

White Identity ≠ Racial Resentment

Identifying the differences between white identity and racial resentment

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Background

In popular narrative, racial resentment and white identity measures are commonly seen as describing the same sets of people. We look to determine the actual distinctions between these measures and find that racial resentment contains an ideological component that white identity does not.

Methods

Using 2018 pilot study data from the ANES, we create a white identity index and a racial resentment index. White identity responses range from "not at all important" to "extremely important". Racial resentment responses range from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly". In both indexes, responses to each question are added to create an index ranging from 0 (low white identity/low racial resentment) to 1 (high white identity/high racial resentment).

White Identity Questions

- How important is being White to your identity?
- How important is it that whites work together to change laws that are unfair to whites?
- How likely is it that many whites are unable to find a job because employees are hiring minorities instead?

Racial Resentment Questions

- Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.
- Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
- Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
- It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites

Correlation

Through a correlation test, we find that white identity and racial resentment are **0.528** points correlated, indicating that, though comparable, the measures carry distinctions.

1. Regression models control for gender, age, family, income, partisanship, education, and political interest.

Predictors of White Identity and Racial Resentment

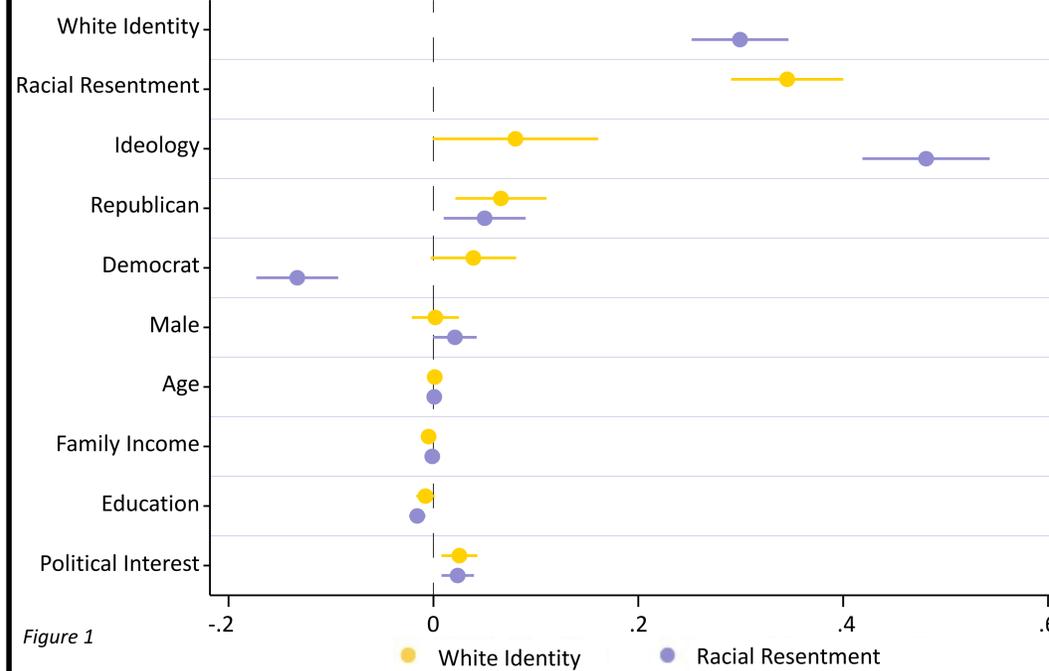


Figure 1

Figure 1 indicates that while ideology trends with and is predictive of racial resentment, it does not do the same with white identity. This shows a distinct ideological difference in the two measures.

Distribution of Attitudes by Ideology

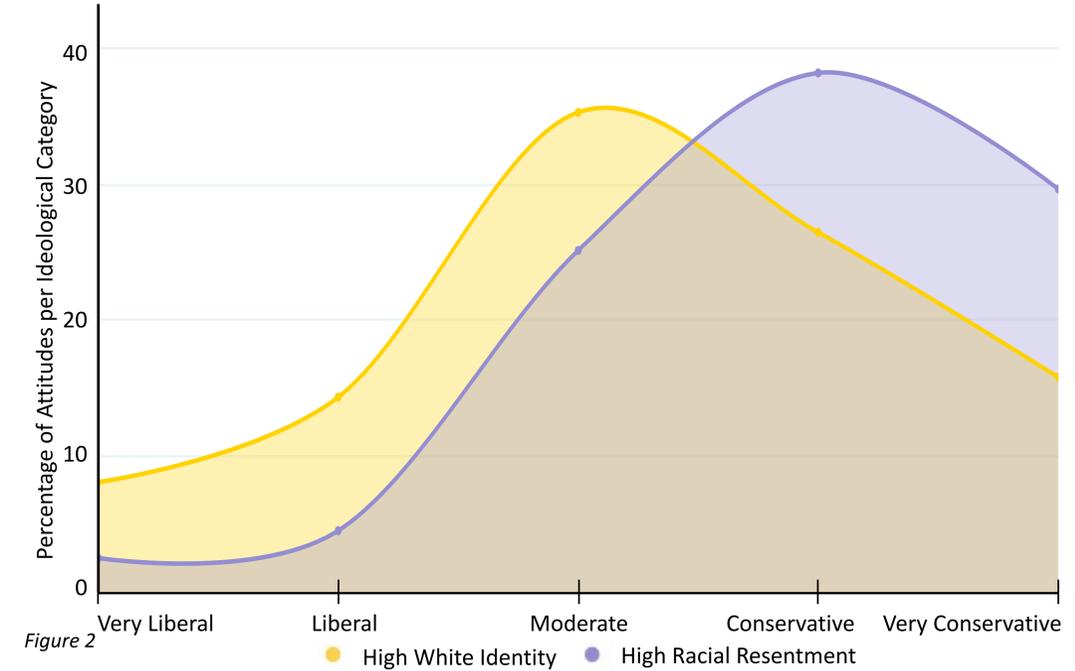


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the distribution of white identity and racial resentment attitudes by ideology. The right skew of the racial resentment distribution illustrates that racial resentment has a conservative skew while white identity does not.

Liberal Policies

Values are the coefficients for regressions predicting support for these policies¹

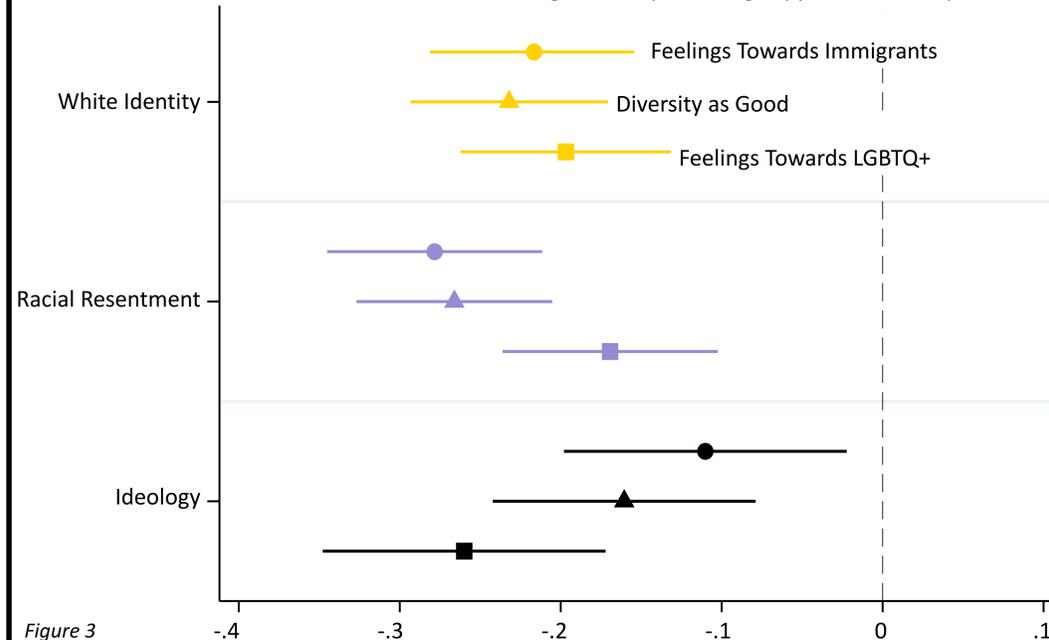


Figure 3

Figure 3 identifies support for left-leaning policies. We see no identifiable pattern in predicting support for these policies.

Conservative Policies

Values are the coefficients for regressions predicting support for these policies¹

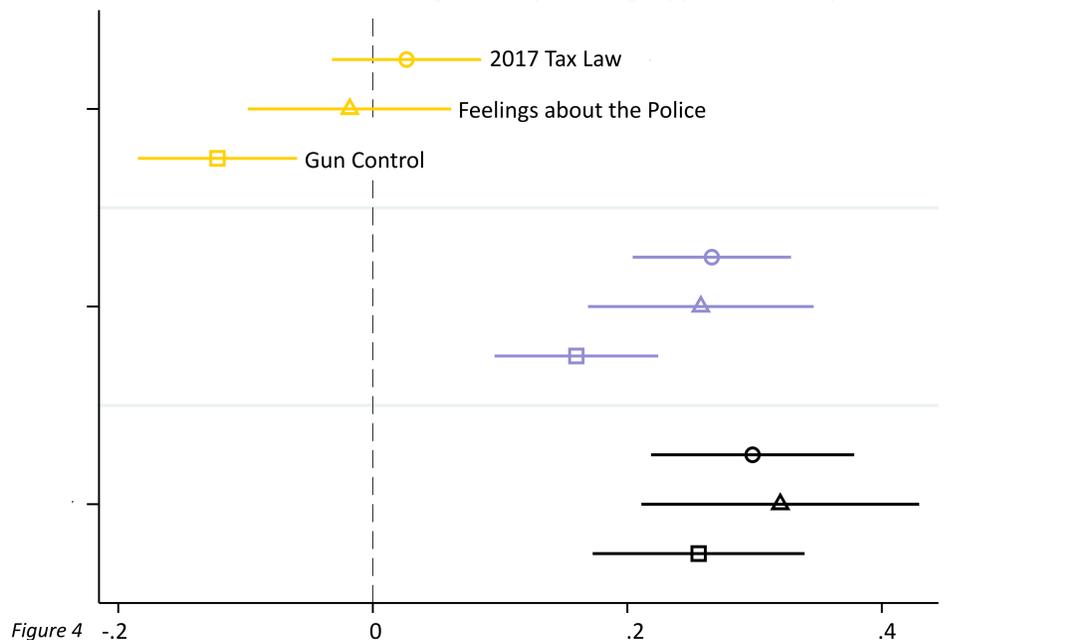


Figure 4

However, Figure 4 identifies support for right-leaning policies and here we see that racial resentment and ideology, once again, trend together, illustrating that racial resentment has an ideological and specifically conservative skew.

Implications

Our findings indicate that while racial resentment is typically considered a conservative issue, we cannot say the same for white identity as it lacks a clear ideological component. To the extent that we view white identity as a problem, this problem is found across all ideological identifications. Our results also imply that it is a mistake to understand white identity purely as another measure of racism.