Economic concerns appear to be weak causal predictors of White Political Identity

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Abstract

Where does White political identity originate? Two leading arguments suggest that White identity results from a disruption of the racial status quo. However, they disagree on which disrupted element drives it. While one suggests that White identity comes from concern with disruption to the relative social and political power of Whites, the other suggests that it is the result of concern with increased economic competition between Whites and other racial groups. Using data from the American National Election Study that measure egotropic and sociotropic economic attitudes and leveraging questions gauging attitudes about social and political changes of influence, this manuscript takes advantage of penalized regression for variable selection. On balance, the models suggest that the hypothesis of economic competition is weaker than some suggest. I take this as evidence that White political identity is largely the result of Whites' concerns with protecting the social and political status quo - and not so much economic.

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1 Introduction

Those conducting post-mortem analyses of the 2016 Presidential election of Donald J. Trump, a presidential candidate that personifies White grievance, contend that the stronger than expected presence of non-college educated Whites explains his electoral success (Griffin, Teixeira and Halpin 2017). Analyses by political scientists largely contribute to Trump's success in attracting voters who see their Whiteness as a politically relevant identity where they are distinct from Americans of other racial groups (Jardina, Kalmoe and Gross 2020). For a long time, political scientists saw White political behavior and attitudes through the lens of prejudice. These analyses exclude another dimension of Whites' racial attitudes: their affinity for other Whites. More recently, scholars using the Tajfel and Turner (1986) social psychological framework of identity have challenged this by arguing that some Whites may see their Whiteness as an identity essential and relevant to politics. As a result, while some may express out-group attitudes, they also express an in-group preference for other Whites (Jardina 2019). The source of these in-group preferences remains somewhat unclear.

The leading argument conceptualizes those expressing a positive White political identity as those motivated by group delineation and difference (Jardina 2019) through cultural or other non-materialistic evaluations. Another interpretation of in-group affinity in the debate surrounding social identity theory sees in-group affinity as the result of relative depravation or group competition (see Huddy 2012); that is, a reaction to threats to material status. Those who argue for the latter illustrate this idea of group competition because non-college-educated Whites in 2016, who may be more susceptible to economic hardship and job market

competition, were more supportive of Trump due to their concern about more staunch group competition. Many others disagree and argue that the 2016 electoral base for Trump was about prejudice and discrimination among Whites and that economic correlates are weak causal features (Fahey et al. 2020).

To adjudicate between these two explanations of where White identity comes from in the post-Obama or "post-racial" era of American politics, I rely on the literature on social identity theory. This manuscript examines whether group conflict and feelings of relative material deprivation among Whites increase White identity.

Given the growing body of literature on the implications of White political identity, I contend that the evidence points to measures that capture group differences and concern with social positioning as opposed to materially-based group competition or relative deprivation. There is ample evidence in the literature that many of the precursors for a politically relevant social identity among Whites are present. While group competition and relative deprivation may explain the motivation of some Whites to express in-group affinity, it is much farther from a complete explanation than proponents of it admit.

Using data from 2012, 2016, and 2020 American National Election Studies (ANES), I use common sociotropic (generalized attitudes of the economy, overall) and egotropic (more specific attitudes related to their personal financial situation) measures of an individual's attitudes towards the economy. I then put them in a penalized regression model along with several questions gauging White respondents' feelings of a loss in cultural and political influence. The model provides evidence supporting my expectations that non-material concerns are stronger causal predictors of White identity than economic indicators.

2 White identity as a form of relative deprivation or group difference

There are two camps in the political behavior literature about how the public forms attitudes based on various social identities that they may hold. In-group affinity comes from an individual's preference for those similar to them when group differences (e.g., symbolic, cultural, physical) are salient (Huddy 2012). The first camp suggests that perceived threats to relative social and political power encourage heightened feelings of in-group affinity. The second camp sees in-group affinity as the result of the desire to protect the status of one's group in the presence of competition which comes from a sense of relative deprivation of material status (Huddy 2012). Social identities are not inherently political (Huddy 2001). Social groups may become a politically relevant identity by which individuals use the group as a benchmark to evaluate politics by making these groups salient in political contexts (Huddy 2001; Posner 2005).

Whites see their racial group as a politically-relevant source to guide their attitudes. For an identity to guide political attitudes and behavior, the group difference argument suggests that there must be a delineation between the groups and that it is salient (Huddy 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Whites not only see race as a dimension dividing Americans in politics, but they also tend to rely on racial evaluations to form their politically-relevant attitudes (Knowles et al. 2014; Nelson and Kinder 1996). Despite the extensive examination of Whites' prejudiced attitudes in the literature, not all racial evaluations focus on the out-group. Americans tend to engage in ethnocentrism, where discrimination arises due to a preference for the in-group (Kinder and Kam 2010). Many Whites exhibit

a psychological attachment to other Whites (Wong and Cho 2005; Schildkraut 2017) and express linked fate in political contexts (Berry, Ebner and Cornelius 2019).

As these differences are salient, one camp argues that White identity is a reaction to a change in the relative social and political power that the racial groups hold. The election of the first Black President represents a shift in the relative political power that racial groups have (Berry, Ebner and Cornelius 2019); Whites reacted with hostility toward Obama (Tesler 2016). Whites exhibit lower levels of support for non-White candidates to protect their political interests (Petrow, Transue and Vercellotti 2018). In response, non-White political candidates change strategies to emphasize that they are not beholden to non-White interests to appease these concerns among Whites (Stephens-Dougan 2020). In non-electoral settings, Whites' attitudes on immigration policies are more conservative when facing more cultural heterogeneity but not more job competition. Whites also are more likely to report that they feel that Whites are discriminated against (Schildkraut 2017) and are less willing to work towards racial equality when these differences are salient, even when they characterize themselves as racially progressive (Schildkraut 2019). While racial animus certainly drives many of these phenomena, Jardina (2019) demonstrates that in-group attitudes do as well.

Others seem to attribute these attitudes and behaviors to economic competition. They argue that the homogenization of Whites' attitudes and behaviors is not the result of group differences, but instead, it is due to concerns about economic status and threats (Wetts and Willer N.d.). These authors directly tie concerns about economic or material competition and the threat of relative economic deprivation to the rise in a White political identity. For example, some

provide evidence suggesting that the rise of the tea party movement during the Obama presidency is a result of Whites' concerns about their long-term economic status (Willer, Feinberg and Wetts 2016). Others link this rise in White political identity to support for Donald Trump in the 2016 election due to concern for group status (Mutz 2018). These arguments do not imply real economic hardship as a necessary cause for one to use relative deprivation as a motivator for the uptake of White political identity, but that concern for status is sufficient.

Group competition and relative deprivation predict an individual's propensity to exhibit more in-group affinity. Experiencing anxiety about one's status and the prospect of higher competition can encourage individuals to seek security by turning to those who resemble them (Bobo 1983; Huddy 2012). Some attribute the increasing homogenization of Whites' attitudes to those who support Trump's messages of economic isolationism (Bunyasi 2019) and the movement to less support for liberal immigration policy (Hopkins 2010).

If Whites express in-group favoritism for other Whites due to group competition, we should expect that economic attitudes predict White political identity where the economy is sluggish. Suppose Whites' concerns with the racial status quo explain White political identity. In that case, we should see that even in times of economic sluggishness and success, attitudes related to changes to the societal equilibrium predict White political identity. Both hypotheses present White identity as a response to a punctuated equilibrium, a change in the racial status quo. However, the two hypotheses take different stances on where the imbalance arises.

In short, there is a plethora of evidence in support of the first hypothesis: Whites react to changes in political power and anticipating the effects of those reactions weigh on political candidates. Though there certainly appear to be con-

nections to the economy, it may be that the economy is simply a proxy for general political and social power as economic power tends to correlate positively with political influence (?). To examine the plausibility of such a claim, I turn to the American National Election Study. Before describing the particular methodology I employ to test the hypothesis, I first justify the use of the particular studies that I use to test my claims.

3 Data

Donald J. Trump's success with tapping into White grievances characterize the 2016 Presidential election cycle (Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2018; Jardina, Kalmoe and Gross 2020). In contrast, Whites' racist attitudes toward Obama characterize the 2012 Presidential election (Tesler 2016). In 2012, the economy was slowly recovering from the Great Recession that Obama inherited after his 2008 electoral success, and Trump inherited a markedly different economy. Both of these contexts depict a very different state of politics and the focus of messaging. The 2020 Election cycle represents one where the economy was suffering due to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and where President Trump spoke to Whites' grievances.

If the argument is that material concerns predict White identity, then we should expect that these factors matter in at least 2012 and, in particular, 2020, when the future is much less certain. Additionally, as racial resentment was high among Whites during the 2012 election cycle, separating out-group resentment from in-group preferences will be easier. In 2016 and 2020, concerns about shifting demographics in the United States represented a social and political change

in the status quo for Whites. Trump's messages primarily focused on bringing his, and his supporters, view of America back. To stop the change and to revert to a time where Whites were secure in their outsized social and political power (Bunyasi 2019). As it appears that White political identity is a more recent trend, most associated with the era of Trump, it should be a strong test of White political identity as a reflection of in-group concern for the loss of social and political power.

The 2012, 2016, and 2020 American National Election Studies (ANES) are nationally representative studies that capture several questions that lend themselves to testing the relationship between economic, social, and political concerns. While the 2012 and 2016 ANES do not have questions with the accepted battery of questions measuring White political identity, both include an item that gets at the concept's core by presenting a Likert scale asking respondents to report how important being White is to their identity.

As the ANES has done for a while, the three studies ask respondents several questions about retrospective and prospective, egotropic, and sociotropic economic attitudes. For sociotropic questions, it asked whether one felt the economy was better a year ago (-2 = Much worse, 2 = Much better) and whether it will be better a year from now (-2 = Much worse, 2 = Much better). They also asked whether the respondent's perceptions of unemployment in the country had gotten better or worse in the past year (-2 = Much worse, 2 = Much better). They asked about egotropic economic attitudes as well. They asked whether they were worried about their family's finances (-2 = Not at all, 2 = Extremely).

The ANES also asked about the respondent's perceptions of future directions for the country regarding political and social influence among racial groups. Respondents report their attitudes as to whether they felt that Whites currently

have too little or too much influence on politics today (-1 = too little, 0 = just about right, 1 = too much), whether the government was biased against Whites or Blacks (-1 = favor Whites, 0 = neither, 1 = favor Blacks), whether Whites face discrimination (-2 = strongly disagree, 2 = strongly agree), whether new lifestyles are breaking societal traditions (-2 = strongly disagree, 2 = strongly agree)[1]. The studies also use the standard 4-item battery for racial resentment by averaging responses across items. The ANES also recorded a number of demographic questions of the respondents, such as their partisan identification (1 = strong Democrat, 7 = strong Republican), their age, level of education, and whether they were female or male. Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3 present descriptive statistics of these variables for each of the datasets, along with information about the proportion of observations for a given measure that is recorded as a missing value.

Given the current position of the literature, the 2020 ANES should offer the most robust test of whether material concerns explain the uptake in White political identity as the economy was poor at the time and still faced significant uncertainty about its ability to rebound in the future. It should also provide a strong test of the role social and political changes have on predicting White political identity. However, the 2012 and 2016 studies serve different purposes for my analysis. The 2012 election came along with the tea party movement that expressed significant racial animus toward Obama and blamed him directly for the recession. Though Trump ran in both the 2016 and 2020 elections and as an incumbent in 2020, Trump's message may focus retrospectively on his performance. In 2016, however, this language was more about bringing (White) America back. To recognize these possibilities, the three studies help account for these different contextual features

[1]This particular question was asked only in the 2012 and 2016 studies.

not measured by the ANES.

The summary of the literature points to a large number of potential predictors that influence the degree to which one takes on White political identity. To adjudicate between hypotheses, there is value in a comprehensive model that considers the plausibility of each. Most models consider those predictors they believe are most plausible and do not include others that the researcher believes to be less plausible. They understandably do this out of concern with increases in the inefficiency of one's regression estimates the more predictors you include and therefore increases the risk of overfitting your model to your particular sample, thereby erroneously generalizing conclusions drawn from the model. Though this concern is reasonable, such a model necessarily neglects to examine the effects of the predictors a researcher believes to be less plausible.

Penalized regression models are helpful for the task of balancing concerns arising from such situations. In ordinary least squares regression, the maximization task is to minimize the sum of squared errors. The general goal of all penalized regression is to place a constraint on the predictors by using a shrinkage parameter to drag the coefficients toward zero. Using the classic "optimization" approach to penalized regression, the task is often to use cross-validation to determine a value for this shrinkage parameter which balances overfitting the model and producing point estimates that are not overly biased. While different penalized regression estimators perform this task differently, they are a valuable set of tools for variable selection. Those variables with small coefficients dragged toward zero by the shrinkage term represent small or inconsequential effects of their predictors. While such an approach introduces bias, it decreases the chances of overfitting the model and drawing incorrect generalizations from it.

As the goal here is not necessarily to detect the true effect of a given predictor, but rather the goal is to reduce this "overfitting" of our model so that we might examine which among these many predictors have causal value. With that in mind, I elect to use a penalized regression as my test of the claims that non-material indicators of influence are stronger predictors of White political identity. The literature surveyed above suggests that there are a small number of variables that do predict White political identity, and there are many others that have no effect. This implies that the L2 regularization parameter equals 0. This is because the L2 regularization parameter shrinks coefficients asymptotically toward zero. The L1 regularization parameter, however, does allow for a shrinkage parameter to pull coefficients to 0. Given this, it suggests that the more appropriate model to capture this debate would be the LASSO penalized regression.

One option for implementation is to use the "classical" LASSO, which relies on an optimization procedure through cross-validation. It is a frequentist approach to LASSO penalized regression. However, there are several positive benefits to the second implementation of the LASSO penalized regression in a Bayesian framework (see van Erp, Oberski and Mulder 2019). From my review of the literature, I have apriori expectations for the distribution of effects on my predictors in the form of a Laplace distribution which I explicitly define in my prior density function. I also have the additional benefit of having the ability to define its hyperparameters. Meaning I suspect that there is a peak around zero and that there are relatively large tails. This characterization of my prior fits with that of the Lasso - there are a large number of included predictors that have zero effect with a relatively smaller proportion of included predictors that do have an effect but are relatively unsure as to how large those coefficients might be. I can specify the scale of that uncertainty

by specifying a hyperparameter for this LASSO prior. Without having to perform cross-validation as I would with the classical LASSO, my posterior distribution naturally reflects the uncertainty around the size of my L2 shrinkage parameter and can estimate models with different L2 shrinkage parameters simultaneously. As stan includes implementations of this model, I rely on Hamiltonian Monte Carlo, a type of Markov Chain Monte Carlo sampling which allows for non-convexity in the L2 shrinkage parameters. As classical LASSO models are challenging to interpret due to cross-validation, using credible intervals offers a much less error-prone interpretation.

My measure of White Identity is ordinal. Though White Identity as a concept is likely continuous, through the specification of a cumulative density function with a logit link, my model bins this latent continuous space based on the number of response options. Though it creates a more complicated computational task, it is a more appropriate model specification given the available measure and my assumptions about the concept (Liddell and Kruschke 2018).

As missing data are a pervasive problem in many surveys, potentially leading researchers to erroneous conclusions, I performed a form of Multiple Imputation called Multiple Imputation with Chained Equations and used a random forest as the basis of the procedure. As this approach is a more flexible imputation procedure, it likely reduces the chances of model dependence relative to standard and conditional multiple imputation procedures that rely on stronger assumptions (van Buuren and Groothuis-Oudshoorn 2011; Roberts 2022). This procedure results in 10 imputed datasets. Using brm_multiple, I simultaneously fit my Bayesian LASSO on each dataset and pool the results. This reflects the uncertainty that I would have gotten using just one model. However, it also reports uncertainty gen-

erated from the imputation procedure, reflected in my reported credible intervals.

One drawback with this particular approach is that my normalized split-$\hat{R}$ will likely be greater than the widely recognized 1.01 cutoff indicating model convergence as the result of the multiply imputed datasets. The results of the same model but using listwise deletion results in similar substantive conclusions (see Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6) while returning normalized split-$\hat{R}$ of 1.00 for each of my estimates. As I can come to the same conclusions comparing the complete case and imputed models for the three studies, I feel comfortable that this indicator of non-convergence is likely a false-negative and that I am drawing valid inferences from my models.

Figure 1 presents the estimates of my fitted ordinal models with the lasso shrinkage prior[2]. I estimated these models with 6 chains and 2000 iterations each. To determine whether a particular predictor "matters" for predicting White political identity, I examine the estimated credible intervals, which report the probability that the true estimate falls within the estimated range. I construct these credible intervals by reporting estimates between the 2.5% and 97.5% quantiles. This means that for a given credible interval, there is a 95% probability that the true value falls within that range. For values outside of the range of the credible interval, it is relatively implausible that the given value is the true value.

3.1 Evidence from a penalized regression

As I set out expecting 2012 and 2020 to be the more generous cases for the group competition and relative deprivation hypothesis, these results are somewhat underwhelming. The 2012 model suggests that retrospective evaluations of the economy

[2]Table 7 presents the table of results.

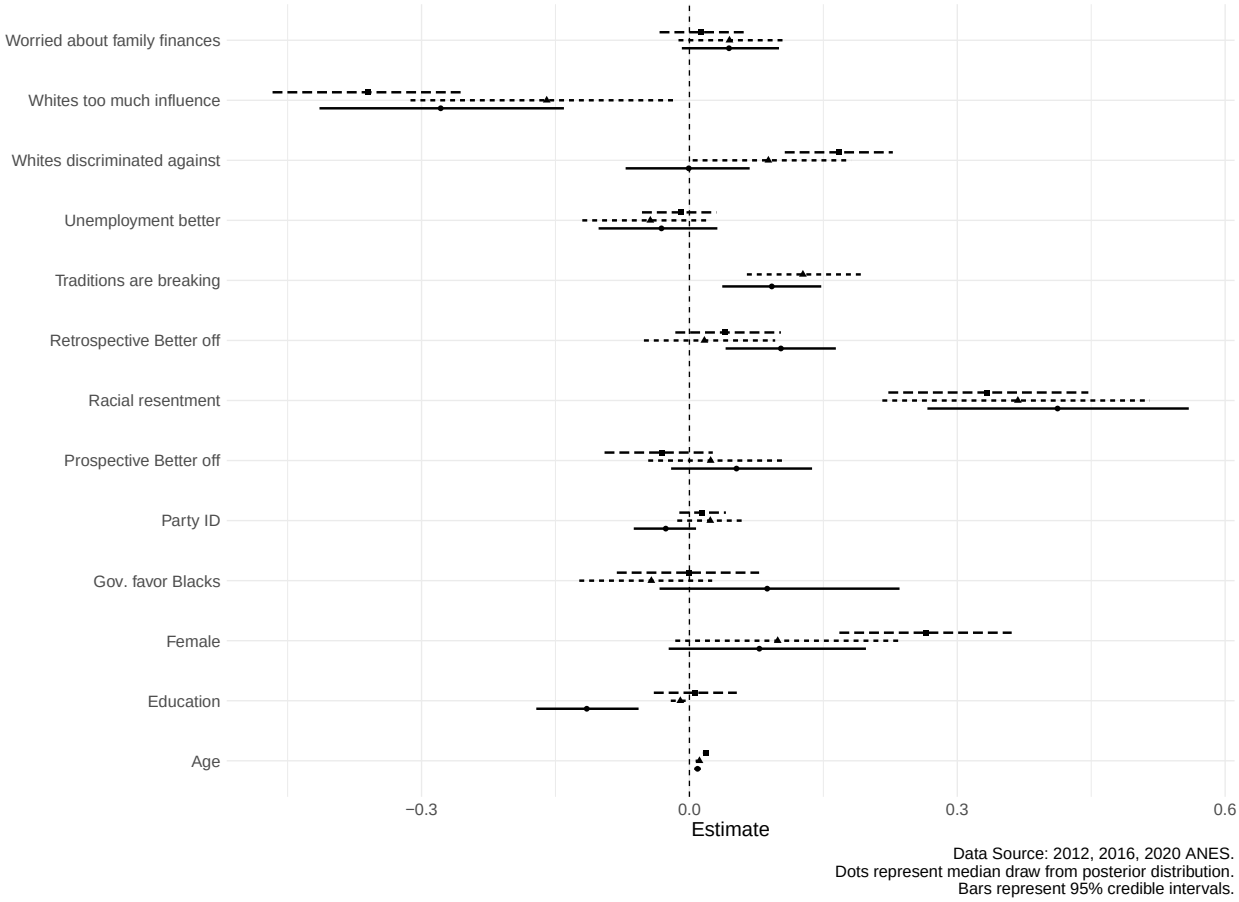

Figure 1: Economic attitudes are weak predictors of White political identity

have a positive and non-zero effect on predicting one's White identity. That is, those who report that they feel that the economy was better off last year report a higher sense of connection with being White to their identity. Considering the political context, this is not surprising. During the 2012 Presidential Election cycle, the Tea Party movement framed their messaging on the economy's slow recovery by blaming Obama. Tapping into racial animus toward Obama, these messages would put racial attitudes for Whites at the forefront and connect the economy to their racial attitudes. However, when investigating other economic attitudes, the model suggests that it is quite plausible that, overall, they have relatively little impact on predicting White political identity. What seems to matter in 2012 are non-material factors such as expressing feelings that Blacks have too much influence on politics, that traditions are breaking because of changes in society, and racial resentment. The model also suggests that those with lower levels of education report that being White is more important to their identity. As education indirectly affects socioeconomic status, this may indicate that economic considerations had some effect on White identity. However, as we see with the 2016 and 2020 models, the two economic factors that matter here do not matter in 2016 and 2020.

The 2016 and 2020 models suggest that economic attitudes have little influence on White political identity. Unlike the 2012 model, the 2016 and 2020 models suggest that it is quite plausible that retrospective and prospective evaluations of the economy have no effects on White political identity. Instead, those who agree with statements such as Blacks have more influence, traditions are breaking because of societal changes (2016 only; question not asked in 2020), that whites face discrimination, and those who express racial resentment are more likely to be

White political identifiers.

Overall, the evidence from these models suggests that non-material attitudes act as more reliable predictors of whether one reports that being White is important to their identity. The results also provide another interesting insight: White political identity has become more focused on non-material concerns than economic ones. This fits with other claims which suggest that Whites are shifting their racial attitudes toward protecting the racial status quo as the U.S. transitions into a minority-majority.

4 Conclusion

Though some suggest that the popularity of messages expressing White grievance politics is the result of a growth in White political identity in those most susceptible to loss in economic status, it appears that this may not be the case. Though Whites might have negative perceptions of the economy's performance and feel that this affects their pocketbook, these factors have less to do with explaining White political identity than concerns about broader political change. As an economic system protects Whites (Painter 2010), a loss in political and social power threatens not just their ability to protect the racial status quo. They suggest that Whites expressing a White political identity are doing so because they are unhappy with the loss of relative political power they have had over other Americans.

Of course, readers should not take the evidence presented here as conclusive evidence that egotropic and sociotropic economic evaluations do not drive white identity. Indeed, there are many other ways in which scholars can and should tackle this question. For example, examining economic and demographic shifts

closer to home seems to be a valuable potential path. This enables one to examine whether localized changes in the economic fortunes of one's community or whether changes to the racial composition of that same community predict the prevalence of individuals reporting a White political identity. Other scholars should continue to examine this question as it seemingly is an important contributor to the division in American politics and is a well that politicians appear to be tapping into to secure their base of electoral support.

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5 Appendix

Table 1: 2012 Descriptive Statistics

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
White identity	6	7	2.8	1.3	1.0	3.0	5.0
Retrospective Better Off	6	1	−0.2	1.2	−2.0	−1.0	2.0
Prospective Better Off	5	2	0.2	0.8	−1.0	0.0	2.0
Unemployment better	6	1	−0.3	1.1	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Worried about family finacnes	6	7	−0.3	1.2	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Whites too much influence	4	7	0.1	0.5	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Gov. favor Blacks	4	8	0.3	0.5	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Racial Resentment	18	7	0.0	0.5	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Whites discrimminated against	6	7	−0.8	0.9	−2.0	−1.0	2.0
Traditions are breaking	6	7	0.5	1.3	−2.0	1.0	2.0
Party ID	8	0	4.2	2.1	1.0	4.0	7.0
Female	2	0	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0
Age	74	0	51.6	17.2	−2.0	54.0	90.0
Education	6	1	3.1	1.1	1.0	3.0	5.0

Table 2: 2016 Descriptive Statistics

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
White identity	6	15	2.6	1.3	1.0	3.0	5.0
Retrospective Better Off	6	0	0.0	1.0	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Prospective Better Off	6	1	0.2	0.8	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Unemployment better	6	0	0.0	1.0	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Worried about family finacnes	6	14	−0.4	1.2	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Whites too much influence	4	15	0.2	0.5	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Gov. favor Blacks	4	15	0.2	0.9	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Racial Resentment	18	14	0.0	0.5	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Whites discrimminated against	5	18	2.0	0.8	1.0	2.0	4.0
Traditions are breaking	6	14	0.3	1.4	−2.0	1.0	2.0
Party ID	8	0	4.2	2.1	1.0	4.0	7.0
Female	3	1	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0
Age	74	2	51.3	17.6	18.0	53.0	90.0
Education	18	0	11.9	7.1	1.0	11.0	95.0

Table 3: 2020 Descriptive Statistics

	Unique (#)	Missing (%)	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
White identity	6	11	2.4	1.3	1.0	2.0	5.0
Retrospective Better Off	6	0	0.1	1.0	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Prospective Better Off	6	1	0.3	0.8	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Unemployment better	6	0	−1.1	1.3	−2.0	−2.0	2.0
Worried about family finacnes	6	0	−0.9	1.1	−2.0	−1.0	2.0
Whites too much influence	4	12	0.3	0.6	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Gov. favor Blacks	4	12	−0.3	0.7	−1.0	0.0	1.0
Racial Resentment	18	10	0.0	0.5	−2.0	0.0	2.0
Whites discrimminated against	6	11	2.1	1.0	1.0	2.0	5.0
Party ID	8	0	4.2	2.3	1.0	4.0	7.0
Female	3	0	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.0	1.0
Age	64	3	53.5	17.1	18.0	56.0	80.0
Education	6	1	3.4	1.1	1.0	3.0	5.0

Table 4: 2012 LASSO with Listwise Deletion

	2012 LWD
Economic	
Retrospective Better Off	0.107
	[0.044, 0.171]
Unemployment better	−0.043
	[−0.117, 0.021]
Worried about family finances	0.038
	[−0.015, 0.098]
Whites too much influence	−0.255
	[−0.394, −0.117]
Non-material	
Gov. favor Blacks	0.075
	[−0.044, 0.226]
Racial Resentment	0.415
	[0.263, 0.565]
Whites discriminated against	0.005
	[−0.061, 0.074]
Traditions are breaking	0.104
	[0.046, 0.160]
Demographics	
Party ID	−0.032
	[−0.071, 0.004]
Female	0.078
	[−0.029, 0.206]
Age	0.009
	[0.005, 0.013]
Education	−0.127
	[−0.186, −0.069]
Thresholds	
Threshold 1	−1.305
	[−1.649, −0.959]
Threshold 2	−0.327
	[−0.672, 0.007]
Threshold 3	0.879
	[0.538, 1.218]
Threshold 4	2.131
	[1.778, 2.484]
N	3040

Data source: 2012 American National Election Study.

95% Credible intervals in brackets.

Median estimate from fitted model with 6 chains and 2000 iterations.

Table 5: 2016 LASSO with Listwise Deletion

	2016 LWD
Economic	
Retrospective Better Off	0.035
	[−0.042, 0.126]
Prospective Better off	0.019
	[−0.055, 0.105]
Unemployment better	−0.057
	[−0.137, 0.015]
Worried about family finances	0.038
	[−0.021, 0.107]
Non-material	
Whites too much influence	−0.190
	[−0.358, −0.033]
Gov. favor Blacks	−0.078
	[−0.173, 0.007]
Racial Resentment	0.365
	[0.203, 0.524]
Whites discriminated against	0.092
	[0.005, 0.184]
Demographics	
Traditions are breaking	0.138
	[0.070, 0.207]
Party ID	0.029
	[−0.010, 0.069]
Female	0.086
	[−0.028, 0.236]
Age	0.011
	[0.007, 0.016]
Thresholds	
Education	−0.013
	[−0.024, −0.002]
Threshold 1	−0.253
	[−0.635, 0.140]
Threshold 2	0.565
	[0.190, 0.967]
Threshold 3	1.748
	[1.363, 2.161]
Threshold 4	2.992
	[2.589, 3.411]
N	2340

Data source: 2016 American National Election Study.

95% Credible intervals in brackets.

Median estimate from fitted model with 6 chains and 2000 iterations.

Table 6: 2020 LASSO with Listwise Deletion

	2020 LWD
Economic	
Retrospective Better Off	0.041
	[−0.015, 0.105]
Prospective Better off	−0.031
	[−0.098, 0.029]
Unemployment better	−0.014
	[−0.058, 0.027]
Worried about family finances	0.018
	[−0.031, 0.073]
Non-material	
Whites too much influence	−0.345
	[−0.461, −0.229]
Gov. favor Blacks	0.001
	[−0.080, 0.087]
Racial Resentment	0.333
	[0.220, 0.445]
Whites discriminated against	0.175
	[0.111, 0.236]
Demographics	
Party ID	0.022
	[−0.005, 0.050]
Female	0.264
	[0.159, 0.370]
Age	0.019
	[0.015, 0.022]
Education	0.001
	[−0.043, 0.046]
Thresholds	
Threshold 1	0.802
	[0.465, 1.132]
Threshold 2	1.691
	[1.350, 2.023]
Threshold 3	2.896
	[2.546, 3.230]
Threshold 4	4.083
	[3.718, 4.436]
N	4911

Data source: 2020 American National Election Study.

95% Credible intervals in brackets.

Median estimate from fitted model with 6 chains and 2000 iterations.

Table 7: The predictive influence of non-matieral factors on White Identity

	2012 ANES	2016 ANES	2020 ANES
Economic			
Retrospective Better Off	0.102	0.017	0.040
	[0.041, 0.164]	[−0.051, 0.096]	[−0.016, 0.102]
Prospective Better off	0.053	0.024	−0.031
	[−0.020, 0.137]	[−0.046, 0.107]	[−0.095, 0.026]
Unemployment better	−0.031	−0.044	−0.010
	[−0.102, 0.031]	[−0.120, 0.021]	[−0.053, 0.030]
Worried about family finances	0.044	0.045	0.013
	[−0.008, 0.100]	[−0.012, 0.107]	[−0.033, 0.064]
Non-material			
Whites too much influence	−0.279	−0.160	−0.360
	[−0.414, −0.141]	[−0.312, −0.016]	[−0.467, −0.251]
Gov. favor Blacks	0.087	−0.043	0.000
	[−0.033, 0.235]	[−0.123, 0.025]	[−0.081, 0.078]
Racial Resentment	0.412	0.368	0.333
	[0.267, 0.559]	[0.216, 0.516]	[0.223, 0.447]
Whites discriminated against	−0.001	0.088	0.168
	[−0.071, 0.067]	[0.004, 0.181]	[0.107, 0.228]
Demographics			
Traditions are breaking	0.092	0.127	
	[0.037, 0.148]	[0.064, 0.196]	
Party ID	−0.027	0.023	0.014
	[−0.062, 0.007]	[−0.014, 0.063]	[−0.011, 0.041]
Female	0.078	0.099	0.265
	[−0.023, 0.198]	[−0.016, 0.239]	[0.168, 0.361]
Age	0.009	0.011	0.018
	[0.005, 0.013]	[0.007, 0.015]	[0.015, 0.021]
Thresholds			
Education	−0.115	−0.010	0.006
	[−0.171, −0.057]	[−0.021, 0.000]	[−0.040, 0.053]
Threshold 1	−1.202	−0.194	0.787
	[−1.517, −0.887]	[−0.570, 0.184]	[0.459, 1.114]
Threshold 2	−0.250	0.586	1.663
	[−0.563, 0.064]	[0.210, 0.963]	[1.335, 1.993]
Threshold 3	0.958	1.756	2.864
	[0.644, 1.273]	[1.369, 2.146]	[2.530, 3.199]
Threshold 4	2.212	2.948	4.057
	[1.888, 2.537]	[2.545, 3.357]	[3.712, 4.403]
N	3509	3038	5963

Data Source: 2012, 2016, and 2020 American National Election Study.

95% Credible intervals in brackets.

Median estimate from fitted model with 6 chains and 2000 iterations.