How Canada Compares: The Politics of White Identity, Racial Resentment, and Racial Attitudes in North America

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Abstract:

With some critical exceptions, the political importance of race has not received significant attention across Canadian behavioural scholarship (Thompson 2008). This paper comparatively examines the prevalence and effects of white identity and racial attitudes between Canadians and Americans by leveraging original survey data and a novel conjoint experiment. This paper presents several major findings. First, on average, white Canadians express lower levels of racial identity and racial resentment than white Americans, but more similar levels of racial affect. Second, experimental evidence shows that Americans are more inclined to penalize non-white political candidates than Canadians. Third, white racial identity and racial resentment are strongly correlated with right-wing voting and partisanship in both Canada and the United States, but the magnitude of effects is greater among Americans. Race continues to be of greater political importance in the United States, but it is far from an irrelevant factor in Canada.

Introduction

Race has historically been a defining social cleavage in the United States (Sidanius & Pratto 2001). In turn, American academic scholarship has long investigated the political importance of racial attitudes and racial group-based identities in the United States, finding that racial resentment and white racial identity are intimately related to Republican voting and partisanship (Craig & Richeson 2014; Hooghe & Dassonneville 2018; Jardina 2019; Mutz 2018; Sides et al. 2018; Tesler 2012). However, there has been much less empirical research on the political importance of race in Canada (Thompson 2008), and limited efforts to compare the political importance of racial attitudes and identity across the Canada-U.S. border.

Canada is a country with historical cleavages based primarily on language and religion (Johnston 2017). It is also a country that formally supports an official policy of multiculturalism and inclusion. Canada's multiculturalism policy has continued to be recognized as a defining moment in a country that has long been faced with the task of accommodating diverse groups of immigrants and recognizing the special status of large national minorities in French Canadians and Indigenous peoples (Kymlicka 1998). Within this context, scholarly understanding of racial attitudes, racial identity and their political importance in Canada is relatively undeveloped. Thompson (2008) provides a telling summary of the state of the literature: "In spite of the increasing relevance of race in Canadian society, analyses concerning the relationship(s) between race and politics have been, at best, tangential in mainstream English Canadian political science." (Thompson 2008, pg. 525).

This is despite a plethora of reasons for the topic to receive more attention. Including, the importance of race in American political behaviour, the fact that almost one in every four Canadians is non-white (Stats Canada 2016), that there is racial inequality in Canada in areas such

as income, health and social integration (Banting & Thompson 2021; Ramraj et al. 2016; Reitz & Banerjee 2007; Satzewich & Liodakis 2010), that anti-Black racism exists in Canada (Calliste 1995; Kymlicka 1998; Lewis 1992), that there is evidence that the rate of employment discrimination on the basis of race in Canada is similar to the United States (Quillian et al. 2019), that racial inequality in Canada has continued to be largely unaddressed by public policy (Banting & Thompson 2021), and that non-white Canadians have reported feeling discriminated against in Canada (Satzewich & Liodakis 2010).

Existent scholarship in Canada has highlighted how ethnic minorities are increasingly reliable partisans for the Liberals (Gidengil et al. 2012), and that those who are resentful towards Indigenous peoples in Canada are more likely to vote Conservative (Beauvais & Stolle 2022). But direct empirical comparisons of racial attitudes and identity between Americans and Canadians have largely been absent from academic scholarship. This absence represents a missed opportunity for scholarship. By comparing the relative political importance of race between Canada and the United States, we may better learn more about the politics of both countries (Lipset 1990; Turgeon 2014; Vipond 2008).

Utilizing original survey data and a novel candidate-choice conjoint experiment, this paper attempts to begin to address this gap. I directly compare white racial identity, racial resentment, and racial affect between nationally representative samples of white Americans and white Canadians. I examine the extent to which these variables are associated with vote choice and partisanship, as well as how the presence of non-white political candidates potentially impacts how white voters in either country select who to support during elections.

This paper has several key findings. First, there are considerable differences in white racial identity and racial attitudes between Canada and the United States. White Canadians consistently

express lower levels of white identity and racial resentment than white Americans. But these differences evaporate on measures of racial affect with feeling thermometers. Second, the presence of non-white political candidates triggers stronger electoral reactions from white Americans than white Canadians. Experimental evidence shows that political candidates randomly assigned to be non-white receive lower average vote shares among the sample of white American respondents. Yet, for white Canadian respondents, there is no electoral penalty for non-white candidates. Candidates randomly assigned to be Asian, Black or Indigenous perform almost just as well as the average white candidate among the Canadian sample. Third, utilizing regression analyses, I find that white racial identity and racial resentment are strongly correlated with voting for and identifying with right-wing parties in both Canada and the United States. However, the magnitude of the effects are consistently larger among the samples of white Americans. Finally, I also test the extent to which measures of non-white racial affect predict voting and partisanship but find little evidence that these are comparably strong measures to racial resentment and white identity.

In short, this paper argues that race continues to be of greater political importance in the United States than in Canada. Perhaps unsurprisingly, white Americans are more racially resentful and identify more strongly with their racial group than white Canadians. But race is also far from an irrelevant factor in Canadian politics. Over 20 percent of the sample of white Canadians strongly identified with their racial group. Over 35 percent of the sample of white Canadians believe that Black Canadians do not deserve any special favours from government. While non-white political candidates did not receive electoral penalties from Canadians in the conjoint experiment, both white identity and racial resentment were strongly correlated with Conservative voting and partisanship. Consequently, future Canadian political scholarship should pay more attention to the ways in which race influences political behaviour.

<u>The Relative Absence of Canadian Behavioural Scholarship on Race</u>

It has long been argued that American politics is group centric, and that race is the defining cleavage separating groups of individuals in American politics (Mendelberg 2001; Nelson & Kinder 1996; Sides et al. 2018; Sidanius & Pratto 2001). Sidanius and Pratto argue that while social class was the primary stratification system throughout much of European history, the most likely group distinction and social stratification in the United States has been race (Sidanius & Pratto 2001). For white Americans, there has been an extensive literature on how racial attitudes and racial identity are important determinants of political behavior. Kinder and Sanders (1996) argue that racial resentment shapes a wide array of political opinions and behavior among white voters. Similarly, Gilens (1999) finds that opposition to welfare and other government social programs in the United States is often motivated by racial resentment among white people.

Scholarship has directly connected race, racial attitudes, and identity politics in the United States to the rise of Donald Trump. Sides et al. (2018), in analyzing Trump's 2016 victory, argue that the decisive issue was social identity. They argue that how Americans felt about immigration, Black people, Muslim people, and the broader idea of white Americans being left behind strongly predicted their vote in 2016 (Sides et al. 2018). Hooghe and Dassonneville (2018) argue that the most compelling factors for explaining a vote for Trump are racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment. Mutz (2018) contends that the key issues in 2016 were immigration, race and how both issues potentially threatened Americans' views of their dominant group status.

Jardina (2019) theorizes that the shift of white voters to the Republican party can be explained by white racial identity. According to Jardina's account, a racial hierarchy is perceived to exist in America with white people at the top. Yet, the dominance of the white group has come under threat through immigration, the rising proportion of ethnic minorities in the population, and Obama's

presidency (Jardina 2019). In response to these group status threats, Jardina states that white people have grown more attached to their racial identity and the importance of white identity has increased (Jardina 2019). Analyzing survey data from 2010 to 2016, Jardina reports that between 30 to 40% of white Americans report that their racial identity is either "very" or "extremely" important to them (Jardina 2019). Jardina demonstrates that individuals with higher levels of white racial identity have more negative attitudes towards immigration and greater affiliation with the Republican Party (Jardina 2019).

Across the border, behavioral scholarship in Canada has centered on several major factors to explain national voting patterns and political partisanship over time. This includes religion (Johnston 2017), regional divides (Gidengil et al. 2012), and language (Lijphart 1979). However, the political importance of racial identity and racial attitudes have largely not received significant attention across Canadian research (Thompson 2008).

Older theoretical work conceived the difference between French and English Canadians as one based on race (Siegfried 1907). Throughout most of the 19th century, it was argued that English Canadians did not consider French Canadians to be white (Scott 2015). However, this view changed over the course of history as French Canadians in Quebec became, as Scott puts it: "white folks" who are a distinct western national group of people and "solidly lodged in whiteness" (Scott 2015, p. 1280).

Beyond the divide between English and French Canadians, it has been shown that visible minorities in Canada are more likely to support the Liberals (Blais 2005; Blais et al. 2002; Gidengil et al. 2012; Nevitte et al. 2000). Gidengil and her colleagues noted that there was a moderate divide between parties based on racial attitudes throughout the 2000s, with those who favored doing less for minorities more inclined to support right-wing parties and those who favored doing more for

minorities supportive of the NDP (Blais 2005; Gidengil et al. 2012). But the authors show that the implications of these attitudinal difference for party vote share is trivial (Gidengil et al. 2012). Yet, these authors also do not measure racial attitudes or identity in the same way as American scholarship, which, consequently, does not provide a meaningful basis for comparison.

Work by Besco has examined the politics of minority voters and minority candidates in Canada. With survey experiments that model conditions of a hypothetical election, Besco finds that non-white voters show a strong affinity for supporting their own ethnocultural group and seem to show stronger support for other minority candidates (Besco 2015; 2019). In other work, Besco shows that ethnic minority candidates in Canada experience electoral discrimination when they run as members of right-wing parties, but not when they run as members of left-wing parties (Besco 2020). Besco concludes that this result is likely because right-wing party voters are more likely to switch allegiance in response to a minority candidate, whereas left-wing party supporters are less likely to switch their allegiances (Besco 2020).

Recent work by Hale (2023) analyzes the effect of racial attitudes on electoral support for the federal NDP under the leadership of Jagmeet Singh, the first non-white leader of a major federal party. Hale finds that colder feelings towards ethnic minorities are associated with decreased likelihood of supporting the NDP in both the 2019 and 2021 federal elections relative to past elections where Singh was not the party leader (Hale 2023). Bouchard (2021) found that Singh's candidacy was more negatively perceived in Quebec, but that it also led to an increase in affinity-voting for the NDP by Sikh Canadians.

Some scholarship has examined attitudes on race and immigration across the provinces. Bilodeau et al. (2012) show that attitudes among white Canadians toward immigrants and racial minorities are a net positive in every province and that these attitudes became more positive from

1988 to 2008. Relatedly, Gravelle (2018) shows that Liberal and NDP partisans express more positive feelings toward Muslims than do either Bloc Québécois (BQ) or Conservative Party partisans.

The only empirical study of white identity in Canada is by Beauvais and Stolle (2022). These authors measure white Canadians attachment to their racial in-group as well as their resentment towards Indigenous Canadians. They find that white identity among Canadians increases support for public pensions, a policy area which the authors argue mostly benefits white Canadians, and that anti-Indigenous resentment lowers support for welfare policies, an area which disproportionately benefits Indigenous Canadians (Beauvais & Stolle 2022). The finding that anti-Indigenous attitudes reduce support for welfare in Canada has been shown by other scholarship (Harell et al. 2014; 2016; Beauvais 2020; 2021). In fact, Harell et al. (2016) found that opposition to helping an Indigenous person in Canada was higher than opposition to helping a Black person in the United States. Beauvais and Stolle analyze how white identity and anti-Indigenous resentment affected vote choice in the 2019 Canadian federal election, finding that both white identity and anti-Indigenous resentment are associated with voting for the Conservative Party (Beauvais & Stolle 2022).

Examining the structure of the Canadian party system, Lachance and Beauvais (2024) analyze how social group affect helps shape vote choice. Using Canadian Election Study data and social group feeling thermometers, Lachance and Beauvais (2024) show how feelings towards others, including ethnic minorities and groups associated with Quebec, have become more important determinants of voting for the Conservatives outside of Quebec over time.

This important recent work has begun to focus more attention on the politics of racial identity and racial attitudes in Canada. Yet, more work is needed. This project builds on this

scholarship in several ways. I directly compare racial identity, racial attitudes, and their political effects between Canadians and Americans by posing virtually identical questions on temporally aligned surveys and employing an original experimental design to capture the causal effect of a candidate's race.[1] Consequently, this analysis allows for a direct empirical comparison of white racial identity and racial attitudes between Canadians and Americans.

Data

Almost thirty years ago, Nevitte (1996) argued that part of the reason for the lack of comparative scholarship on Canada and the United States was methodological difficulties. The same point can be made today. Past qualitative work is extensive and rich in context, but its generalizability is suspect (Nevitte 1996). On the quantitative side, there exist few publicly available surveys that pose identical questions to both Canadians and Americans. Surveys that do ask similar questions are not always temporally aligned and are not always theoretically relevant. Both Canada and the United States have long-running national election studies, but these surveys have never been conducted in the same year, contain different sets of questions, or altered question wording, and are not always focused on the same theoretical avenues.[2]

Accordingly, original data is necessary to expand the scope of comparative analysis and the reliability of inference. On this front, this project leverages a cross-sectional public opinion survey of Americans and Canadians fielded from December 2022 to January 2023. Survey respondents were recruited by Leger, a Canadian-based marketing/polling firm hired to conduct the survey.[3] Leger is a well-regarded polling firm known for their accuracy. In both the 2019 and

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[1] Beauvais and Stolle (2022) compare their findings on Canadian white racial identity to Jardina's (2019) results. But given the substantial temporal gap between the empirical data, and the differences in terms of what survey questions were employed, these comparisons lack necessary precision.

[2] This is of course unsurprising given that national election studies are not designed to be comparative.

[3] Leger recently merged with an American-based survey firm which expanded their reach to American respondents.

2021 Canadian federal elections, Leger provided the most accurate polling relative to actual election results (Grenier 2021). I used Leger for both the American and Canadian portions of the survey to avoid any potential bias from the use of different survey firms.

The survey was fielded to a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Americans and 2,000 Canadians. Respondents were recruited to fill quotas, configured using American and Canadian census data, for age, gender, and geographic region. Following data collection, national survey weights were calculated and appended to the dataset. To maximize empirical comparability, the survey contains nearly identical questions for American and Canadian respondents. Question wording was only altered for country-specific contexts, such as the names of political parties. The survey contained a large number of questions to gauge respondents' background demographics, their political preferences, and the social identities that are most important to them. This includes a number of key variables measuring racial attitudes, resentment and white identity as described in the subsequent section.

The median survey completion time was just over seventeen minutes for Canadians and fourteen minutes for Americans. The survey included two attention checks to ensure data quality. The first was an easy attention check, that most respondents passed. The respondents who did not pass this first attention check were removed from the survey and replaced with new respondents.[4] The harder attention check is the favorite colour question designed and validated by Berinsky et al. (2014). A smaller percentage of respondents passed this check, but none were removed based on answers to this question. As a robustness check, each of the regression models in the forthcoming analysis were run amongst the sample that passed this harder attention check.

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[4] This first attention check simply asked respondents to select an answer choice to show that they were reading the question.

This project's original quantitative design also included a paired-profile, candidate-choice conjoint experiment.[5] The advantage of a conjoint experiment is that it allows researchers to assess the effects of multiple experimental treatments simultaneously and identify respondents' preferences within and across multiple tested dimensions (Bansak et al. 2021). The intent of the experimental design is to mirror the relevant background information about political candidates that might determine a respondent's actual choice at the ballot box, and to then compare the relative effects on vote share of these different pieces of information between Americans and Canadians. The design of the conjoint experiment was pre-registered at Open Science Framework in November 2022, prior to it being fielded to respondents. Respondents were shown two side-by-side profiles of hypothetical political candidates and were asked to choose which candidate they would support.[6] The experiment provided six pieces of information about each candidate. These six attributes were the hypothetical candidate's party, race, gender, major endorsement received, occupation history, and their number one policy priority.

<u>Measuring Racial Attitudes, Identity and Resentment</u>

Feeling thermometers were first employed in the 1964 National Election Study in the United States to measure survey respondents' affect towards groups of people and prominent political figures (Winter & Berinsky 1999). Feeling thermometers have been employed in the Canadian Election Study (CES), which has asked survey respondents to rate groups of people, provinces, and prominent politicians on a 0-100 scale.[7] Because of their use in the CES, the most common empirical approach to assessing the importance of attitudes toward other social groups in

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[5] The conjoint experiment was ordered randomly in the survey, such that there would be no systematic bias produced from any preceding survey questions. Respondents completed four iterations of the experiment, increasing statistical power (Bansak et al. 2021).

[6] Respondents were also separately asked to rank each candidate on a 1 to 7 scale.

[7] Although, as Lachance and Beauvais (2024) note, not every iteration of the CES contains the same set of feeling thermometer questions.

Canadian politics has often been to utilize feeling thermometer scores (see Lachance & Beauvais 2024 on the growing importance of group-based affect in the structure of the Canadian party system). The advantages of these measures are their conceptual clarity and logistical ease.

I utilized feeling thermometers in the Canadian and American surveys to capture general sentiments towards different racial groups. This set of questions is utilized in order to operationalize racial affect and to get a sense of public attitudes towards non-white groups more generally. I included a feeling thermometer measure for Indigenous peoples, which can helpfully capture sentiment towards this group among Canadians and Americans (see Appendix 1 for each question).

However, feeling thermometer scores only provide one piece of the puzzle. How individuals rate other groups of people on 0-100 scales, for example, says little about the extent to which their racial group is an important social attachment, or whether they believe other racial groups are undeserving of a hand-up from government. Feeling thermometers indicate the extent to which individuals have 'warm' or 'cold' feelings towards other groups of people. While this may be correlated with other attitudes, accurately measuring theoretical constructs such as white racial identity and racial resentment requires their own questions. And these types of questions have often not been included in the Canadian Election Study.[8] Moreover, as the forthcoming analyses will show, the comparative picture of the behavioral effects of racial attitudes are markedly different when researchers go beyond measures of racial affect.

Accordingly, this study employs several other measures of racial attitudes and identity to estimate the political importance of race more comprehensively. Jardina bases her measure of

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[8] With the exception of resentment towards Indigenous peoples, questions on racial resentment (towards Black people) and white racial identity, as measured by American politics scholars, have not been commonly included on the CES. But see Beauvais & Stolle (2022) for a measure of white identity.

white racial identity on five questions across multiple survey sources, including the ANES (Jardina 2019).[9] Each question targets a particular aspect of white racial identity construction: the centrality of the identity, evaluations of the group, and the degree of white consciousness. The original survey launched as part of this project replicated Jardina's (2019) measure of white racial identity, fielding each of the five questions simultaneously to nationally representative samples of Americans and Canadians (see Appendix 1 for each question). This measurement of white racial identity differs from Beauvais and Stolle (2022), who construct their index measure of white identity using three of the survey questions originally operationalized by Jardina (2019).

I also measure racial resentment using the traditional set of four survey questions used in the ANES, recoded for appropriate attitudinal direction, and combined into an index measure for both the Canadian and American samples (see Appendix 1 for each question). It is worthy to note that this measure also departs from Beauvais and Stolle (2022), who do not measure racial resentment towards Black people. Instead, these authors argue that the more appropriate out-group which white Canadians are more likely to express resentment towards are Indigenous peoples. While this is theoretically possible, this project opts to measure racial resentment in the same way for Canadians and Americans for several reasons. First, this is for the sake of comparison: unless identical constructions of racial resentment are utilized, comparisons between Canadians and Americans cannot be meaningfully conducted. Second, simply stated, anti-Black racism exists in Canada too (Calliste 1995; Lewis 1992; Thompson 2008). The number of Black Canadians as a percentage of the population in Canada is not insignificant, totalling over 1.2 million as measured

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[9] This is not the only measure of white identity that exists across the literature. Knowles and Peng (2005) measure white identity implicitly using the White Identity Centrality Implicit Association Test (WICIAT). In this measure, respondents run through an experiment that assesses their automatic associations with white identity (Knowles & Peng 2005). Yet, the WICIAT is a much lengthier process that requires respondents to run through a computer program in a controlled environment and is no longer the dominant measurement approach.

by the 2016 census. Given that empirical scholarship in Canada has not posed survey questions measuring resentment towards Black people in Canada, we cannot say with certainty whether some Canadians express out-group resentment towards Black people or how this compares to the level of resentment in the United States.

Public Attitudes in North America: The Weaker Racial Cleavage in Canada

How do Canadians and Americans compare in terms of white racial identity and racial attitudes? This section reports descriptive statistics and difference-in-means tests among white respondents from the nationally representative survey samples. Beginning with white racial identity, Figure 1 plots the relative distributions of Canadian and American survey respondents to the question "How important is being white to your identity?" To better show the differences between the samples, the answer categories are grouped into two responses: 1) those who said being white was "extremely" or "very" important to their identity, and 2) those who said being white was "a little" or "not at all" important. The middle category, "somewhat important", was excluded from this figure.

Figure 1 shows that there are significant differences in the extent to which white Americans and Canadians identify with their racial group. Over 37 percent of the sample of white Americans stated that being white was either 'very' or 'extremely' important to their identity, while only 20 percent of the sample of white Canadians did the same. A much greater percentage of white Canadians (almost 52 percent) stated that being white was 'a little' or 'not at all' important compared to the sample of Americans (36 percent).

Figure 1: White Identity in Canada and the United States

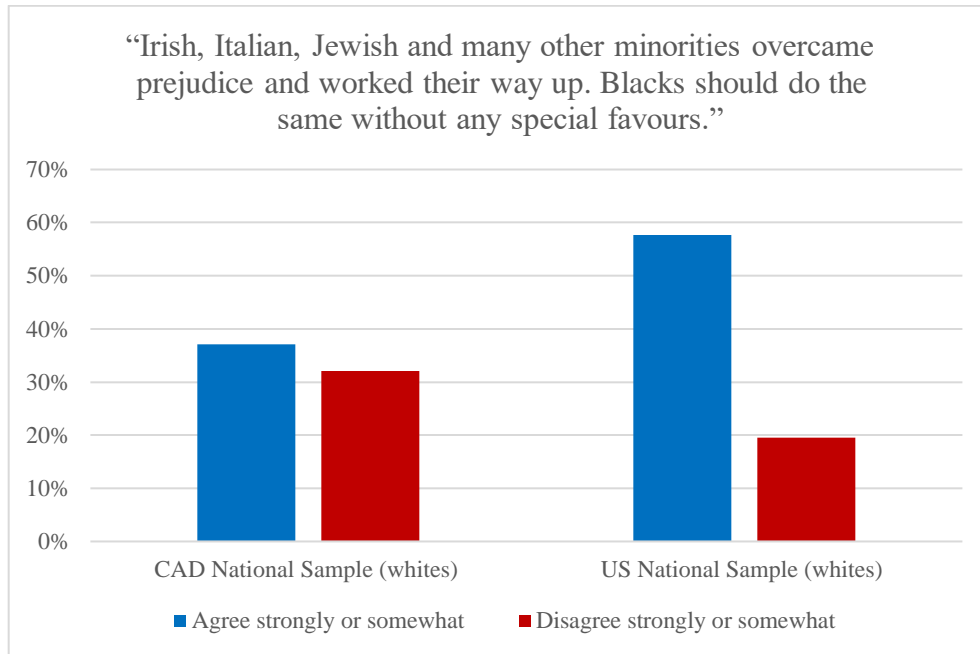How important is being white to your identity?
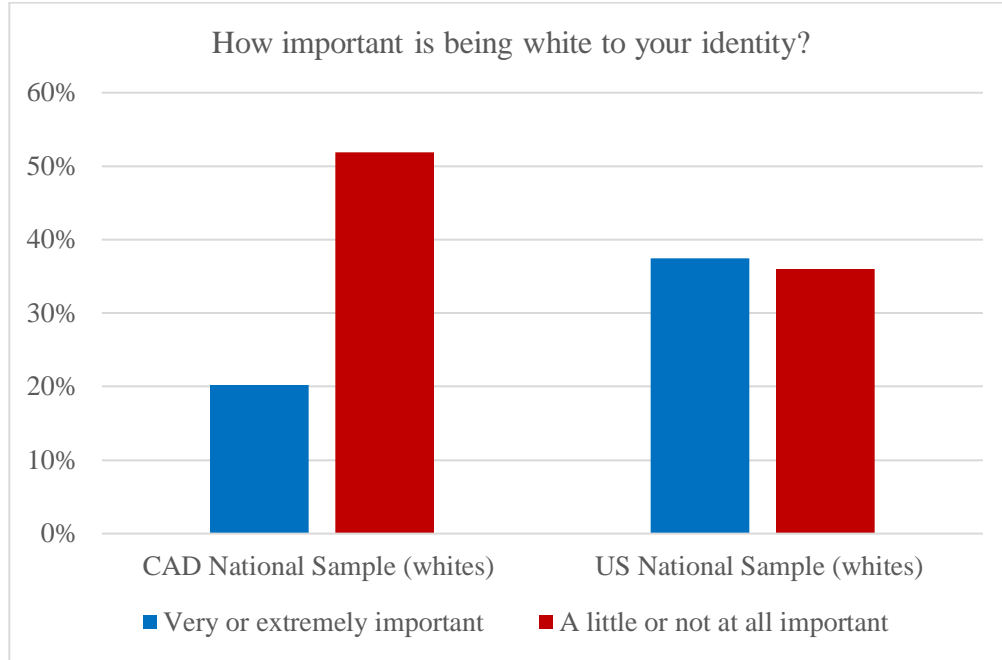
Source: Original survey data (2023). National samples are nationally representative samples from the United States and Canada, white respondents only. Y-axis is percentage of the respective sample. X-axis indicates which sample. Color indicates answer given to question. More extreme answers grouped into two categories (strongly or somewhat).

Figure 2 repeats the comparison across the national samples for a survey question measuring racial resentment. It displays how white respondents answered the first question of the racial resentment scale utilized in American political scholarship. Again, for the sake of comparison, answers of "agree strongly" or "agree somewhat" were grouped together, as well as answers of "disagree strongly" or "disagree somewhat".

Figure 2 shows how there are again significant differences between white respondents across the border. Over 32 percent of white Canadians disagree either 'strongly or 'somewhat' that Black people should not receive any special favours, compared to less than 20 percent of white Americans. A majority of white Americans (over 57 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed with the prompt that Blacks should not receive any special favours, compared to 37 percent of white Canadians. Notably, however, more white Canadians agreed with the racially resentful prompt

than disagreed, suggesting that resentment towards Black people in Canada, as measured with this survey question, is not insignificant.

Figure 2: Racial Resentment in Canada and the United States

Source: Original survey data (2023). Nationally representative samples from the United States and Canada, white respondents only. Y-axis is percentage of the respective sample. X-axis indicates which sample. Color indicates answer given to question. More extreme answers grouped into two categories (strongly or somewhat).

Table 1 displays the results of a difference-in-means analysis of nine measures of white identity and racial attitudes between the national samples of white respondents. Each variable has been recoded between 0 and 1 to increase comparability. These variables include: the full white racial identity index, the single variable measure of white identity ("How important is being white to your identity?"), the full index measure of racial resentment, as well as feeling thermometer scores for different racial groups. The feeling thermometer for non-whites was calculated by averaging the scores respondents provided on each of the thermometers for non-white groups (Black people, Indigenous/Native peoples, Asian people, and Hispanic/Latino people).

On average, white Americans display a greater degree of attachment to their racial identity than the average Canadian. On the full index measure, this difference is equal to .09 on a 0-1 scale.

On the single-item measure of white identity, this difference is equal to .14 on the same scale. Evidently, there is also a considerable difference between the national samples in terms of racial resentment. On average, the national sample of white Americans express higher levels of racial resentment than the corresponding Canadian sample. This difference on the index measure of racial resentment is equal to .11 on a 0-1 scale.

Table 1: Difference-in-Means National Samples of White Respondents	American Mean (SE)	Canadian Mean (SE)	Difference (p-value)
Variables:			
White Racial Identity Index	.5084 (.006)	.4167 (.005)	.0917 (p<.0001)
White Racial Identity (Single Variable Measure)	.4925 (.009)	.3515 (.008)	.1410 (p<.0001)
Racial Resentment Index	.5462 (.007)	.4286 (.006)	.1176 (p<.0001)
Feeling Thermometer: Whites	.7571 (.006)	.7504 (.005)	.0067 (p=.3837)
Feeling Thermometer: Non-Whites*	.7062 (.005)	.7138 (.005)	-.0076 (p=.3178)
Feeling Thermometer: Blacks	.6863 (.007)	.7165 (.006)	-.0302 (p=.0005)
Feeling Thermometer: Indigenous/Native Peoples	.7381 (.006)	.6986 (.006)	.0395 (p<.0001)
Feeling Thermometer: Asians	.7083 (.006)	.7131 (.005)	-.0048 (p=.5593)
Feeling Thermometer: Hispanics/Latinos	.6903 (.006)	.7240 (.005)	-.0337 (p<.0001)

Source: Original survey data (2023). Nationally representative samples from the United States and Canada. White respondents only. Each variable has been recoded between 0-1 to improve comparability. Means are calculated and rounded to four decimal points. Standard errors are reported in brackets. *Mean for non-whites feeling thermometer is the average across each non-white group thermometer.

However, the differences between the national samples are more modest when comparing scores on feeling thermometers. The average feeling thermometer score for white people and non-white people is virtually identical between the national samples of Americans and Canadians. These differences are small and not statistically significant. Yet, there are larger differences when the feeling thermometers are broken down by specific non-white racial groups. The American national sample had colder feelings towards Latinos and Black people relative to the Canadian

national sample, while the Canadian national sample expressed colder feelings toward Indigenous peoples than the American sample. Accordingly, feeling thermometers provide important pieces of information, especially as it pertains to the specific dimensions of racial affect. But it also shows the importance of not simply measuring racial affect to evaluate the political importance of race. White Canadians and white Americans are quite similar in terms of racial affect, but much different in terms of white identity and racial resentment.

Experimental Evidence: The Comparative Effects of a Candidate's Race

What do differences in white identity and racial resentment potentially signify for political behaviour and electoral outcomes? This section turns to experimental evidence to assess how the presence of non-white political candidates affects vote choice between Americans and Canadians. The setup of the conjoint experiment was identical for both American and Canadian respondents, but with some of the levels of the attributes adjusted for country context. For instance, the party attribute could be Liberal, NDP, or Conservative for Canadians, and Democrat or Republican for Americans. The race attribute could be White, Black, Asian, or Indigenous for Canadians, and White, Black, Asian, or Hispanic/Latino for Americans.[10] The gender attribute, major endorsement attribute, occupation attribute, and policy priority attribute had the exact same possible levels for both Americans and Canadians.[11]

The levels of each attribute that respondents saw in the experiment were determined randomly with one important exception. To better replicate political conditions in each country, the levels of the policy priority attribute were constrained to certain political parties. For example,

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[10] These four levels were chosen given that they are the four largest racial groups in each country, respectively. It would have been ideal to disaggregate the racial treatment further to include South Asians and East Asians, rather than just prompting respondents to consider Asian candidates. Yet, for the sake of comparison and statistical power, this was not done. Future research should analyze whether there are evident differences in results when the race of candidates is specified further.

[11] For a full list of each level that an attribute could take, please refer to the Appendix 3.

it would make little sense for respondents to encounter a candidate from either the NDP or the Democrats campaigning primarily on a policy platform of reducing immigration and refugee settlement. Thus, to enhance realism and external validity, the levels of the policy priority attribute that had a clear ideological-lean were constrained to the corresponding political party on that end of the left-right spectrum.[12]

To analyze the results of the conjoint experiment, I estimated Average Marginal Component Effects (AMCEs) for each possible level of the attributes with a given baseline category. The AMCE represents the causal effect of an attribute level (i.e., candidate race = Black) against another baseline value of the same attribute (i.e., candidate race = White), while holding equal the joint distribution of the rest of the attributes in the design (Bansak et al. 2021). In this experiment, the AMCEs represents the average effect of an experimental treatment on a candidate's vote share, given all the information that respondents have seen about a candidate. This experimental approach models how individuals make a single choice within a multidimensional information environment, like voting in an election (Bansak et al. 2021).

Figure 3 plots the AMCEs of each candidate attribute with confidence intervals from the conjoint experiment among white respondents, both French and English, from the national sample of Canadians.[13] Given the randomization constraint between a candidate's policy priorities and their political party, I created an interaction variable (Party_Policy) that combined each possible

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[12] Specifically: the 'creating jobs' and 'reducing reliance on foreign imports' levels could go with any party; the 'lowering taxes' and 'reducing immigration and refugee settlement' levels were constrained to match either the Republicans or the Conservatives; and the 'improving access to education and health care' and 'protecting the environment/fighting climate change' levels were constrained to match the Democrats, Liberals, or NDP.

[13] Respondents selected whether they preferred to answer questions in French or English. To analyze these respondents together, I translated the text provided to French respondents and merged all completed answers in the conjoint experiment.

pairing of the two attributes and estimated an AMCE for each level. There are numerous findings

from this experiment, yet in this paper I will focus on the estimated effects of a candidate's race.[14]
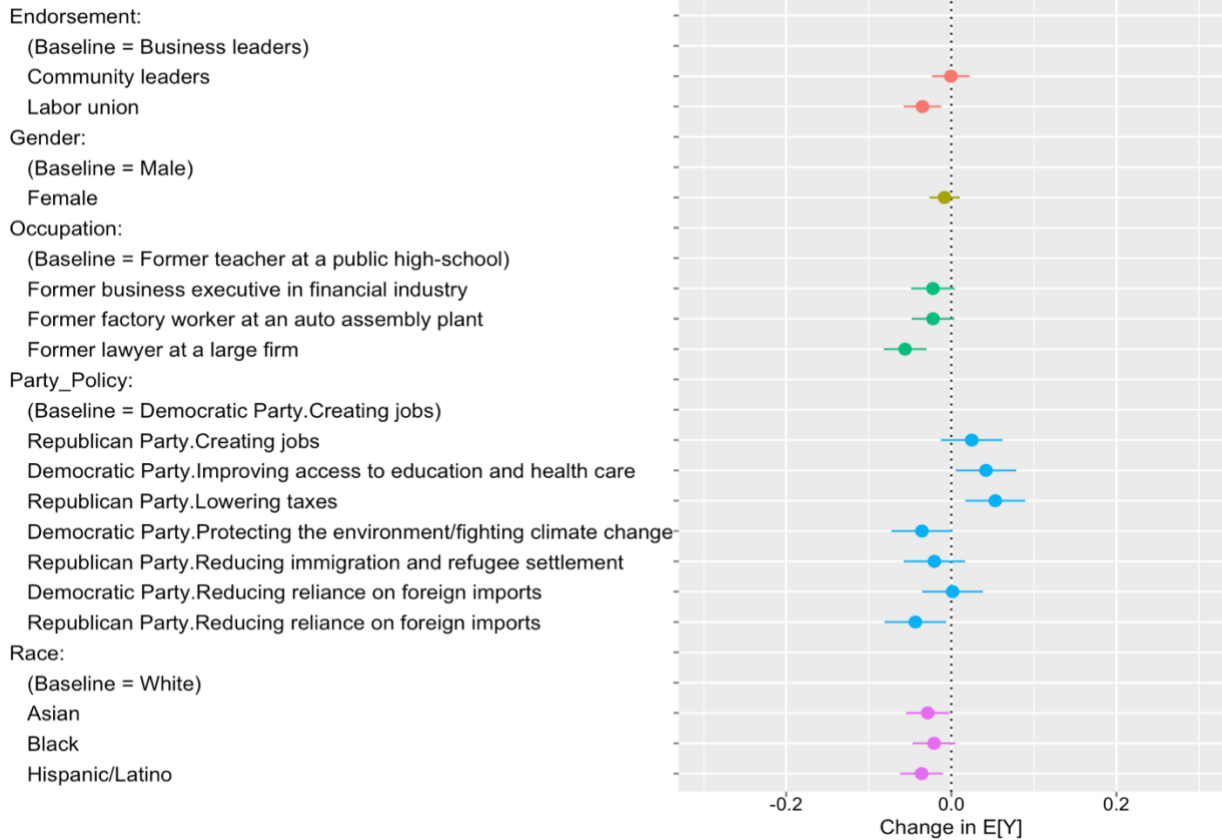
Figure 3: Canadian Conjoint Results
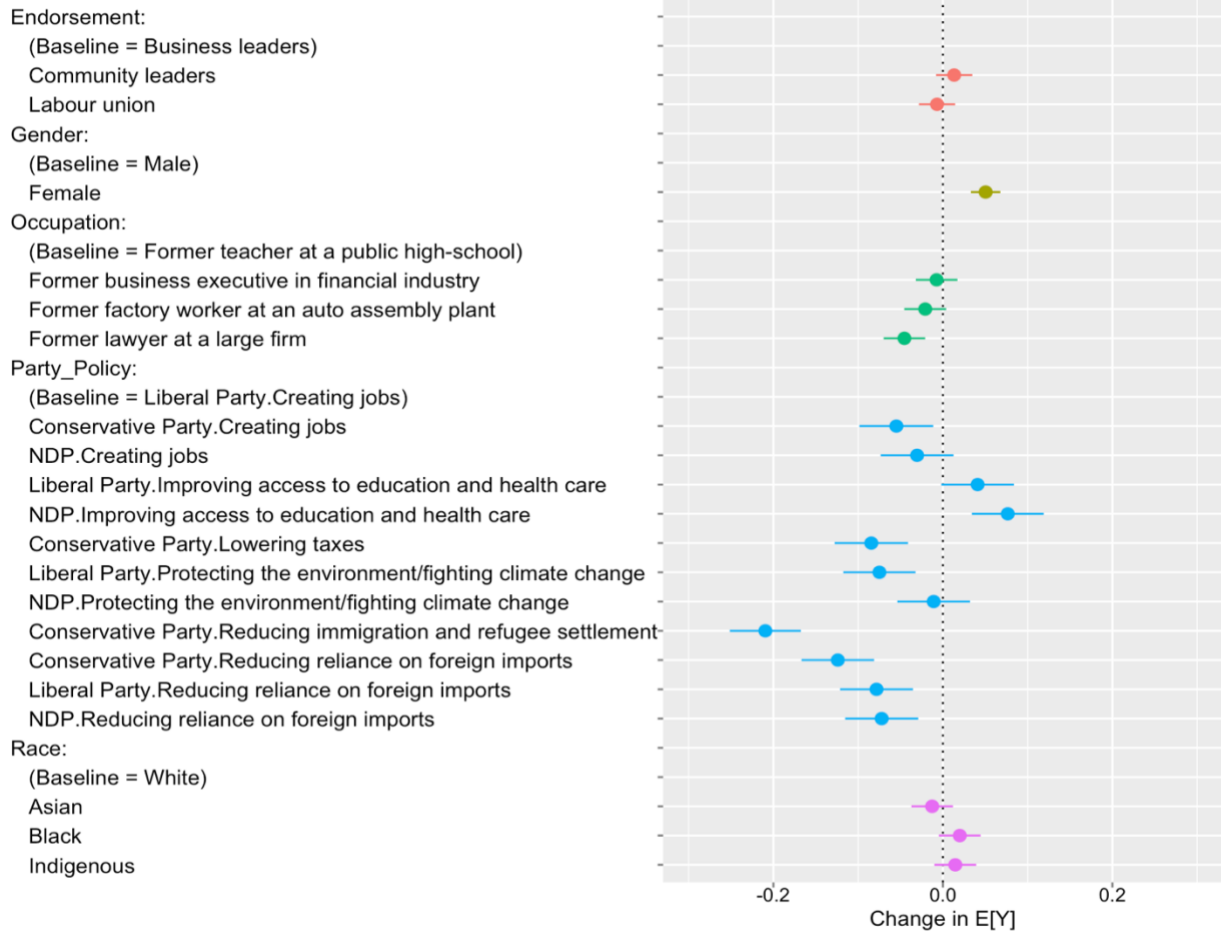
Average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate you would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Respondents are nationally representative sample of Canadians, whites only. N = 1,549. Effect sizes for race treatments: Asian = -.013 (.012); Black = .020 (.012); Indigenous = .015 (.013).

Among white Canadians, Figure 3 shows resoundingly that the race of a political candidate

has no discernible negative effect on their vote share. Relative to white candidates, the baseline

category, candidates randomly assigned to be Asian received a slightly lower average vote share

(-1.3 percent), yet this effect was not statistically significant. Candidates randomly assigned to be

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[14] Some of the more striking findings include the positive effects of expansionary social policy and the negative effects of trade and immigration policies for white Canadians.

Black (+2 percent) or Indigenous (+1.5 percent) actually received slightly higher average vote shares than white candidates, although these effects were also not statistically significant.

Figure 4: American Conjoint Results

Average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate you would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Respondents are nationally representative sample of Americans, whites only. N = 1,399. Effect sizes for race treatments: Asian = -.029 (.013); Black = -.021 (.013); Hispanic/Latino = -.036 (.013).

Figure 4 plots the corresponding results from the candidate-choice conjoint experiment among white respondents from the national sample of Americans. By contrast to the Canadian results, non-white political candidates do receive an electoral penalty from white Americans. Political candidates randomly assigned to be Asian (-2.9 percent), Black (-2.1 percent), and Hispanic/Latino (-3.6 percent) all received lower average vote shares relative to white candidates in the experiment. The negative effect corresponding to Black candidates is just below the conventional level of statistical significance, but the negative effects corresponding to both Asian and Hispanic/Latino candidates are statistically significant.

These comparative results are especially noteworthy given the consistency of the direction of effects. For white Americans, all non-white racial candidates received lower average vote shares than white candidates. For white Canadians, only Asian candidates received a lower average vote share than white candidates, but this penalty was both marginal in magnitude and smaller than the penalty that Asian candidates received from white Americans.

Electoral Behaviour: White ID, Racial Resentment and Racial Affect

To further investigate the comparative electoral importance of race, this section reports the results of regression analyses estimating the effects of white racial identity, racial resentment, and racial affect among white respondents from the national samples of Americans and Canadians. The key outcome variables for this set of analyses are past vote choice, future vote intention, and a scaled index measure of right-wing partisan identity (5-point intensity scale). A large selection of control variables are included in the analysis to limit any concern of omitted variable bias, yet, for conciseness, only the estimates associated with white racial identity, racial resentment, and racial affect are shown below.

The full regression models with the corresponding estimates for each control variable are shown in Appendix 2. These include standard control variables established by past literature, such as age, income, gender, religious affiliation, and religious importance. I included variables for views on free trade (coded into an index labelled "Free Trade Opposition") and variables for views on the economy/their current financial outlook (coded into an index labelled "Economic Resentment").[15] An additional control variable was included, labelled "Language Identity", which measures the stated importance of language to an individual's identity. Finally, a control variable was included in the Canadian models that measures resentment towards Quebec.

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[15] The variables for economic resentment were modelled after some of the variables used in the prominent article by Gest et al. (2017) on support for Trump.

Beginning with the Canadian data, I estimated multinomial logit models for vote choice in the 2021 federal election and vote intention for the next federal election, where each political party was a separate category in the outcome variable.[16] I also estimated an OLS model for Conservative Party identity, measured on a five-point intensity scale and recoded between 0-1 for ease of analysis. Robust standard errors were employed to protect against heteroskedasticity. Figure 5 displays the average marginal effects of the white racial identity index derived from each model, but with only the Conservative Party outcome level from the two multinomial models.[17]

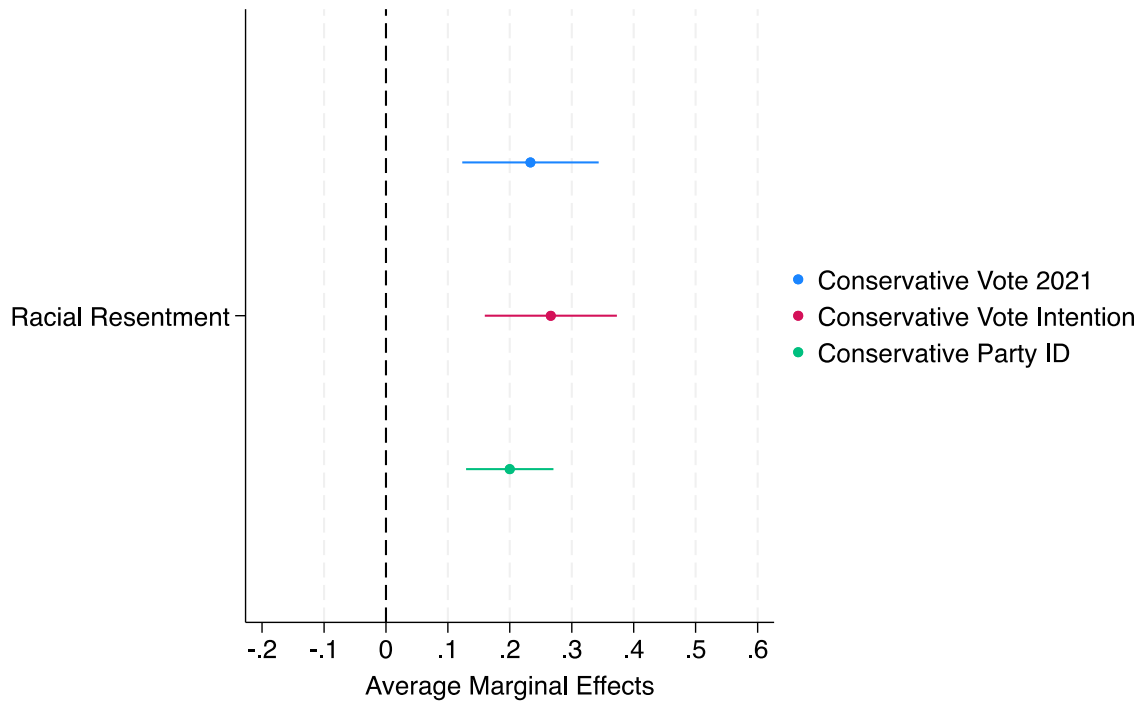Figure 5: White ID and Electoral Behaviour in Canada
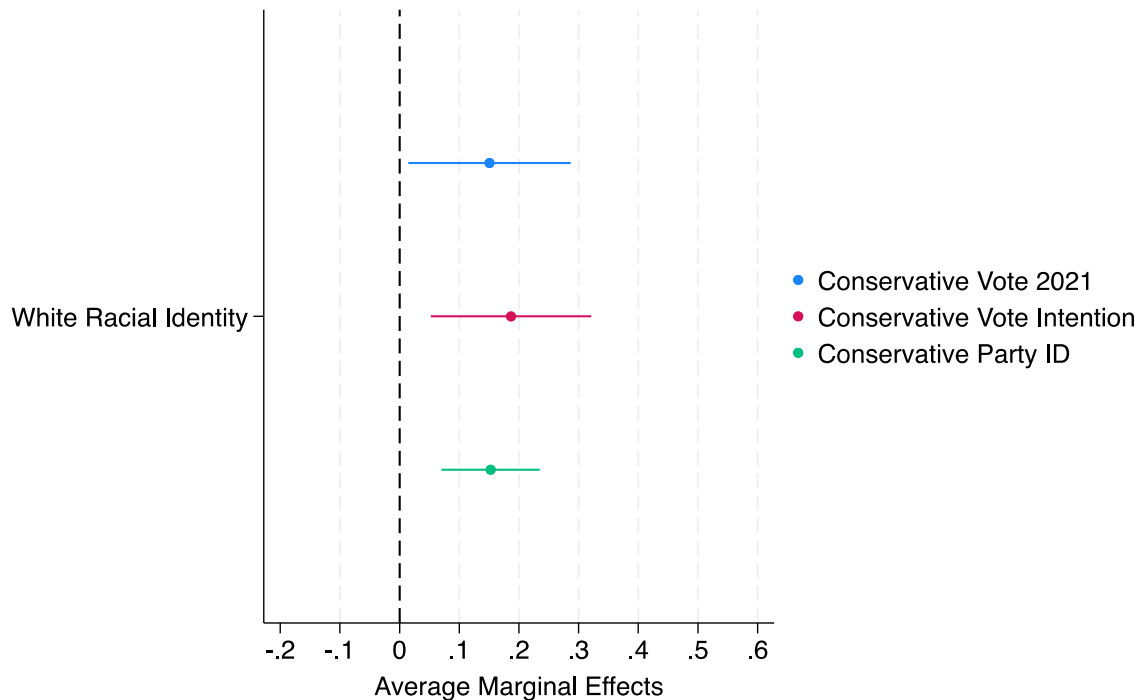
Average marginal effects for White Racial Identity index derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Canadians. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Conservative Vote 2021 = .151 (n = 1,136); 2) Conservative Vote Intention = .187 (n = 1,223); 3) Conservative Party ID = .153 (1,280).

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[16] Following established behavioral literature, multinomial logit models are the appropriate estimation technique for multi-party systems where the outcome variable is party vote choice (Alvarez & Nagler 1998; Blais et al. 2004).
[17] The baseline category is voting for the Liberal Party.

Figure 5 shows that white racial identity is a statistically significant predictor (at the .001 level) of Conservative voting and partisanship among white Canadians. A one-unit increase in white racial identity translates to a 15 percent increase in the likelihood a respondent voted for the Conservatives in 2021, an 18 percent increase in intent to vote Conservative in the next federal election, and a 15 percent increase in the probability that a respondent is a strong Conservative Party identifier.

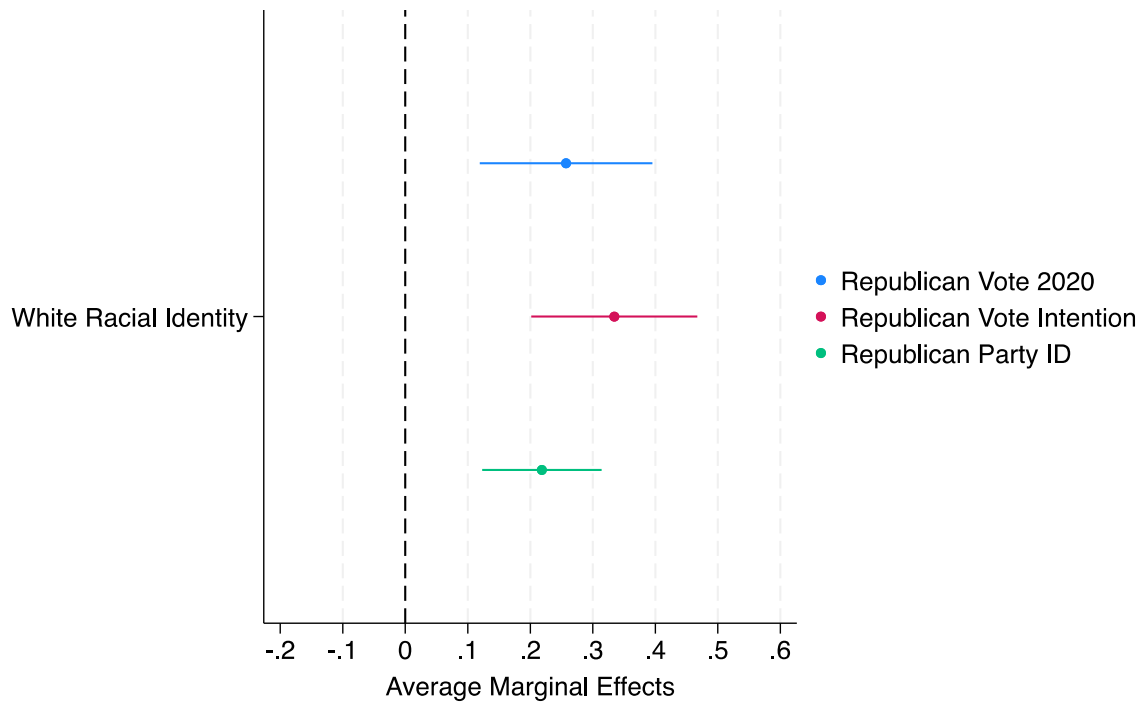Figure 6: Racial Resentment and Electoral Behaviour in Canada

Average marginal effects for Racial Resentment index derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Canadians. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Conservative Vote 2021 = .233 (n = 1,139); 2) Conservative Vote Intention = .266 (n = 1,226); 3) Conservative Party ID = .199 (1,283).

Figure 6 again estimates three regression models for right-wing voting and partisanship but with racial resentment as the key independent variable instead of white identity. Notably, Figure 6 shows that racial resentment has a consistently stronger effect across each of the three models relative to white identity in the preceding models. Specifically, A one-unit increase on the racial

resentment scale translates to white Canadian respondents being 23 percent more likely to have voted for the Conservatives in the 2021 Federal Election, 26 percent more likely to intend to vote Conservative in the next election, and 20 percent more likely to strongly identify as a Conservative partisan.

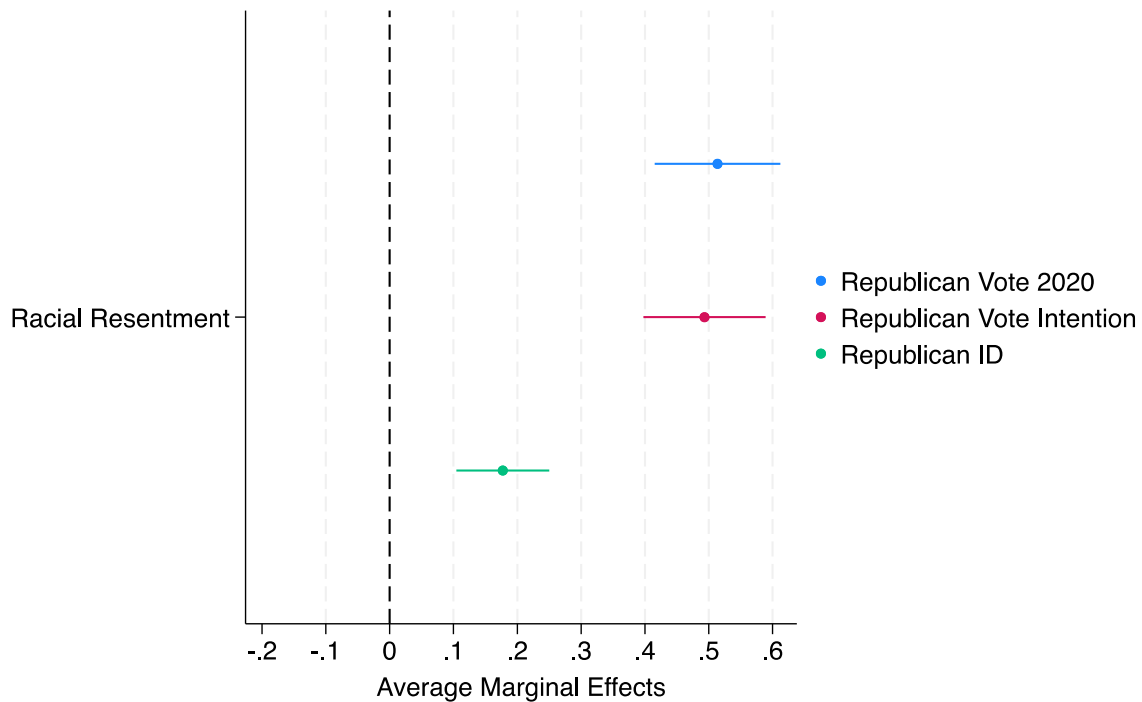Figure 7: White ID and Electoral Behaviour in the United States

Average marginal effects for White Racial Identity index derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Americans. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Republican Vote 2020 = .257 (n = 1,086); 2) Republican Vote Intention = .334 (n = 1,136); 3) Republican ID = .218 (1,349).

Turning to the American models for white racial identity, I estimated regression models for 2020 Republican presidential vote (0-1 dummy variable, where 1 is a vote for Trump), 2024 Republican presidential vote intention (0-1 dummy variable, where 1 is a vote for the Republican presidential candidate), and Republican partisanship (5-point intensity scale, recoded between 0-1 for ease of analysis). The first two models are logit regressions, the third model for Republican Party ID is estimated with OLS. Each model was run with robust standard errors. Figure 7 plots

the average marginal effects associated with white racial identity that were derived from the three

models, with confidence intervals.

Figure 7 shows that there is a consistently large, statistically significant effect of white

racial identity across each of the three models. A one unit increase on the white racial identity scale

corresponds to a respondent being 25 percent more likely to have voted for Trump in 2020 and 33

percent more likely to state they would vote for a Republican for President in 2024. A one-unit

increase in white racial identity translates to a respondent being 21 percent more likely to strongly

identify as a Republican.

Figure 8: Racial Resentment and Electoral Behaviour in the United States

Average marginal effects for Racial Resentment index derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Americans. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Republican Vote 2020 = .514 (n = 1,084); 2) Republican Vote Intention = .493 (n = 1,135); 3) Republican ID = .177 (1,349).

Figure 8 moves to the effects of racial resentment. I estimated three regression models that

are otherwise identical to the regression models plotted in Figure 7 but with racial resentment as

the key independent variable. Figure 8 plots the average marginal effects for racial resentment

derived from the three regression models for Republican vote in 2020, Republican vote intention, and Republican partisan identity.

The results of Figure 8 show that racial resentment is an even stronger predictor of Republican voting and identity. A one-unit increase on the racial resentment scale translates to white Americans being over 51 percent more likely to have voted for Trump in 2020, 49 percent more likely to state that they would vote for a Republican for President in 2024, and almost 18 percent more likely to identify as a strong Republican partisan.

Racial resentment and white racial identity are strong correlates of right-wing voting and party identity in both Canada and the United States. Crucially, however, the four preceding figures show that the magnitude of the average marginal effects of white racial identity and racial resentment across are lower in five of the six models for the Canadian sample compared to the American sample. For example, the effect size of white racial identity, across each of the three models for past vote, future vote intention and right-wing party identity, is at least 8 percentage points higher among white Americans relative to white Canadians. For racial resentment, the differences in effect size between the cross-national samples are even greater on the first two regression models for voting behaviour (over 20 percentage points higher for white Americans). The exception is the model for Conservative Party identity, where racial resentment has a slightly greater effect size relative to the model for Republican Party identity, but this difference is slim. Consequently, while white racial identity and racial resentment had mostly larger effects on right-wing voting for Americans, both variables are evidently important correlates of Conservative voting and partisanship among white Canadians.

To conclude this section, I also estimated regression models with non-white racial affect as the key independent variable. As stated above, this variable is measured as the average feeling

thermometer score provided by respondents for each non-white racial group that the survey included. The setup of the three regression models for each national sample is otherwise the same as the prior models, but with the variables for non-white racial affect in place of racial resentment or white identity. The cross-national samples again consist only of white respondents.

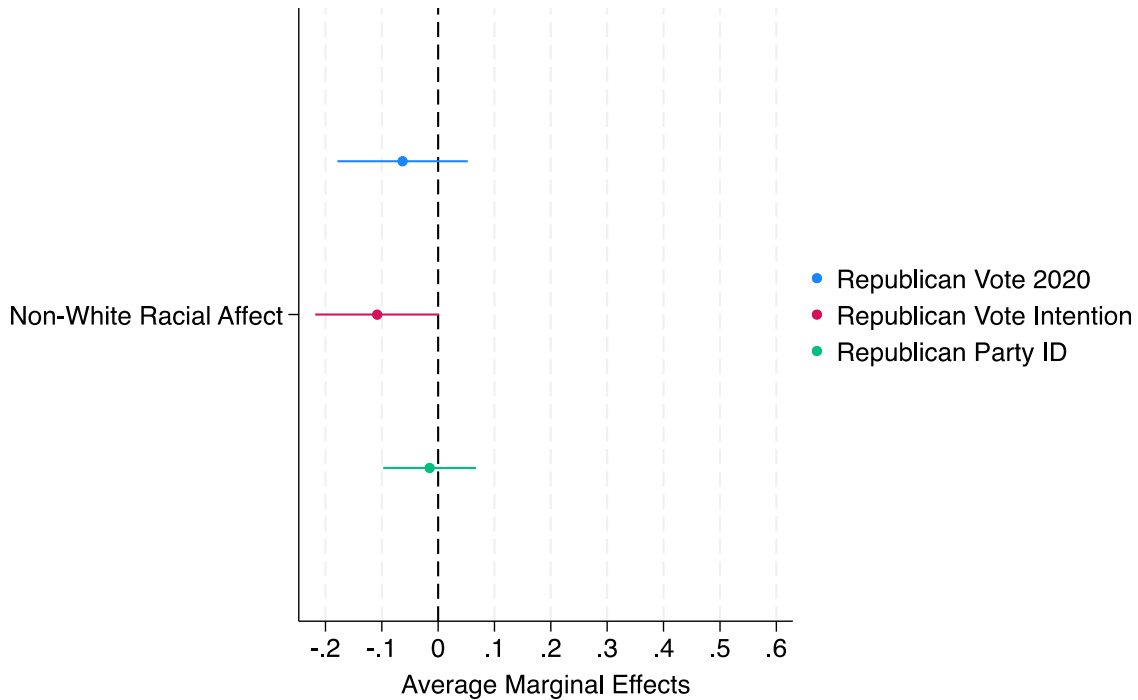Figure 9: Non-White Racial Affect and Electoral Behaviour in Canada
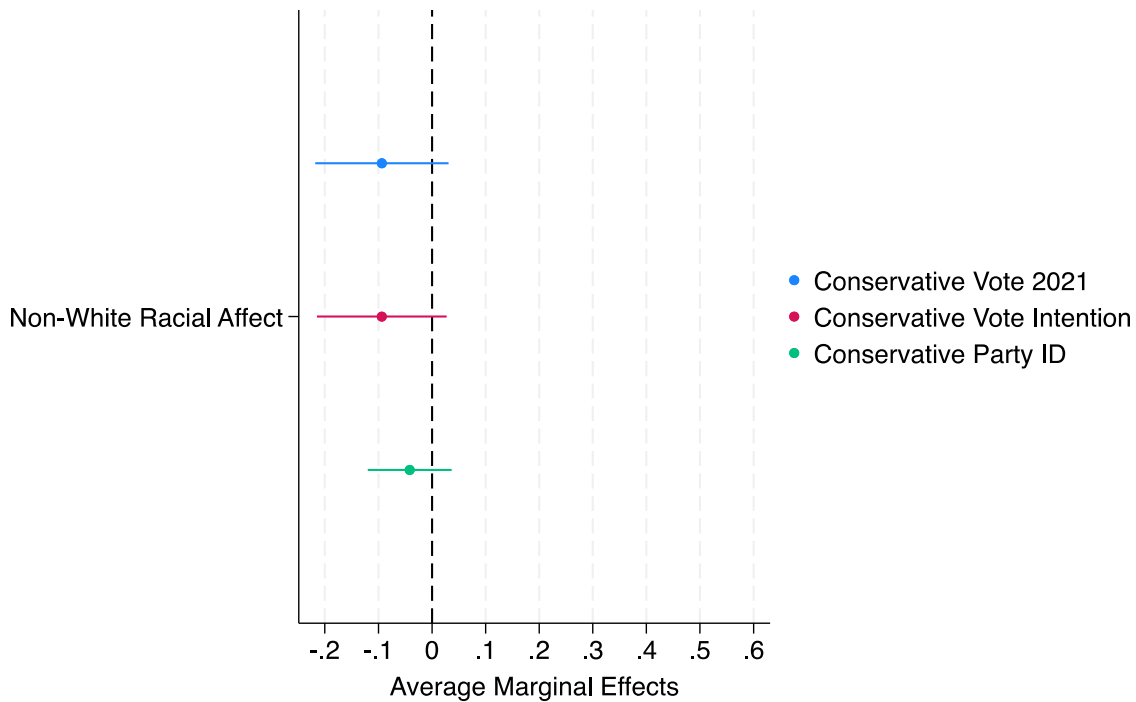
Average marginal effects for Non-White Racial Affect derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Canadians. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Conservative Vote 2021 = -.093 (n = 1,115); 2) Conservative Vote Intention = -.094 (n = 1,200); 3) Conservative Party ID = -.042 (1,258).

Figure 9 plots the average marginal effects derived from the three regression models among the sample of white Canadians. As above, the first two models for past vote choice and future vote intention are estimated with multinomial logistic regression, but with only the output for Conservative Party voting displayed. The third model for Conservative Party ID was estimated with OLS. We expect to find that the warmer individuals feel towards non-white people is negatively associated with voting Conservative and identifying as a Conservative. Figure 9 shows

that this is the direction of the relationship. However, unlike the models for racial resentment or white identity, these effects are not statistically significant.

Figure 10: Non-White Racial Affect and Electoral Behaviour in the United States

Average marginal effects for Non-White Racial Affect derived from three regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Nationally representative sample of white Americans. Size of estimated effects, with sample size in brackets: 1) Republican Vote 2020 = -.063 (n = 1,081); 2) Republican Vote Intention = -.108 (n = 1,132); 3) Republican ID = -.015 (1,346).

Figure 10 plots the corresponding average marginal effects derived from the American regression models for non-white racial affect. The first two models are estimated with logistic regression and the third model is estimated with OLS. Figure 10 shows that, similar to the Canadian models, non-white racial affect does not have a statistically significant effect in any of the three regression models for vote choice and Republican identity. Therefore, while racial affect is an important attitudinal measure, it has a weaker correlation with electoral behaviour compared to racial resentment and white identity. These results suggest how it is important for researchers to go beyond feeling thermometer scores and extend their analysis of racial attitudes to include other measures.

Conclusion

To the south, race has long been a central unit of political analysis. From affective polarization (Iyengar et al. 2019) to policy attitudes (Gilens 1999), voting behaviour (Dawson 1994; Mendelberg 2001) and the rise of Donald Trump (Mutz 2018; Sides et al 2018), scholars have shown that there is an array of areas in American politics where race is of fundamental importance. But to the north, in the words of Thompson (2008), scholarship on the politics of race has been "tangential" at best.

Recent studies have begun to look at racial politics in Canada more closely. Important work has shown how non-white voters have an affinity for supporting their own ethnocultural group (Besco 2015; 2019), colder feelings towards ethnic minorities were associated with decreased likelihood of supporting the NDP in 2019 and 2021 federal elections (Hale 2023), and white identity and anti-Indigenous resentment are associated with voting for the Conservative Party (Beauvais & Stolle 2022). This paper builds on past work by examining the importance of white racial identity, racial resentment, and racial affect in Canada from a comparative perspective. I do so by utilizing temporally aligned survey and experimental data among white respondents from large, nationally representative samples of Americans and Canadians.

This paper shows how there remain significant differences between white Canadians and Americans on measures of white racial identity and racial attitudes. Canadians display considerably lower levels of white identity and racial resentment relative to Americans. Being white is more important to Americans, and Americans are more racially resentful. But these differences decline when considering measures of racial affect with feeling thermometers. Americans express colder feelings towards Black people and Hispanics/Latinos, but warmer feelings towards Indigenous peoples. On average, white Canadians and Americans express

similarly warm feelings toward white people as a group. There are important differences between Americans and Canadians in terms of racial attitudes and white identity, but to find them requires extending the comparison beyond racial group feeling thermometers.

How do these differences matter for electoral behaviour? Leveraging this project's original candidate-choice conjoint experiment, I show that non-white political candidates trigger stronger electoral backlash from white Americans. The political candidates randomly assigned to be non-white receive consistently lower average vote shares among the sample of white American respondents. By contrast, for white Canadian respondents, there was no electoral penalty for non-white candidates. Among the sample of white Canadians, the candidates randomly assigned to be either Black or Indigenous even performed slightly better than the average white candidate. However, utilizing regression analyses, I show that white racial identity and racial resentment are strongly associated with voting for and identifying with right-wing parties in both Canada and the United States. While the magnitude of these effects is generally larger among the samples of white Americans, it would be a mistake to conclude that white identity and racial resentment are unimportant for Conservative voting and partisanship.

In sum, this paper argues that race continues to be of greater political importance in the United States than Canada. But that it is far from an irrelevant factor in Canada and, specifically, in how white Canadians decide which party to support. Accordingly, these findings suggest, above all, that race should be given greater attention by scholars of Canadian political behavior.

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