportive of equal opportunity, White Christians tend to be the least, and Asian and Latino Christians tend to fall somewhere in the middle. These results generally suggest a racialized hierarchy within American Christianity with regard to attitudes toward equal opportunity, and some religio-racial generational distinctiveness that has not been shown before.

4. Discussion and Future Directions

4.1. New Religio-Racial Solidarities and Cleavages

Our study suggests that the general racial hierarchy or revised racial order applies to attitudes toward equal opportunity among American Christians. This suggests that structural racial domination has counterparts within cultural ideologies; White supremacy generally goes unquestioned through the internalization of abstract liberalism, particularly for White Christians, regardless of specific tradition. Resistance to this ideology is evident among some Christians, particularly those informed by the liberation theologies in the historic Black Church tradition. At the extreme ends of support for abstract liberalism, we find confirmatory evidence of a racial hierarchy among Black and White Christians.

However, Latino and Asian American Christians show some important complications to this current understanding of abstract liberalist ideological adherence. We conjectured that immigrants, including immigrant Christians, from Asia and Latin America would show adherence to abstract liberalism roughly approximating that of White Christians. We further conjectured that the second generation would align more closely with Black Christians. On both points, evidence did not readily support these claims. The general alignment of Latino Christians, with the important exception of second generation Latino evangelicals, comports with Brown's earlier finding that Latino Christians were largely similar on inequality attitudes. The clustering of Latino Catholics in both generations also supports Edgell and Tranby's argument that Catholicism offers a unique cultural toolkit that challenges racial inequality attitudes for these professing Latinos. Our disaggregation of Latino Christians by religious tradition and generation revealed that cultural assimilation to White evangelical ideology may be at work primarily for second generation Latino evangelicals. The same could be said for second generation Asian American evangelicals. Unlike Latino Christians, other Asian American Christians are more dispersed in their views about equal opportunity. Here, we may have evidence of an "honorary White Christian" attitudinal position that mirrors the structural one identified by Bonilla-Silva. In sum, religious affiliative effects on abstract liberalist attitudes such as equal opportunity are complicated by a combination of generational status and racial designation; our findings support the complex religion argument that religion intersects with race and nativity. Larger oversamples may better

clarify how distinctive these religious traditions are within different generations of Asian and Latino Christians. New oversamples of immigrant and second generation African and Caribbean Christians, most of whom identify as Black, will also add important clarification on how racial positioning may work in the ideological commitments of recently arrived Black Christians. Other explanatory factors we could not account for due to data limitations include racial and socioeconomic compositions of the respondent's neighborhood, stronger individual-level socioeconomic indicators, and perceptions of having faced discrimination. As one reviewer noted, each of these can help explain respondent attitudinal disposition regarding equal opportunity.

4.2. Future Directions

Complex religion invites scholars to move beyond current framings, especially those involving racial difference. The Black–White framing in racial inequality attitudes research and in race-related sociology research more generally remains robust insofar as understanding racial broad dynamics are concerned. What we show here is that non-Black minority Christians, particularly Asian and Latino American Christians, constitute potential new allies that may complicate the terminology for the framings we currently use.

We need more qualitative inquiry into the sources at work that help explain why these new potential cleavages are occurring as they are among American Christians. What cultural resources and scripts inform how immigrant and second generation Asian American and Latino Christians think about equal opportunity and inequality for that matter? While this question is often directed at further academic inquiry, we feel this has import for social justice efforts. This introductory study raises questions about how colorblind ideology is transmitted more so among some non-White Christians than other non-White Christians. Conversely, how are anti-racist ideologies embraced by some non-Black Christians more so than others? Christian communities of color could begin conversations that invite immigrant and second-generation members to discuss the sources of their ideological commitments and excavate the roots from which those commitments first appeared. To the extent that racial equity is important to the mission of a given Christian community of color, such intra- and intergenerational communal introspection could transform the ways and means of addressing racialized injustice in their local community perhaps through a combination of ethnic-specific collective effort and partnerships with like-minded Black Christians. At present, much of our scholarship on these subpopulations has not taken this next step given our reliance on assimilation theory. Our findings suggest that there is more to the cultural assimilation framework than generational identity boundary work. What informs the boundary work apart from rejection of practices and beliefs surrounding internalized ethnic cultural beliefs? How is identity linked to perceptions of the inequalities occurring around these immigrant and second generation individuals and communities? How do the cultural scripts from Christian communities inform and socialize non-Black minority Christians in view of these social inequalities?

Apart from these investigations, we recommend revisiting these analyses in two other ways. First, we recommend consideration of non-Christians. To what extent are the cultural scripts among American Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists similar to or different from American Christians, particularly Black and White Christians? Further how might the views or scripts of atheist, agnostic, and otherwise non-religious Americans resemble or differ from those of different racialized Christian groups? Studies of the so-called "Protestant work ethic" proposed by Weber suggest that this concept is not exclusively Protestant (Park et al. 2016). If similar ethe exist, future research should examine how those too could alter the effect of religious affiliation on equal opportunity beliefs. Second, we recommend ethnic-specific interactions with Christianity. Asian Americans are the least Christian of all major racialized groups in the US. However, among Asian American Christians, different ethnic groups dominate these subpopulations. The largest fraction of Asian American evangelicals is Korean (about 43 percent of NAAS), and another 53 percent of Asian American Catholics are Filipino in NAAS. Similarly, Mexican Americans dominate the Latino category and we should expect that this is true among Catholic and Protestant Latinos. How might ethnic group dominance within these

racialized categories alter our understanding of the alleged "racial differences" found in religion research? These are a few avenues for future directions that complex religion helps to illuminate.

References

Alcoff, Linda Martin. 2003. Latinos, Asian Americans, and the Black-White Binary. *The Journal of Ethics* 7: 6–27. [CrossRef]

Bobo, Lawrence D. 2011. Somewhere between Jim Crow & Post-Racialism: Reflections on the Racial Divide in America Today. *Daedalus* 140: 11–36.

Bobo, Lawrence, and James R. Kluegel. 1993. Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes? *American Sociological Review* 58: 443–64. [CrossRef]

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2004. From Bi-Racial to Tri-Racial: Towards a New System of Racial Stratification in the USA. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27: 931–50. [CrossRef]

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2010. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 3rd ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2015. The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind, 'Post-Racial' America. *American Behavioral Scientist* 59: 1358–76. [CrossRef]

Brodkin, Karen. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Brown, R. Khari. 2009. Denominational Differences in Support for Race-Based Policies among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48: 604–15. [CrossRef]

Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. 2012. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. New York: New York University Press.

Doane, Ashley W., Jr. 1997. Dominant Group Ethnic Identity in the United States: The Role of 'Hidden' Ethnicity in Intergroup Relations. *The Sociological Quarterly* 38: 375–97. [CrossRef]

Edgell, Penny, and Eric Tranby. 2007. Religious Influences on Understandings of Racial Inequality in the United States. *Social Problems* 54: 263–88. [CrossRef]

Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. 2000. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Emerson, Michael O., Christian Smith, and David Sikkink. 1999. Equal in Christ, but Not in the World: White Conservative Protestants and Explanations of Black-White Inequality. *Social Problems* 46: 398–417. [CrossRef]

Funk, Cary, Luis Lugo, Alan Cooperman, Gregory A. Smith, Jessica Hamar Martinez, Besheer Mohamed, Neha Sahgal, Noble Kuriakose, and Elizabeth Podrebarac. 2012. Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths. July 19. Available online: https://www.pewforum.org/2012/07/19/asian-americans-a-mosaic-of-faiths-overview/ (accessed on 1 June 2020).

Golland, David Hamilton. 2011. Conclusion: Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity. In *Constructing Affirmative Action*. The Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunity. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, pp. 171–84. [CrossRef]

Gordon, Milton. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hinojosa, Victor J., and Jerry Z. Park. 2004. Religion and the Paradox of Racial Inequality Attitudes. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43: 229–38. [CrossRef]

Horowitz, Juliana Menasce, Anna Brown, and Kiana Cox. 2019. *Race in America 2019: Public Has Negative Views of the Country's Racial Progress; More than Half Say Trump Has Made Race Relations Worse*. Washington: Pew Research Center.

Hunt, Matthew O. 1996. The Individual, Society, or Both? A Comparison of Black, Latino, and White Beliefs about the Causes of Poverty. *Social Forces* 75: 293. [CrossRef]

Hunt, Matthew O. 2007. African American, Hispanic, and White Beliefs about Black/White Inequality, 1977–2004. *American Sociological Review* 72: 390–415. [CrossRef]

Ignatiev, Noel. 1995. *How the Irish Became White*. Routledge Classics. New York: Routledge.

Kim, Claire Jean. 1999. The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans. *Politics & Society* 27: 105–38. [CrossRef]

Kim, Nadia Y. 2008. *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to LA*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Lee, Jennifer, and Frank D Bean. 2012. *The Diversity Paradox: Immigration and the Color Line in Twenty-First Century America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lee, Taeku, and Efrén O. Pérez. 2014. The Persistent Connection Between Language-of-Interview and Latino Political Opinion. *Political Behavior* 36: 401–25. [CrossRef]

Lee, Jennifer, and Van Tran. 2019. The Mere Mention of Asians in Affirmative Action. *Sociological Science* 6: 551–79. [CrossRef]

Liu, William Ming. 2017. White Male Power and Privilege: The Relationship between White Supremacy and Social Class. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 64: 349–58. [CrossRef]

Manning, Alex, Douglas Hartmann, and Joseph Gerteis. 2015. Colorblindness in Black and White: An Analysis of Core Tenets, Configurations, and Complexities. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1: 532–46. [CrossRef]

Noonan, Allan S., Hector Eduardo Velasco-Mondragon, and Fernando A. 2016. Wagner. Improving the Health of African Americans in the USA: An Overdue Opportunity for Social Justice. *Public Health Reviews* 37: 12. [CrossRef]

Paris, Peter J. 1985. *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Park, Jerry Z., Kevin D. Dougherty, and Mitchell J. Neubert. 2016. Work, Occupations, and Entrepreneurship. In *Handbook of Religion and Society*. Edited by D. Yamane. Switzerland: Springer, pp. 29–46.

Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 1998. Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community. *American Sociological Review* 63: 767. [CrossRef]

Perea, Juan F. 1997. The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The 'Normal Science' of American Racial Thought. *California Law Review* 85: 1213–58. [CrossRef]

Portes, Alejandro, and Min Zhou. 1993. The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants Among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530: 74–96. [CrossRef]

Ramakrishnan, Karthick, Jennifer Lee, Taeku Lee, and Janelle Wong. 2018. *National Asian American Survey (NAAS) 2016 Post-Election Survey*. Riverside: NAAS.

Rodríguez, Clara E. 2018. *America, As Seen on TV: How Television Shapes Immigrant Expectations around the Globe*. New York: NYU Press.

Rosenbloom, Susan Rakosi, and Niobe Way. 2004. Experiences of Discrimination Among African American, Asian American, and Latino Adolescents in an Urban High School. *Youth and Society* 35: 420–51. [CrossRef]

Sewell, William. 1992. A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98: 1–29. [CrossRef]

Shelton, Jason E., and Michael O. Emerson. 2012. *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions*. New York: New York University Press.

Smith, Gregory A., Alan Cooperman, Jessica Martinez, Elizabeth Sciupac, Conrad Hackett, Besheer Mohamed, Becka Alper, Claire Gecewicz, and Juan Carlos Esparza Ochoa. 2015. America's Changing Religious Landscape. May 12. Available online: https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/ (accessed on 1 June 2020).

Steensland, Brian, Jerry Z. Park, Mark D. Regnerus, Lynn D. Robinson, W. Bradford Wilcox, and Robert D. Woodberry. 2000. The Measure of American Religion: Toward Improving the State of the Art. *Social Forces* 79: 291. [CrossRef]

Swidler, Ann. 1986. Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51: 273. [CrossRef]

Taylor, Marylee C., and Stephen M. Merino. 2011. Race, Religion, and Beliefs about Racial Inequality. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634: 60–77. [CrossRef]

Taylor, Paul, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jessica Martinez, and Gabriel Velasco. 2012. When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity. In *Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends*. Washington: Pew Research Center.

Western, Bruce, and Becky Pettit. 2005. Black-White Wage Inequality, Employment Rates, and Incarceration. *American Journal of Sociology* 111: 553–78. [CrossRef]

Wilde, Melissa J. 2018. Complex Religion: Interrogating Assumptions of Independence in the Study of Religion. *Sociology of Religion* 79: 287–98. [CrossRef]

Wilde, Melissa J., and Lindsay Glassman. 2016. How Complex Religion Can Improve Our Understanding of American Politics. *Annual Review of Sociology* 42: 407–25. [CrossRef]

Wright, Bradley R. E., Michael Wallace, Annie Scola Wisnesky, Christopher M. Donnelly, Stacy Missari, and Christine Zozula. 2015. Religion, Race, and Discrimination: A Field Experiment of How American Churches Welcome Newcomers. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54: 185–204. [CrossRef]

Yancey, George A. 2004. *Who Is White? Latinos, Asians, and the New Black/Nonblack Divide.* Boulder: Rienner.

Zhou, Min. 1997. Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation. *International Migration Review* 31: 975–1008. [CrossRef] [PubMed]