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RACE-RELATED CORRELATES OF YOUNG ADULTS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

ABSTRACT. We investigated how often young adults worry about race relations and whether they perceive that white/black relations have been deteriorating. We also explored the relationships between race-related worry and pessimism, and subjective well-being. This study addressed the distribution of race-related worry and pessimism, and their relationship to subjective well-being in national probability samples of high school seniors completing self-administered questionnaires in 1996 and 1997 ($n = 4{,}514$). Nearly one-third of high school seniors often worry about race relations, and about 20% perceive that contemporary white/black relations have been getting at least a little worse. Worrying often about race relations and perceiving that race relations have been getting worse were significantly associated with diminished levels of life satisfaction and happiness. The results confirm that race-related worry and pessimism were common, and that they impact youth's affective and cognitive states.

KEY WORDS: race relations, worry, pessimism, stress, subjective well-being

INTRODUCTION

DuBois (1969: 20) predicted that the "color line" would be the most prominent, persistent problem of the 20th century. At the dawn of the 21st century, his prophetic words strike a chord because the color line has indeed been a major problem, and will likely be worrisome well into the future. Like DuBois, other scholars have concluded that race impacts the lived experiences of people in the United States (Bell, 1992; Cose, 1993; Committee on the Status of Black Americans, 1989; Essed, 1991; Farley and Allen, 1987; Hacker, 1992; Massey and Denton, 1993; Oliver and Shapiro, 1996; Thomas and Hughes, 1986; Wilson, 1973). Bell (1992: 12), for instance, states, ". . . Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary 'peaks of progress', short-lived victories that slide

into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard to accept fact that all history verifies". Consistent with this statement, Blendon et al. (1995) report that 23% of their Black respondents perceive that racial equality will never be achieved. In addition, 46% predict that racial problems will not be solved in their children's lifetime. Thus, interracial conflict remains a national concern and race-related worrying and pessimism are not likely to decrease.

There is growing scientific interest in the physiological and psychological consequences of pessimism, hopelessness, and worry. For example, Everson et al. (1996) found that hopelessness was significantly related to increased risk of heart attack and mortality. And Muris et al. (1998) found a positive and significant correlation between depression and worrying about things such as school performance, dying, and social contacts among children. There are few studies, however, that examine the psychological consequences of worrying about, and holding pessimistic perceptions of, race relations.

Because young people will ultimately determine which course we take toward addressing racial conflict, it is important to examine how often they worry about race relations and to consider their perceptions of the contemporary racial climate. It is also important to explore emotional consequences of such perceptions because worry and pessimism have been linked to adverse health outcomes. Toward this end, our study describes perceptions of race relations, and hypothesizes how stress might conceptually link race-related worry and pessimism to reduced levels of subjective well-being. Finally, this study empirically investigates whether worrying about race relations or expressing pessimistic perceptions about race relations is associated with low levels of life satisfaction and happiness among young adults.

PERCEPTIONS OF RACE RELATIONS

In the general population, individuals from different racial groups rarely agree regarding racial issues, racial policies, and consequences of the color line. Survey results indicate, on average, White adults are more likely than adults from other racial groups to

perceive that race relations are improving, that the racial climate is affable, and that reports of racial privilege and discrimination are exaggerated (Bobo et al., 1992; Hacker, 1992; Klugel, 1985; Klugel and Smith, 1982; Schuman, Steeh and Bobo, 1985, 1997; Sigelman and Welch, 1991; Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 1997; Tuch and Martin, 1997).

Teenagers and young adults' perceptions of race relations and views about racial conflict do not always coincide with results and patterns found among adults (Collison, 1992, 1993; Farley, 1997; Peart, 1994; Reitman, 1998). For example, in a telephone poll of 601 teenagers (aged 12 to 17) conducted by Time/CNN, 18% of Black teens thought that most problems Blacks face today are caused by Whites whereas 32% of White teens believed that to be true. About 58% of Black teenagers perceived that Blacks fail to take advantage of available opportunities compared to 31% of White teenagers. When asked if race relations will ever get better, 76% and 55% of White and Black respondents, respectively, say "yes" (Farley, 1997). These results suggest that White teens are less likely than Black teens to be pessimistic about race relations, but more likely to perceive that racism negatively impacts Blacks' lives.

In a larger telephone survey commissioned by People for the American Way, 1 170 youth (aged 15 to 24) were asked about a number of racial issues. Approximately 46% of Black and 47% of White youth reported that Blacks experienced racial discrimination. In terms of the contemporary racial climate, 57% of Black respondents, 48% of White respondents, and 49% of Hispanic respondents, respectively, described race relations as "generally bad" (People for the American Way, 1992). These results suggest that youth from different racial groups are equally and largely pessimistic about race relations, and tend to perceive that the impact of racial discrimination is not exaggerated.

Arthur J. Kropp, president of People for the American Way, said, "The plain message of our research is that racial division is taking root among the next generation of Americans" (Collison, 1992: A1). In contrast, Farley (1997) believes that many young people are more optimistic about contemporary race relations and more tolerant than their parents. And unlike many adults, they honestly believe racial problems can be solved. Contradictory conclusions about young

peoples' racial attitudes remain enigmatic and could be a function of at least two things. First, youth may not have lived long enough to accurately appraise the meaning and significance of race in the United States. Second, conclusions drawn about young people's perceptions of race relations from telephone poll data may not be reliable because population coverage, which influences reliability and generalizability, may be suspect.

WORRYING, STRESS, AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

On the way to adulthood, it is normal that youth experience periods of stress, worry, and insecurity as they construct their personal identity and plot their life trajectory. For instance, many young adults worry about things such as wearing the latest fashions, their physical appearance, future educational and career plans, school violence, being popular with peers, getting access to an automobile, and dating. In addition, young adults might also worry about race relations and express pessimistic appraisals of the contemporary racial climate (Collison, 1992, 1993; Peart, 1994; Reitman, 1998). We predict that worrying about race relations and being pessimistic about race relations is subjectively experienced as stressful, and consequently linked to low levels of subjective well-being.

Stress can be conceptualized as a negative affective and cognitive state related to the occurrence of specific events and/or specific appraisals (Aneshensel, 1992; Arnold, 1990; Avison and Gotlib, 1994; Cockerham, 1996; Colten and Gore, 1991; Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend, 1981; Williams and House, 1991). These events or appraisals are experienced as a sense of lessened environmental control, heightened physical or emotional strain, hopelessness, helplessness, tiredness, disappointment, and anxiety. A vast body of literature has demonstrated that stress is a prominent risk factor for adverse psychological outcomes among children and adults (Arnold, 1990; Avison and Gotlib, 1994; Cockerham, 1996; Colten and Gore, 1991; Thoits, 1995).

Young adults may worry about race relations and therefore experience stress because they have direct contact with racially intolerant peers, parents, or teachers. They may be upset because they are assessing our nations' past failures to engineer racial harmony, or

because they are appraising how far our society must go to guarantee racial parity. Young adults may experience stress because they fear that deteriorating race relations will interfere with their chances for success in life. They may perceive that the race problem will directly harm them, harm significant others in their social network, or limit their chances of realizing their potential. Few studies systematically investigate how race-related phenomena are subjectively perceived, and whether such perceptions have a detrimental impact on young adults' psychological functioning.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

There is some evidence suggesting that race-related factors have adverse mental and psychological consequences among youth. For example, Spurlock (1973) concluded that racism negatively affects Black and White children's emotional well-being. Drawing on evidence from case studies, she reported that Black children experience conflict triggered by discriminatory experiences, and are prone to low levels of self-esteem and disengagement from social life because of the color line. For White youth, she proposed that racism generates false hatreds, guilt, confusion, disrespect for authority, and moral cynicism.

In a large study of immigrant youth representing more than fourteen ethnic groups in Southern California and Florida, Rumbaut (1994) found that ethnic discrimination was one of several race-related correlates of depressive symptoms and self-esteem. Specifically, he found that ninth and tenth graders who believed they would experience discrimination in the future reported increased depressive symptoms and low levels of self-esteem. He also found that reports of personal experiences of racial discrimination were correlated with high depressive symptomatology.

In the current study, using nationally representative samples of young adults, we empirically describe how often young adults worry about race relations and how they perceive contemporary race relations. We also investigate whether worrying about race relations or expressing gloomy perceptions of race relations is linked to low levels of subjective well-being. There are few studies that systematically describe how young adults appraise contemporary race rela-

tions using nationally representative data. In addition, researchers admit that correlates, particularly race-related correlates, of young adults' psychological functioning and emotional well-being, have not been scientifically studied (Bender, 1997; Powers et al., 1989; Spurlock, 1973; United States Congress, 1991).

HYPOTHESES

1. Black and Hispanic young adults would be more likely than White youth to often worry about race relations and to express pessimistic perceptions about contemporary race relations.
2. Young adults that tend to worry about race relations or express pessimistic perceptions about contemporary race relations would be likely to report low levels of life satisfaction and low levels of happiness.

METHODS

Sample

Data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) Project were used to test our hypotheses. A detailed description of the MTF Project can be found in Bachman, Johnston and O'Malley (1996). Each year since 1975, a multi-stage, area, clustered sample of high schools was drawn. Approximately 150 high schools were randomly sampled from the coterminous 48 states and between 15 000–19 000 high school seniors were surveyed. They completed self-administered, machine-readable questionnaires during a normal class session. Respondents answered questions regarding social issues, gender roles, peer relationships, as well as questions regarding their use of illicit and licit substances. School absence was the primary reason for non-response. Sample weights were used to adjust for differential probability of selection based upon school size, region, and other sampling probabilities.

Six overlapping questionnaire forms were used each year; each form was given to a random sixth of respondents. The items concerning worrying about race relations and perceptions of race relations were present in one form. We combined samples from

1996 and 1997 (the average response rate was 84%), and restricted analyses to respondents that reported their race as: 1. Black or African American ($N = 643$), 2. White (Caucasian) ($N = 3\,373$), or 3. Hispanic (i.e., Mexican American or Chicano, Cuban American, Puerto Rican, or Other Latin American) ($N = 498$).

Measures

Worrying about race relations was a single item indicator that asked how often participants worry about race relations. The response scale ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (often). Pessimistic perceptions of race relations was captured by the following item: "Thinking about the country as a whole, would you say relations between white people and black people have been getting better, getting worse, or staying pretty much the same?". The responses ranged from 1 (better) to 5 (worse).

Life satisfaction and happiness measured subjective well-being (Bender, 1997; Campbell, 1981; Diener, 1994, 1995; Pilcher, 1998). Life satisfaction was a single item measure that asked: "How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?". The response set ranged from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 7 (completely satisfied). Happiness was also a single item indicator. The question asked: "Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days – would you say you're very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy these days?". High happiness was coded into high values. These indicators assess the degree to which respondents appraise their lives in positive ways, and express positive affect about the quality of their lives.

Several background variables were included as controls in the multivariate analyses: 1. gender, 2. number of parents in household, 3. urbanicity, 4. region, 5. total weekly income, 6. parental education, 7. and religiosity. These variables were included to reduce the likelihood of mis-specified or spurious results. Appendix A shows verbatim question wording and response scales of the background variables. Appendix B presents pairwise, zero-order correlations between worrying about race relations, pessimistic perceptions, subjective well-being, and background variables.

Analytic Strategies

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models were used to test our hypotheses. ANOVA estimates differences on a response measure among three or more mutually exclusive sub-groups. ANOVA models were used to calculate race differences in worrying about race relations, expressing pessimistic perceptions of race relations, and subjective well-being. Multivariate regression analysis estimates the association between two variables adjusting for the influence of other variables. We regressed life satisfaction and happiness on worrying and pessimistic perceptions adjusting for background variables.

RESULTS

Table I describes the frequency with which high school seniors worry about race relations, and degree to which they held pessimistic perceptions of race relations. Worrying about race relations was somewhat negatively skewed whereas holding pessimistic perceptions of race relations was somewhat positively skewed. Two out of three young people, regardless of race, tended to worry at least sometimes about race relations. Eight out of ten Black seniors worry at least sometimes. Nearly one in seven Hispanic high school seniors never worries about race relations. Black young adults were significantly (F-statistic $= 37.20$, $p < 0.01$) more likely than White or Hispanic youth to report high levels of race-related worry.

Most high school seniors perceived that white/black relations have been getting at least a little better, but only about 11% endorsed that interracial relations have gotten unequivocally better. Contrary to our predictions, White young adults were most likely to perceive that white/black relations have been getting worse. About 12% of Hispanic seniors perceived that white/black relations have been getting at least a little worse, while nearly 20% of Black and White youth expressed that level of pessimism. Black youth were significantly (F-statistic $= 6.28$, $p < 0.01$) more likely than Hispanic youth, but significantly less likely than White youth to express pessimistic perceptions regarding race relations.

In sum, moderate levels of race-related worrying and pessimism were common among young adults in the United States. Patterns in

TABLE I

Worrying about race relations and perceptions of race relations (Monitoring the Future, 1996–1997)

	Total	Black	White	Hispanic
Of the problems facing the nation today, how often do you worry about race relations?				
Never (1)	11.44%	8.80%	11.44%	14.86%
Seldom (2)	21.12%	12.46%	22.94%	19.94%
Sometimes (3)	35.34%	29.53%	36.36%	35.88%
Often (4)	32.10%	49.22%	29.26%	29.32%
Mean	2.88	3.19	2.83	2.80
Std. dev.	0.99	0.97	0.98	1.02
Weighted N	4,495	639	3,362	495
Thinking about the country as a whole, would you say relations between white people and black people have been getting . . .				
Better (1)	10.90%	11.30%	10.54%	12.87%
A little better (2)	40.01%	42.26%	39.32%	41.83%
Same (3)	27.73%	27.33%	27.47%	30.05%
A little worse (4)	13.77%	11.99%	14.71%	9.66%
Worse (5)	7.59%	7.12%	7.97%	5.60%
Mean	2.67	2.61	2.70	2.53
Std. dev.	1.08	1.06	1.09	1.02
Weighted N	4,489	636	3,359	493

worrying about race relations were consistent with our predictions. We were surprised, however, to find that White youth tended to perceive that white/black relations have been getting worse moreso than Black and Hispanic young adults. Interestingly, although high school seniors generally tended to worry about race relations, they also generally tended to perceive that white/black relations have been getting better (See bivariate correlations in Appendix B). This seeming contradiction, high levels of worry and low levels of pessimism, could be related to an interpretative distinction between "race relations" and "black/white relations".

Table II presents descriptive statistics for life satisfaction and happiness among youth by race; both measures were fairly normally distributed. Seven out of ten respondents were at least somewhat satisfied with their lives, and most young people were pretty happy – more than 60% in fact. White and Hispanic young adults reported significantly (F-statistic = 8.35, $p < 0.01$) higher levels of life satisfaction than did Black youth. Similarly, Black young adults were significantly (F-statistic = 73.37, $p < 0.01$) less happy than White and Hispanic high school seniors. Overall, the distribution of life satisfaction and happiness suggest that most youth were emotionally well adjusted and appraised their lives in positive terms.

Relationship Between Worrying, Perceptions, and Well-Being

Table III shows bivariate associations between worrying about race relations and pessimistic perceptions of race relations, and subjective well-being. Worrying and pessimistic perceptions were both negatively and significantly related to life satisfaction and happiness. Although statistically significant, the magnitude of differences in life satisfaction and happiness were not substantially large.

In the top panel of Table III, we found that often worrying, compared to never, seldom, or sometimes worrying about race relations, was linked to low levels of life satisfaction. And compared to youth that seldom worried about race relations, young people that often worry reported lower levels of happiness. In the bottom panel of Table III, young adults perceiving that white/black relations have been getting worse reported lower levels of life satisfaction compared to those with more optimistic perceptions of race relations. And compared to high school seniors that perceive white/black relations have been getting better, respondents that tend to be pessimistic reported significantly lower levels of happiness.

Relationships Between Worrying, Perceptions, and Well-Being Adjusting for Background Variables

Table IV presents unstandardized coefficients from OLS regressions of life satisfaction and happiness on worrying about race relations and pessimistic perceptions of race relations, adjusting for gender, number of parents in household, urbanicity, region, total weekly

TABLE II

Life satisfaction and happiness (Monitoring the Future, 1996–1997)

	Total	Black	White	Hispanic
How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?				
Completely dissatisfied (1)	1.91%	2.71%	1.65%	2.71%
Quite dissatisfied (2)	5.82%	5.44%	6.14%	4.14%
Somewhat dissatisfied (3)	7.95%	9.90%	7.52%	8.32%
Neither, mixed feelings (4)	13.77%	20.06%	12.02%	17.52%
Somewhat satisfied (5)	24.14%	25.13%	23.64%	26.24%
Quite satisfied (6)	38.15%	26.21%	41.44%	31.21%
Completely satisfied (7)	8.26%	10.56%	7.59%	9.86%
Mean	5.00	4.80	5.05	4.94
Std. dev.	1.41	1.47	1.40	1.42
Weighted N	4,488	635	3,357	496
Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days – would you say you're very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy these days?				
Not too happy (1)	15.51%	26.08%	12.18%	24.41%
Pretty happy (2)	66.27%	65.17%	66.94%	63.14%
Very happy (3)	18.23%	8.76%	20.89%	12.45%
Mean	2.03	1.83	2.09	1.88
Std. dev.	0.58	0.56	0.57	0.60
Weighted N	4,493	642	3,357	494

income, parental education, and religiosity. Worrying about race relations was not statistically linked to life satisfaction in the entire sample after controlling for background variables, but was marginally related to White respondents' life satisfaction. White youth that often worried about race relations were likely to report low levels of life satisfaction. The perception that white/black relations have been getting worse was significantly and negatively associated with life satisfaction level. Regardless of race, young adults who perceived race relations have been getting worse reported low levels of life satisfaction.

TABLE III

Life satisfaction and happiness by worrying about race relations and perceptions of race relations (Monitoring the Future, 1996–1997)

| | Worrying about race relations | | | | |
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	*F*-stat
Life satisfaction (1–7)	5.06	5.05	5.06	4.87	5.73**
Happiness (1–3)	2.03	2.06	2.04	1.99	3.77*

| | Perceptions of race relations | | | | | |
| | | A little | | A little | | |
	Better	better	Same	worse	Worse	*F*-stat
Life satisfaction (1–7)	5.09	5.09	4.93	4.95	4.75	4.82**
Happiness (1–3)	2.13	2.05	2.01	1.98	1.90	8.62**

Worrying about race relations was not significantly linked to happiness once control variables were introduced. On the other hand, holding pessimistic perceptions of race relations was inversely and significantly linked to happiness. White, Black, and Hispanic high school seniors that tended to perceive race relations have been getting worse reported low levels of happiness.

DISCUSSION

We found that 32.1% of high school seniors often worry about race relations, and 7.59% of high school seniors perceive that white/black relations have been getting unequivocally worse. Black youth were more likely than White and Hispanic youth to often worry about race relations. On the other hand, White youth were more likely than Black and Hispanic youth to perceive that white/black relations have been getting at least a little worse.

Most youth were satisfied with their lives and pretty happy, but White young adults were significantly more satisfied and happy than their Black and Hispanic counterparts. Controlling for background variables, we found that worrying about race relations was not significantly linked with satisfaction and happiness. In contrast,

TABLE IV

Unstandardized coefficients from regression of life satisfaction and happiness on worrying, and pessimistic perceptions (Monitoring the Future, 1996–1997)[a]

	Entire sample	Black	White	Hispanic
	Life satisfaction			
1. Worry about race relations	−0.04	0.00	−0.05[+]	0.01
2. B/W relations getting worse	−0.07**	−0.11*	−0.06*	−0.22**
Intercept	4.45	4.26	4.49	4.48
Weighted N	3,857	680	2,803	374
R^2	3.4%	4.67%	3.36%	6.60%
	Happiness			
1. Worry about race relations	0.00	−0.03	0.00	0.04
2. B/W relations getting worse	−0.05**	−0.07**	−0.04**	−0.13**
Intercept	1.93	1.94	1.88	2.17
Weighted N	3,854	686	2,798	370
R^2	5.42%	5.07%	2.41%	6.83%

[+] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$
[a] Adjusted for gender, number of parents in household, urbanicity, region, total weekly income, parental education, and religiosity.

expressing pessimistic perceptions about contemporary race relations was significantly and consistently related to low levels of life satisfaction and happiness. This was especially true among Hispanic young adults who find themselves in an increasingly more influential position regarding interracial politics given the changing demography of the United States.

The relationship between worrying about race relations and subjective well-being was weaker compared to the association between pessimistic perceptions and subjective well-being. This suggests that worrying about racial issues may not be intrinsically pathogenic. Frequent worrying about race relations might be indicative of commitment to dealing with racial conflict, and may differentiate youth that will ultimately determine the course we take toward addressing racial conflict from those youth that are disinterested. Concerned and worried young adults may be

more attuned to the seriousness of white/black conflict and more intensely committed to the fight for racial equality. In future studies, researchers should explore the prospective consequences of holding certain racial perceptions. For example, it would be intriguing to compare the current profiles (e.g., subjective well-being, racial attitudes, health status) of adults that did not worry about race relations during young adulthood with the current profiles of adults that often worried about race relations. Given the seeming permanence of racial inequality (Bell, 1992), worrying and pessimistic appraisals that begin in young adulthood and continue over the life course may become mundane, on-going sources of stress.

Strengths of this study included the use of nationally representative samples and novel results related to racial attitudes and race-related correlates of subjective well-being. There were, however, three limitations that should be explicitly addressed. First, the survey instrument did not include multiple indicators of subjective well-being. We examined how worrying about race relations and pessimistic perceptions of race relations were correlated with two single-item indicators – general life satisfaction and overall happiness. Future studies should investigate relationships between worrying about race relations and other outcomes such as satisfaction with peer relations, negative affect, demoralization, grade point average, self-esteem, and substance use. In addition, explorations of the extent to which pessimistic perceptions of white/black relations explain race differences in life satisfaction and happiness are needed.

Second, there may be reciprocity between worrying about race relations and subjective well-being. For instance, young people that are generally unhappy might be more likely to worry about race relations. Or, youth who are unsatisfied and unhappy may tend to be pessimistic about race relations. And finally, there are other issues (e.g., pollution, school violence, crime) young adults might worry about, which were not included in this study, that may also impact their psychological functioning and mental health (see Muris et al., 1998). For example, worrying about pollution or school violence may be negatively associated with satisfaction and happiness, or may interact with worrying about race relations to jointly influence subjective well-being.

Young People and Racial Conflict

Findings from the current study suggest several important things about the nature of race-related worry and pessimism, and the role young people play in eliminating racial conflict. First, race was correlated with the frequency of worry and the degree of pessimism. Compared to Black youth, White young adults were less likely to worry about race relations but, interestingly, were more likely to perceive that white/black relations have been getting worse. These patterns suggest that contradictory conclusions in the extant literature regarding young adults' perspective on racial issues might be related to the type of question asked (e.g., worrying about race relations versus perceptions of race relations).

Second, historical time period is probably linked to variation in youth's perceptions of race relations and the degree to which they worry about race relations. There are undoubtedly historical periods when youth (and adults) tend to agree about race relations. For example, in the early 1990s, it is likely that worry and pessimism peaked. Events that occurred in the early 1990s (e.g., the alleged rape of Tawana Brawley; release of Spike Lee's movies *Do the Right Thing* and *Malcolm X*; police beating of Rodney King, subsequent Los Angeles riots; murder of Yusef Hawkins in Bensonhurst) may have made the color line more visible, consequently magnifying the need for renewed efforts to address the race problem. In future studies, researchers should plot longitudinal trends in race-related worry and pessimism on a timeline that shows major events of racial conflict.

Third, there may be important experiential (e.g., amount of interracial contact, experiences of discrimination), familial/parental (e.g., race socialization practices), or attitudinal (e.g., conscientiousness, religiosity) variables that are predictive of whether or not young people worry about race relations, and whether or not they believe that race relations are improving. For example, young people that have personally been a victim of racial discrimination (see Rumbaut, 1994) may be more sensitized to racial issues and more likely to worry about race relations. And socio-demographic variables like gender and socioeconomic status may be correlated with expressions of pessimism about improvement in interracial relations.

It is not unreasonable to assume that youth are grappling with racial issues very early in their lives because race influences lived experiences and determines, in part, who we are and to some extent who we can become. By the time children reach young adulthood, they may have already formed opinions, developed attitudes, or had experiences that lead them to worry about race relations, or to be pessimistic and cynical about the possibility of future amicable interracial relations. It is crucial to study how racial issues are perceived and experienced by youth because they will ultimately determine which course we take toward addressing racial conflict, and because race-related perceptions and experiences are predictive of their cognitive and affective states. Young adults, the future hope and embodiment of our nation, are a vulnerable segment of the population, and we must do everything in our power to protect their well-being.

APPENDIX A

Description of background variables

1. Gender: 1 = female; 0 = male.
2. Number parents in household: 0 = none, 1 = 1 parent, 2 = 2 parents.
3. Urbanicity: 1 = farm, 2 = country (not farm), 3 = Non-SMSA, 4 = other SMSA, 5 = Large SMSA.
4. Northeast: 1 = Northeast region, 0 = else.
5. North Central: 1 = North Central region, 0 = else.
6. West: 1 = West region, 0 = else.
7. South: 1 = South region, 0 = else.
8. Total weekly income: Total weekly income from job(s), allowances, etc. 1 = none, 2 = $2-5, 3 = $6-10, 4 = $11-20, 5 = $21-35, 6 = $36-50, 7 = $51-75, 8 = $76-125, 9 = $126.
9. Parental education: What is the highest level of schooling your father completed? What is the highest level of schooling your mother completed? 1 = completed grade school, 2 = some high school, 3 = completed high school, 4 = some college, 5 = competed college, 6 = graduate or professional school after college. Arithmetic average of parents' education.
10. Religiosity: How important is religion in your life? 1 = not important, 2 = a little important, 3 = pretty important, 4 = very important.

APPENDIX B

Zero-order pairwise correlations between worrying, pessimism, subjective well-being, and background variables (Monitoring the Future, 1996–1997).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Worry about race relations	1.00																
2. B/W relations getting worse	0.12**	1.00															
3. Life satisfaction	−0.05**	−0.06**	1.00														
4. Happiness	−0.04*	−0.09**	0.37**	1.00													
5. Black (0 = else)	0.13**	−0.02	−0.06**	−0.14**	1.00												
6. White (0 = else)	−0.08**	0.05**	0.06**	0.18**	−0.70**	1.00											
7. Hispanic (0 = else)	−0.03*	−0.04**	−0.02	−0.09**	−0.14**	−0.61**	1.00										
8. Gender (0 = male; 1 = female)	0.16*	−0.02	−0.03*	−0.05**	0.06**	−0.07**	0.03*	1.00									
9. # Parents/household	−0.01	−0.01	0.09**	0.09**	−0.24**	0.22**	−0.03*	−0.03*	1.00								
10. Urbanicity	0.06**	−0.01	−0.03	−0.05**	0.08**	−0.19**	0.17	0.01	−0.03**	1.00							
11. South (0 = else)	0.05**	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.18**	−0.13**	−0.02	0.01	−0.06**	−0.06**	1.00						
12. Northeast (0 = else)	0.01	0.00	−0.03*	−0.01	−0.11**	0.11**	−0.03*	−0.03*	0.04**	0.16**	−0.38**	1.00					
13. North Central (0 = else)	−0.02**	0.05**	−0.01	0.00	−0.02	0.13**	−0.17**	0.02	0.00	−0.16**	−0.47**	−0.32**	1.00				
14. West (0 = else)	−0.04**	−0.07**	0.02	0.01	−0.09**	−0.12**	0.26	−0.01	0.03*	0.10**	−0.32**	−0.22**	−0.27**	1.00			
15. Total weekly income	−0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.01	−0.05**	−0.06**	−0.04*	0.05**	0.01	0.00	0.04*	−0.05**	1.00		
16. Parental education	0.06**	−0.04**	0.05**	0.09**	−0.06**	0.22**	−0.24**	−0.04*	0.17**	0.04**	0.03*	0.03*	−0.05**	−0.02	−0.05**	1.00	
17. Religiosity	0.07**	−0.04**	0.09**	0.03	0.22**	−0.23**	0.07**	0.10**	0.01	−0.04**	0.18**	−0.17**	−0.05**	0.01	−0.08**	−0.04*	1.00

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