Melanin Deficiency as a Political Identity: The Origins of White Political Identity

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Abstract

Where does white identity come from? Leading accounts of what white identity is and the political implications for policy all state that white identity comes from threat. Of course, there are several ways that threat may present itself. This paper explores the argument that white identity has been driven by a number of personal and contextual factors. The article also argues that some of the out-group animosities that white identity creates originate from those already harboring racial resentment. [INSERT DATA SOURCES AND FINDINGS HERE]

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Introduction

With a surge in the study of race and ethnicity in American politics and the growing political cohesion of whites, scholars have become quite interested in studying white identity and the behavioral and political consequences of it. Scholars have started from the presupposition that white identity comes from a status threat in discussing white identity. Since the 2008 economic collapse, the election of a Black president, racial turmoil from police brutality, the increased usage in workplaces, and the increased rhetoric from critical race theory, the estimations that whites will become the racial minority before the end of the century, whites have been made aware and are continually reminded that their status may be slipping. While the literature has cited and has concluded that the surge in individuals claiming their white identity is due to threat, the exact origins are somewhat unclear.

This paper sets out to narrowly determine where white identity comes from. Given that status threat is the leading explanation for the rise in white identity, I seek to determine which among a smattering of the types of threat whites are facing have the most explanatory value. That is, are whites claiming their white identity due to personal or contextual threats? Or, possibly, is white identity simply arising from racial resentment, and do threats exacerbate whites' anxiety? Within these two categories, I discuss a number of distinct threats in more detail later in the paper.

In my analysis, I find that ... [INSERT FINDINGS AND STUFF HERE].

Social identity theory, categorical politics, and the status of understanding white identity

Before diving into a discussion of the literature on white identity, this paper must first establish a broader view of the literature on identity and race. While this discussion is not fully comprehensive, the goal of the discussion is to provide perspective on how social psychologists and political psychologists conceptualize identity, where we think it comes from and how we apply those foundational understandings to studying race as a political variable. In doing so, the discussion should elucidate some possible motivations we may extrapolate from the implications of the identity literature so that I may better explain my theory and my assumed motivations behind the development of white identity.

First, it is important to discuss what identity is in relationship to membership. The prevailing social psychological theory for which political psychologists studying identity use as a foundation come from social identity theory (see Huddy, 2012, for a review). As a great service to political psychologists studying identity, Huddy (2001, 2012) simply concludes from her extensive analysis of the literature that identity is distinct from membership. In the reviews of the social psychological literature, identity stems from membership when one develop's a psychological attachment to a recognized group membership Huddy (2012).

Second, as social identity theory posits, identity is important to the degree to which it is salient in different contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For identities that are central to one's self-conception, those individuals tend to hold strong convictions and seek opportunities to find characteristics for which their in-group is superior relative to outgroups; this is particularly true among identifiers of groups who feel status threat (Mummendey

& Schreiber, 1984; Huddy, 2001).

The third relevant implication from social identity theory here is that to the degree to which we see an individual cling to an identity, they also seek to develop ingroup favoritism and outgroup animosity (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995).

The social identity theory literature informs political psychologists studying identity that one necessary condition for the development of identity is that people form a psychological attachment to an important and relevant group membership. Here, the discussion above indicates that those studying political identities should identify the means through which a group becomes salient, and remains, salient in political contexts. For example, Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) demonstrate the power of partisan identity by emphasizing the centrality of it in coloring people's perceptions of political events and policy. With citizens centering their partisan identity in developing political attitudes, this becomes a primary predictor of vote choice and attitude development (Campbell et al., 1960; Taber & Lodge, 2013; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Additionally, we should expect that once people have established a group identity and are able to tie it to various contexts that they often find themselves in, once they estimate that identity's status, they begin to develop group biases. With these broad conclusions from the literature in hand, I outline a few examples of how political psychologists have used this framework to study some important political identities in the categorical politics literature.

As the social identity theory literature would predict, group consciousness - or one's recognition of their group membership - does not translate to homogenous group behavior. The categorical politics literature demonstrates this quite unequivocally. In studying Black political behavior, White and Laird (2020) demonstrate a strong political group cohesiveness, established through a long history of group deprivation through discrimi-

nation and a common unequal access to political institutions, is quite strong; even in the face of competing self-interests (White, Laird, & Allen, 2014). In their theory, White and Laird (2020) outline the various social costs present in the Black community for individuals to defect from voting against and supporting policies that run counter to the community's collective group interests. While the community may be ideologically heterogeneous, individuals recognize their group's needs through the various collective and personal implications present when one acts in their self-interest. They recognize a need to work together to build the community's status and their status as an individual (White & Laird, 2020).

Not all groups are this behaviorally homogenous, however. For example, women are disadvantaged relative to men in a number of ways. Despite this, not all women are Democrats and actively vote counter to issues considered to be "female issues" such as on abortion (Barnes & Cassese, 2017). In this case, there are a number of competing identities for which women may attach themselves to in politics. For example, despite a growing number of men becoming more likely to claim a Republican political identity, women have tended to remain quite stable in their partisan identity (Kaufmann & Petrocik, 1999). That is, partisan identification for women is a powerful political identity that seems to prevail over possible interests in supporting more feminist policy. This conclusion seems to also fit with my brief discussion of the social identity theory literature. In situations where there are strong and competing identities that may be more salient in a political context, we see, as we would expect, that the more salient and powerful identities override the interests for status protection that the other identities may demand.

Gender is not the only group identity where we see this, either. Group identification with being Latino is quite variable. That is, Latinos tend to have varying levels

of even taking on group membership as a Latino. Instead, while studying Latino politics, scholars have noted that individual-level recognition of membership to Latino's more broadly is obfuscated by competing and stronger ethnic identities (Morín, Macías Mejía, & Sanchez, 2020). Moreover, we see that unlike what we see with Women, a linked fate with one's own ethnic group drives policy preferences among Latinos; more so than partisanship. Here, we see that group membership is certainly subjective and despite appearances, group membership is snuffed out entirely by a more important group membership that may be less apparent.

In summary, the categorical politics literature has applied social identity theory to important political group memberships and have demonstrated a few things that should be considered. First, a recognition of group membership is quite variable; other identities that are more nuanced may be more important. In studying race, one must first be clear as to whether the subjects of study even hold a psychological attachment to the group we ascribe them to. Next, the categorical politics literature informs us that some groups may work more cohesively than others and that it is largely driven by a linked fate. In the case of comparing men to women, the discussion above demonstrated that men became more politically homogenous while women did not. As noted above, a competing and stronger group identity was more important to women - partisanship. The categorical politics literature also informs us that group cohesiveness not only comes from the lack of stronger competing group interests, but also comes from the degree to which the group has some degree of enforcement of infractions for deviation. If the group has members consistently deviate for self-interested purposes due to few benefits to being a member of the group, it is likely that members will work with the group only when it benefits them; they have no fealty towards the collective good of the group.
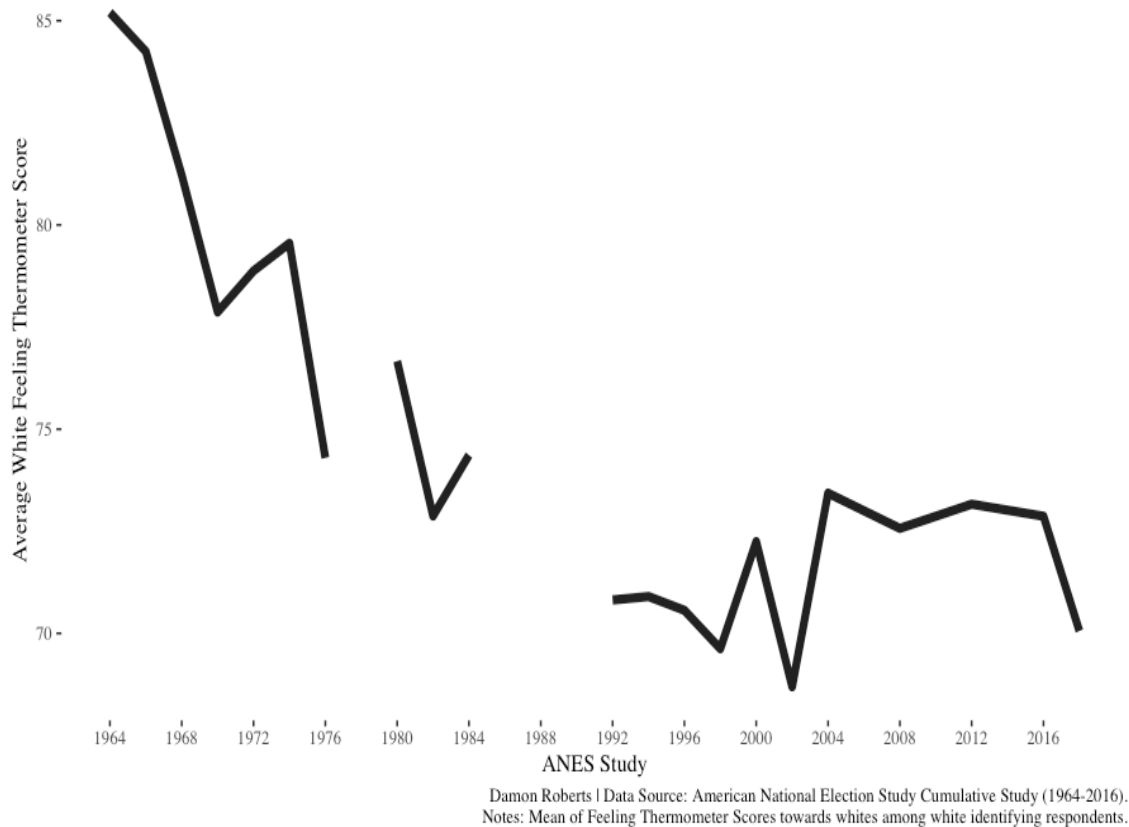
The white identity literature exploded onto the scene with perhaps the most comprehensive and careful exploration of white identity to date. Jardina (2019) provides thorough descriptions of who white identifiers are (for details see Jardina, 2019, Chapters 3 and 4) and what their policy preferences are. Yet, while (Jardina, 2019) and other scholars of white identity have pointed to sociological data about those high on white identity, there remains to be a causal exploration of where white identity comes from. To be consistent, the remainder of this section of the paper will go through the literature of white identity to discuss the four major areas of white identity formation that were extrapolated from the social identity literature and were applied to the categorical politics literature from earlier.

Contemporaneously, white identity appears to have become quite important during the Obama administration. Tesler (2016) demonstrates that, overall, we saw a heightened racialization of politics after 2008. As a result of this racialization, white Americans in particular began to use race as a lens for policy evaluation and political attitude formation. For example, attitudes about the Affordable Care Act (or Obama-Care) were shaped by how the policy was framed (Tesler, 2016). Moreover, the literature demonstrated that at the time Blacks were considered undeserving of welfare provided by the federal government (Winter, 2008) and that many whites saw Obama's policies as benefiting Blacks (Tesler, 2016; Sides, Tesler, & Vavreck, 2018). As a result of this racialization, it appears that there were antecedents of in-group and out-group evaluations present during the Obama administration.

Not only were whites evaluating policy and politics through the lens of race at the time but they were and have also been demonstrating more psychological attachment to other members of the group (see Wong & Cho, 2005; Jardina, 2019, as an example). I also corroborate this using mean feeling thermometer towards white scores using the

2016 ANES study. While there are a number of ways to measure psychological attachment to ones group, one leading narrative in the literature about white identity is the in-group affinity that whites have been displaying toward one another (Jardina, 2020).

Figure 1. Mean White Feeling Thermometer Scores of Whites

Damon Roberts | Data Source: American National Election Study Cumulative Study (1964-2016).
Notes: Mean of Feeling Thermometer Scores towards whites among white identifying respondents.

In line with social identity theory's predictions, Figure 1 demonstrates that in-group attitudes towards other whites tend to correspond with times of high group salience. We see that during times of high racial tensions and related policy debates, there are increases of white respondents indicating relatively warmer feelings toward other whites. We see that after 2008, when the tea party became stronger during the 2010 and 2012 elections, whites feelings became warmer as compared to 2008. We see that in the mid-1960's with the end of formal segregation and the enactment of the Voting Rights Act,

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whites felt relatively warmer towards one another.

The literature shows that not only was the racialization of politics the kindling for group evaluations around race for whites, but that many whites actually began to behave that way. For example, scholars demonstrate that not only were whites who identified that way more likely to affiliate with the tea party movement (Berry, Ebner, & Cornelius, 2019), but that those who did were much more likely to recognize and cite a threat to the status of whites as being a reason for joining the movement (Willer, Feinberg, & Wetts, 2016).

While not all whites display a psychological attachment to other whites, those that have are more likely to show preferences for policy that benefit whites (Jardina, 2019) and support candidates who explicitly speak to anxieties of white status loss (Bunyasi, 2019). Social identity theory would predict white identity to a large extent. While not all whites recognize that they do have a shared history with other whites, one of historically high political influence, those that do recognize their commonality with other whites tend to be those who ascribe to that membership (Jardina, 2019). As the racialization of politics and other signs of status loss for whites increase, social identity theory would predict that more whites will claim a stronger white identity.

Sources for White Identity

The section above outlined the ways in which scholars have used social identity theory in studying categorical politics in a general sense and how some have used it as a framework for studying white identity. The conclusion of the previous section laid out a probable expectation that the literature of both social identity theory and white identity politics would imply. While, as discussed above, Jardina (2019) provides a number of

variables to explain who high white identifiers are, it is still somewhat unclear as to what variables have a causal effect on white identity. Coming from the social identity framework in the previous section and the economic, political, and contextual factors that scholars like Jardina (2019) have used to describe white political behavior and attitude formation, I seek to explore the various characteristics that describe high white identifiers and explain which ones are likely to be the most informative drivers of white identity.

One obvious and tangible way in which whites may face status loss is through their pocketbook. Whites experiencing greater financial burdents or those who feel that the national economy is heading in the wrong direction are likely to experience some anxiety about politics. This anxiety drives a search for answers and for someone to blame (Albertson & Kushner Gadarian, 2015; Kinder & Kam, 2010). We know from the literature on economic voting that most voters are not ones who look in their wallet but they look outward for general trends (Mackuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 1989, 2007a). For whites living in a racialized political world who are like other voters looking outward, it might be reasonable for whites to look at the financial position of other whites. This point requires some elaboration.

Whites who are looking at the economy are likely looking at other whites' financial positions and are perceiving status through their group's financial positioning. As mentioned above, many in the public rarely look at their own pocketbook to evaluate the economy. Instead, the leading account in the literature is that individuals look outward and look at national economic trends (Mackuen et al., 2007a). In a world where race became the primary lens for which Americans, and in particular whites, evaluate politics (Tesler, 2016; Hajnal, 2020), they likely are looking at the economy heuristically - looking at those who are like them; other whites. From the literature, we know

that high white identifiers tend to be more worried about the economy relative to other whites who are not high identifiers. This worry likely is directed towards a sense of status threat given that it presents itself as a tangible status threat.

There are other non-tangible forms of status threats that whites may face and lead them to stronger cling to their white identity. One is personal threats. While these may take a number of different forms, some that surveys often measure and ones that Jardina (2019) descriptively linked to high white identifiers are feelings of efficacy in government, feeling discriminated against for both job opportunities and in the government. A large body of survey evidence shows that whites tend to not like affirmative action; they see it as unfair and that Blacks are undeserving of it (Gilens, 1999; Winter, 2008). Whites also felt left behind in the Obama presidency, they felt that Obama's presidency was meant to pull up Blacks at the expense of whites (Tesler, 2016). Whites who feel threatened by losing job opportunity and by feeling unprotected by the government, likely express resentment toward Blacks, an outgroup. Moreover, as social identity theory posits, when group members feel that another group is catching up or surpassing their group, they seek to find ways to bolster their group's status (Huddy, 2001). Here, personal factors may be less tangible but are still prevelent and have been used to describe who white identifiers are (see Jardina, 2019). Although these personal factors are relevant, the increased subjectivity of evaluating whether you and other group members are personally experiencing hardship due to your identity, they are likely to be a bit weaker relative to the tangible and quantifiable effects one may see in the state of the economy.

There is one other relevant source for white identity - context. With a growing diversity of the United States' population, whites may be facing another racially salient threat. There are a few ways in which context may matter here. Scholars using social

contact theory have shown that an increased salience of minorities in a community increase support for policy that benefit whites (Enos, 2017). While Enos (2017) is not looking at white identifiers, the project still demonstrates that whites, more generally, notice demographical shifts in their community and that it has behavioral and attitudinal effects relevant to politics. Rather than whites becoming more empathetic and supportive of other racial groups, whites become more ethnocentric when faced with a realization that whites are a minority majority (Enos, 2017; Kinder & Kam, 2010). This would predict that high white identifiers who realize whites are a shrinking majority are likely to be concerned about the political influence that they have. When hearing increasingly common predictions that whites will be the minority and that the hispanic and latino population will be the majority some point this century, this implies that whites will have a smaller say in politics - they will be able to cast fewer votes relative to other racial groups. This prospective feeling of political deprivation is quite salient and becomes acutely so when living in increasingly diversifying communities or seeing national trends toward an increasing diversification of the U.S. population.

In summary, in a racialized political world, whites see their race everywhere. While doing so, whites are seeing financial crashes, like in 2008, that wiped out white wealth and in turn see economic policy that are meant to economically equalize the races, and furthermore, see the shrinking number of whites comprising the U.S. population as a sign of decreasing political significance. In this world, those seeing those threats to others like them, may expect, as social identity theory posits, that they are next. If one's white neighbor has a house foreclosed on them, that individual may expect that they are next. If a white individual sees a family member passed up on for a job or a promotion in favor of a non-white person, that individual may expect that they will not get that job offer or promotion they are currently working toward. Rather than society being a color-

blind place where whites tend to benefit from policies, they see policies that are meant to create a more even playing ground as a threat. They see a racialized world in which non-whites are gaining status and are beginning to look more like them in representation and status, and are concerned about whether the future holds a place for them.

In the next section, I take some economic, personal, and contextual variables to causally determine whether they predict individual proclivities to claim a white identity.

1   OLD STUFF

Here, I conceptualize white identity as a group identity. Similar to how Campbell et al. (1960) conceptualize partisan identity, it is a group that one associate themselves with where they hold a psychological attachment with. In this context, whites must have some reason to create a psychological attachment to other whites. Traditionally, the lack of attention towards white political behavior and attitudes was because many consider whites not to be a politically cohesive group - that considerations of other whites do not shape their attitudes and behaviors. More recently, however, scholars have begun to see white identity as a growing phenomenon, and furthermore, it is an increasingly important identity that has and will lead to substantial political implications. The goal of this paper is to describe the mechanisms driving white identity.

One leading assumption about where white identity comes from is threat. While the literature has not dug much deeper than this, the idea is quite powerful, given what social identity theory has predicted in other contexts. As Social Identity Theory [IN-SERT tajfel-turner citation] posits, those observing misfortunes befalling their group encourages action on the part of the individual for impression management. In political contexts, threat has led those with high group identity to engage more with partici-

patory behaviors that political scientists often consider to be costly - actions such as voting, volunteering, and protest (Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Brady, Verba, & Lehman Schlozman, 1995). When faced with an existential threat to the group, whites are likely to seek ways to help the their group's status since they are invested and associated with it. Often, when these threats come from a competing group, individual members of the group become increasingly likely to harbor animosity towards that group.

Whites have long expressed disparate levels of support for other racial groups. Using racial resentment measures, scholars have demonstrated that whites are less likely to support social welfare policies that the media frame as being primarily helpful to Blacks (Winter, 2008; Kinder & Kam, 2010) and have consistently viewed reliance on social welfare policy as a Black issue (Gilens, 1999). Out-group animosity is not the only important outcome of white identity, however. On feeling thermometer measures, whites feel warmer to their own in-group at about the same level as other politically cohesive groups (Wong & Cho, 2005), such as Blacks (White & Laird, 2020). As an implication, whites who have claimed this racial identity have also become more likely to support policies that uniquely support their racial group (Jardina, 2019; ?, ?). One question remaining in this literature is why white identity might arise and what types of threats have lead to all these attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

Whites may see their fate as a group identity as linked with a prototypical member of their group. While the past literature has often seen linked fate as not being an appropriate measure for whites, recent work has argued that whites actually do have a linked fate - they share a story of privilege (Berry et al., 2019). With this linked fate, whites feel that adverse events occurring to the prototypical member in their group could happen to them. This association of negative events to other group members to themselves, changes an individual's motivational structure. It leads the psychologically

invested members to become increasingly concerned about the prospects of these effects becoming more widespread and more malignant. This effect is particularly true as these threats become increasingly salient.

For whites, the threats to their status and position in society abound. Quickly following the 2008 recession, where many Americans faced financial crises, particularly middle-class whites, the Tea Party emerged and produced several candidates who primaried the GOP. One leading explanation for why the Tea Party candidates were so successful in capturing congressional seats was their popularity among whites who felt disenfranchised (Wong & Cho, 2005). Also, at the time, the first Black president, Barack Obama, had a sweeping victory. The ascendance of a Black man to the White House led many conservatives like Bill O'Reilly and Rush Limbaugh to set out on a crusade to convince Americans that the status-quo was under attack - whites no longer were dominant (?, ?). To rub it in further, increased conversations around race and systematic disadvantages that non-whites faced were growing. An increased saliency that there are issues besides white issues led to an increase in white anxiety so that by the time 2016 came around, a Donald J. Trump who spoke to white fears was quite popular among whites (Bunyasi, 2019). Not only was Trump popular among whites, generally, but he was incredibly popular among whites who felt disadvantaged on a number of economic factors and those who disagreed with assessments that Blacks were uniquely faced with systematic discrimination relative to whites.

In studying white identity, this literature has all come from the assumption that threat, defined broadly, causes a rise in white identity. Given the literature on identity and the origins of it, this is quite a powerful explanation. Threat to whites not only causes whites to support political candidates that promise to help re-establish the status of whites, but it motivates them to turn out to vote for those candidates and to partici-

pate in a number of other costly political behaviors that political scientists often consider to be quite challenging to convince citizens to be participants of (Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Brady et al., 1995). In discussing threat, though, as mentioned before, the rise of white identity had a number of possible types of threats that coincided with it.

There are two types of threats that I want to focus on here. The first being personal threats. These sorts of threats are ones that have been included the most in different models of white identity. Namely, factors such as personal economic challenges that one may blame on the whites' loss of status as being better off than others should be an essential antecedent to white identity. These financial challenges include evaluations of an ill economy such as the unemployment rate, how difficult it is for whites to find a job relative to Blacks, The second type of threat that I want to focus on here receives less attention in the identity literature, which is context. Here, I consider contextual factors to be related to how whites perceive the environment around them. Factors such as how many minorities live in their communities and their community are primarily white, their perceptions about the United State's increasing diversity. This last point is particularly interesting. It may be the case that those who have long enjoyed insulation from the growing diversity around them may have faced a more potent jolt during the increased racialization of American politics in the early 2010's relative to those living in communities that have already been diverse or had already been in the process of diversifying. We know that demographically, whites (not those who necessarily have accepted their white identity) have interesting behavioral and attitudinal changes when faced with the fact that their community is changing. When reminded that they are not in the racial majority of a community, whites often feel more threatened and hold stronger racial resentment and support policies perceived to help minorities less (Enos, 2017; Enos & Gidron, 2018). In the case of Israel and Palestine, when identity is at

play, those faced with an increase in those of an out-group in their community tend to become much more hostile and hold stronger out-group animosities. Social contact theory would indicate that identity and context are essential here.

Given my discussion thus far, I would expect the following relationships to lay bare in the data.

Linked fate is a mechanism by which whites demonstrate an increased psychological attachment to other whites. Linked fate demonstrates this psychological attachment by recognizing that there is a shared story among whites, and that story is under attack, leading whites to see what happens to one of their own to affect them all potentially.

Hypothesis 1. *We should expect to see that, over time, whites have increasingly reported a psychological attachment with each other.*

We know from the literature on retrospective voting that voters are sociotropic voters (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981). They see that gloomy forecasts for the country's economy are likely to affect later their wallet (Mackuen, Erikson, & Stimson, 2007b). Here, whites likely see that economic misfortunes for other whites across the country will likely end up impacting their bank account because they are white too.

Hypothesis 2. *We should expect that negative evaluations of the economy for whites will increase ones willingness to express white identity*

We also know from the literature that when faced with an increase in racial out-groups in your community, it increases your willingness to express your identity that is most relevant (Enos, 2017).

Hypothesis 3. *In this case, we should expect to observe that when whites notice an increase in racial minorities in their community, their willingness to express and claim a white identity will increase.*

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Hypothesis 4. *We should also expect that those living in predominantly white communities will have increases in white identity around the time of Obama's administration and Obama's election in 2016.*

We may also see that racial resentment is an important measure here. While many scholars have discounted the role of racial resentment in the origin story of white identity, in the presence of these other measures, we may see that white identity is pretty popular among those who hold intense out-group animosity. The existing narrative around white identity argues that it comes from both out-group hostility and in-group affinity (Jardina, 2019).

Hypothesis 5. *Given this, white identity, in the presence of these other factors that cause white identity, racial resentment still plays a part for some.*

Data and Methodology

To model my theory and hypotheses, I primarily rely on the American National Election Study. Namely, I use the 2016 Cumulative study by the ANES, the 2012 study, and the 2016 and 2018 Pilot studies for my analyses. Using these studies have a number of advantages. First, the ANES has long asked psychological and attitudinal questions that lend itself well to individual-level analyses. Second, the ANES uses a number of common behavioral measures related to race and identity. And third, the ANES often ask about impressions of their respondents about their personal finances and issues the respondent perceives to be most important for government to address. Given these advantages of the ANES, it allows me to not only look at attitudinal changes over time, but it allows me to examine a large number of personal and contextual threats that white respondents may be feeling.

Have whites increased psychological attachments?

Unfortunately, questions about linked fate are relatively new. The first question about linked fate in the ANES was in 2004 and was only directed toward black respondents. The earliest instance of the formal linked fate measure directed towards whites was in 2012 and then again in 2016. Given that the timeline directed by the literature for when threats to whites became more salient predates those studies, I have to rely on feeling thermometer scores towards other whites. While this does not precisely capture the same thing as linked fate, feeling thermometers are useful in a number of ways for capturing in-group affinity (Kinder & Kam, 2010). The most common use of feeling thermometers in the behavior literature occurs in the study of polarization. In the polarization literature, high feeling thermometer scores for in-partisans is argued to demonstrate an affinity and a psychological investment to their party (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, & Westwood, 2019).

To first determine whether whites are increasing in their psychological attachments to one another, I use the feeling thermometer ratings of white respondents to whites as a group and plot how those ratings have moved over time. The ANES has collected feeling thermometers of whites since 1964. Using the 2016 ANES cumulative dataset, I plot the mean feeling thermometer ratings that white respondents gave whites as a group. I additionally calculated the average feeling thermometer score among white respondents for the 2018 ANES pilot study and included that average in **Figure 1.**

The leading narrative of white identity would tell us that during times where threat are at its highest, we should expect spikes in white identity. In **Figure 1.**[1] we see that whites' psychological attachments were quite high. In 1964-68, when the Voting Rights

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[1]Unfortunately, the gaps in the graph are due to missing data for Feeling Thermometer scores for whites by white respondents.

Act and discussions about race were salient, whites were scorchingly warm towards other whites (85.20% and 84.24%, respectively). As the anti-war movement gathered steam, it appears as though group attitudes towards other whites became less white-hot. As we entered the 1990's, whites were still quite warm to their own group, hovering around a mean feeling thermometer above the 70's. The next peak for warm attitudes towards other whites was in 2004, in the first presidential election year since the terrorist attacks in 2001, the average feeling thermometer rating rose to 73.43%. This observation is somewhat unsurprising given the rise of ethnocentrism that became quite widespread in American society. Afterwards, we saw a decrease in average ratings as we entered the election season of 2008, where the first Black president would ascend to office. In the 2008 ANES we observed a bit of a drop in the average ratings of whites to decrease to 72.57%. However, as the discussion thus far would expect, we see that around the time the 2010 ANES was fielded, white racial attitudes began to rise again and appear to have been at their post Bush-administration peak in 2012 (73.16%). Once we entered 2016, the average white respondent rated other whites on the feeling thermometer at 72.86%. Based on the 2018 white feeling thermometer scores, we saw another drop in whites feeling thermometer scores to other whites with the average score at 70.05%.

Based on these observations, it appears as though that we do experience increases in whites expressing a psychological attachment to one another during times of heightened racial saliency. While this is just observational and is in no way causal, these data still provide some face-validity to the claim that white identity arises during times of threat. Furthermore, with the wealth of causal evidence provided by other scholars arguing that white racial identity increases during times of high racialization in the political sphere, these observations of long-term trends seem to corroborate that story. So far, the

aggregative data show large spikes of whites expressing in-group favoritism in the face of racialized political events. While feeling thermometers can express a psychological attachment to a group to an extent (Kinder & Kam, 2010), this is a rough measure, and thankfully, there are other more direct measures that the ANES have more recently developed and include in their studies.

Next, I use the 2012 study, the 2016 and the 2018 pilot studies to examine linked fate in those three years. Specifically, I seek to determine whether linked fate increased from 2012 to 2016 and if that that has since grown during the first two years of the Trump Administration. While I have no expectation that linked fate among whites has had a tidal shift between 2012 and 2016, given the conclusions from Sides et al. (2018), I, nonetheless, do expect to find a marginal increase in linked fate among whites in 2016 relative to 2012. Previous literature has demonstrated that partisanship is strongly associated with whether whites hold linked fate. Specifically, Berry et al. (2019) demonstrate the disparate effects linked fate has on partisan turnout. In a Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model where my outcome variable is linked fate and the primary independent variable is the year of the study, I also include controls for age, sex, education, income, and racial resentment.

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