<u>Introduction</u>

Separated by the Detroit River, just over one mile apart, are a pair of working-class areas that lie at the heart of the North American auto industry. To the north, making up a prominent part of Metro Detroit and southeast Michigan, is Macomb County. To the south, one of the most southern parts of Canada, is the city of Windsor, Ontario.[1] These cross-border areas have shared a great deal in common, including economic fates similarly linked to the health of the auto industry, parallel histories of labor activism, overlapping media markets, and even shared cultural ties based on their geographic proximity.[2] However, a critical difference that has emerged between these two areas, despite their similarities, is how they vote. In the 2016 election, like other white working-class areas across the American Midwest, Macomb County swung significantly to Trump and the Republican Party. Since then, in both 2020 and 2024, Trump has won the majority of Macomb voters. But by contrast, voters across the border in Windsor, like other white working-class areas in the province of Ontario, have remained decidedly supportive of either the center-left Liberal Party or the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) in recent Canadian federal elections.[3]

A great deal of resources has been expended to try to understand how Trump could be elected, an effort that has not produced a solution for Democrats and one that will likely only intensify now that Trump has won re-election in 2024. Much of this focus has been directed to the allegiances of American white working-class voters, a group that has been gradually moving to the right (Carnes & Lupu 2021), has shifted further red under Trump (Ternullo 2024; Turney et al. 2017), and continued to support Republicans in 2024 (Press 2024). There has been extensive research covering the broader phenomenon of white working-class electoral support for right-wing

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[1] Windsor is one of the few places in Canada where you look north into the United States.
[2] See Table A.11 in the Appendix for background demographics of the two areas.
[3] See Section A.4 in the Appendix for voting figures in Windsor and Macomb County.

parties, which has focused on Trump specifically and has also connected his rise to other candidates and parties across Europe (Margalit 2019). The bulk of this work has generally been centered on four major explanations: economic grievances, cultural backlash, the interaction of economic and cultural factors, and supply-side explanations (Berman 2021). Yet, one prominent counterexample to the rightward shift of white working-class voters, which has largely been omitted by comparative research, is Canada. While Trump has won large numbers of white working-class voters in the American Midwest, the same group of voters across the border in the province of Ontario have remained much more supportive of left-wing parties. This paper investigates the reasons why this cross-border divergence has occurred.

The lack of scholarly attention to white working-class voting in Canada represents a missed opportunity in two respects. First, analyzing a counterexample to the global trend of white working-class support for right-wing parties might help refine larger theories (Mahoney & Goertz 2004). If these theories can explain the rise of right-wing support among white working-class voters elsewhere, they should also be able to account for the lack of a right-wing shift among these voters in Ontario. This paper evaluates different theoretical approaches within the context of this comparison. Second, the minimal attention to Canadian white working-class voters comes at the cost of a better understanding of the rise of Trump in the United States and the realignment of white working-class Americans to the Republican Party. Most American research tends to avoid efforts at comparison. Canada and the United States are, of course, different in important ways. But while this paper focuses on explaining the differences between the two countries, it is the extent of their similarities that make the two ideal for comparison. As Lipset (1990) writes*: "knowledge of Canada and the United States is the best way to gain insight into the other North American country…they are probably as alike as any other two peoples on earth."

This project's empirical analysis employs a mixed-methods approach, leveraging the strengths of observational, experimental, and qualitative evidence to produce more sound inferences. Existing survey data comes from the American National Election Study (ANES) and the Canadian Election Study (CES), which is used to delineate voting patterns in the subsequent section. Original quantitative data for this project comes from a cross-sectional public opinion survey of Americans and Canadians.[4] The survey was fielded to over 7,000 respondents from Canada and the United States from December 2022 to January 2023.[5] The sample includes a nationally representative selection of 2,000 Americans and 2,000 Canadians, as well as a targeted oversample of white working-class respondents, who live in non-rural areas, in either Ontario or the American Midwest (n > 1,500 from each country). Helpfully, this large sample of white working-class respondents permits a close quantitative analysis of a distinct and usually hard-to-reach segment of the population.

Embedded in the survey, I also examine a novel candidate-choice conjoint experiment that measures white working-class preferences in response to experimental stimuli. The advantage of a conjoint experiment in this context is that it models multi-dimensional decision-making and allows for several treatments to be experimentally manipulated simultaneously, including socially sensitive topics such as a candidate's race (Bansak et al. 2021). To account for what can be missed by purely quantitative work, I also conducted qualitative fieldwork in paired case studies of Windsor, Ontario and Macomb County, Michigan, which includes evidence collected from over 60 semi-structured interviews.[6] As Cramer argued in her seminal work (2012; 2016), research on

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[4] Survey respondents were recruited by Leger, a Canadian-based firm hired to conduct the online survey.

[5] To maximize comparability, the wording of survey questions was virtually identical. Only country-specific names or spellings were different.

[6] I selected these two working-class areas as case studies based on the inferential logic of the most similar method (Seawright & Gerring 2008), which is described in more detail in the appendix (section A1).

public opinion and behavior should spend more time actually listening to the public. Heeding this call, this paper takes seriously how residents of American and Canadian working-class communities understand, discuss, and make their political choices.

This paper first evaluates established theories that stress the importance of economic grievances or trade-related attitudes. This set of arguments hold that white working-class voters have shifted to the right in part due to job loss, long-term economic decline or rising insecurity, import competition, and deindustrialization (Baccini & Weymouth 2021; Berman 2021; Gest et al. 2017; Gidron & Hall 2017; Margalit 2019; Rodrik 2021). While this paper cannot question the role of these factors more generally, it finds limited quantitative evidence for these theories and points out the limits of these explanations within the Canada-U.S. context where white working-class communities, which are voting differently, have been subject to similar economic developments and trade flows.

Instead, this paper finds more support centered on the effects of group-based social identities and, specifically, the differential role of both race and nation in explaining comparative voting patterns between white working-class voters in Ontario and the American Midwest. A leading argument across behavioral research is that individuals often make sense of the political choices they are presented with by categorizing, associating themselves with groups, and treating the interests of the group as their own (Achen & Bartels 2016; Campbell et al. 1960; Dawson 1994; Elder & O'Brian 2022; Green et al. 2002; Tajfel 1981). American scholarship has shown that whether the operative group identity is one based on race, religion, class, place or a certain combination of these categories has important implications for political behavior (Cramer 2016; Jardina 2019; Ternullo 2024). This paper comparatively examines social identities between white

working-class Midwesterners and Ontarians, investigating whether and to what extent these identities differ in their magnitude and relationship with partisanship.

Scholarship has long argued that race is a defining social cleavage in American politics (Dawson 1994). Yet, there exists much less research on the political importance of race in Canada (Thompson 2008), and even less research that directly compares racial attitudes between Americans and Canadians. Past research has analyzed some of the effects of national identity in Canada and the United States. This includes the level of support for immigration (Citrin et al. 2012; Johnston et al. 2010), redistribution and welfare state programs (Johnston et al. 2010), and minority political rights (Banting et al 2022). However, there has been limited empirical work on the effects of national identity on voting or partisanship (Mader et al. 2021).

This paper finds that racial attitudes and race-based social divisions are more salient in Macomb County relative to Windsor. Interviews with people on both sides of the Detroit River illustrate how the historical legacy of racial division in Metro Detroit still influence the attitudes and behaviors of working-class voters in Macomb County. Confirming the importance of these differences for electoral behavior, experimental evidence shows that non-white political candidates receive a greater electoral penalty, relative to white candidates, from American white working-class voters. Midwestern white working-class voters penalize the vote share of Asian candidates and Hispanic/Latino candidates, whereas white working-class voters from Ontario only penalize Asian candidates and by a smaller margin. Moreover, mediation analysis reveals that racial resentment is strongly correlated with right-wing voting in both countries, but the magnitude of these effects is considerably larger for white working-class voters from the Midwest.

In terms of the conceptions of national identity, there are stark differences between white working-class voters in Ontario and the Midwest. Case study evidence illustrates how national

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identity in Canada is tied to support for multiculturalism, collectivist attitudes, and is defined in opposition to being American. Conversely, in the United States, national identity is tied to racial identity, racial resentment, religiosity, and individualism. How do these differing conceptions matter for electoral behavior? Subgroup analysis of the conjoint experiment shows how white working-class voters with higher-than-average levels of national identity have opposed candidate preferences across the Canada-U.S. border. Those from the Midwest prefer Republican candidates promising lower taxes, while those from Ontario prefer left-wing candidates promising expansionary social policy. Regression analyses shows that national identity is strongly associated with Republican ID among American white working-class voters. However, among white working-class voters from Ontario, national identity is instead associated with Liberal Party ID.

This paper represents a unique and multi-method examination of white working-class voters in the American Midwest, posing the question of how and why this groups differs from white working-class voters in Ontario who remain much more inclined to support left-wing parties. American politics observers looking for lessons from the Canadian experience on how white working-class support might return to the fold of the Democratic Party may be disappointed by the findings of this paper. The comparison reveals that much of the difference in voting behavior stems from the prevalence, conceptions, and effects of core social identities, namely race and nation, which are not easily countered or altered by policy platforms or campaign messaging.

Electoral Divergence

To set the scope of the comparative puzzle, this section utilizes ANES and CES data to detail the contrasts in electoral behavior of white working-class voters in Ontario and the American Midwest.[7] With ANES data, Figure 1 plots the percentage support for Republican presidential

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[7] The appendix (section A4) shows the divergent voting patterns in Windsor and Macomb County.

candidates from 1992 to 2020 among white working-class Midwesterners relative to the national

average in the United States, displaying a pattern that is well documented across American politics

research (Carnes & Lupu 2021; Turney et al. 2017).

Figure 1: American Midwest WWC vs. National Right-Wing Vote (1992-2020)
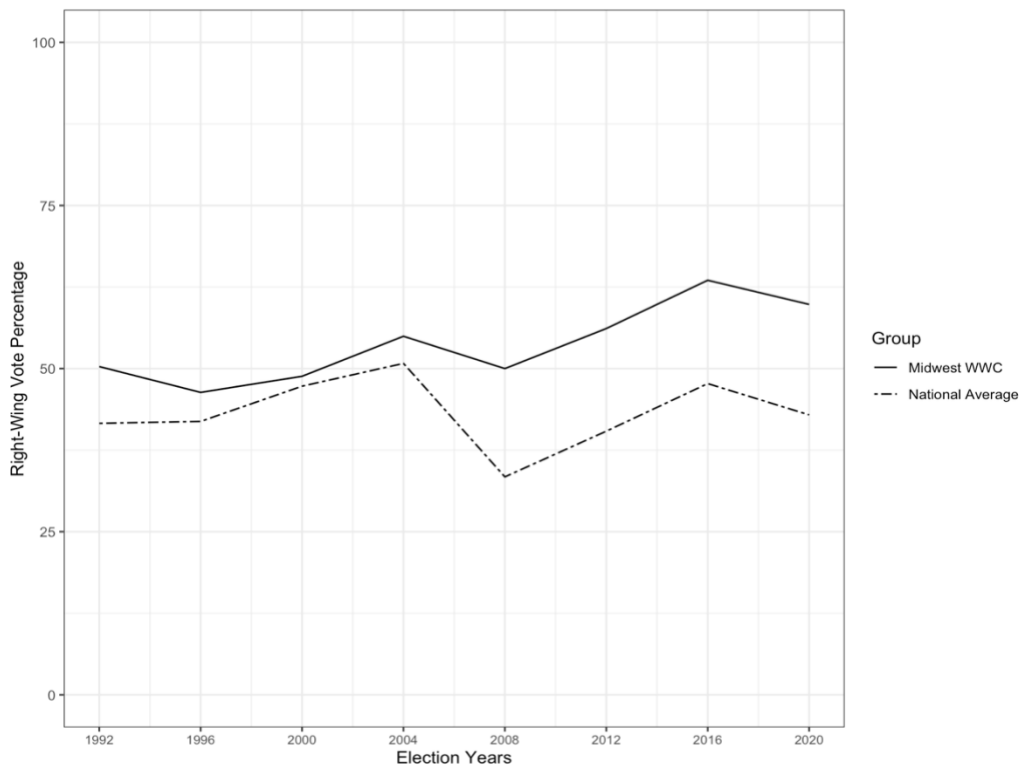
Source: ANES 1992-2020 (stated vote choice, post-election). Sample size for Midwest WWC ranges from a low of N = 131 (in 2004) to a high of N = 655 (in 2020). Note: Vote percentage based on two-party share of presidential vote. Midwest WWC Respondents = white, no four-year college degree who reside in a Midwestern state (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)

From 1992 to 2004, white working-class Midwesterners were closely aligned to the

national average level of support for Republicans. In 2008, however, with the arrival of Barack

Obama's candidacy, a significant gap in voting behavior emerged. While the national vote for

McCain plummeted, support among white working-class Midwesterners remained split between

the two candidates. In 2012, a considerable majority of these voters supported the Republican party

(56.14%) and, in 2016, support for the Republican Party among white working-class

Midwesterners peaked (63.54%). While support declined somewhat in 2020, Trump maintained

his electoral advantage among this group (59.84%) and significantly outperformed his average level of support across the country.[8]

By contrast, white working-class voters in Ontario have remained more supportive of left-wing parties. Utilizing CES data from 1993 to 2021, Figure 2 shows the national average vote share of right-wing parties and the level of support that these parties received from white working-class respondents from Ontario.

Figure 2: Ontario WWC Vs. National Right-Wing Vote (1993-2021)
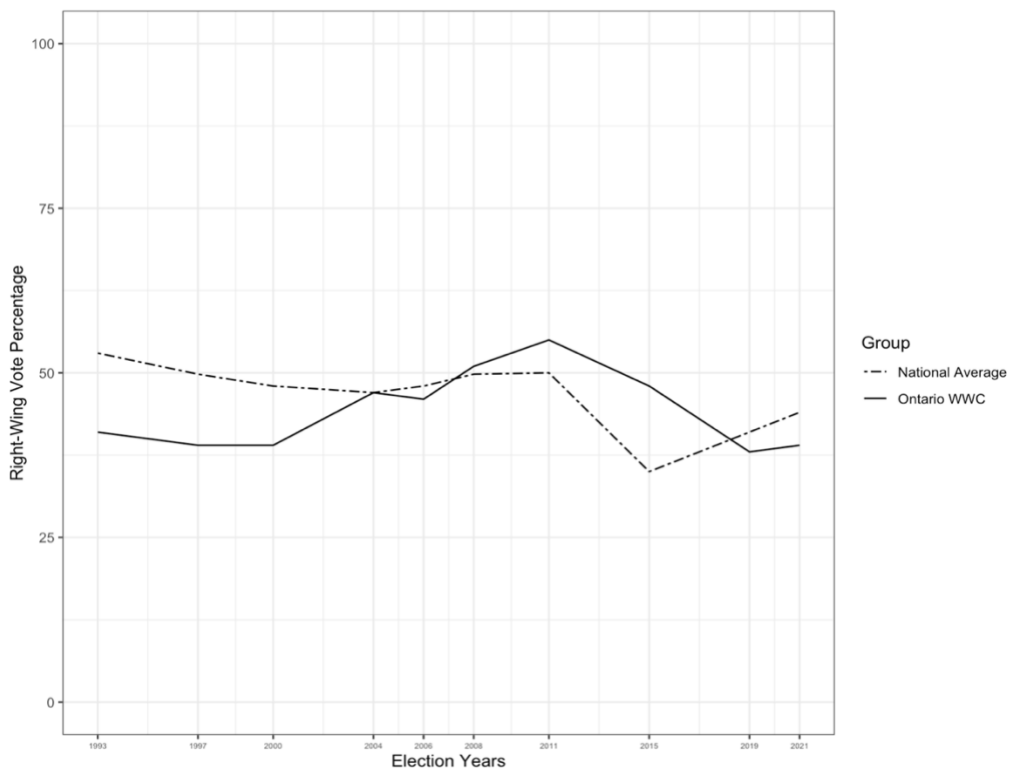
Source: CES 1993-2021 (stated vote intention, pre-election). Sample size for Ontario WWC ranges from a low of N = 194 (in 1993) to a high of N = 3,722 (in 2019). Note: ON WWC respondents = white, no four-year college degree. Right-wing parties = Conservative, PPC, Bloc, Alliance, PC, Reform.

From 1993 to 2006, the majority of white working-class voters from Ontario supported left-wing parties. Notably, left-wing support dropped to 48 percent in the 2008 election and 44 percent in the 2011 election. While this could be interpreted as a change in political preferences,

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[8] At the time of writing, ANES data is not yet available for the 2024 presidential election. But a similar pattern of WWC support across the Midwest is expected.

an important short-term factor in these elections was the popularity of Liberal Party leaders. Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff, the respective Liberal leaders in 2008 and 2011, had particularly low party-leader approval ratings and at times struggled to connect with Canadian voters (Ljunggren 2008; Sibonney 2011). Canadian research highlights how negative sentiments towards these leaders in part drove the considerable decline in Liberal support across the country (Bittner 2018; Gidengil et al. 2012).

Importantly, support for left-wing parties quickly rebounded among Ontario white working-class voters. In the 2015, 2019 and 2021 federal elections, this voting bloc significantly favored left-wing parties. For instance, in the 2019 election, 62 percent of white working-class survey respondents from Ontario favored parties on the left. This is notable given that 2019 was the first year that a far-right party, the People's Party of Canada, was on the ballot. Similarly, in the most recent Canadian federal election in 2021, 61 percent of white working-class voters in Ontario supported left-wing parties. This result is again significant considering that the Conservative Party leader, Erin O'Toole, employed populist appeals to working-class voters on the campaign trail. Specifically, in his "Canada First" economic strategy, O'Toole blamed big government, corporate elites, and bad trade deals for the country's economic woes (Savage & Black 2020). Yet, this rhetoric had evidently limited appeal to white working-class voters in Ontario.

In short, while white working-class voters shifted to the right in the Midwest, white working-class voters have remained much more supportive of left-wing parties in Ontario. In the 2019 and 2021 Canadian federal elections, roughly 40 percent of white working-class survey respondents from Ontario favored right-wing parties. By contrast, in the American Midwest,

roughly 60 percent of white working-class voters supported Trump in 2016 and 2020. This paper seeks to answer the question of why this electoral divergence has emerged.

Case Study Findings

From May 2022 to September 2023, I conducted 64 semi-structured interviews that ranged in length from 1 to 3 hours with people on both sides of the Detroit River. These interviews were done over the phone, on Zoom, or in-person at various bars, cafes, and local union halls across the area. Interview subjects were recruited by leveraging initial connections, cold contacting individuals, and through a snowball sampling method with the goal of balancing perspectives across the communities (Cramer 2016; Ternullo 2024). To gain insights on the working-class background and dominant industry of Windsor and Macomb County, I intentionally sought to interview individuals who worked in the auto industry. The resulting purposive sample of interviewees includes local political leaders, union leaders, union members, political consultants/lobbyists, and other community members.

The substantive focus of these interviews was explaining political behavior in Macomb County and Windsor.[9] Each interview was conducted with a pre-designed set of questions, personalized for each interview (Fenno 1978), that could be expanded on depending on the answers provided by the interviewees. My goal in the interviews, following a relational approach, was for respondents to feel comfortable enough to express their opinions on challenging questions (Fujii 2018). Moreover, following Dexter's approach to elite interviewing, I would frequently allow the interviewee to introduce their own perceptions of what was relevant, their own definition of situations, and inform about the facts on the ground (Dexter 1970).

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[9] During my time in Windsor and Metro Detroit, I also engaged in many informal conversations. Insights from these more casual conversations, combined with the simple act of observing how the two working-class communities functioned (Fenno 1978), underpin the qualitative findings of this project.

<u>Is It All About the Economy and Free Trade?</u>

One of the most prominent strands of research on the rightward shift of working-class voters focuses on how economic developments, including job loss and deindustrialization, have triggered resentment that has led voters to candidates like Trump (Baccini & Weymouth 2021; Berman 2021; Gest et al. 2017; Gidron & Hall 2017; Margalit 2019; Rodrik 2021). Similarly, other work has focused on the role of globalization and trade flows, especially the decline of certain industries due to import competition (Autor et al. 2017; Baccini & Weymouth 2021; Milner 2021; Rodrik 2021). However, these economic-based accounts have been disputed by American behavioral scholarship that instead emphasizes the importance of identity politics, race, and culture (Mutz 2018; Sides et al. 2018). As previously noted, economic-based populist appeals by O'Toole in 2021 failed to move many white working-class Ontarians to the right (Savage & Black 2020). Furthermore, as the below section of this paper on conjoint findings exhibits, candidates randomly assigned to advocate for "reducing reliance on foreign imports" performed relatively poorly compared to candidates with other policy priorities among white working-class voters from both Ontario and the American Midwest.

Analyzing the case studies selected for this project shows that the 'left behind' theory of economic grievances has considerable shortcomings within the context of this comparison. First, there is significant economic overlap between Windsor and Macomb County. This in part reflects the extent of national economic exchange between Canada and the United States, and the level of cross-border integration of supply chains within the auto industry.[10] Automation and technological change have led to job loss across industries in both countries. Past factory closures, the longer-term decline of the auto industry and the disappearance of manufacturing jobs has impacted

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[10] From 1995 to 2010, over 81% of Canada's total exports were to the United States (Beaulieu & Song 2015).

working-class people in both areas. Colin Bird, the Consul General of Canada in Detroit, affirmed these points in an interview. Bird stated that the American and Canadian economies are highly integrated, especially in the manufacturing sector and auto industry.

> *"Right now, there is $68 Billion in trade that crosses the border between Michigan and Canada. For Ohio, it's about $34 Billion in trade, but still more trade than its next seven largest export markets. That has a lot to do with the manufacturing sector. A single car can cross the bridge 5-6 times before its finally completed, that tells the story of how we make things together as opposed to having two separate industries."*
> - Colin Bird. Consul General of Canada in Detroit.

Second, in conducting fieldwork in both Macomb and Windsor, I found that people in Windsor are just as inclined to express frustration about economic decline as people in Macomb County. Despite left-wing support remaining high in Windsor, economic grievances are commonplace. J.P. LeFave, an autoworker in Windsor who prefers the NDP or the Liberals, exemplifies what I heard from many working-class voters in the Canadian city.

> *"When speaking to the average person in Windsor, I don't think they have a sunny disposition on where things are headed here. I think we missed the boat to diversify ten years ago. We kept plugging away trying to be the automotive capital of Canada, even though it was quickly leaving, jobs were going away to Mexico. When I was growing up as a kid, it was a coveted job to work with the Big Three of Ford, GM, Chrysler… I don't know why anyone would want to come to Windsor to be honest…I don't think we're going to be the automotive capital of Canada too much longer. We're probably going to be the homeless capital of Canada."*
> - J.P. LeFave. Member of Unifor Local 195. Windsor, Ontario.

The argument for rising right-wing support centered on attitudes toward free trade and the decline of local industries due to import competition is also limited within the context of the Canada-U.S. comparison for two key reasons. First, Canada and the United States are members of similar trade agreements (i.e. NAFTA, USMCA), they are both highly globalized countries, and, at least for certain industries, such as the auto industry, have highly interconnected supply chains that have followed similar trajectories. Since the late-1990s and the implementation of NAFTA, auto industry employment has dropped by 28 percent in the United States and by 26 percent in

Canada, while auto employment in Mexico has expanded (Swiecki & Menk 2016). Second, qualitative evidence suggests that anger over free trade agreements is no longer top of mind for working-class voters in Macomb County, but these voters still support Trump. I heard from several interview sources, both who actively work or are retired from the auto industry, that trade policy is no longer frequently discussed. Other research has also pointed to the increased concern for the transition to electric vehicles (Gazmararian & Krashinsky 2023).

> *"No, I don't hear about free trade agreements. I pretty much never hear that."*
> - D. Robinson. Vice-President, UAW Local 140 (Warren Truck). Macomb County, MI.

> *"I think we're kind of passed that whole thing [on trade]. It was brought back up under Trump's era, and it was 'we're going to get rid of NAFTA,' then it didn't happen"*
> - Nicole Didia. Vice President of UAW Local 2280. Macomb County, MI.

> *"I think that something else has replaced that concern [over trade]. The focus now is more on EVs, that's a big issue, then on NAFTA itself. It seems like people are more fired up about illegal immigrants than they are about free trade."*
> - Rick Isaacson. Retired UAW Leader, former President of UAW Local 540. Macomb County, MI.

While this is not to argue that economic-based explanations for Trump support are irrelevant, they are more theoretically limited in the context of the Canada-U.S. comparison. Instead, this analysis finds support for the role of potent social identities that underpin political partisanship and help explain differing longer-term voting patterns (Achen & Bartels 2016; Ternullo 2024).

The Comparative Salience of Race

In Macomb County, a predominantly white working-class area that borders downtown Detroit, racial tension is far from an artifact of history and is still reflected in the attitudes, perceptions, and everyday lives of the individuals that I interviewed. Jaren Garza is a third-generation UAW member with Mexican heritage. He believes that racial tension has never decreased in the Metro Detroit area, and that it still motivates how some people vote.

"This town is pretty segregated, man. Still to this day in my eyes. I'm not from here, but it's got a long history with racism as far as the city of Detroit and how the city is viewed. I've met guys up at rock shows who have never been to the city, they just refuse to go to the city. Somebody they know got shot down there and now they won't go. There's a lot of history here. There's still a wall on the west-side of Detroit on 8 Mile that separates black and white neighborhoods. That's wild to me that the thing is still standing."
- Jaren Garza. UAW Local 160 Member. Warren, MI.

In many of the interviews I conducted across Metro Detroit, racial intolerance was highlighted as a pressing issue in the area. Nicole Didia is a white woman and a third-generation UAW member. In an interview, she pointedly stated that there is a clear negative bias against people of color in Macomb County and that this bias is evident even at auto plants.

"I would say Macomb County, where we're at, we have a pretty bad bias against people of color. We're having that situation at the plants now. It's a big thing right now. Macomb County is pretty special for that. This county was built on the Big Three, it made these nice big suburbs with these pretty houses and the population was definitely more Caucasian when that all happened. So, there's definitely a bias."
- Nicole Didia. Vice President of UAW Local 2280. Sterling Heights, MI.

Darryl Nolen was born and raised in the city of Detroit and is a former UAW leader. He retired in 2020 and currently resides in Sterling Heights, a city in Macomb County. Since he moved to Macomb, he has noticed an uptick in the level of racism he sees and experiences as a Black person.

"It is 100 percent different in Macomb. It's night and day. In my opinion, there's more racism on this side of town than what I experienced in Wayne County."
- Darryl Nolen. Retired UAW leader. Sterling Heights, MI.

On the other end of the spectrum, I also heard clear instances of racial resentment from some interviewees from Macomb. I spoke with a retired UAW member that spent over twenty-five-years working for Chrysler. This person asked to remain anonymous but discussed his attitudes towards racial equality and politics in Michigan. He insisted that white people in Michigan are now the target of unfair treatment and was an avid supporter of Donald Trump.

"Every time there's a shooting where a white cop shoots a black guy, there's a protest. But a white guy gets shot and nothing happens."
- Retired UAW Local 961 Member. Macomb County, Michigan.

In Windsor, the interviews I conducted painted a much different picture of race and racial intolerance. It is not the case that Windsor is an idyllic city uniquely immune to all forms of prejudice. People in Windsor are not simply turning a blind eye to an issue that affects many large communities in North America. However, the scale of the issue is considerably different relative to the American side of the border.

Two such interviews that spoke on the theme of racial intolerance were active members of Unifor locals in Windsor. Krysten Lawton is a member of Unifor Local 200 and is a health and safety trainer at the Ford Assembly Plant in Windsor. J.P. LeFave, introduced previously, is a member of Unifor Local 195 and a former employee of Syncreon, a recently closed automotive parts company. In contrast to Macomb, the people in Windsor that I spoke with maintained that intolerance towards non-white people is not a significant problem in the city.

"I personally don't see a ton of intolerance in this area, I don't see it as a major issue in Windsor. I honestly believe, especially in our work culture and where we work, that you can't get away with that."
- Krysten Lawton. Unifor Local 200 Member. Windsor, Ontario.

"I don't know if intolerance is a significant problem, I myself don't see it that much. I don't think that's me being naive and turning a blind eye. I have friends from all different countries on the map. I don't understand the whole mentality of hating someone based on how they look. If I dislike someone who is a different ethnicity than me, it's not a blanket statement for everyone from that group. If I don't like someone it's because he's an asshole. He is an asshole, but not the rest of them... I grew up playing sports. You don't get to pick your teammates. Regardless of what they look like or smell like, you're going to stick up for them."
- J.P. LeFave. Unifor Local 195 Member. Windsor, Ontario.

The inference from qualitative work across the Detroit River is clear: racial attitudes and racial divisions are more salient in Macomb County than they are in Windsor. Further supporting this qualitative finding, in section A3 of the appendix I report the results of a difference-in-means

analysis showing how white working-class Midwesterners are more racially resentful and identify more strongly with their racial group compared to white working-class Ontarians.

<u>Conceptions of the Nation in Windsor and Macomb County</u>

National identity is defined as the extent to which individuals think of themselves as members of a nation (Schildkraut 2011). It is a subjective attachment to the nation and other members of the nation (Huddy 2023). A growing body of research recognizes national identity as one of several important social identities and likely one of the strongest group-based attachments (Huddy 2023; Schildkraut 2014). Research has established that national identity can be malleable, shaped overtime by elite rhetoric and institutions, and passed down by prior generations (Anderson 1991; Brubaker 1992; Citrin et al. 2012; Gellner 1983).

A crucial question that has emerged is what the dominant conception of the nation is and what the public believes constitutes membership to that nation. The major fault line is whether the boundaries of the nation are more exclusive and marked by ethno-cultural homogeneity, or whether it is more inclusive and accepting of others (Huddy 2023; Schildkraut 2014). On this dimension, past work has established that there are eminent differences between Canada and the United States. In Canada, multiculturalism has been an official government policy since the 1980s and public attitudes have been largely supportive of these values. As Johnston et al. (2010) write, multiculturalism is firmly a part of the public conception of the Canadian nation. By contrast, ethno-cultural boundaries to national belonging, as well as religious ones, are still argued to exist in the United States (Schildkraut 2014).

This section explores the conceptions of national identity in Windsor and Macomb County, finding that multiculturalism is more closely tied to national identity in Windsor, but much less so in Macomb County. Regression analysis in the appendix (section A5) shows how racial identity,

racial resentment, and religiosity are weakly correlated with national identity among white working-class voters from Ontario but are much stronger predictors of national identity among white working-class voters from the American Midwest. Interviews with Americans across Metro Detroit suggested that the Republicans are the 'flag-waving' party, have capitalized on pride in the American military, and that conceptions of the nation have come to be more closely tied with religiosity, individualism, and the leadership of Donald Trump. I heard explicitly from some in Macomb County that America is proudly a Christian nation and not a Muslim nation.

From most parts of Windsor, Ontario, you can drive to downtown Detroit in as little as fifteen minutes. People in Windsor watch American television, listen to Detroit radio, and cheer for the same sports teams as their American neighbors. The city of Windsor is one of the most Americanized places in Canada. Yet, most people in Windsor nevertheless exude a strong attachment to the Canadian nation and are proud to be Canadian. In some ways, the proximity to the United States reminds people of who they are and who they are not. Consistent with the findings of Cameron and Berry (2008), many of the people in Windsor that I spoke with framed their national identity in terms of not being Americans.[11] The most common out-group delineated by Windsorites that I spoke to were Americans, and not other Canadians who do not meet certain ethnocentric standards of national group membership.

Dave Petten is the President of CUPE Local 543, representing the public sector employees of the City of Windsor. In an interview, Mr. Petten detailed how American influence is hard to dismiss in Windsor, but that there is a core sense of belonging to Canada that is defined in negative relation to the United States.

> *"Another oddity about this place is the fact that we're heavily influenced by Detroit. It seems like more people are receptive to American concepts and American ideals than in*

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[11] Given that 90% of Canadians live within 100 miles of the U.S. border (Jacobs 2023), this finding is applicable beyond Windsor.

other areas of the country. But then there is also this core that wants to pronounce and uniquely identify as Canadian. The example of that is right on the riverfront with the huge Canadian flag. In many ways, we're American influenced. But there's an underbelly of resistance to that notion. That we are separate, that we are distinct, that we don't share the same views as the people across the river."

- Dave Petten. President of CUPE Local 543. Windsor, Ontario.

Dan Bolton is an organizer for LiUNA Local 625 in Windsor, the local union representing construction workers across Windsor-Essex County. Growing up in Windsor, he said that you are constantly in the shadow of the United States: "America is in your face more than it would be anywhere else. Here you go downtown and you're looking at Detroit across that border." Bolton argued that Canadian identity in Windsor is even stronger because of this proximity and that you only have to watch a hockey game between Canada and the U.S. to notice its significance.

"When I travel to northern Ontario it is a different feel. We did grow up on Detroit TV, we grew up on American politics, but there's still that line that runs right down the middle of the Detroit River…that we know we're our country, they know that they're their country. I used to have this feeling crossing back into Canada on the Ambassador Bridge, it was just like 'phew, I'm relaxed, I'm home'. I don't know how to describe it, but it happened every time. I think Windsor is still very proud to be Canadian. I remember putting on US-Canada Olympic hockey games at the bar and it would be a rowdy night, that's for sure."

- Dan Bolton. Organizer LiUNA Local 625. Windsor, Ontario.

Several interviewees in Windsor directly tied Canadian identity to support for multiculturalism, without any direct prompt about multiculturalism. Joe Comartin, the former Consul General of Canada in Detroit, spoke emphatically about how one of the key differences in terms of national pride in Canada relative to the United States is the importance of multiculturalism.

"One of the differences is one of pride on the Canadian side in the importance of multiculturalism. Not only are we tolerant of new Canadians coming in, but we celebrate that. Not as well as I have always wanted us to, but we do. I don't have any sense of an equivalent level of pride in that on the US-side. The fact that that it is a legal policy in Canada, and it is one that we practice, if not perfectly but fairly extensively. We don't have a similar sense of pride on the US side, because frankly it's not as true on the US-side as on the Canadian-side."

- Joe Comartin. Former NDP MP for Windsor – Tecumseh (2000 – 2015). Consul General of Canada in Detroit (2018 – 2022).

This stands in contrast to how national identity is conceived in Macomb County. None of the interviewees I spoke with about American identity highlighted its connection with support for multiculturalism. Most American interviewees stated that national identity and pride in being American was significant in Macomb County. Yet, unlike in Windsor, people told me that this identity is commonly associated with right-wing values, religion, the military, and ethnocentrism.

For instance, Jim Pedersen, a retired UAW leader, told me that: "There's a lot of pride in being an American, but we have to be on guard for that turning into jingoism." Pedersen believes that Trump effectively gained support based on his messages pertaining to American pride, but that the nature of these appeals was far from admirable. Pedersen directly tied Trump's appeals to national pride with appeals based on race or the threat of foreign immigration.

> *"Trump tapped into American pride malevolently. He crossed the line into the unhealthy nationalism, the jingoism. Not that sense that we're good people. But that 'they aren't'. Detroit is on the border with a foreign country. You say it that way and they go 'what Canada? I used to go over there and drink beer and go see the Windsor ballerinas.'[12] But we don't think of Canada as a foreign country. When we talk about foreigners on the border it's never about Canada, and it's like don't you understand how racist that sounds? Trump did that. He tapped into nationalism and jingoism that is the bad side of Americanism and patriotism. The sense that we're great people and that there's something wrong with those other people. That there's no sense of comparing those Guatemalans huddling at the border with the Irish that came to this country."*
> - Jim Pedersen. Retired UAW leader in Michigan; held various leadership positions over career, including working under Dick Long at UAW CAP.

The Trump supporters I talked to in Macomb County held a different position about what it means to be American. This was best exemplified by Brian Pannebecker, a retired autoworker and UAW member who now leads the group Autoworkers for Trump. Pannebecker's conception of the nation had two main elements: Christianity and individualism.

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[12] The Windsor ballerinas is an informal term for the employees of local gentlemen's clubs in Windsor.

"Barack Obama ran for president twice, and he won Macomb County twice. He apologized for America. He said that we are not a Christian nation. But guess what, we are a Christian nation. We're not a Muslim nation. He made the claim that Muslims helped build this country. That's 180 degrees wrong. This is a Christian nation. All you need to do is go to Washington, D.C. and look at the monuments that they haven't torn down and see the religious verses and biblical themes that run through everything. When Trump came along in 16', on the tails of Barack Obama, he said I'm going to return this country to America first, putting America first, believing that we are an exceptional country, a great country, founded on great ideas by great men. He wanted to return us to that patriotism, that love of country, the love of liberty and freedom."

- Brian Pannebecker. Retired UAW member, head of Autoworkers for Trump. Macomb County, Michigan.

Public conceptions of the nation are markedly different in Macomb County than in Windsor. The interviewees I spoke to in Metro Detroit highlighted how the Republicans have become the party of patriotism, national identity, and capitalized on this support despite the fact that most Democrats believed that this was not what America should represent. Those on the left argued that patriotism and national identity in America have become too closely aligned with jingoism and ethnocentrism. Those who endorsed Trump's version of national identity argued that it represented a return to the true Christian values of the country. Unlike in Windsor, not once was I told by interviewees that national pride in Macomb County meant to be welcoming of others.

Experimental Evidence: Non-White Candidates and High National ID

What do differences in national conceptions and racial contexts imply for political behavior? In the subsequent sections, I present experimental and observational evidence that show how race and national identity are important and differing determinants of vote choice and partisanship between white working-class Ontarians and Midwesterners. This project's original quantitative design included a paired-profile, candidate-choice conjoint experiment that tested the extent to which a candidate's race influences vote choice among respondents.[13] The advantage of

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[13] 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).

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). Respondents were shown two side-by-side profiles of hypothetical political candidates and were asked to choose which candidate they would support.[14] The experiment provided six pieces of information about each candidate, including their party, race, gender, major endorsement received, occupation history, and their number one policy priority. The design of the conjoint experiment was pre-registered at Open Science Framework, prior to it being fielded to respondents.[15]

The setup of the conjoint experiment was identical for both American and Canadian respondents, yet some attribute levels were 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.[16] The gender attribute, major endorsement attribute, occupation attribute, and policy priority attribute had the exact same possible levels for both Americans and Canadians.[17] The levels of each attribute 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. Correspondingly, I created an interaction variable ("Party_Policy") for each possible combination of the treatment levels.

To first analyze the results of the conjoint experiment, I estimate 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 = white)

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against another value of the same attribute (i.e., candidate race = black), while holding equal the

joint distribution of the rest of the attributes in the design (Bansak et al. 2021). In the conjoint

experiment analyzed here, the AMCE 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.

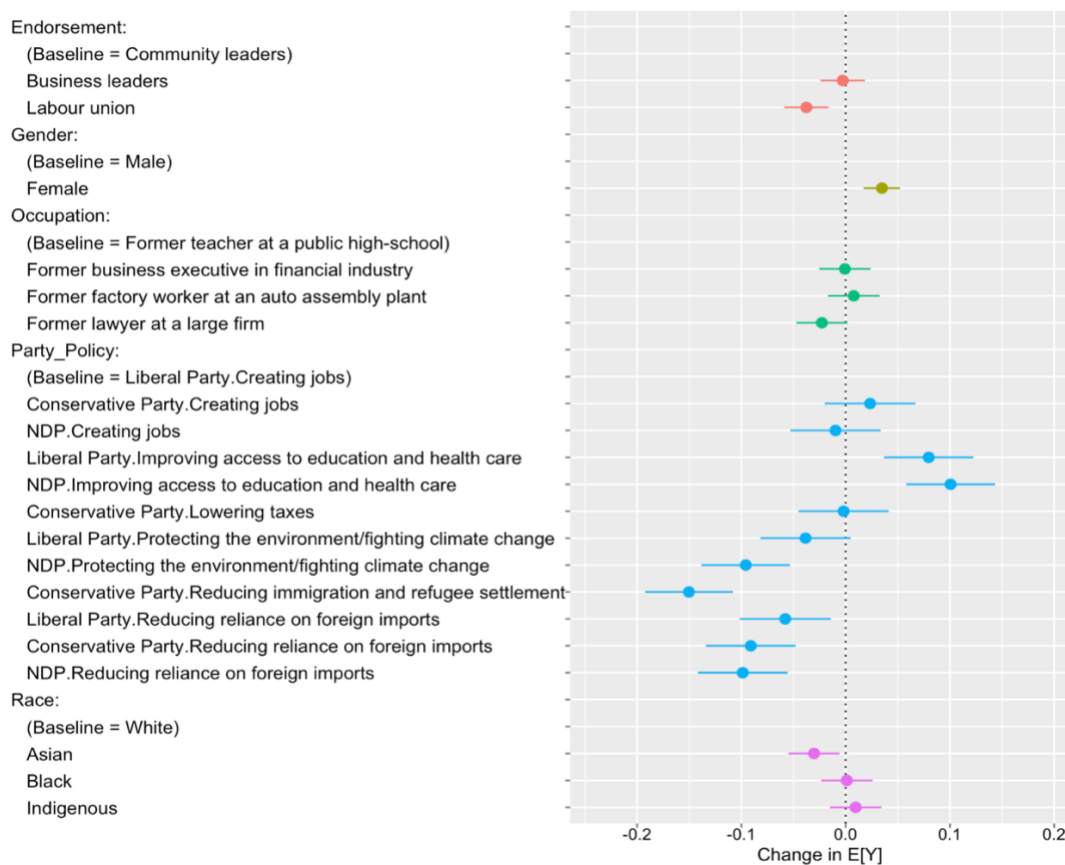Figure 3: Midwest U.S. WWC Conjoint Results
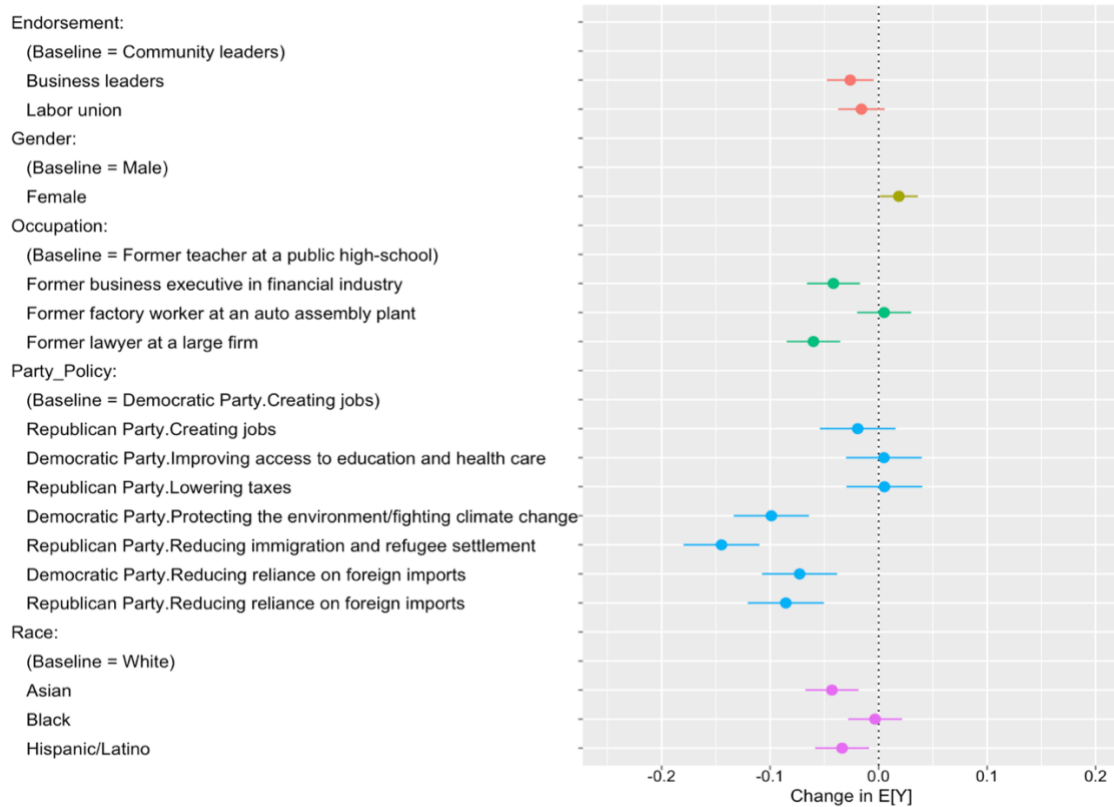
Average marginal component effects of all candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate the respondent would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Respondents = non-rural, white Midwest Americans, with less than a four-year college degree. Respondents (N = 1,550) completed four iterations of the experiment with two candidates (effective N = 12,402).

Figure 3 plots the AMCEs of each attribute with confidence intervals from the American

conjoint experiment. Figure 3 shows that a candidate's race does affect their respective vote share

in the experiment among the sample of white working-class Midwesterners. Candidates randomly

assigned to be Asian received a vote share that was 4.3 percentage points lower than white

candidates, and Hispanic/Latino candidates received a vote share that was 3.3 percentage points

lower than white candidates.

Figure 4 plots the corresponding conjoint results among the sample of white working-class voters from Ontario. Notably, candidates who speak to economic/trade frustrations specifically ("Reducing reliance on foreign imports") performed relatively poorly among both samples of white working-class voters. In contrast to the theories that emphasize the importance of trade-related attitudes and economic grievances, white working-class voters from both Ontario and the Midwest penalized these candidates compared to candidates with more generic policy promises such as "creating jobs" or "lowering taxes".

Figure 4: Ontario WWC Conjoint Results

Average marginal component effects of all candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate the respondent would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Note: Respondents = non-rural, white Ontarians, with less than a four-year college degree. Respondents (N = 1,551) completed four iterations of the experiment with two candidates (effective N = 12,406).

One of the main differences in the results between the cross-national working-class samples is the effect of a candidate's race. There is a noticeably smaller electoral penalty for non-

white candidates among the sample of white working-class voters from Ontario. Only candidates who are Asian receive an electoral penalty, equal to roughly 3 percentage points, from Canadian white working-class voters relative to white candidates. However, this is a comparatively smaller penalty than Asian candidates received in the experiment from American white working-class voters. Moreover, relative to white candidates, candidates who are either Black or Indigenous receive a slight increase in their average vote share among the sample of white working-class voters from Ontario. On average, non-white candidates receive a greater electoral penalty from white working-class voters from the Midwest than they do from white working-class voters from Ontario.[18]

There was no randomized treatment in the conjoint experiment that varied a candidate's position on national identity, nor a treatment that primed respondents to consider their level of attachment to the nation. However, we can compare how respondents with high levels of national identity assessed different candidate profiles. While this analysis does not provide causal estimates for how national identity predicts vote choice, it does descriptively show how white working-class voters with high national identity hold different political preferences depending on whether they are American or Canadian. Following the approach advocated by Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley (2020), I estimate the marginal means of each treatment level among subsamples of white working-class voters from Ontario and the Midwest who expressed a higher-than-average level of national identity.

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[18] In the appendix (section A2), I investigate the marginal means of each candidate attribute among white working-class Americans and Canadians conditioned by a respondent's levels of racial resentment or white identity. This subgroup analysis shows how the effects of a candidate's race are highly responsive to the degree to which a respondent is racially resentful or identifies as white.
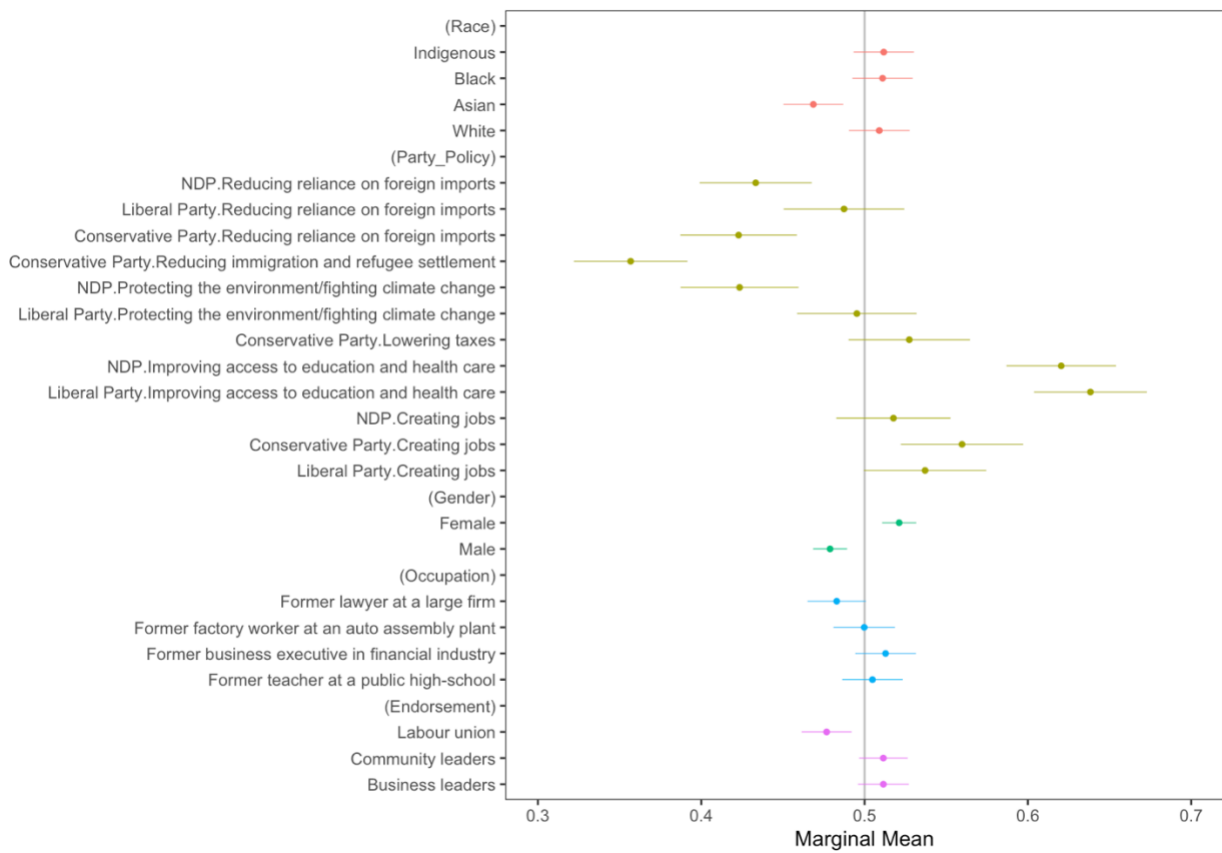
Figure 5: MW WWC High National ID Subgroup
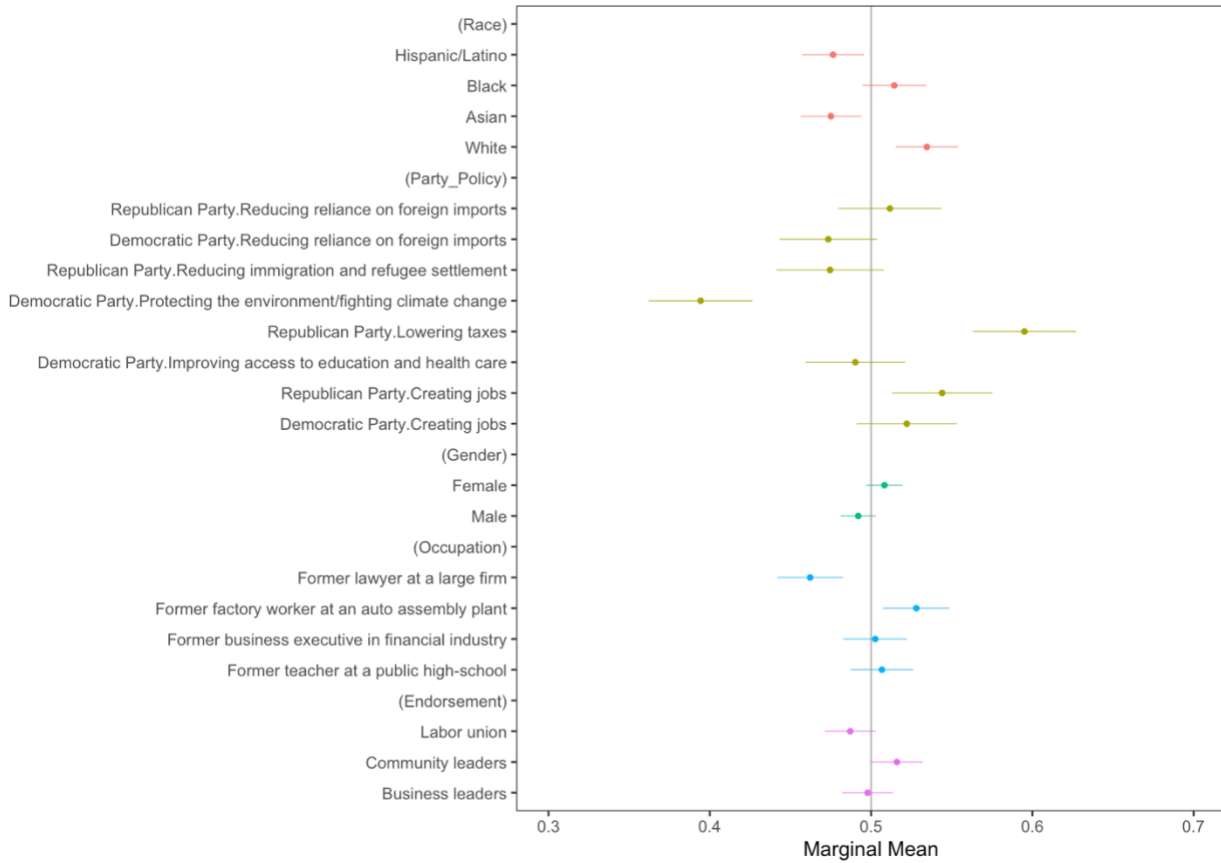
Marginal means of all candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate you would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Respondents = non-rural, white Midwest Americans, with less than a four-year college degree. Respondents (N = 1,550) completed four iterations of the experiment with two candidates (effective N = 12,402). Respondents split into sample above the mean of the National Identity measure (.682).

Figure 5 displays the marginal means associated with each candidate attribute among white working-class Midwesterners with higher-than-average levels of national identity. This subgroup is more likely to support Republican candidates and, specifically, Republican candidates who advocate for lowering taxes. Among all the possible party and policy treatments, the combination that generated the highest level of support among this sample were Republican candidates whose main policy priority was lower taxes, followed by Republican candidates who main policy priority was creating jobs. These two combinations generated more electoral support than any of the policy treatments paired with candidates from the Democratic Party. The party and policy combination that received the lowest level of support was a candidate from the Democratic Party who advocated

for protecting the environment/fighting climate change. Moreover, Figure 5 shows that white working-class Midwesterners with higher levels of national identity were again more inclined to support white candidates, and penalize Asian and Hispanic/Latino candidates.

Figure 6: ON WWC High National ID Subgroup

Marginal means of all candidate attributes. Outcome is a binary forced choice variable of which candidate you would vote for. Lines represent confidence intervals. Respondents = non-rural, white Ontarians, with less than a four-year college degree. Respondents (N = 1,551) completed four iterations of the experiment with two candidates (effective N = 12,406). Respondents split into subsample above the mean of the National Identity measure (.737).

Figure 6 shows the corresponding results among white working-class Ontarians with higher-than-average levels of national identity. By contrast, this group is much more supportive of left-wing parties who are supportive of expansionary social policy. Of all the possible party and policy treatments, the combination generating the highest level of support is candidates from the Liberal Party who advocate for improving access to education and healthcare, followed closely by candidates from the NDP who advocate for improving access to education and healthcare. The

combination generating the lowest level of support is a candidate from the Conservative Party on a platform of reducing immigration and refugee settlement. Moreover, among the Canadian sample, white candidates perform roughly the same as Indigenous and Black candidates, while Asian candidates perform worse among white working-class Ontarians who identify more strongly with the nation.

In sum, the results of the conjoint experiment paint a comparatively different picture of the political preferences of white working-class respondents with high national identity across the Canada-U.S. border. The sample from the American Midwest was more inclined to support Republican candidates, who advocated for lower taxes, and for white candidates. By contrast, the sample from Ontario was more inclined to support left-wing candidates, who advocated for better access to education and healthcare.[19]

The Observational Effects of Racial Resentment and National Identity

Utilizing original survey data, this section further examines the comparative electoral importance of racial attitudes and national identity between white working-class Midwesterners and Ontarians.[20] Behavioral work has long established the importance of partisan identity in predicting vote choice (Achen & Bartels 2016; Campbell et al. 1960). In terms of what determines party attachments, Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002) theorize that individuals will often align their attachment to a political party with the social identity or group-based attitudes that are most important to them. Beginning with racial attitudes, this section employs mediation analysis, with party identity as the mediating variable, to investigate how racial resentment affects vote choice

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[19] In the appendix (section A2), I compare the marginal means of each attribute level between those with higher or lower levels of national identity (Figures A1 and A2) within each country sample of white working-class respondents, which further support these findings.

[20] The appendix section A3 reports how the samples descriptively compare on measures of racial attitudes and national identity. White working-class Midwesterners are more racially resentful and identify more strongly as white, white working-class Ontarians are more likely to strongly identify with the Canadian nation.

comparatively between the cross-border samples of white working-class voters. I measure racial resentment using the traditional ANES set of four survey questions, recoded for appropriate attitudinal direction and combined into an index measure, for both the Canadian and American samples.[21] Alternatively, the appendix (section A6) includes mediation analysis showing how white racial identity similarly has differential effects on voting between the working-class samples (Jardina 2019).

This project follows the mediation estimator and sensitivity check advocated by Imai et al. (2011). The estimator decomposes the total effects of a variable into the indirect effect (that operates through the mediator, in this case right-wing party identity) and the direct effect (that operates through all other causal mechanisms). With continuous treatment variables (in this case, racial resentment), the analysis produces multiple estimates of the expected difference in the outcome (in this case, voting for a right-wing party) at different set values of the treatment (in this case: .25, .5, .75 and 1), with respect to the control point of the treatment variable (in this case 0, given that racial resentment has been coded on a 0-1 scale).

Out of caution, this portion of the analysis avoids causal interpretations because of the limitations of observational data. Yet, to strengthen the reliability of inference with non-randomized treatments, I control for relevant political attitudes, identities, and demographic factors that have been shown by past literature to influence partisanship and voting behavior. This includes age, income, gender, religious affiliation (Evangelicals for the American data, Catholics for the Canadian data), religious importance, views on free trade, economic resentment, national identity, laissez-faire attitudes, union membership, language identity, and resentment towards Quebec

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[21] This project diverges from Beauvais and Stolle (2022) and opts to measure racial resentment in the same way for Canadians and Americans. Unless identical constructions of racial resentment are utilized, comparisons between Canadians and Americans cannot be meaningfully conducted. Anti-Black racism exists in Canada and, in fact, was deemed, at least in the 1990s, to be the most significant form of racism in Ontario (Lewis 1992).

(utilized only for the Canadian data). Section A.6 in the appendix (Tables A.2 and A.5) display the full results of the mediation analysis, broken down by individual regressions, which include the effects of each control variable associated with Figure 7 and Figure 8.

Figure 7: Racial Resentment, Partisanship and 2020 Trump Vote, Midwest U.S. WWC Voters
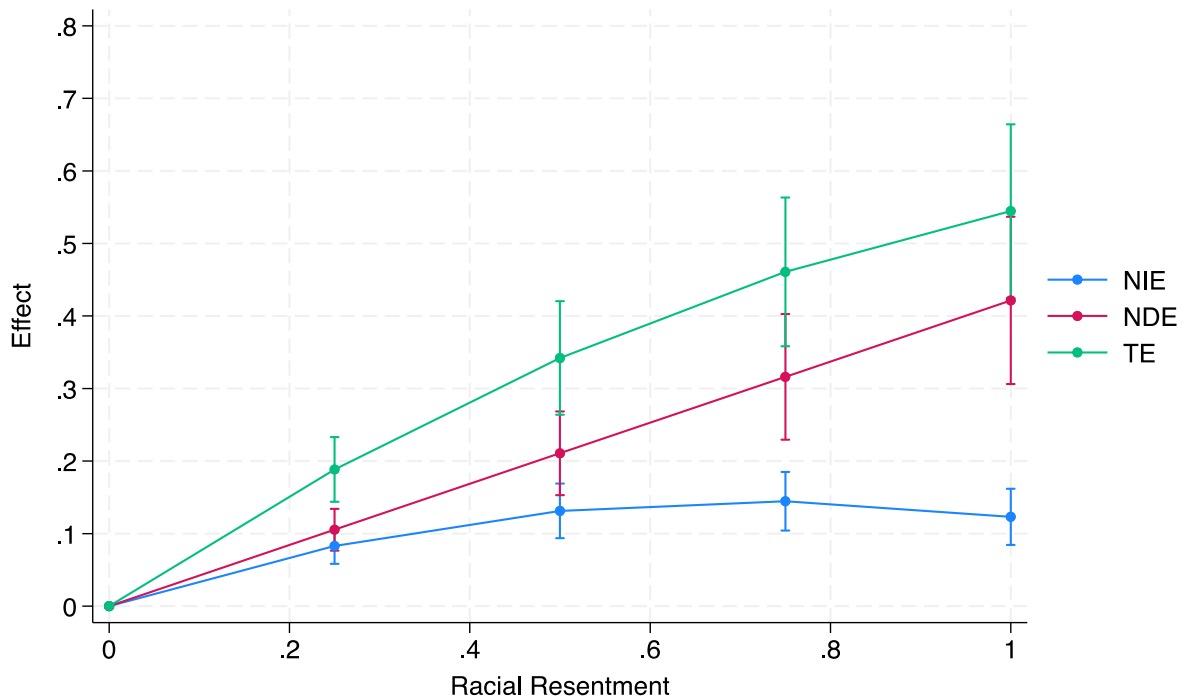

Figure shows the effects of a mediation analysis, confidence intervals denoted with lines, where racial resentment is the treatment (evaluated relative to 0 at .25, .50, .75, and 1), the mediator is Republican Party ID (measured on a five-point intensity scale), and the outcome is voting for Trump in 2020. The sample consists of white working-class Midwesterners (n = 1,050). TE = Total Effect (effect values at estimation points: .188, .342, .461, .545); NDE = Natural Direct Effect (effect values at estimation points: .105, .211, .316, .421); NIE = Natural Indirect Effect (effect values at estimation points: .083, .131, .145, .123). See Table A.2 in appendix for full results.

  Figure 7 displays the results of the mediation analysis for racial resentment among white working-class respondents from the American Midwest. The outcome variable is whether the respondent stated that they voted for Trump in the 2020 American Presidential Election and the mediating variable is Republican Party Identity. The points of estimation on the racial resentment scale are 0 (control), .25, .5, .75, and 1. There is a strong statistical effect of racial resentment on the likelihood of voting for Trump in 2020. Compared to respondents with the lowest levels of racial resentment, those with moderate levels of racial resentment (.5) are 34 percent more likely

to have voted for Trump, those with high levels of racial resentment (.75) are 46 percent more likely to have voted for Trump, and those with the highest levels of racial resentment (1) are 54 percent more likely to have voted for Trump.

Figure 8 plots the corresponding results of the mediation analysis for racial resentment among the sample of white working-class voters from Ontario. The total effect of racial resentment on the likelihood of Conservative voting is strong and statistically significant. Relative to those with low levels of racial resentment, white working-class Ontarians with modest levels of racial resentment (.5) are 19 percent more likely to have voted Conservative, those with high levels of racial resentment (.75) are 26 percent more likely to have voted Conservative, and those with the highest levels of racial resentment (1) are 32 percent more likely to have voted Conservative.

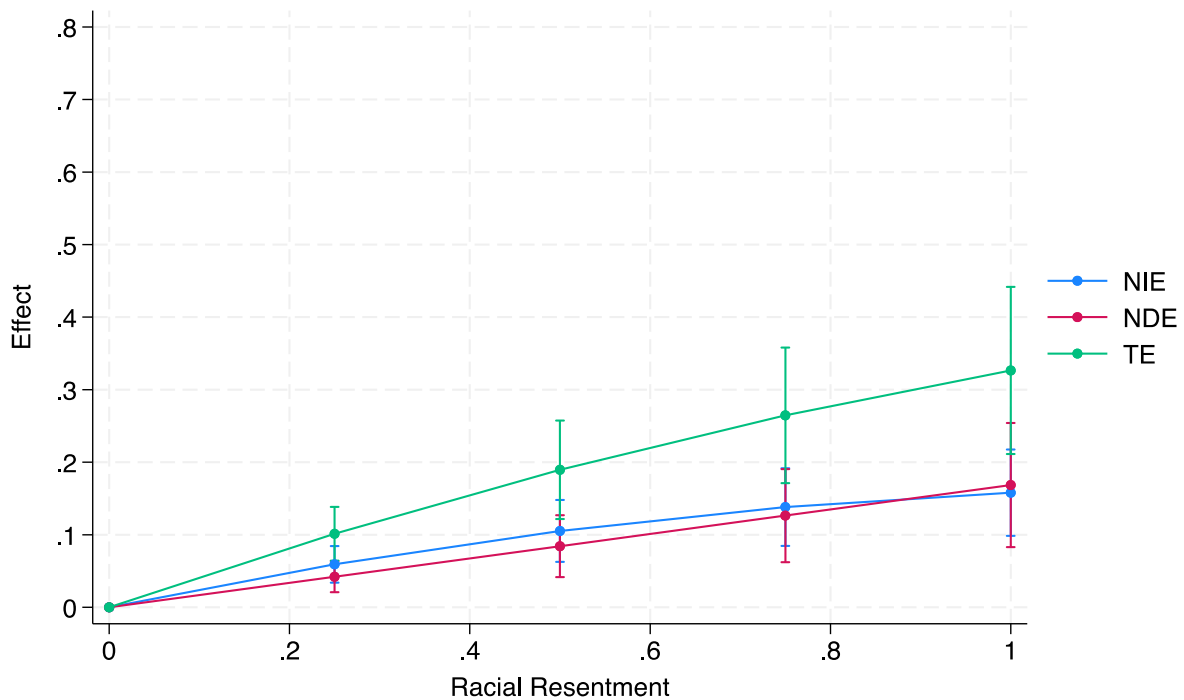Figure 8: Racial Resentment, Partisanship and 2021 Conservative Vote, ON WWC Voters

Figure shows the effects of a mediation analysis, confidence intervals denoted with lines, where racial resentment is the treatment (evaluated relative to 0 at .25, .50, .75, and 1), the mediator is Conservative Party ID (measured on a five-point intensity scale), and the outcome is voting for the Conservative Party in 2021. The sample consists of white working-class Ontarians (n = 1,292). TE = Total Effect (effect values at estimation points: .101, .189, .265, .326); NDE = Natural Direct Effect (effect values at estimation points: .042, .084, .126, .168); NIE = Natural Indirect Effect (effect values at estimation points: .059, .105, .138, .158). See Table A.5 in appendix for full results.

Evidently, racial resentment is strongly associated with the likelihood of voting for right-wing parties. However, there is a considerable difference in the magnitude of these effects between white working-class voters in the Midwest and Ontario. For instance, the total effect of the highest level of racial resentment on voting for Trump (.545) is over twenty percentage points higher than the total effect of the highest level of racial resentment (.326) on voting for the Conservative Party.

To assess the comparative effects of national identity on partisanship, I now turn to regression analysis among the samples of white working-class voters from Ontario and the American Midwest. The full models, with all controls included, are reported in the appendix (section A7, Tables A.9 and A.10).[22] Only the effect of national identity is shown for the sake of conciseness. Each regression model is estimated with robust standard errors to account for heteroskedastic errors. The key independent variable in the analyses is national identity, measured on a five-point intensity scale and recoded between 0-1.[23] Figure 9 displays the average marginal effects of national identity derived from OLS models of party identity for the samples of white working-class Midwesterners and Ontarians. Model 1 shows the effect of national identity on Republican ID among the American sample, models 2-4 show the effect of national identity on different party affiliations among the Canadian sample.

American national identity has a strong positive association with identifying as a Republican. Even while controlling for other major predictors of Republican partisanship, such as white racial identity and laissez-faire attitudes, a one-unit increase in national identity translates to respondents being over 11 percent more likely to identify as Republicans. Conversely, for white working-class voters from Ontario, identifying more strongly with the Canadian nation does not

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[22] The appendix section A6 also includes mediation analysis showing how national identity comparatively effects vote choice, with party identity as the mediating variable.

[23] The survey question for national identity asks respondents how important being Canadian/American is to their identity.

equate to individuals being more likely to identify with right-wing political parties, nor the social democratic NDP. Instead, greater identification with the Canadian nation is strongly associated with identifying with the Liberal Party. A one-unit increase in national identity translates to white working-class Ontarians being over 12 percent more likely to identify with the Liberal Party. The effect of national identity is one of the strongest predictors of Liberal Party ID (see appendix section A7).

Figure 9: National ID and Partisanship, White Working-Class Voters
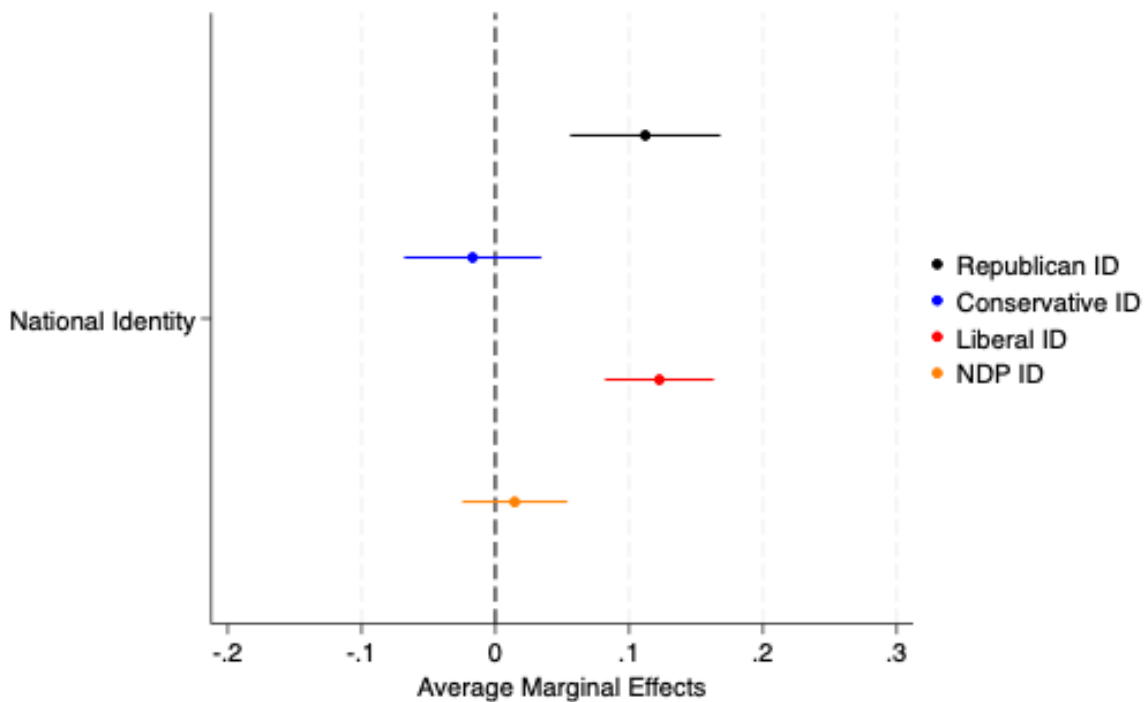
Average marginal effects of National Identity derived from four regression models (full controls included, reported in appendix Table A.10 and Table A.9); confidence intervals denoted with lines. Sample is non-rural, white respondents with less than a four-year college degree from either the American Midwest (model 1) or Ontario (models 2-4). Size of estimated effects for National Identity, with sample size in brackets: 1) Republican ID = .112 (N = 1,486), 2) Conservative Party ID = -.016 (N = 1,517); 3) Liberal Party ID = .123 (N = 1,517); 4) NDP ID = .014 (N = 1,517).

Across the American Midwest, white working-class voters who more strongly identify as American are more likely to vote for Donald Trump and identify as a Republican. By contrast, the picture in Ontario is much different. White working-class voters who more strongly think of themselves as being Canadian are more likely to support the center-left Liberal Party. This is a key finding that helps explain the electoral divergence of white working-class voters in North America.

To the south, the Republicans own national identity. To the north, national identity is owned by the Liberal Party.

The question of why this is the case is an important task that could benefit from future empirical research. Theoretically, the content of national identity as well as the role of parties and party elites is crucial. Social identities, such as national identity, can be activated, primed, or made politically salient by the political rhetoric of elites. Research has shown that simply being exposed to the American flag can lead to a shift towards Republican values and a greater inclination to vote Republican (Carter et al. 2011). Liberal Party leaders standing next to a Canadian flag while discussing the values of being Canadian might similarly activate this identity for Canadians. National identity in Canada is also likely paired with the Liberal Party in part due to the party's traditional stance on the question of Quebec's place in the country, and the party's position in forwarding the ideal of a multicultural Canada. According to Johnston (2017), the Liberals have uniquely appealed to voters outside of Quebec who support the rights and demands of Quebec residents, while also appealing to voters inside of Quebec who support a multicultural nation and are opposed to Quebec separating from the rest of Canada, and that, more than any other party, the Liberals have been the party of national unity.

Conclusion

Writing on the state of comparative research regarding Canada, Vipond argues that "for most comparativists… Canada remains somewhat off the beaten track…[and] has not attracted broad and deep attention from non-Canadians" (Vipond 2008, p. 14). There has been a significant divergence in voting behavior between white working-class voters in Canada and the United States. This divergence has occurred locally across the Detroit River between Macomb County and Windsor, and more broadly between white working-class voters in Ontario compared with

those in the American Midwest. While Trump has now returned to the white house in part due to continued support from white working-class voters in Midwestern states, this same group of voters in Ontario remain much more inclined to support left-wing parties. However, despite the sharp voting contrast and the promise of comparative inference from Canada and the United States (Lipset 1990), this electoral divergence has been largely omitted from comparative scholarship.

In examining this puzzle, this paper leverages multiple methods and analyzes several different pieces of empirical evidence. This includes original survey data, which contains a substantial oversample of non-rural, white working-class voters from both Ontario and the Midwest U.S., a novel candidate-choice conjoint experiment, and qualitative fieldwork in Windsor and Macomb County.

One major explanation for rising right-wing support among working-class voters focuses on industrial decline, import competition, and economic grievances (Baccini & Weymouth 2021; Berman 2021; Gest et al. 2017; Gidron & Hall 2017; Margalit 2019; Rodrik 2021). Yet, this paper finds only limited evidence for these propositions in helping explain differing voting patterns between white working-class Ontarians and Midwesterners. Experimental evidence shows that there is limited support for candidates advocating for reducing reliance on foreign imports among both cross-border samples. Within the context of the Canada-U.S. comparison, similar economic trajectories, perceived economic wellbeing, and exposure to the same trade deals provides only limited theoretical traction in explaining why the two populations now differ so much in how they vote.

Instead, this paper emphasizes the theoretical role of race and national identity. Racial attitudes and race-based social divides are much more salient on the American side of the Detroit River. In Windsor, racial attitudes and identity do not seem to animate political divides to the same

extent as their American counterparts. Experimental evidence demonstrates that non-white political candidates receive a greater electoral penalty from American white working-class voters. In both countries, racial resentment is positively correlated with right-wing voting, but the magnitude of these effects are considerably larger among the sample of white working-class voters from the American Midwest.

National identity functions in a markedly different way between Midwestern and Ontarian white working-class voters. Canadian national identity is more closely tied to support for multiculturalism, collectivist attitudes, and is defined in opposition to being American. Conversely, American national identity is more closely tied with racial identity, racial resentment, religiosity, and support for laissez-faire attitudes. For white working-class Americans in the Midwest, national identity has a strong positive effect on identifying with the Republican Party. Yet, for white working-class Ontarians national identity is instead correlated with Liberal Party identity. Subgroup analysis of the conjoint experiment reveals how white working-class Midwesterners with high levels of national identity prefer Republican candidates, and those that promise lower taxes, while white working-class Ontarians prefer left-wing candidates, and those that promise better access to education and health care.

This paper concludes from the comparison of white working-class voters in Ontario and the American Midwest that there might not be an easy fix for the Democratic Party to win back these voters. While left-wing parties perform better among white working-class Ontarians, much of the differing voting behavior across the Detroit River and between Ontario and the American Midwest comes down to the differing salience, conceptions, and effects of race and national identity. The content and prevalence of core social identities, and how they are aligned with particular parties, is not something proven easily manipulable on the campaign trail.

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