# Double jeopardy*

## The implications of gender on white's racial attitudes

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**ABSTRACT**    Do White women report a higher racial identity than men? We argue that White women associate stronger with other Whites due to concerns with experiencing discrimination on their racial and gender identities. white identity is a reaction to Whites who feel that the relative status of Whites is in decline. As women face discrimination, under some circumstances, rather than respond with empathy for other low status racial groups, concerns of facing discrimination for both their Whiteness and their gender will motivate their concerns to protect the racial status quo. We use the 2016 and 2020 American National Election Studies and original experimental data to examine our claim.

**KEYWORDS**     white identity; racial attitudes; gender; framing

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## Introduction

Academics and political observers are documenting a shift in the approach that Republicans and conservatives are taking in their messages about race. Coverage among, large, nationwide news organizations connect the messaging strategy among Republicans to play up white victimhood as a way to justify their policy positions (Samuels & Lewis Jr., 2022). Academics make similar claims connecting white identity with support for Donald J. Trump in the 2020 Presidential election (Jardina et al., 2020). Some non-academic analyses make the connection to the way that Trump frames individual problems as resulting from widespread discrimimnation against whites (Harwood, 2022). These elite messages stand in stark contrast to those that express racially resentful views of non-whites. As these racially resentful messages were popular, in particular, during Barack Obama's administration among conservatives (Tesler, 2016), it appears that there has been a recent shift in Republican messaging. This is not to say, however, that Trump and other politicians do not express racially resentful views; he does. On balance, however, white grievance politics appears to play a larger role in elite messages than it used to. These messages play well among Whites - particularly among conservative men. Though some have attributed the shift in racial attitudes among the American public to Democrats who hold racially conservative views (Sides et al., 2018), it remains unclear as to why Republicans believe a shift in messages that focus on the plight of one racial group as beneficial.

We argue that the shift from messages which focus on individual attributions of blame for poor circumstances among non-Whites and hostility toward systematic-level efforts to address it (see Winter, 2008) to those that express concern with system-wide bias against Whites, may be partially attributable to the Republican party's concern with attracting White female voters. In

the 1972 Presidential election, 38% of women voted for the Democratic candidate, but in 2012 52% of women did (Chaturvedi, 2016). However, about 52% of White women voted for Trump in the 2016 Presidential election (Junn, 2017). Messages of racial resentment were more popular among racially conservative men CITATION. Though we cannot get into the heads of political strategists for the party, it is reasonable to assume that the party will try to expand its voting base and that it will focus on messages that are popular among segments of the population they want to attract. This means we will examine whether it is the case that these in-group oriented racialized messages are popular among White women.

Using data from the 2016 and 2020 American National Election Studies (ANES) and original data from a series of experiments, we test the claim that making their messages more palatable to relatively more liberal views helped the Republican party in attracting White women who may hold racially conservative views but were turned off by messages of racial resentment. The results demonstrate that …

## Explaining the white identity gender gap

Identity is a multifaceted concept. Social identity theory argues that identity salience is a function of contexts and cues. "White skin provides white people with the privilege to connect with other white people, to seemingly remove ourselves from an oppressed state, because a knight in shining armor protects us." (Anderson, 2021, p.19).

### Hypotheses

$H_1$ : We expect that White women report a higher white identity than White men; when controlling for partisan identification. $H_2$ : We expect that when we hold partisanship constant, liberal

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women will report a higher white political identity than conservative men. $H_3$ : We expect that liberal women report a higher white identity because they find the message communicating white grievances more palatable than those expressing racial animus.

## Methods

### Study 1

For Study 1 we use the 2016 and 2020 ANES. There are two primary reasons we rely on survey data. The first reason is that we want to establish whether there is a gender gap in white identity and whether white identity is more popular among liberal women relative to conservative men - who tend to find raically resentful messages more appealing. Second, the conservative media did not exclusively focus on white identity politics but also expressed a fair amount of racial resentment as well (e.g., praising Trump's comments that conflated immigrants with gang-affiliated criminals (Derespina, 2017)), so we want to examine the effects of conservative media on the whole as opposed to one particular type of message.

The 2016 ANES was in the field from September, 2016 to January, 2017. As we are focusing on Whites, we subset our dataset to those who self-identify as White. This leaves us with a sample of 3038 respondents. However, we expect for there to be less once we account for missing observations. Table 1 provides the unweighted characteristics of the sample.

The 2020 ANES was in the field from August, 2020 until December, 2020. The sample contains 5963 White respondents[1]. Table 2 provides the unweighted characteristics of the sample.

Both samples ask white respondents "How important is being White to your identity". Respon-

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[1]This does not account for observations with missing values.

dents then can report the degree to which they or disagree with the statement along a 5-point Likert scale. We code responses to this question as increasing agreement. We use this as our measure of white identity as it is a self-identification with their Whiteness and, in the context of the survey, should measure this identification when primed by politics. Though it does not capture linked fate with other whites, we agree with other scholars using these datasets that it should be sufficient to measure white identity (Pérez et al., 2021).

Both samples ask respondents about their gender identity as well. For this particular analysis we are interested in the differences between male and female identifying respondents. Though it is somewhat reductive, we code a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent is male or female. We exclude respondents who report that they do not identify with these two gender identities.

First, we start with a simple difference of means test to examine whether there are differences between men and women on white identity. Given our hypotheses, we expect that we should find that men report a higher level of white identity as this test does not control for partisanship. As white identity is coded ordinally and gender is coded dichotomously, we perform this test using a Wilcoxon non-parametric t-test as opposed to the standard t-test.
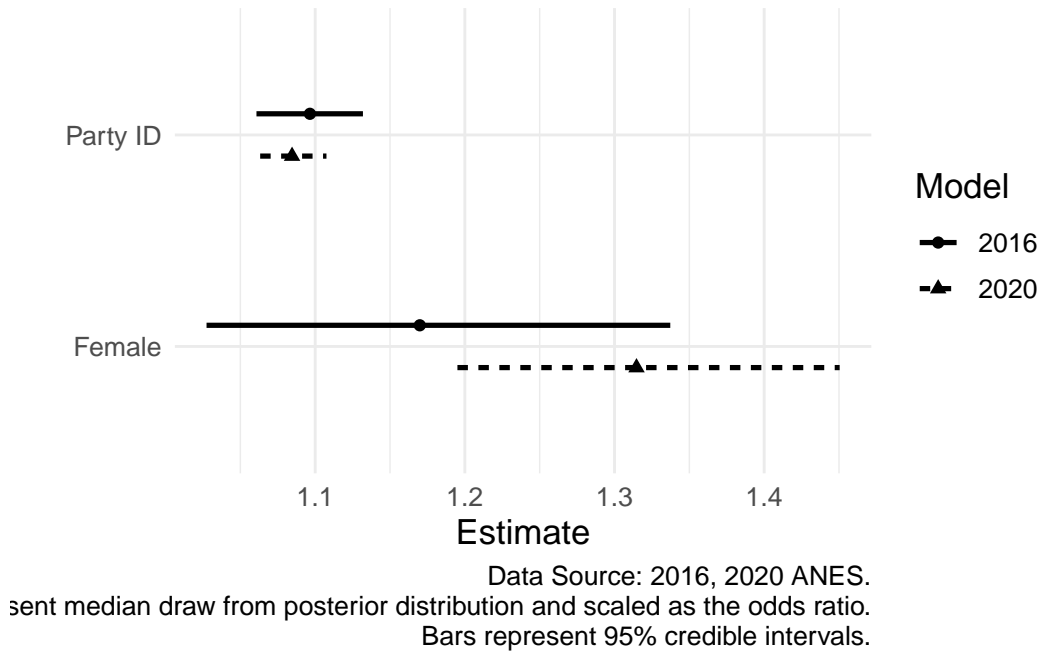
Second, we expect that once we account for partisanship, women will be more likely to report a higher white identity than men. To examine this, we fit a model using the $\text{logit}^{-1}$ link function. For the fitted model, we specify our prior using the $R2$ distribution as we expect that the cutpoints from the $k-1$ logistic regressions will explain approximately $0.3$ of the variance in the variance of our latent outcome (**gelman_et-al_2021**). We fit this model on 6 chains with 2000 iterations.

Third, as we expect this gender gap to be the result of the palatability of in-group messages, we expect that, when holding partisan identification constant, more liberal women will express a white identity and that more conservative men will score relatively lower on white identity as

racially animous views will be more attractive.

**Results**

The Wilcoxon test suggests that men report higher White identity than women. This occurs in
2016 (estimate = -2.00, p = 0.000) and in 2020 (estimate = -2.00, p = 0.000). However, men
tend to be more conservative than women. To test $H_1$, we examine whether White women report
higher levels of White identity when we control for partisanship.



Data Source: 2016, 2020 ANES.
sent median draw from posterior distribution and scaled as the odds ratio.
Bars represent 95% credible intervals.

**Figure 1:** Higher odds of women reporting white identity when controlling for Party ID

Figure 1 visualizes the distributions of the posterior draws from the fitted model[2]. Both models
suggest that women are more likely to report more white identity than men when we hold partisan
identification constant. Specifically, for 2016 our model suggests that women are 16.99% more

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[2]Table 3 presents the full table of results.

likely to report a white identity when controling for partisan identification. 2020 suggests similar patterns with women $31.47\%$ more likely to report a White identity when holding partisanship constant. The credible intervals of both models also suggest a low probability that, given the data, the estimated relationship in 2016 and 2020 is null.

This analysis, however, does not test our mechanism. Our analysis thus far does suggest that the gender gap exists on in-group racial attitudes and that it is dependent on whether you consider partisanship. We expect, however, that these messages are more palatable to women as a result of their tendency to be more liberal. That is, liberals are likely to reject messages expressing explicit racially resentful attitudes but are likely still attracted to racialized messages that makes them feel like they are victims too.

## Discussion

# Appendix

**Descriptive statistics**

**Table 1:** 2016 Descriptive statistics

|  | Unique (#) | Missing (%) | Mean | SD | Min | Median | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White identity | 6 | 15 | 2.6 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 3.0 | 5.0 |
| Female | 3 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Party ID | 8 | 0 | 4.2 | 2.1 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Conservative media | 3 | 36 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 |
| Gender discrimination | 5 | 21 | 2.9 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 5.0 |

Data source: 2016 American National Election Study.

Note: Unique column includes NA values.

**Table 2:** 2020 Descriptive statistics

|  | Unique (#) | Missing (%) | Mean | SD | Min | Median | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White identity | 6 | 11 | 2.4 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 5.0 |
| Female | 3 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Party ID | 8 | 0 | 4.2 | 2.3 | 1.0 | 4.0 | 7.0 |
| Conservative media | 2 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 1.0 |
| Gender discrimination | 4 | 82 | 3.4 | 0.7 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 5.0 |

Data source: 2020 American National Election Study.

Note: Unique column includes NA values.

## Models

**Table 3:** Women have higher log-likelihood of reporting high white identity when controlling for Party ID

|              | 2016             | 2020             |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| Female       | 0.157            | 0.274            |
|              | [0.027, 0.291]   | [0.178, 0.372]   |
| Party ID     | 0.092            | 0.081            |
|              | [0.059, 0.124]   | [0.061, 0.102]   |
| Threshold 1  | −0.460           | −0.125           |
|              | [−0.626, −0.286] | [−0.241, −0.010] |
| Threshold 2  | 0.307            | 0.718            |
|              | [0.135, 0.476]   | [0.604, 0.836]   |
| Threshold 3  | 1.426            | 1.858            |
|              | [1.245, 1.613]   | [1.730, 1.989]   |
| Threshold 4  | 2.593            | 3.019            |
|              | [2.382, 2.811]   | [2.875, 3.176]   |
| N            | 2564             | 5287             |

Data source: 2016, 2020 American National Election Study.

Point estimates are the logged odds ratios.

Brackets represent credible intervals at the 95-percent level.

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