

Economic threat and social threat conjointly driving white identification

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Abstract

White political identity has broad impacts on candidate and policy support in the United States. There have been a number of attempts to explain where white political identity comes from using a social identity theory framework. One of these arguments is that economic or material competition or threat to status drive white individuals to seek a group to blame for negatively valenced responses - often coming down to blaming non-white racial groups. The other argument contends that white political identity comes from a broader set of social threats that include more sociotropic, cultural, and political forms of a loss in power or status in the United States. In seeking to strike a balance between these two popular arguments, I argue that white political identity comes from both concerns about one's personal finances and from more sociotropic concerns relating to their ability to live comfortably. Testing this argument, I use data from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies in conjunction with congressional district-level demographics from the American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. From these analyses, I find broad support for my hypotheses. I do find, however, that these pocketbook factors are not accentuated when their effects are mediated with the amount of racially heterogeneity in the respondent's congressional district. These results suggest a need for scholars to consider how social and material threats interact to drive white political identity and the outcomes stemming from it.

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1 Introduction

Several scholars contend that the ways in which whites are behaving in politics follows what one may predict from Tajfel and Turner's (?) theory of social identity. To be clear, I am referring to the use of whites' behavior to protect the in-group - other whites. This follows the conceptualization of white identity used by scholars like Jardina (?). For the remainder of the manuscript, when I use the term white identity, I am referring to in-group behavior intended for maintaining whites' relative political standing. While this concept has been defined well and scholars seem to agree on that point, it is still somewhat unclear as to what is driving this behavior, however.

There are two popular arguments explaining why whites are behaving in a way that appears to be intended for protecting white status. First, some may claim that whites are behaving in this way because they are concerned about their material status. This argument implies that white identity comes from whites who are poor or are concerned about either actualized economic threat (e.g. losing jobs, having relatively low education which means that they lose out on opportunities in an increasingly competitive market, having relatively low incomes) or are more sociotropic in that they are concerned about the threat eventually effecting their pocketbook. The second popular argument is that whites are not concerned with economic threats at all, but are instead turning toward behavior comporting with white identification because of social identity threats. This argument implies that whites turn to in-group behavior based on race due to concerns with their overall standing in the United States - not just on their economic standing. This argument then suggests that white identity comes from prejudice that is not simply rooted in feeling left out on job opportunities, but that it is that whites want to maintain power and influence in the United States and in its political system.

This manuscript seeks to strike a balance between these two arguments. Others have made recent attempts to strike such a balance between these two arguments. In studying support for populist ideas and candidates, Rhodes-Purdy and their colleagues (?) contend that economic events stimulating affect can activate cultural discontent. This manuscript follows this framework. While current conceptualizations of white identity, as mentioned before, are defined as in-group orientation, explanations for the sources of white identity seem to focus heavily on evaluations of the out-group as the conversionary factor for white individuals. In making this argument, I follow the model specifications of other scholars sticking to the in-group conceptualization of white identity. As I will highlight in the following section, approaches viewing white identity as a bundle of expressed attitudes and behaviors meant to protect the in-group has yet to fully explore the sources of it. Likewise, those who have sought to study the sources of it have yet to look at sources of white identity beyond expressed prejudice among white individuals. While doing this, I also explore the relationship between pocketbook or economic realities converts whites to a politically relevant white identity or whether sociotropic or perceived economic outcomes do this as well. Discussion as to why I make this distinction is elaborated upon in a later section of the manuscript.

Following that discussion, I use data from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies to test whether outside of racial prejudice, whites convert to claiming a politically relevant white identity based on economic concerns. From those analyses, I find support for the two arguments: (1) white identifiers express more racial resentment than white s who do not claim a white identity and for those white identifiers who do not harbor high levels of racial resentment, (2) class matters in converting whites to a white political identity. Further, my analyses discover that economics - both pocketbook (actual) and sociotropic (percieved) - becomes less important in 2016. Instead, white

identifiers are much more Republican and conservative in 2016. These findings comport with my expectations that stem from the extant literature.

2 Conceptualizing a white political identity

The history of what defines one as white in the United States has a long and complicated history. In short, whiteness has been meant to encapsulate those from ethnic and religious groups deemed to be desirable. Further, legalistic definitions in the 19th century were used to persecute those deemed to not be saxton to keep them from gaining meaningful employment, and experienced physical violence. While definitions at this time often depended on what academic circles you were most exposed to, at the time, the Irish, Italians, those from countries in the Mediterranean, Jews, and Eastern Europeans were all considered non-staxton and therefore un-American (?). While these classifications appear confusing to contemporary Americans, many of these determinants were wrapped up in class (?). The ways in which these groups were discriminated against comport with the two common forms of economic ethnic antagonism - efforts to reduce the immigration of these groups and when that fails, to exclude these groups from certain types of work by establishing a form of caste system (see ?). As debates raged through the centuries about who was deemed white both culturally (see ?) and in the legal system (see ?), critical race theorists have advocated for people to define their race based on their personal narrative of who they are (?).

Those who can and have defined themselves as white have long held more similar racial attitudes than what some political scientists have historically let on. As it turns out, however, whites not only see race, but they tend to rely on racial evaluations for attitude formation (?). One ingredient to theories rooted in social identity theory or

social categorization theory is that there has to be a delineation between the groups and members of the in-group have to recognize the delineation (?). It is well known that whites engage in this. Whites have a psychological attachment to other whites (?) and express a linked fate (?). In doing so, whites evaluate politics both as a prejudice toward non-whites (???????) and as a way of self-preservation (???????)

Distinguishing white identity as a political identity from other concepts in political science has been very aptly done by Jardina (?)¹. Following that conceptualization, this paper sees white identity as an in-group process by which whites seek the self-preservation of their group (?). As a social identity, it implies the presence of prejudice against an out-group (???). This prejudice, or ethnocentrism, has often been measured using a racial resentment scale in political science (???). White identity, instead, is measured as an affinity towards other whites (?) which comports with common recommendations by social psychologists for establishing the presence of an individual's claiming of a membership with a group (?). That is, out-group attitudes have been conceptualized as ethnocentrism or racism, whereas white identity requires one to express an in-group affinity. Not all whites claim a white identity, but may still participate in racist behavior (???). Likewise, not all of those who have a strong group identity need to participate by behaving in a way that demonstrates or harbor hostility toward members of the out-group (?). Indeed, white identifiers can be racist and certainly racists can be white identifiers. The difference is, that white identifiers do not all have to score highly in ethnocentrism. Given this, white identity should not be conflated with prejudice nor should observed behaviors and attitudes comporting with out-group hostility be assumed to be indicators of the presence of white identity. This is easier said than done, however. Behavior and attitudes expressing hostility toward members of an out-group

¹See also Wong and Cho (?)

often come with the benefit of benefiting the in-group (see ?, as an example). While it is tricky to isolate these two behaviors, the following section demonstrates how from a conceptual standpoint they are different. But as the discussion above illustrated, measurement is also important for distinguishing between in-and-out-group behaviors and attitudes.

3 Leading arguments for what converts whites to white identity?

3.1 Social identity threats

It is no secret that scholars studying political behavior remain divided on whether various group-based attitudes and behavior are shaped by social identity threats or whether they are driven by material threats. The study of white political identity is no different. In studying support for Donald Trump in his 2016 Presidential bid, not necessarily white identifiers, Mutz (?) contends that support came from anxiety from high-status groups (whites, Christians, and men) stemming from growing racial diversity and a globalizing economy. Bartels (?) contends that Republican support for anti-democratic policy is driven by ethnic antagonism as opposed to any form of economic conservatism or concern for economic status. Others have made similar arguments - when examining white identifiers in particular - against the left-behind hypothesis by arguing that anti-immigration attitudes among white Americans are largely attributable to sociotropic concerns about the cultural and political impacts an influx of immigration would have on the United States.

Research making this argument is undoubtedly picking up on white anxiety. It re-

mains somewhat unclear, however, if the literature making this argument is picking up on out-group animosity, however. When exposed to information making salient estimates that the U.S. will become a minority-majority country by 2042, hypotheses related to motivated social cognition theory found support. That is, whites became more concerned about their political and societal status when presented with this information (?). Others have supported this finding but have also demonstrated that it increases both explicit and implicit racial bias (?). Undoubtedly, the Republican political agenda has been, for some time now, anti-immigration. These messages are laced with dehumanizing and out-group oriented language (?). Experiments reminding respondents of racial demographic shifts find that, in addition to the findings cited a few sentences earlier, that it drives support for Republican and conservative positions on immigration and it makes respondents more likely to claim to be a Republican and a conservative (?).

3.2 Material threats

Arguments in support of the left behind thesis or for material threat have centered more on white identity as a form of self-preservation. One popular argument supporting the material threats hypothesis as a motivator of white identity contends that competition for jobs in the labor market drive concerns for the ability for the higher-status group to maintain a leg up in the market (?). Arguing in support for the competitive perspective to intergroup relations, Giles and Evans (?) contend that external threats enhance in-group solidarity and identity among members of the group feeling threatened. When examining linked fate's role in this, concerns about continued employment increase one's feelings that their interests are tied to the interest of the group as a whole (?). Support for Trump came from whites who expressed concern about the perceived decline in

economic status for whites (?).

Not all of those who take this position only study effects aligning with group preservation, however. For example, Malhotra and colleagues find that in sectors where H1-B visas are common and recipients of those visas are highly competitive in the labor market for that sector, white Americans who work in the sector often become more concerned with immigration policy and tend to harbor more negative attitudes towards it (?). This perspective, however, demonstrates a value added in that it has studied how white political attitudes and behaviors have both an in- and a out-group dynamic. The next section intends to explain the way in which these two perspectives may be used together as a way to explain where white political identity, as conceptualized as a set of behaviors and attitudes comporting to in-group preservation, comes from.

4 Identifying the possible sources of white political identity

The literature surveyed above demonstrates a need to bridge the gap between understanding where white identifiers attitudes come from by keeping a consistent conceptualization. In terms of studying race as a social identity, where there are established group boundaries, evaluations of deservingness of resources often come into play when resources are deemed to be scarce (??). Furthermore, whites react negatively to politicians who spark anxiety about whether whites will continue to hold political and societal influence in politics (???). Those who claim that being white is important to them often support policies that are beneficial to whites (?).

Central to group behavior for whites, and in general, is this idea of feeling that one,

by proxy of their group, will be left behind. The first way this may occur is through this idea termed in the economic voting literature as pocketbook. Those with low incomes, low levels of education, and in jobs where turnover or unemployment are quite present, have been descriptively found to be more likely to be white identifiers (?). The mechanism through which this happens has been demonstrated to be through this feeling of linked fate. That is, those who feel less secure in their jobs and their personal finances are more likely to have an external locus of control that is placed on a group that is like them (?). Given that class-based groups are quite sparse in the U.S. (e.g. unions and political parties), relative to other western democracies (see ?, Chapter 7), and racial stereotypes are tied up in class (?), blame for personal financial loss and challenges to get ahead are argued to be from this labor market competition model common in the economic threats literature (?). The second way this may occur is through a more sociotropic mechanism. Although the economic voting and economic threats literature defines these measures as still economic, they capture something broader about feelings of society as a whole. These types of sociotropic threats can come through in two ways, in economic terms or in political terms (?). In both instances, sociotropic threats are seen to be broader threats that may have not reached an individual yet, they are perceived, to use Giles and Evans' (?) language, or anticipatory.

The path by which the mechanism of pocketbook threats may occur is a bit different than in sociotropic threats. Sociotropic threats are broader and include observations of society as a whole. One way in which citizens learn this information is through the media: the frames used by the media identify where the roots of contemporary ills are coming from (?); such as blaming the loss of jobs on an influx of immigration (?) or a loss of willingness for people to put in a hard day's work (?). In contrast, pocketbook threats are more localized. Pocketbook threats are factors that weigh heavy on the

minds of those concerned about a loss in income, getting laid off, not having enough education to qualify for promotions or jobs because your coworkers and neighbors have more education and are willing to do the same work. The manifestations of localized threat are different than sociotropic. This difference in how these manifest are likely to contribute to different interpretations of where the blame should be placed: is it my bank account has a low balance, or is it a broader cultural problem that also effects the larger economy?

These two sources seem to be equally plausible paths toward searching for an external locus of blame. In this search, with the prevalence and primacy of race in whites' evaluations of politics (??), blaming non-white groups seems to be a common approach as manifested through a number of political evaluations like not supporting candidates who seem too close to racial minority interests (?), for example. These two paths also imply important mediating factors that have had some attention in the literature already. For pocketbook evaluations, the degree to which you blame other racial groups for your financial misfortunes are likely to be dependent on whether you are competing against other whites or against members of other racial groups. The literature has had a long debate as to whether or not social contact theory drives political attitudes (?, see), however, here, following the labor market competitiveness model, if you are competing against whites in a saturated labor sector, you will likely blame other sources of why you are doing poorly at securing that job. If you are in the same labor saturated sector that is primarily comprised of Latinos and fail at securing the same job, you are likely to see it as a problem to do with race (??, see). In terms of sociotropic threats, the degree to which you claim a white political identity is mediated by exposure to political news (?) and the positions that your political party often take on issues having to do with race (???). Furthermore, sociotropically, for white individuals who feel that it is harder

to get ahead and that income inequality has gotten worse, they are likely to be those looking for external locusts of control - one way to do that is to blame these lack of opportunities on other groups; which then provides the precursors of a white political identity.

The operationalization of pocketbook threats is a much more straight-forward process. In the empirical section to follow, one's financial standing is recorded as their household income, employment status, and their level of education. In terms of sociotropic threat operationalizations, as I allude to earlier in this discussion, cultural threats may appear in an economic form. That is, if one feels that there are cultural threats or political threats, these may arise as feelings that the status-quo is changing (?) which may present themselves as concerns about the continued economic prosperity in the United States. These may be concerns such as feeling that the economy will do worse in the year to come when Obama secured a re-election in 2012 or that the economy has done poorly but will improve after 2016 when Donald Trump, a presidential candidate popular among white identifiers (?), was elected as president. It may come in the form of the battery of questions common in the racial resentment scale which often capture feelings that things like feeling that the government pays more attention to the concerns of a Black person than a white person or that Blacks should just try harder to get ahead. While there are number of alternative ways in which I might capture manifestations of concern about sociotropic threat, these measures are sociotropic in nature, are common in the literature, and a comparison between retrospective and prospective evaluations of one's finances and then the economy as a whole is much more suitable for my purposes here.

Hypothesis 1. *I expect that those with lower incomes, those who have lower levels of*

educational attainment, those who are unemployed, those who live somewhere where there are higher levels of poverty, those who feel that their finances were better off in 2011 relative to 2012, those who feel that their finances were worse off in 2015 than in 2016, those who feel that the economy will be worse in 2013 than in 2012, and those who feel that the economy will be better in 2017 than in 2016 are likely to be higher white identifiers.

Hypothesis 2. *I also expect that those who feel that it is harder to find opportunities to get ahead in the U.S., those who feel that income inequality has gotten worse in the US, those who feel that the economy was better in 2011 than in 2012, those who feel that the economy was worse in 2015 than in 2016, those who feel that the economy will be worse in 2013 than in 2012, and those who feel that the economy will be better in 2013 than in 2012.*

Hypothesis 3. *I expect that the effects of 1 will be mediated by the degree to which where the respondent lives is mostly white or whether they live in a area that is mostly comprised of racial minorities.*

Hypothesis 4. *I also expect in 2016, in the post-tea party Republican and the hyper-racialized era, partisanship and ideology will be more Republican and conservative given the discussion above.*

5 Methods

I model my theory using data from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Study and the American Community Survey². While the measure proposed by Jardina

²www.data.census.gov

(?) is relatively new and has only been included in ANES since 2016, I take advantage of the single question contained in both executions of the ANES that asks how important being white is to an individual's identity. Definitions of whiteness have changed dramatically over time (?). Contemporary constructions of "whiteness," while still blurry, have moved past biological and taxonomic definitions to definitions that are rooted more in one's personal narrative of who they are (???). Although people's identity can be quite context-dependent, we are interested in studying white identity when primed by politics. Allowing respondents to claim their whiteness while also in the context of a survey about attitudes on politics, we should expect that measures of whiteness and the importance of whiteness should not be too far afield from that of making decisions or forming evaluations of politics. Additionally, the measure is constructed as a Likert scale where I coded it as values of 1 represent strongly disagree, and values of 5 represent responses of strongly agree. Figure 1 presents the count of responses per category for both the 2012 and 2016 samples ³. The figure shows that white identity was higher in 2012 than in 2016.

As my theory would predict, pocketbook factors should have significant impacts on my ability to predict white identity. The most straightforward measure of someone's financial situation is their income. This is a categorical variable provided by the ANES. Scholars have argued that along racial lines, perceptions of material status loss activates a number of emotions that drive behaviors similar to what we might see in accordance with inter-group conflict (?). Those who are poor and reside in poor communities may seek external explanations for why they, and those like them, are doing poorly (?). Although it is not accurate to assume that all live in racially homogeneous communities,

³Table of descriptive statistics for both samples can be found in Appendix A. We see that between 2012 and 2016, more respondents in 2012 said that being white was important to them relative to 2016.

Figure 1: Density of White Identity Responses in 2012 and 2016.

we know that American communities are quite segregated even after formal segregation (?). Also, from my theory, I expect that community-based identities matter here. That is, individuals are likely to face events making racial group delineations salient more when they live in a community that is more racially heterogeneous. Using the ANES ordinal coding of respondent incomes, I coded a variable of the district's median income using the same categories. In terms of the community, I have access to the respondent's congressional district. While there are certainly more micro-geographic boundaries to make when looking at community level, the Congressional district loosens any assumptions about how large the labor market competition is. For example, if the respondent lives in Prescott, Arizona and has or is looking for employment there and I define the labor market competition to only include Prescott, Arizona, then I may miss those who come from Phoenix or any of the small towns or rural areas around Prescott. Additionally, congressional districts have policy import as well. Credit-claiming for any national politics tend to be for the district or for the state. Local level politicians tend to fly under the radar to most voters.

I also expect that another pocketbook factor driving white identity may be measured by the inequality present in their community as operationalized as a measure of the percent of those in their community below poverty - in the case of this model, the estimate provided by the American Community survey by district. That is, communities with high levels of poverty should make the scarcity of resources salient. As a result, inter-group conflict should also be a concern (?).

Another way in which we might proxy for pocketbook effects on converting one to claim a white identity is through their educational attainment - using the standard ordinal measure used by the ANES. Political scientists have long understood that in terms of politics, education is an important resource not just correlated with the level of fa-

miliarity and sophistication by which they evaluate politics (see ??), but it also predicts a number of forms of participation in politics (see ??). In terms of predicting white identity, we might expect those with lower levels of education are more likely to claim a white identity relative to those with higher levels of education with all else equal. Those that have lower levels of education are likely to have lower levels of social mobility, which may make changes in the racial status quo more salient - if nonwhites begin to attain higher levels of education, those individuals will be among the first to be affected by increased labor market competition. Education may also be important here in that political sophistication may decrease the degree to which one claims a white identity. Those who are more educated may recognize the nuance in politics and the economy. I should expect that those with low levels of educational attainment are more likely to claim a white identity because they will be among the first to feel changes in material status relative to nonwhites and will be among the least likely to use less heuristical thinking (which is what identity-based thinking is) when seeking explanations as to why their status has fallen.

Another indicator of actual status for an individual may also be their employment status. Those who have lost the ability not just have an income but to seek opportunities to build experience to presumably make more money will also be among those who seek external loci of where to place the blame. As a result, this increase in salience of group differences and conflict will likely increase the tendency by which someone relies on identity-based evaluations of politics. Using a question in the ANES asking about respondents' employment status, those who were employed or reported that they were students were given a value of 1. Those that were unemployed, laid off, or unable to work were coded as having a value of 0 for the employment status variable in the model.

The theory and demographic composition of white identifiers indicate that those

claiming the identity are not all experiencing economic threat themselves. That is, one does not have to be a poor, uneducated, or unemployed white individual to feel that being white is important to who they are. Sociotropic factors may drive white identity as well for an individual. One source we might anticipate the sociotropic mechanism to manifest is through feelings of fairness. Feelings of being left out and a sentiment expressing an inability to get ahead may signal feelings of helplessness against changing contexts where racial equality is increasing. Feelings of unfairness and being left out is associated with increased levels of identity-based evaluations (?). As a result, I expect that those who feel like they are unable to get ahead are more likely to respond that white identity is important to who they are. This sentiment of an inability to get ahead should also be associated with my predictions about why education can predict white identity - they, however, explain a different mechanism. The 2016 ANES asks a question about whether they feel that it is harder for them to get ahead. This measure, unfortunately, was not included in the 2012 ANES and was not included in the 2012 analyses ⁴. Those that responded that there was no chance to get ahead or strongly disagreed with the statement about equal opportunity were coded with a value of 1 and a value of 5 if there was a great amount of opportunity to do so.

I also include measures of pocketbook and sociotropic economic voting to explain

⁴ Although there is a question in 2012 and 2016 that asks respondents the degree to which one believes society should ensure there is equal opportunity, a comparison between the preferred measure of fairness that was only included in 2016, and the equal opportunity measure demonstrates they are measuring two different concepts. If the equal opportunity and fairness measures capture the same latent concept, we should expect respondents to respond in similar ways to the two questions, and a resulting Pearson's r correlation should be close to a point estimate of 1. The Pearson's r of -0.02 demonstrates these two measures are quite different. Given that this is a question about the degree to which a respondent feels that the system is fair, the measure getting at their perceptions of opportunities for them to get ahead is better aligned with the concept intended to be measured here. A comparison of a 2016 model with the measure and one without the measure did not lead to substantive differences in the conclusions I make later in the paper, nor did it lead to dramatically different BIC scores in a table not included in the present manuscript.

the two mechanisms. Those who either feel that their finances are or will be doing worse are likely, if my theory is correct, to seek out alternative explanations for why this may be happening - which either leads them to blaming out-groups and harboring animosity towards members of out-groups contributing to this personal perceived financial insecurity along with also possibly seeking to bolster a complementary group, racial, in hopes it improves their own and their group's position in the future. Anticipation and perceived financial insecurity does not need to only be egoistic, however. Those perceiving trends in the national economy may perceive that the economic downturns will soon come to impact them and their families. Sociotropic evaluations may also cloud people's evaluations of their own personal standing - even if it has not necessarily impacted them. If they are living in a poor economy, just because it has not impacted their employment status, it does not mean it has not made it harder to look for other jobs, buy houses, invest in the stock market, and other forms of participating in the broader market. The ANES asks respondents about the degree to which they think the economy or their personal finances are better or worse compared to the previous year and whether the economy or their personal finances will be better a year from now. Those that were the most negative prospective or retrospective evaluations for their own pocketbook or for national trends received a value of 1 and a value of 5 for those most positive for each of the four measures.

I also include an indicator that might capture the degree to which one may feel that social and cultural trends are increasing their feelings of being left behind. Income inequality is a long-term factor that demonstrates the heterogeneity in incomes. Asking respondents about the degree to which they feel that income inequality is problematic when mediated by partisanship and racial attitudes may represent the degree to which people feel that there is fairness. When people feel that things are stacked against them

and that there is not much fairness, they often seek external explanations tied to their identity (?). If they feel that things are unfair and use identity as a heuristic to evaluate what is causing this unfairness, individuals will likely express more positive sentiments to their in-group. Therefore, I expect that those who feel that inequality has become worse in the past 20 years are more likely to be white identifiers. This is measured by an ANES question asking whether respondents feel that income inequality has gotten much larger or much smaller over time. I coded the respondents' responses as 1 for those who feel that it has gotten much smaller and 5 for those who feel it has gotten much larger.

An alternative explanation important to this story is the role of elite rhetoric. As my theory discusses, it may be the case that elite rhetoric is more important at driving the salience and use of identity than actual status loss or perceived status loss. In the 2016 Presidential election, those experiencing material status loss were the most likely to support Trump for his rhetoric blaming external actors, like China, for Americans' economic hardship (?). If respondents receive more messaging about white grievances, we should expect that racial differences, the inter-group conflict, and their racial identity should be more salient. Unfortunately, the ANES has no direct measure of how much white respondents were exposed to racialized elite rhetoric. As a proxy, however, I use a measure of how many times per week respondents watch the news. While this is indirect and any exposure to this elite rhetoric may be moderated by partisanship (see ??).

5.1 Results

With these expectations established about my particular indicators of these separate mechanisms, I ran a multi-level model for both samples where I varied the intercepts

based on which congressional district the respondent lived in. I use a multi-level model here due to the both personal and contextual level indicators of pocketbook and sociotropic conversionary factors that I hypothesized to have effects on predicting respondent white identity. The assumption used in most common forms of regression estimation is that my errors are independent from one another. Here, it is important to relax this assumption, given that my theory explicitly states that observations are context-dependent. That is, white respondents facing the same contextual mechanisms that I predict should drive up white identity breaks the independence assumption of regular Ordinary Least Squares Estimation. One approach is to use standard clustered errors (??). Given the sampling technique of the ANES, however, I do not have the same number of observations for congressional districts. Therefore, using random effects on the intercept allows for calculations of the uncertainty of the unexplained variance of my dependent variable based on the district. Congressional District level (the second, or the context, level) while also allowing for group-specific differences not explained by my predictor parameters nor the model's error (?).

In the models, I include a number of relevant controls. The first control that appears important to include here would be a measure of community characteristics. My theory and the discussion of my hypotheses discuss the importance of community identity to political evaluations (?). These differences in community type tend to be along rural and non-rural differences (?). From this literature, we should expect that those living in poor rural communities will likely express resentment toward those residing in non-rural communities (?). My theory also implies that the degree to which one's pocketbook indicators matter are dependent on how much they are in competition with those of other racial groups for where white individuals place their blame. To absorb some of this variation that may be explained by community-type identities rather than racial

identities, I calculated a dichotomous measure of rurality for the congressional district each respondent lives in. This was determined by merely coding congressional districts that are more than 50 percent as 1 and 0 for those that where rurality counts as the minority community type in the district. I also include a few sociological controls. There tend to be particular characteristics associated more with white identification, such as one's age and gender (see ?, Chapter 2).

I first present the results for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4. The results of this model are presented in Table 1. In the table, we see a number of interesting results. Looking at the model for 2012, it suggests that that two of the three indicators of actual status loss have statistically significant effects. The model demonstrates that those with lower levels of education are move up the scale by a tenth of a point up the likert scale for white identity importance. This means that means that those with the least amount of education are approximately 0.54 points higher up on the white identity scale relative to those with the highest levels of education. We also see in the table that unemployed respondents are 0.147 points higher on the white identity scale relative to employed respondents, as well; these effects are also meet conventional levels of statistical significance. I also observe that those who feel that they had done better financially in the past year than the current year were 0.070 units more likely to claim a white identity relative to those who felt more positive about their economic status the previous year. Substantively, those who said that they strongly agreed with the statement that they were doing better financially in 2012 than in 2011 were about a third of a point higher on the white identity scale relative to those who strongly disagreed with the statement. The other pocketbook indicator that has significant effects in 2012 is the percent of the congressional district that is impoverished. For this indicator, we see that those living in Districts with 1% more poverty are 0.009 units less likely to claim a white identity than those with less

poverty. This goes against my hypothesis ⁵.

In terms of my hypotheses about sociotropic factors driving white identity, the results are much weaker. I observe that those who strongly disagreed with the statement that the economy was doing better in 2012 than in 2011 were approximately a third of a point higher on the white identity scale relative to those who strongly agreed with the statement. In line with the social threat argument, the 2012 model also tells us that racial resentment was a significant predictor of white identity as well. The model tells us that those with the highest levels of racial resentment are approximately 1.4 points higher on the white identity scale relative to those who express no racial resentment. For the 2012 model, this appears to be the largest substantive effect. Those who are older than the average respondent are also more likely to claim a white identity relative to younger respondents.

We see a different story in 2016. In 2016, I observe that those with We also see that in 2016 unemployed respondents were 0.153 units more likely to claim a white identity than those who were employed.

Sociotropic attitudes mattered more in 2016 than they did in 2012 for predicting white identity. Again these are indicators of perceived status loss. We see here that those who strongly disagreed with the statement that the economy was better in 2015 than in 2016 were approximately 0.57 points higher on the white identity scale relative to those who strongly agreed with the statement. I also observed that those who strongly agreed with the statement that the economy will be better in 2017 than in 2016 were .6 points higher on the white identity scale relative to those who strongly disagreed with the statement. I again find support for the social identity threats argument in that high

⁵A correlation matrix demonstrates there is no multicollinearity between percentage of the district below poverty and the other covariates. Jardina (?) found that about 54% of high white identifiers had incomes above the US median in 2012.

Table 1: Effects of actual and perceived material status loss on predicting white identity adoption

	White Identity Importance	
	2012	2016
Income	0.002 (0.003)	−0.009* (0.004)
Education	−0.107* (0.024)	−0.006 (0.004)
Employment Status	−0.147* (0.057)	−0.153* (0.072)
% below poverty	−0.009* (0.003)	−0.002 (0.007)
Retrospective - better off		0.030 (0.029)
Prospective - better off	0.070* (0.024)	0.039 (0.033)
Economy Better - Past	−0.007 (0.032)	−0.030 (0.036)
Economy Better - Future	−0.060* (0.030)	−0.114* (0.031)
Income Inequality	0.041 (0.033)	0.121* (0.033)
Frequency of news consumption	−0.018 (0.029)	−0.050 (0.030)
Rural	−0.013 (0.010)	−0.019 (0.015)
Racial Resentment	0.106 (0.083)	0.150 (0.102)
Age	0.281* (0.057)	0.302* (0.055)
Female	0.007* (0.002)	0.007* (0.002)
% White	0.056 (0.050)	0.078 (0.054)
Party Identification	−0.0002 (0.002)	−0.002 (0.002)
Ideology	−0.003 (0.017)	0.050* (0.014)
ideo	0.022 (0.024)	0.002* (0.001)
Constant	2.987* (0.259)	2.742* (0.331)
Num. groups: District	423	418
Variance: District(Intercept)	0.001	0.03
Variance: Residual	1.59	1.27
N	2,685	2,367
Log Likelihood	−4,485.413	−4,008.835
AIC	9,010.825	8,059.669
BIC	9,128.734	8,180.826

Source: 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies.

Coefficients from regression with random intercepts by congressional district.

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$

white identifiers score higher on the racial resentment scale.

What is different about 2016 compared to 2012 is the importance of political factors. Although the measure of news consumption was intended to capture some effect of elite rhetoric that made white grievances more salient, partisanship and ideology still mattered. As one would expect, Republicans and conservatives were more likely to claim a white identity than Democrats and liberals. The literature has demonstrated that white identifiers were more supportive of Donald Trump and that those who were disgusted by him were less likely to be white identifiers (?). These results seem to fall in line with a number of scholars' arguments about whites harboring racially moderate and conservative views and their tendency to migrate more towards Trump and other Republicans in 2016 (??).

In terms of information about the unexplained differences within the districts, the estimated variation between respondents, there is a within congressional district standard deviation, $\hat{\sigma}_y$, of 1.59 in 2012 and 1.27 in 2016. In terms of the estimated standard deviation of the district intercepts, $\hat{\sigma}_x$, are 0.001 and 0.03 respectively.

So far my analyses support Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4. To test for my claim that the conversionary pocketbook factors' effects on white identity will increase in districts with a lower percentage of whites, I conduct the same model, however I only include the pocketbook factors and interact each of them with the % White variable. From Figures 2 and 3, overall, we see that in both 2012 and 2016 there do not appear to be differences statistically distinguishable from 0 between minority-majority and white-majority districts looking at the predicted values for particular points along the x-axes. Though, the effects are small, there are interesting phenomenon occurring when comparing the valence of the slopes in both figures. It is important to not dwell too much on these differences, however, given that they are not statistically significant. There appears to

Figure 2: Interaction between % District White and Pocketbook factors - 2012.

Figure 3: Interaction between % District White and Pocketbook factors - 2016.

be little support for my hypothesis that these pocketbook factors driving white identification are accentuated when living in districts with higher racial saliency in the labor market.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

The results highlight that, as expected, pocketbook and sociotropic factors matter for predicting white identity. Speaking more explicitly to the debates in the literature that were highlighted earlier, both a material or economic threat *and* social threats matter for predicting white identity. Though, what particular factors matter in 2012 and 2016 differ. Additionally, it appears that sociotropic and political factors matter more in 2016 than in 2012. This fits with existing explanations suggesting a heightened racialization of politics in the post-Obama era. Additionally, I find that racial resentment is a consistent and powerful predictor of those who claim a white political identity. Though, it is important to note, however, that both financial and economic factors matter for those who do not harbor these prejudiced attitudes. Overall, the results of this paper finds support for my primary argument: both pocketbook and sociotropic factors matter for predicting whether an individual holds a white identity. One should be cautious about predicting one's white identity, however, by assuming the presence of other racial groups in an individual's labor market will make them claim more of a white identity or will even make the effects of these pocketbook factors larger.

Further work should more seriously grapple with the mechanism that is driving the increased explanatory power of sociotropics in explaining white identity in 2016. While the present analysis considers news consumption, this is a weak proxy. Even still, that proxy only speaks to one possible mechanism. Emerging work contends that disgust

towards Donald Trump in 2016 drove the likelihood of white identity down (?). It remains unclear whether Trump's rhetoric, in particular, was what drove up white identity, whether negative reactions to claiming a white identity due to Trump was a result of liberal whites' increasing in negative valence toward their own group, whether Republican messaging yet increased the saliency of identity politics more than it has in recent years, or whether there is no causal mechanism at all for this and it is just a result of identity politics just becoming more important in the public's evaluation of politics, period.

This present manuscript also does not speak to the role of status. While the literature speaks much of the importance of status for activating group behavior, the present analysis only presents a theory and an analysis that tests one's location on the pocketbook indicators. Measures of status would capture the relativity and the individual's perceived standing relative to non-white racial groups. Future analyses should explore this.

References

7 Appendix A.

Table 2: Effects of actual and perceived material status loss on predicting white identity adoption

	White Identity Importance	
	2012	2016
Income	0.005 (0.020)	-0.049* (0.021)
% District White	0.001 (0.008)	-0.014 (0.009)
Education	-0.101 (0.141)	-0.009 (0.017)
Employment Status	0.003 (0.309)	-0.754* (0.374)
% below poverty	-0.019 (0.018)	-0.005 (0.032)
Retrospective - better off	0.052 (0.128)	-0.082 (0.178)
Prospective - better off	0.101 (0.178)	-0.061 (0.202)
Income \times % District White	-0.00004 (0.0002)	0.0005 (0.0003)
Education \times % District White	-0.001 (0.002)	0.00002 (0.0002)
Employment \times % District White	-0.003 (0.004)	0.005 (0.005)
% Below Poverty \times % District White	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0004)
Retrospective - better off \times % District White	-0.00005 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Prospective - better off \times % District White	-0.001 (0.002)	0.0003 (0.003)
Constant	3.399* (0.674)	4.284* (0.729)
Num. groups: District	423	418
Variance: District(Intercept)	0.01	0.05
Variance: Residual	1.63	1.70
N	2,873	2,458
Log Likelihood	-4,847.578	-4,230.336
AIC	9,727.155	8,492.672
BIC	9,822.565	8,585.585

Source: 2012 and 2016 American National Election Studies.

Coefficients from regression with random intercepts by congressional district.
Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$