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How Do You Vote? Breaking Down Party Identification by Racial Resentment

Abstract

Racial resentment has long existed in the United States, with the idea that Black people receive unfair advantages by exploiting their race thus negatively affecting White people. In a time in which politics is drastically polarized, a focus is put onto an individual's political identity. The purpose of this research is to determine under what conditions does race influence vote choice by examining how racial bias influences political affiliation. Using data from the 2012 and 2016 National Election Study, the results revealed that ideological thoughts do have an impact on a person's political party identity as individuals with a higher rate of racial resentment are more likely to support the Republican Party.

Keywords

Racial Resentment, Voting, Political Party, Ideology, Race

Disciplines

African American Studies | American Politics

Comments

Written for POL 215: Methods of Political Science

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How Do You Vote? Breaking Down Party Identification by Racial Resentment

Introduction

America is a representative democracy, which means anyone who is eligible to vote has the opportunity to choose who they want to represent them in our government. The most important voting decision occurs every four years during the Presidential election, where the American people are given the chance to cast their vote in favor of whoever they want to be the leader of our country. This choice is made by the influences of a variety of factors in the individual's life (Laurison, Brown, and Rastogi 2022) which would lead one to believe that everyone makes their choice in a way that would express their ideological beliefs, but rather voting has been seen to be a decision based on social factors and a collective thought (Mason and Wronski 2018).

Despite the progress made in ways of equality in America, our society maintains a sense of a race-gender hierarchy shaping how individuals view themselves in ways of in-groups and out-groups (Junn 2017). The presence of this hierarchy affects an individual's experiences in regards to their race influencing how they participate in politics (Westwood and Peterson 2022). Race has been a key part of the recent elections with political parties seeking to win elections by the unity of racial groups rather than communities; this results in partisanship becoming more of a social identity (Rothschild et al. 2019).

The question this paper will examine is: under what conditions does race influence vote choice? This paper will explore the experiences of White, Black, and Hispanic voters and will look at the 2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections with a focus on political affiliation, and racial resentment/conservatism to determine if there is a relationship between vote choice and an

individual's experiences with race. The significance of comparing these two election years is that both of these elections were historic elections that sparked many emotions of the electorate.

The expectation of research is that there are stronger feelings of linked fate for those who experience racial bias which will result in individual's voting based on race over ideology. Using literature that examines the inequalities around voting, the impact of racial resentment, and ethnic attachments; I will develop the background knowledge about race and voting behavior provided by these studies and will have an opportunity to further expand the connections that have already been determined.

The importance of this research is that it will further the understanding of how racial voting occurs and explore how racial bias influences political affiliation. This is an important issue as the voting system in place remains unequal for minority voters and by furthering the research on the topic there is more opportunities for progress as there is information that can help determine what needs to be changed.

Voting Inequalities

The inequalities that have led to the noticeable connection between race and political affiliation are caused by the dark history of the United States and the deep-rooted racism that is still present today. In the modern day, Black voters are more likely to vote for the Democratic Party; however, this was not the case when Black men were given the right to vote. After the enactment of the 15th Amendment, Black men were voting for the Republicans causing the Democrats to lose their seats (Williams 2022). As a result of this, KKK members threatened and to lynch Black voters if they did not vote for the Democrats and caused the deaths of over 2,000

Black Americans (Dickerson 2003). This resulted in Black turnout in the South to drop drastically, and only 20% of eligible Black voters were registered to vote.

Even in recent years, events have impacted the voting abilities of non-White individuals. An example of this is the 2013 Supreme Court *Shelby County v. Holder* decision. This decision ruled that the coverage formula in the Voting Rights Act that determines which jurisdictions are subject to preclearance was unconstitutional. These jurisdictions covered were the Southern states that had histories with voter discrimination (“*Shelby County v. Holder*”). By changing the Voting Rights Act, it became possible for states to make changes to their voting procedures that would negatively affect minority voters, which was seen by the reduction in polling places in districts with a higher minority population, and an increase in voter restrictions (Schuit and Rogowski 2017).

Moreover, in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, mail-in ballots became a popular option for many people (Shino and Smith 2022), although non-White minority voters were experiencing a high rate of ballot rejection (Shino, Suttman-Lea, and Smith 2022). This was mainly caused by lateness or errors in the mail-in ballots, but the cause of such errors is the result of the lack of resources for minority voters which limits the ability to know how to properly cast a mail-in ballot (Barreto, Cohen-Marks, and Woods 2009; Herron and Smith 2014; Pettigrew 2017). Additionally, non-White voters are more likely to experience discrimination when they do reach out to election officials for assistance (Butler and Broockman 2011; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015) which could pose as a deterrent for many people who are struggling to vote.

Racial Resentment

Racial resentment is a metric that was developed in the 1980’s to measure the attitudes of White Americans towards Black Americans (Kinder and Sanders 1997). An individual’s score is

based on their beliefs that Black people's lack of effort is the primary reason for racial disparities, meaning the more they agree the higher it is. Racial bias towards non-Whites by Whites is not a new concept; despite some change, non-White individuals in the United States are more likely to experience economic disadvantages and institutional racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Omi and Winant 2014; Tatum 2021). Racial resentment stems from individuals' need for positive identity which is strengthened by the weakening of the outgroup (Brewer 1991; Brewer and Brown 1998). White voters see themselves as a challenged racial group which has led to a stronger in-group ideology and more expression against out-groups (Valentino, Neuner, and Vandebroek 2018). Racial resentment predicts White voters' beliefs that trivialize Black voters' political behaviors as a result of Whites' goal to ensure ingroup stability (Wilson and Davis 2018).

In both the 2016 and 2020 Presidential election, Trump voters had higher levels of racial resentment than those who did not vote for him (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018; Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta 2018; Albrecht 2022). Trump's political campaign fueled racial resentment with White voters and as a result he was able to have a higher percentage of the White vote (Sides et al., 2017; Oberhauser et al., 2019) the majority of whom voted based on their race and identity (Smith and Hanley 2018; Jardina 2019). This can be explained by how White voters that have a higher rate of racial resentment and a belief that Whites are losing status, tend to increase their political participation (Cepuran and Berry 2022). This is important in determining how racial resentment influences who an individual votes for as the goal in mind is to maintain and increase the power of a group.

Ethnic Attachments

There is extensive research on the influence of race on individuals voting behaviors; the main concept being that race and voting exist jointly, and the influences of ethnic attachments shapes how people cast their vote. Social sorting explains the way individuals' societal identities grow in line with a partisan identity to reduce social pressure on political behavior (Mason 2016). This results in strong political identities due to psychological need for identity alignment (Mason and Wronski 2018).

The Democratic Party has been enfranchised African Americans (Black & Black, 1987; Tesler & Sears, 2010) and Latino immigrants (Huddy, Mason, & Horowitz, 2016) and has provided a stable identity for non-White voters. For Black voters, the Democratic Party identity is not only political but also has social influences (Wamble et al. 2022). The social norm is how one should behave politically as a Black person (Brewer 2001) which is supporting the Democratic Party. The result of this is that Black voters are more likely to vote based on their racial group and ignore their ideological beliefs. This is due to the assumptions that adhering to the social norm is rewarded and straying from the norm is punished (Wood and Eagly 2012).

White voters have developed a sense of linked fate that is on par with that of minority groups despite being the privileged majority resulting in a stronger connection to their race (Berry, Ebner, and Cornelius 2021). Using the relation of being the ingroup, White voters have increased shared political attitudes and behaviors (Hutchings et al. 2011; Jardina 2019; Petrow, Transue, and Vercellotti 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018; Gest 2016). While the sense of group consciousness influences Black voters to lean towards the Democratic Party, it is the opposite for White voters as they are more likely to vote Republican as White Democrats are more likely to be cross-pressured (Krupnikov and Piston 2015, 415). The importance of White

voters experiencing group consciousness is that it furthers the idea that Whites feel a need to gain more control as they feel threatened by the minority voters.

Causal Explanation and Hypotheses

As it was not unknown to politicians and election analysts the effect race has on how people vote more studies were done as party affiliation increased, these studies revealed racial groups voting in the manor as each other. This exemplified the idea of linked fate which is when group conscience leads to political cohesion. Linked fate typically is used to describe the voting patterns of minority groups; however in recent election years it has applied to White voters as well. This sense of linked fate within White voters can also be compared to the rise in racial resentment towards minorities, showing that White voters are more likely to have a sense of linked fate as a result of distain for minorities.

On the other hand, the sense of linked fate that minority groups express is the result of racial bias, which contrasts the way White voters are connected. This explains the way minorities vote as an ethnic group as the goal is a way to protect and better the collective. This is influential to the voting behaviors of minority groups as the social norm becomes supporting the collective and to do otherwise would be wrong, overall reducing the chance minority voters stray from the group affiliation even if it does not align with the individual's ideological views.

In this paper I will test one main hypothesis with data from the 2012 and 2016 Presidential elections to determine what conditions shape vote choice.

Hypothesis One: In a comparison of individuals, those who have a higher rate of racial resentment are more likely to support the Republican Party than those who have a lower rate racial resentment.

I will be controlling for age, education, and income. Controlling for age will allow me to determine if the differences in my results are a result of age. By controlling for education, I will be able to see if the level of education of the respondents has any effect on the different variables. This is also important as those with different levels of education are more likely to have different experiences. Lastly, controlling for income will allow me to see if income has any effect on a person's views. These control variables will allow me to rule out possible causations of the results that have to do with age, education, or income as I will be able to see the interactions within my tests.

Research Design Section

Introduction

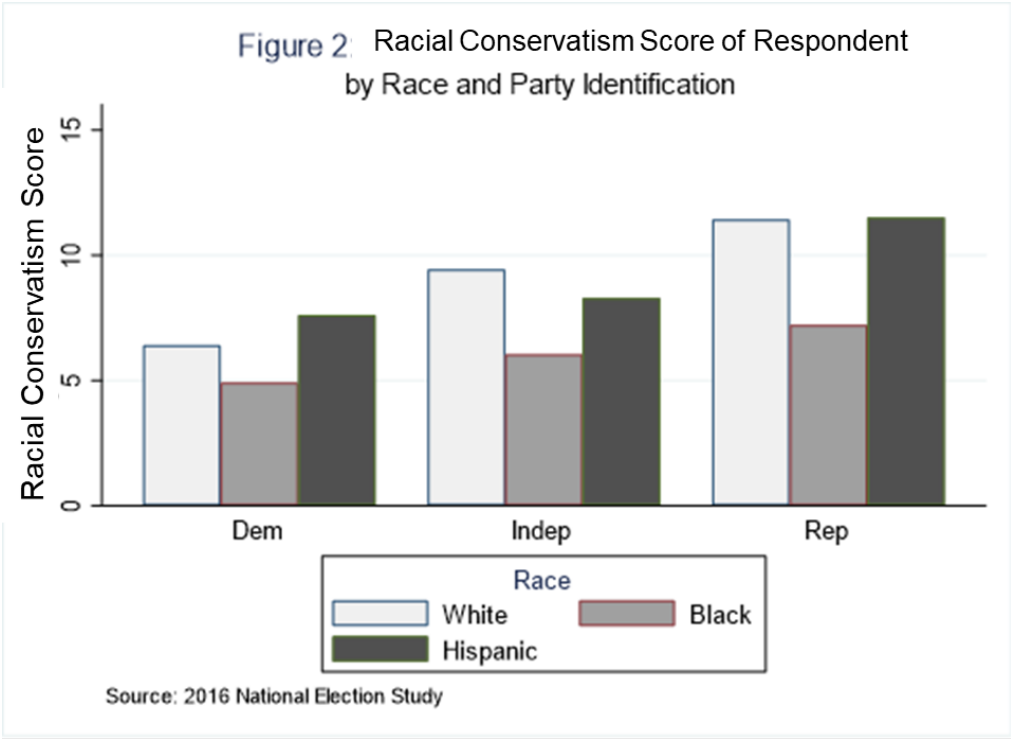
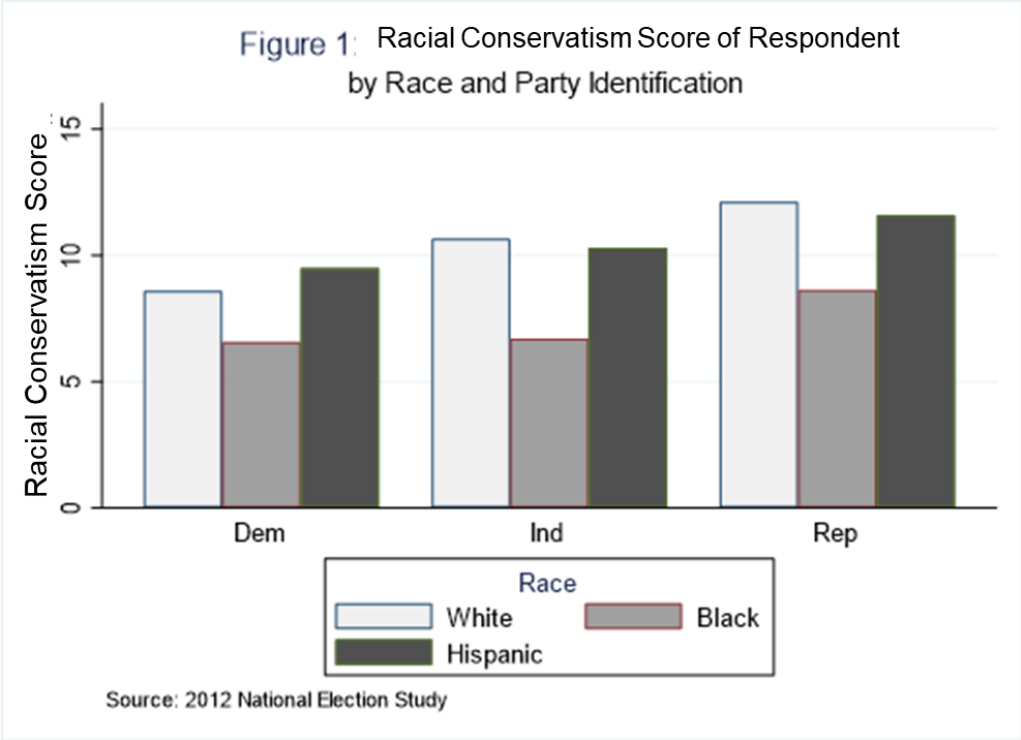
In order to test the hypotheses, I examined data from the 2012 and 2016 American National Election Survey (NES) datasets. The 2012 NES has 5,916 respondents and the 2016 NES has 4,271 respondents; additionally, all of these respondents are US voters.

I selected these datasets because I am researching the effect of racial resentment on political affiliation which requires data from voters regarding these topics. The 2012 and 2016 surveys both included scales of racial conservatism/ resentment as well the political affiliation of voters and asked the respondents about their race/ ethnicity. I selected 2012 and 2016 as they were crucial elections in regards to the issues of race, with 2012 being the second election for President Barack Obama and 2016 was the first election for Donald Trump who had a history of troubling public comments on racial issues. A constraint of both of the surveys I used was the sample size in regard to the race and ethnicity of the respondents, the population of the surveys

was largely skewed towards White respondents which inhibits how much detail I am able to get from minority populations. This was an issue for the research discussed in the literature and appeared in my own work as well.

Variable Measurements

In order to operationalize party identification of a respondent, I used the racial resentment scale variable. The racial resentment variable was a scale from 0 to 16, with 0 being the least racial conservative and 16 being the most. The mean for this variable in 2012 was 9.75 and the mean for this variable in 2016 was 8.76. Using the 2012 NES, Figure 1 displays placement on the racial resentment scale by political party and race. Similarly, Figure 2 shows the same graph of placement on the racial resentment scale by political party and race using the 2016 NES data. In Figure 1, it is evident that Republicans have a higher value of racial resentment compared to Democrats or Independents. Additionally, Black respondents are the least racially conservative regardless of political party compared to White or Hispanic respondents. In Figure 2, the same pattern is seen in 2016.



In the 2012 survey, the respondent's political party was recorded in the pid_3 variable with the options being Democrat, Republican, and Independent. These responses were coded as 1 "Democrat", 2 "Independent", and 3 "Republican". The mode of this variable was Democrats. In the 2016 survey, the respondent's political party was recorded in the partyid3 variable and was coded the same as in 2012 as well as had the same mode of Democrats.

Race was recorded in the 2012 survey as dem_raceeth4 and Race3 in the 2016 survey, the 2012 survey coded race as 1 "White non-Hispanic" 2 "Black non-Hispanic" 3 "Hispanic" 4 "Other non-Hispanic" and the 2016 survey was coded 1 "White" 2 "Black" 3 "Hispanic". The mode for the variable for both the 2012 and 2016 surveys was white. Table 1 and Table 2 show the details of the distribution of the sample in 2012 and 2016 respectively.

	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
White non-Hispanic	973	1,377	1,132	3,482
Black non-Hispanic	755	228	27	1,010
Hispanic	489	360	154	1,003
Other non-Hispanic	135	168	66	369
Total	2,352	2,133	1,379	5,864

Source: 2012 NES

	Democrat	Independent	Republican	Total
White	839	289	204	3,026
Black	1,128	92	172	395
Hispanic	1,059	14	70	446
Total	1,332	1,392	1,143	3,867

Source: 2016 NES

Model Estimation

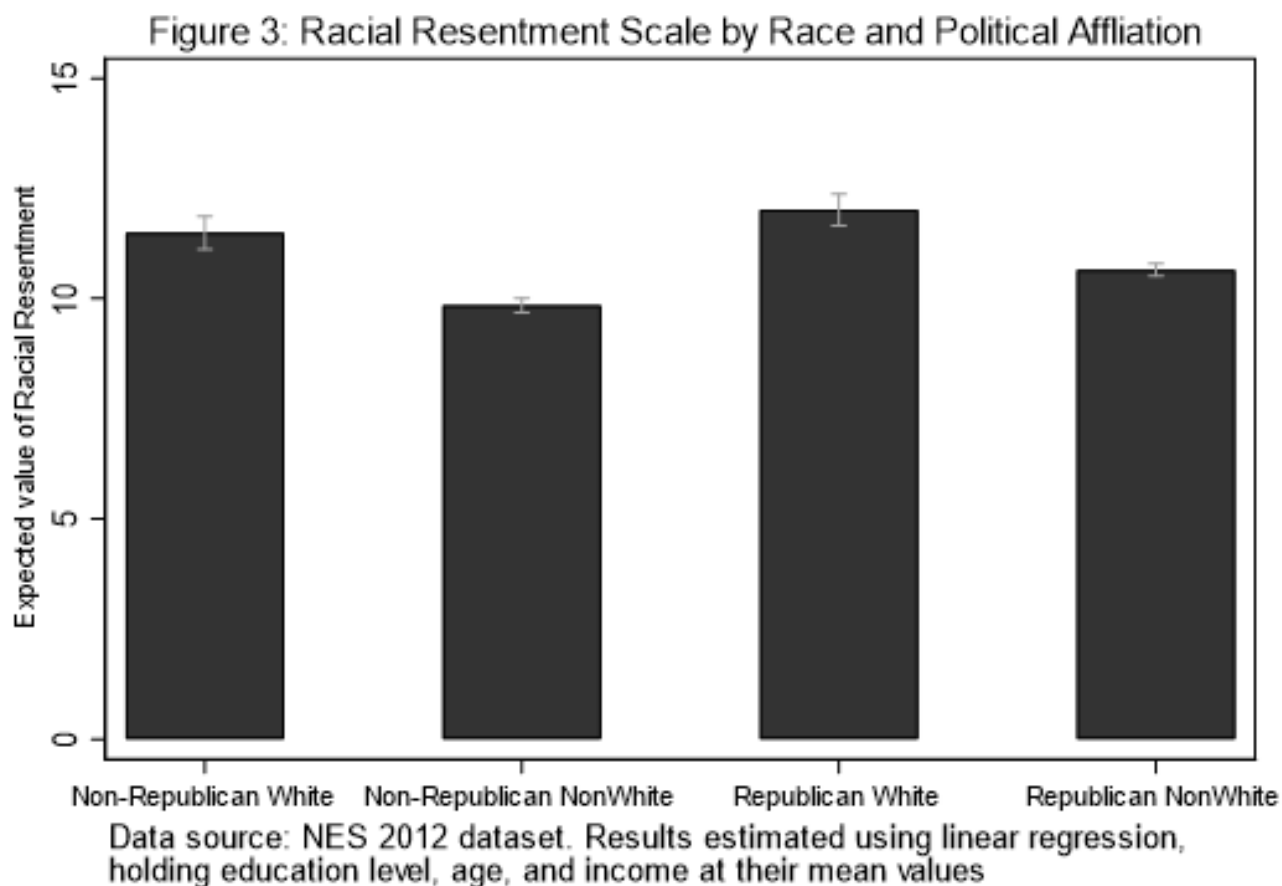
Given that my dependent variable, political party identification was a multi-category variable in both surveys, I chose to use linear regression to approximate the party identification of a respondent, with my independent variable as the value of racial conservatism. I ran two regressions, one for the 2012 data and one for the 2016 data. In both models, I controlled for education level, age, and income by holding them constant at their mean values as they are all interval variables. By holding education, age, and income I was able to see if they have any effect on the relationship between party identification and racial resentment.

Results

Model 1: Interaction of Racial Resentment and Political Affiliation in 2012

Table 3: 2012 Linear Regression for Expected Value of Racial Resentment	
VARIABLES	resent_racial_scale
Republican	0.525*** (0.132)
Race	-1.644*** (0.125)
Non-Republican	0.277*** (0.103)
Education	-0.932*** (0.0705)
Age	-0.0405** (0.0163)
Income	0.0149** (0.00720)
Constant	13.42*** (0.292)
Observations	4,907
R-squared	0.155

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1



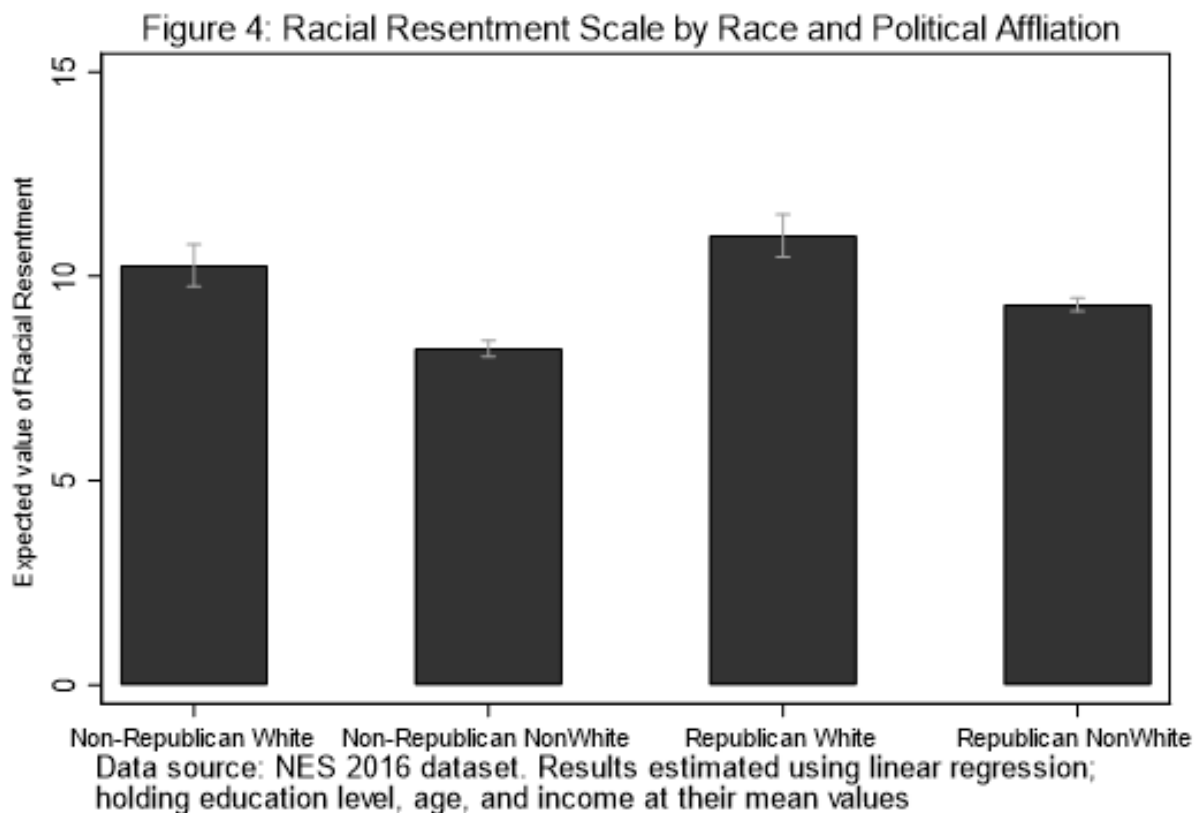
This model of racial resentment by race and political affiliation supports the hypothesis that Republicans are more likely to have a higher value of racial resentment than those who have a lower value of racial resentment. The p-value is less than .01 for the relationship between the independent variable of racial resentment and the dependent variable of being a Republican so it is statistically significant which means we reject the null hypothesis, therefore accepting the alternative hypothesis. In this model, the p-value for age and income are greater than 0.01 which means they are not statistically significant which means we cannot conclude the effect it has on the relationship. The R-squared value was .155, meaning 15% of the variation in the dependent variable of political affiliation is explained by the independent variables. Other independent

variables not used in the regression may explain the other 85% of the variation. The coefficient for being a Republican was 0.525 whereas the coefficient for not being a Republican was 0.277; meaning being a Republican increased expected value of racial resentment more which supports my theory.

Model 2: Interaction of Racial Resentment and Political Affiliation in 2016

Table 4: 2016 Linear Regression for Expected Value of Racial Resentment	
VARIABLES	racial_resent_scale
Republican	0.734*** (0.201)
Race	-2.030*** (0.197)
Non-Republican	0.338* (0.176)
Education	-1.196*** (0.0770)
Age	0.112*** (0.0210)
Income	-0.0414 (0.0418)
Constant	12.33*** (0.395)
Observations	3,125
R-squared	0.235

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1



This model using the 2016 survey shows a statistically significant relationship between political party identification and expected value of racial resentment within 95% confidence intervals and we reject the null hypothesis. As a result, the model supports my hypothesis that those who have a higher rate of racial resentment are more likely to support the Republican Party than those who have a lower rate racial resentment. In this model the R-squared value was 0.235, meaning 23% of the variation in the dependent variable of political affiliation is explained by the independent variables. Of the control variables I fail to reject the null hypothesis for the independent income variable as the p-value is greater than 0.01, although I reject the null hypothesis for age and education similarly to the 2012 model. In this model, race had a coefficient of -2.030 meaning race had the greatest effect on expected value of racial resentment.

My theory was supported by the coefficients for political party identification as the coefficient for being a Republican had a greater increase at 0.734 and the coefficient for not being a Republican was 0.338.

Discussions and Conclusions

Overall, the results of these models showed a statistically significant relationship between political affiliation and racial conservatism. The findings supported my hypothesis: In a comparison of individuals, those who have a higher rate of racial resentment are more likely to support the Republican Party than those who have a lower rate racial resentment. The control of income showed to not be significant in either the 2012 or 2016 model which means that income cannot explain the relationship as it is more likely a result of chance. Education and age, on the other hand were statistically significant in both models. The data from 2012 and 2016 supports that Republicans have a higher amount of racial conservative and more specifically white Republicans have the most. These findings are important as they show an ideological thought that shapes what a person's political party identity is.

My findings are concurrent with existing literature as my research supports the past ideas of racial resentment within the Republican Party, especially during the Trump era in 2016. My research further the existing literature as it adds to the reasons why people lean towards political parties by looking at a specific issue and determining the connection. The research that is needed to further explore my argument would include looking deeper into the ideas that go into the racial resentment scale to see if a more specific reason has a different relationship or not. Another way of expanding the research I have done would be looking at more racial issues to determine what else shapes political views.

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