

Canadian White Identity Politics

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Abstract

How do Whites' racial attitudes—and in particular, White ingroup identification—shape Canadian politics? This paper clarifies the contours of Canadian White identity politics and shows how Whites' racial attitudes impact policy preferences and vote choice. We find that stronger identification with the White ingroup increases Whites' support for government spending on policies that disproportionately benefit Whites. Confirming existing research, we find that negative outgroup evaluations—anti-Indigenous attitudes—predict opposition to welfare. In Canada outside Québec, we find strong evidence that anti-Indigenous attitudes predict voting Conservative and offer some evidence that stronger identification with the White ingroup increases the likelihood White Canadians vote Conservative. In Québec, White identity mobilizes support for the Bloc Québécois while Whites' attitudes toward Indigenous peoples are not predictive of vote choice.

“The artificial unity which is the work of the Confederation has not solved the problem of the races.”
—*André Sigfried 1907, p. 17*

1 Introduction

André Sigfried has been described as the “Tocqueville of Canada” for his seminal work, *The Race Question in Canada* (Underhill, 1966). *The Race Question in Canada* is strictly about White settlers in North America—Sigfried’s analysis focuses on the conflict between English-Protestants and French-Catholics, and identifies the threat that American settlers posed to British superiority in North America. Contemporary Canadian scholarship has thoroughly analyzed how Canadian settlers’ linguistic and religious identities shape political behaviour and attitudes (e.g., Johnston, 1985, 1991; Blais, 2005). However, far less research considers the question of Whiteness, and how Whites’ *racial identities* shape political behaviour and attitudes in Canada. Who identifies as White in Canada? How do racial attitudes—both negative evaluations of outgroups, and identification with a White ingroup—impact Canadian politics?

We answer these questions using data collected as part of the Canadian Election Studies (CES) 2019. In Section 2, we review existing research on intergroup attitudes and group-based identification in the United States and Canada. With respect to the political consequences of Whites’ *outgroup* attitudes, we review the American literature on how anti-Black attitudes shape policy preferences and political behaviour (Gilens, 1995, 1996; DeSante, 2013), as well as the growing literature on the political consequences of White Americans’ *ingroup* attitudes (Jardina, 2019, 2020; Berry, Ebner and Cornelius, 2019; Petrow, Transue and Vercellotti, 2018; John Sides and Vavreck, 2018; Croll, 2007). We also review the burgeoning Canadian literature on how anti-Indigenous attitudes shape politics (Harell, Soroka and Ladner, 2014; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016; Beauvais, 2020), as well as existing

scholarship on how national identity and other, not explicitly racial, group memberships shape policy preferences in Canada (Johnston et al., 2010).

In Section 3, we discuss our data and outline our analysis procedures. Although there is a growing literature on the political consequences of anti-Indigenous attitudes in Canada, there is almost no empirical research on Canadian White identity politics. As such, we spend a bit of time describing the correlation between White identity and important attributes. This descriptive work should be useful to scholars interested in developing and exploring new hypotheses about the interplay between White identity, social attributes, and political behaviour in Canada. We then describe the models we use to test our research questions related to how racial attitudes shape policy preferences and political behaviour in Canada. Specifically, we first estimate OLS models regressing racial attitudes on policy spending preferences, and we then estimate multinomial logistic models regressing racial attitudes on vote choice in Québec and in the rest of Canada.

In Section 4, we first answer the question related to who identifies as White in Canada by reporting the correlation between White identity and other important attributes, including anti-Indigenous attitudes, region, religion, and party identification. We then turn our attention to the question of how racial attitudes, and particularly White identity, impacts Canadian politics. We find that in Canada, like in the United States, White identity increases support for policies that disproportionately benefit Whites (i.e., Canada/Québec Pension Plans) and that negative outgroup attitudes reduce support for policies perceived as disproportionately benefiting racialized and Indigenous peoples (i.e., welfare).

With respect to political behaviour, we find strong evidence anti-Indigenous attitudes increase the likelihood of voting Conservative, even controlling for partisanship and region. We also find some evidence that Whites' identification with their racial ingroup increased the likelihood of voting for the Conservative Party, although the association White identity and Conservative voting is weaker and less reliable (the association between White identity and vote choice is not robust to alternate operationalizations of White identity). In Québec,

White identity significantly and reliably increased the likelihood of casting a ballot for the Bloc relative to any other party. Anti-Indigenous attitudes were not predictive of vote choice among voters in Québec in 2019. We find no evidence that higher White ingroup identification decreased the likelihood of voting for the NDP under the leadership of Jagmeet Singh (relative to voting Liberal) in 2019, in Québec or in the rest of Canada.

In Section 5, we discuss the implications of our findings. We highlight the importance of understanding the role of racial attitudes—both in-group and out-group attitudes—for understanding Canadian politics. Finally, we conclude by pointing to avenues for future research.

2 Literature

The political consequences of racial attitudes have received greater attention in the American literature, which has largely focused on White Americans’ attitudes toward outgroups, particularly symbolic racism directed toward Black Americans (see Tarman and Sears, 2005, for a review). Symbolic racism, often operationalized as racial resentment, refers to the combination of anti-Black affect and the belief that Blacks violate cherished values related to industry and self-sufficiency. American research shows that anti-Black attitudes are a strong predictor of opposition toward spending on programs that are seen as disproportionately benefiting people of colour, such as welfare (Gilens, 1995, 1996; DeSante, 2013). Despite older concerns that the racial resentment measure overlaps with liberal-conservative ideology—that the scale reflect “principled conservatism” instead of racial prejudice (Sniderman and Tetlock, 1986)—recent scholarship clearly shows that racial resentment is a strong predictor of White opposition to redistribution even after correcting for the overlap between racial resentment liberal-conservative ideology (Enders, 2019). Negative outgroup attitudes also shape political behaviour. Even controlling for partisanship, anti-Black attitudes are a strong and consistent predictor of vote choice (Jardina, 2020). Time-series analyses show

that American electoral politics are becoming increasingly racialized (Enders and Scott, 2019).

Recent American scholarship on the political consequences of racial attitudes is increasingly attentive to the role that White Americans' racial *ingroup* attitudes play in American politics (Jardina, 2019, 2020; Berry, Ebner and Cornelius, 2019; Petrow, Transue and Vercellotti, 2018; John Sides and Vavreck, 2018; Croll, 2007). Research shows that many Americans see the world through the lens of White racial identity. Between 30–40% of Americans indicate that being White is “very” or “extremely” important to their identity (Jardina, 2019). Although stronger identification with a White ingroup and negative attitudes toward racialized outgroups are correlated, both White ingroup and outgroup attitudes independently impact political attitudes and behaviours. With respect to policy preferences, White identity—but not negative outgroup attitudes—explains support for spending on policies that disproportionately benefit the White in-group, such as Social Security (Jardina, 2019). Controlling for racial resentment, White identity is not significantly related to the welfare spending preferences of Americans (Jardina, 2019).

With respect to political behaviour, White ingroup identity helps explain support for Republican candidates even when controlling for anti-Black attitudes (Jardina, 2019), although outgroup attitudes do tend to be a stronger and more consistent predictor of right-party voting (Jardina, 2020). Mutz (2018) finds that status threat—the perception that the dominant status of Whites was being jeopardized—largely explained vote switching from President Barack Obama to Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election. Similarly, John Sides and Vavreck (2018) show that the White voters who identified the most strongly with their racial ingroup and felt their dominant status was threatened were the most likely to support the candidacy of President Trump.

Other studies show that, among Whites, perceptions of linked fate—the feeling that what happens to one's fellow group members matters to oneself—are comparable to other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, and feelings of linked fate among White

Americans mobilizes political participation (Berry, Ebner and Cornelius, 2019). Higher feelings of linked fate among Whites predict higher levels of voter registration and turnout, protesting, volunteering for candidates, and donating money to campaigns. Linked fate also increases the preference for co-racial candidates among White Americans (Schildkraut, 2017).

Compared to the American scholarship, Canadian political science scholarship has paid less attention to the role of race in politics. This is not to say that the political consequences of social group memberships have been ignored. On the contrary, the role of cultural differences are considered among the defining features of Canadian politics. For instance, although Canadians tend to be relatively secular, religion—specifically, Catholicism—is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of vote choice (Blais, 2005; Johnston, 1985; Bélanger and Eagles, 2006). Although it is not fully understood why Catholics tend to vote Liberal (Blais, 2005), the fact that the relationship between Catholicism and voting Liberal is conditioned by the religious composition of ridings suggests that the politicization of religion has a social basis (Johnston, 1985; Bélanger and Eagles, 2006).

Johnston (2008, 2017) points to the meaning of Catholic-identification in the Canadian context in order to account for some of the more distinctive features of Canadian politics: the co-presence of a single-member plurality (SMP) electoral system and a party system characterized by polarized pluralism, where the dominance of the centrist Liberal Party creates a centrifugal logic. Historically, Québec has always been the region with the greatest number of Catholics, and the Québécois were the settlers most opposed to an imperial project that situated Canada as a British pawn in the game European imperial domination. Outside of Québec, the greatest opposition to “Canada in Empire” (at least among White settlers)¹ came from Catholics. As Johnston (2008, p. 828) explains, “imperial relations were the only policy domain in which party and religious interests aligned cleanly,” and “the Liberal party controlled the anti-imperial pole.” In other words, group-based identities have always

¹There has always been resistance from Indigenous peoples (e.g., see Coulthard, 2014).

mattered for Canadian settler politics, and the social meaning of these identities is rooted in European imperialism. These old divisions continue to dominate Canadian identity politics today. As Soroka, Johnston and Banting (2006, p 586) explain, “on the field of identity, the fundamental divisions are not “new” Canadians versus “old” ones but within the ranks of the old,” as both Indigenous peoples and the French Québécois have a weaker sense of pride and belonging in Canada as compared to British- and Northern European-identified settlers.

With respect to White Canadians’ attitudes toward racialized outgroups, there has also been a growing interest in the political consequences of anti-Indigenous attitudes in Canada (Harell, Soroka and Ladner, 2014; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016; Beauvais, 2020). Similar to the way White Americans’ anti-Black attitudes predict opposition to welfare (Gilens, 1995, 1996; DeSante, 2013), White Canadians’ anti-Indigenous attitudes predict opposition to welfare (Harell, Soroka and Ladner, 2014; Beauvais, 2020). Comparative experimental research also shows that Canadians are less willing to redistribute when target group members are Indigenous (Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016). In fact, Canadian opposition to helping an Indigenous person is greater than American opposition to helping a Black person.

Like in the United States, negative outgroup attitudes vary systematically by correlates such as region, gender, and partisanship. In Canada, anti-Indigenous attitudes are higher in the West, among men, and among Conservative Party identifiers (Beauvais, 2020). There is also some research suggesting that the Québécois hold more negative views of non-Whites (Berry and Kalin, 1995; Bilodeau, Turgeon and Karakoç, 2012), although these accounts have been disputed (Dufresne et al., 2019). To our knowledge, no studies consider whether racial attitudes impact vote choice in Canada, and there have been no overtime analyses to identify whether Canadian politics have become increasingly racialized or not.

Almost no quantitative Canadian scholarship considers the political consequences of White ingroup attitudes. As we have started to explain, when it comes to the study of group-based identities and policy attitudes, most of the Canadian literature has focused on cultural or national questions. For instance, a great deal of attention has been paid to the

relationship between social cohesion and support for redistribution—and much of this research considers the role of ingroup identities—but this scholarship has focused exclusively on Canadians’ national, rather than *racial* identities (e.g., Banting, Kymlicka et al., 2006; Banting, 2010; Johnston et al., 2010). For instance, research shows that White Canadians who identify more strongly with Canada² express more support for healthcare spending (Johnston et al., 2010).

It is important to study the role of religion, language, and the national question in Canadian politics. However, it is also helpful to contextualize the historical conflict between French-speaking Catholics and English-speaking Protestants in the critical race and Whiteness studies literatures. Scholars studying race and the construction of Whiteness have documented the distinct ways that historically racialized groups—including Italian, Irish, Jewish, and French Canadian peoples—became part of a White ingroup (Allen, 1994; Baum, 2006; Brodtkin, 1998; Ignatiev, 2009; Matthew, 1998; Scott, 2016). In 19th century Canada, English settlers thought of French Canadians in racial terms (Scott, 2016). When Henri Bourassa debated English-speaking representatives in Parliament, he was derided for speaking French and told to “speak White.” Lord Durham’s *Report on the Affairs of British North America* describes the situation in Canada as “a struggle, not of principles, but of races.”

As Scott (2016) notes, although the usage of the word “race” has changed over time, the *concept* of race, and the perceived inferiority of the French race, was central to arguments for French Canadian assimilation. Durham and other elites depicted French Canadians using the stereotypes used to derogate Blacks and other racialized groups, depicting French Canadians as lazy, backward, and un-evolved. These discourses were common in 19th century popular and scientific discourses. Motivated by biological racism, anthropologists drew analogies between “primitive races” and “man-like apes” who had a purportedly “limited innate ability

²Measured with an index that combines four measures: “a rating of how much the respondent feels he or she belongs to the Canadian community, how proud the respondent is to be Canadian, how important it is to be Canadian and the respondents’ raw feeling toward the country on a 0-100 scale” (Johnston et al., 2010, p. 357)

to invent civilization” (Barkan, 1992, p. 41). Political cartoons from the 19th century often depicted French Canadians as primates, a powerful symbolic depiction of the “supposedly primitive and unruly French Catholic minority” (Scott, 2016, p. 1289).

Like other historically “non-White” settlers from Europe like Irish, Italian, and Jewish settlers, the Québécois have now been “redefined as a singular Euro-American ‘white’ population” (Scott, 2016, p. 1289). However, Whiteness—and the struggle over who is “really” White—played an important role in Québec’s Quiet Revolution and sovereigntist movement. For instance, Pierre Vallières’ manifesto, *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, alludes to the racial hierarchies that empower Whites by subordinating people of colour, and simultaneously promotes the recognition of the French Québécois as *being* White. This does not represent a paradox, as some have argued (e.g., Scott, 2016). Rather, Vallières’ description of the “*nègres blancs*” represents a recognition and implicit acceptance of racial hierarchies, and an entitlement claim: that the French Québécois belong among the *maîtres*. The discursive link between Québécois identity and Whiteness has also been made by other leaders of the sovereigntist movement, including Jacques Parizeau, who said in a concession speech after the 1995 referendum that sovereignty was defeated by “money and ethnic votes,” and by Loucien Bouchard, who described the Québécois as a “White race” while lamenting the low birth rate among Québécois women.³ We are not suggesting that these were the only or even the most dominant views in Québec’s sovereigntist movement. Rather, we are simply pointing out that discourses linking Québécois national identity and the entitlement to collective self-determination to *Whiteness* have existed within the movement.

With respect to the study of Whiteness in Canada, aside from Scott’s (2016) “How French Canadians Became White Folks,” most of the existing theoretical research has focused on the rural aspects of Whiteness in Canada, hypothesizing that White identity is constructed in opposition to the cosmopolitanism of the urban context (O’Connell, 2010; Cairns, 2013). However, thus far these propositions have not been tested with survey data asking Canadi-

³Bouchard specific quote was: “Do you think it makes any sense that we have so few children in Québec? We’re one of the white races that has the fewest children.”

ans about their identification with the White ingroup. To date, no quantitative Canadian scholarship considers the political consequences of White ingroup attitudes. Who identifies as White in Canada? And how do racial attitudes—both outgroup and ingroup attitudes—impact Canadian politics?

We hypothesize that, like in the United States, negative outgroup evaluations will decrease support for welfare, which has come to be associated with racialized groups. Further drawing on the U.S. literature, we hypothesize that stronger identification with the White ingroup will increase support for government spending on social programs that have historically benefitted Whites, notably the Canada/Québec Pension Plan. With respect to political behaviour, we hypothesize that both negative outgroup attitudes and stronger identification with the White in-group will increase voting for right-of-centre parties, and decrease voting for the NDP led by Jagmeet Singh—the only candidate of colour leading a major Canadian political party. We will also explore the relationship between racial attitudes and electoral support for the Bloc Québécois, to see whether racial attitudes are related to voting for the federal sovereigntist party.

Although we are interested in both White Canadians' racial ingroup identification and outgroup attitudes (anti-Indigenous attitudes), our descriptive look at who identifies as White and our analysis of the impact of racial attitudes on policy preferences focuses on ingroup rather than outgroup attitudes. This is because the impact of anti-Indigenous attitudes on spending preferences has been addressed more thoroughly by existing research on policy preferences (see existing research by Harell, Soroka and Ladner, 2014; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016). Our analysis of the impact of racial attitudes on vote choice focuses equally on ingroup and outgroup attitudes. To our knowledge, our analysis is the first look at how racial attitudes impact vote choice in Canada.

3 Methods

Data was collected as part of the Canadian Election Study (CES) 2019 through the Qualtrics’ online platform. An otherwise representative sample of White Canadian citizens were recruited to complete the White identity module of the CES ($n = 872$) between October 18th and October 19th, 2019. All respondents were Canadian citizens who self-identified as White, aged 18 or over. To answer the question “Who identifies with the White ingroup in Canada?,” we offer a descriptive look at the relationship between White identity and Indigenous resentment, sociodemographic attributes, and political attributes using a correlation matrix and bivariate plots. This descriptive work will be useful to scholars interested in developing and exploring new hypotheses about the interplay between White identity, social attributes, and political behaviour in Canada.

To answer the question “What are the political consequences of racial attitudes in Canada?,” we first model OLS regressions estimating the relationship between racial attitudes on support for two separate policy outcomes—*pension spending* and *welfare spending*—controlling for socio-demographic and political attributes. We analyze the impact of racial attitudes on spending preferences for Canada as a whole, controlling for region. We then model multinomial logistic regressions to estimate the impact of racial attitudes on *vote choice*. We present separate analyses of vote choice in Québec and the rest of Canada (ROC) as voters face different political choices in these regions.

Our regressions include the CES survey weights for “non-visible minorities” (Canadians who are neither persons of colour nor Indigenous, i.e., White Canadians), which are based population data for non-visible minorities from the 2016 Canadian census. Because the participants who completed the survey were paid panel participants, there is relatively little missing data. In instances where there were missing values on the outcome variables, these cases were dropped through list-wise deletion (see Table S4). For the control variables, missing data was imputed through multiple imputation by chained equations using the *MICE* package in R. Not only does multiple imputation prevent data loss by allowing us to avoid

dropping cases with missing values, but multiply imputed data yield more accurate standard errors because the uncertainty in the imputations is accounted for (Azur et al., 2011).

3.1 Outcomes

We measure support for policy preferences with two variables: the first item asked how much respondents thought the government should spend on welfare, while the second asked how much respondents thought the government should spend on pensions (a lot less, somewhat less, the same, somewhat more, or a lot more).⁴ Higher values indicate support for more federal government spending on the policy.

We measure vote choice using a variable that asked: “Which party do you think you will vote for?” The initial response options for all respondents included: Liberal Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party (NDP), Green Party, People’s Party, and another party; respondents in Québec were additionally allowed to select the Bloc Québécois. In our analysis, we use a four-category measure of vote choice in Canada outside of Québec (Liberal, Conservative, NDP, or Other party), and a five-category measure of vote choice in Québec (Liberal, Conservative, NDP, BQ, or Other party). The number of respondents who indicated they would vote for the smaller parties was insufficiently large to include them as separate outcome categories in our multinomial regressions (i.e., data sparsity prevented the algorithm from converging). Voting Liberal, the model response option, is used as the reference category in our regressions.

⁴Respondents outside Québec were asked how much the government should spend on *Canada Pensions Plans* and respondents in Québec were asked how much the government should spend on *Québec Pensions Plans*.

3.2 Independent Variables

3.2.1 Racial Attitudes: White Identity and Indigenous Resentment

Following Jardina (2019), we created a summated scale of *White identity* from the following five Likert-type items: 1. “How important is being white to your identity?” (Extremely important to not important at all); 2. “White people in this country have a lot to be proud of” (Strongly agree to strongly disagree); 3. “Whites in this country have a lot in common with one another” (Strongly agree to strongly disagree); 4. “How likely is it that many whites are unable to find a job because employers are hiring minorities instead?” (Extremely likely to not at all likely); 5. “How important is it that whites work together to change laws that are unfair to whites?” (Extremely important to not important at all). For the distributions of each variable across each response option, see Table S1).

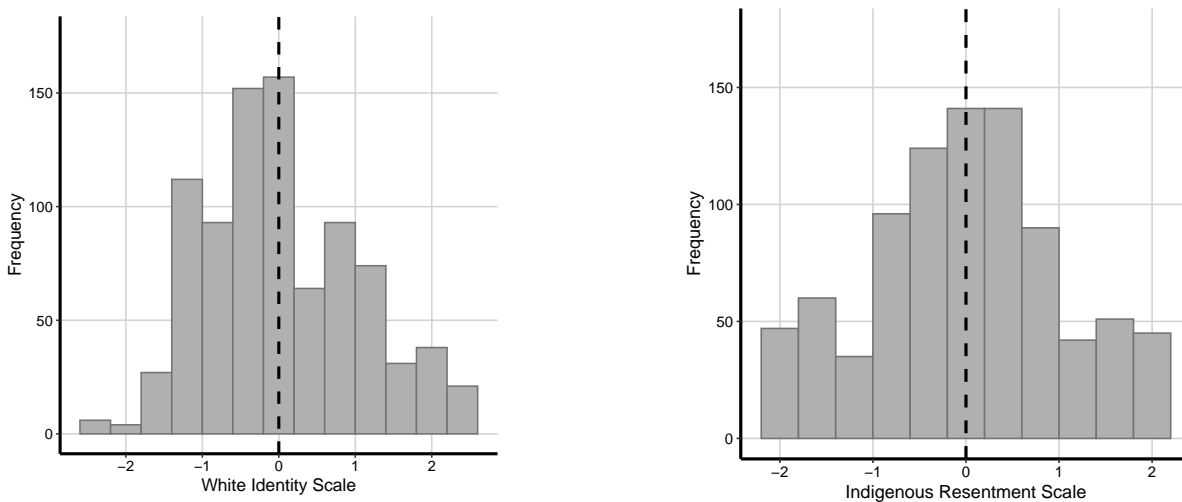
Theoretically, all of the items tap into awareness of and identification with the White ingroup. The last two items also touch on a sense of linked fate with other Whites. Replicating American research (Jardina, 2019), our reliability analysis reveals that the five-item measure of White identity has moderately-high internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.67$) and that the reliability of the scale would decrease if any of the five items were dropped (Table S2). The results of a scree test confirm that the items comprise a unidimensional measure (Figure S1). Because a three-item measure of White identity constructed using the variables tapping into the importance of being White for one’s identity, feelings of pride with other Whites, and feelings of commonality with other Whites is also popular in the literature (e.g., Jardina, 2020), we also test our hypotheses using the three-item measure as a robustness check. We present these results in the Supplementary Materials (SM) but refer to them in the main analysis. We can place more confidence in results that are robust to alternate specifications of White identity.

Comparable research on racial politics in the United States accounts for outgroup attitudes by using a measure of racial resentment toward Black Americans. In the Canadian

context, it is more appropriate to control for the confounding effect of anti-Indigenous attitudes. Using the available items on the CES, we construct a scale tapping into Indigenous resentment. Congruent with comparable Canadian scholarship (Beauvais, 2020), our scale measuring Indigenous resentment is highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.87$) (Table S3) and unidimensional (Figure S2).

To ensure our measures of ingroup attachment and outgroup attitudes are directly comparable, the White identity and Indigenous resentment scales were rescaled using z -score normalization (to have a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1).⁵ The distributions of White identity and Indigenous resentment are presented in Figure 1. Comparing the two scales, we can see that a larger number of respondents' scores fall closer to mean of the White identity scale (fewer respondents' scores fall in the tails of the distribution of White identity) as compared to the distribution of Indigenous resentment. This suggests that, among White Canadians, outgroup attitudes may be more salient or polarizing than ingroup attachments.

Figure 1: Distribution of White Identity and Indigenous Resentment in Canada



⁵Because z -scores are standardized values that specify the location of any given value within a distribution by describing its distance from the mean in terms of standard deviation units, z -score standardization allows for the direct comparison of values from different distributions.

3.2.2 Covariates

In order to estimate the independent effects of White identity and Indigenous resentment on spending preferences and vote choice, we control for party identification and ideology. Party identification is a five-category variable indicating whether respondents normally think of themselves as supporters of the NDP, Liberals, Greens, Bloc Québécois (BQ), Conservatives, People’s Party, or another party/ no party identification. We use the modal category, Liberal Party identifiers, as the reference category in our regressions. We also control for ideology, measured with a variable asking respondents to place themselves on a scale ranging from Left (0) to Right (10).⁶

We also control for a host of sociodemographic variables. Gender is a dummy variable indicating if a respondent self-identified as a man ($man = 1$).⁷ Generation is a four-category measure indicating if a respondent belongs to the Millennial or a younger generation, Generation X, Boomer, or Silent generation. Education is measured using a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent completed a four-year university (Bachelor) degree ($university = 1$). Religion is a four category variable indicating whether a respondent identifies as non-religious/atheist, with a minority religion (e.g., Jewish or Muslim), with a Protestant sect, or as a Catholic. Non-religious/atheist is the reference category in our regressions. Language is measured with a dummy variable indicating whether the respondents completed the survey in English or French ($French = 1$).

Since income, employment, and economic evaluations are central to the “workhorse model” in the literature on attitudes toward redistributive policies (Johnston et al., 2010), we also control for economic features. Income is a categorical variable that divides respondents into five roughly equal categories. Congruent with Jardina’s (2019) analysis of White

⁶The results of a VIF test show that collinearity is not a problem when including both party identification and ideology on the same model.

⁷There were not a sufficient number of transgender respondents to include transgender as a separate category. Excluding transgender/ gender non-conforming respondents from the analysis would not change the results. To avoid the unnecessary exclusion that would result from dropping these respondents we included women and transgender/ gender non-conforming respondents together in a single category.

identity politics in the United States, we also control for unemployment (*unemployed* = 1) and macro-economic judgements. Macro-economic judgments are measured with a three-category variable asking whether respondents thought the economy had improved, stayed the same, or gotten worse (higher values indicate perceptions the economy has worsened).

With respect to place, we operationalize region using a five-category variable: the Pacific (British Columbia and Yukon), the West (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, and Yukon), Ontario, Québec, and the Maritimes. Readers who concerned about including Canadians from the northern territories with Canadians from the southern provinces should note that there is only a single respondent from Northern Canada (Northwest Territories) in our sample and that excluding this respondent does not impact our results. Furthermore, these are meaningful regions in the Canadian political system; for example, the entire Canadian public service,⁸ Bank of Canada,⁹ and Canada Revenue Agency¹⁰ are organized into these five regions. We treat Ontario, the most populous region, as the reference category in our regressions. Finally, we used respondents' area codes¹¹ to create a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent lives in a rural area (*rural* = 1).

4 Results

4.1 Who Identifies as White in Canada?

Like their counterparts south of the border, the level of White Canadians' ingroup identification is positively—although not overwhelmingly—correlated with negative attitudes toward a salient outgroup, which in our analysis are Indigenous peoples ($r = 0.25$) (Figure 2). Figure 2 also illustrates that White identity is very weakly correlated with economic indicators

⁸See: <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/apropos-about/rgnstnnll-rgnztnal-eng.html>

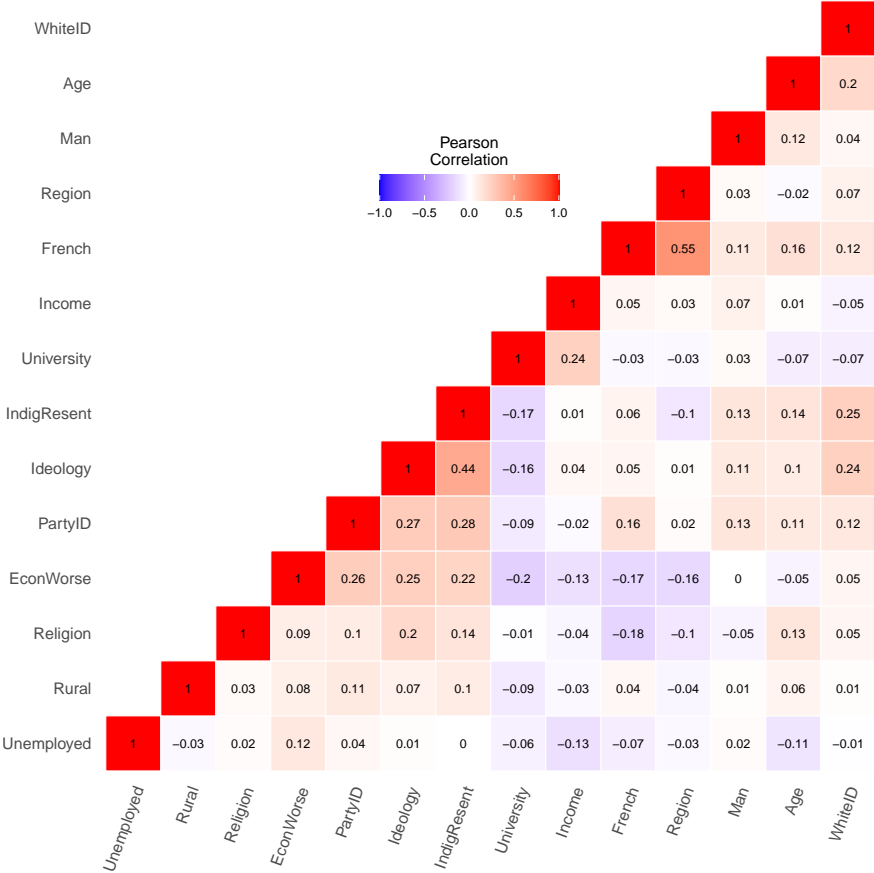
⁹See: <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/about/contact-information/regional-offices/>

¹⁰See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/corporate/about-canada-revenue-agency-cra/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-strategies/sustainable-development-strategy-2007-2010-6.html>

¹¹The CES 2019 includes respondents' Forward Sortation Area (FSA), or the first three values of their area code.

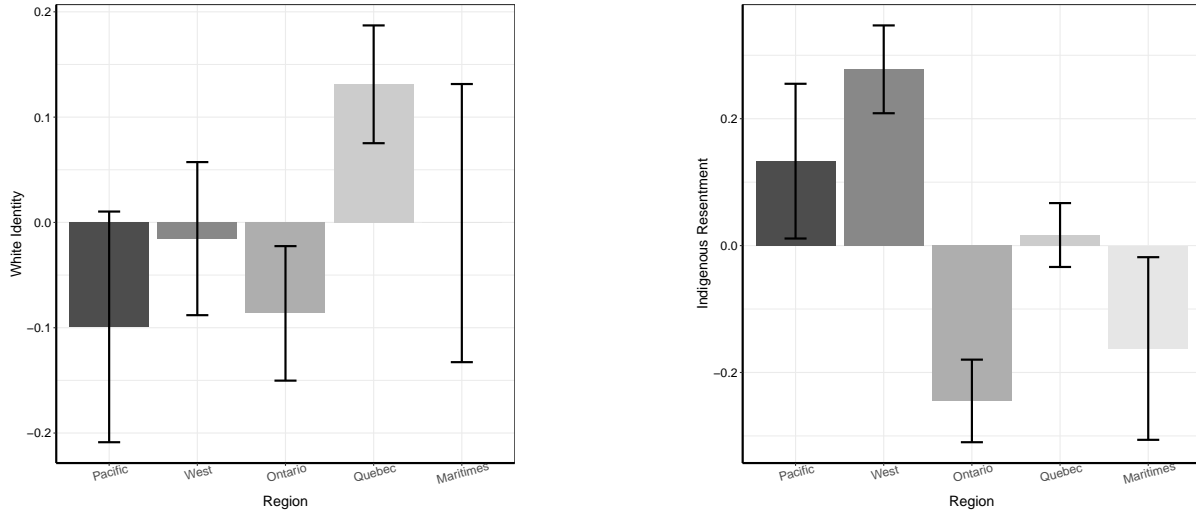
such as income, economic perceptions, and unemployment and is essentially uncorrelated with gender. Interestingly, the correlation between White identity and living in a rural area ($r=0.01$) is much weaker than the correlation between Indigenous resentment and living in a rural area ($r=0.10$). Because a correlation matrix and heatmap cannot very meaningfully illustrate the relationship between racial attitudes and unordered factor variables (such as region, religion, and party identification), we also plotted the bivariate relationships between these features.

Figure 2: Correlation Matrix Heatmap of Racial Attitudes and Correlates



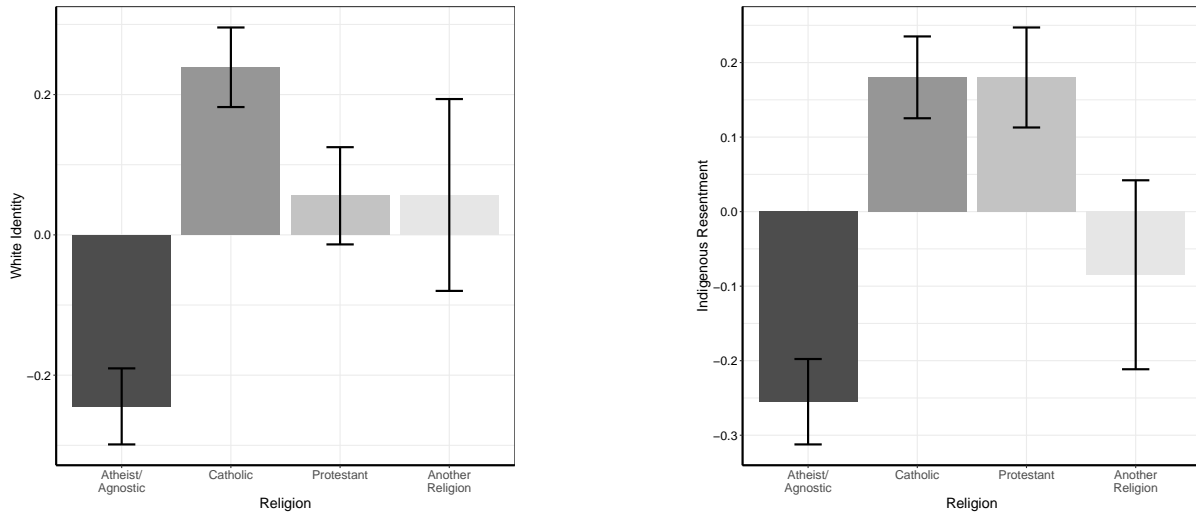
Plotting racial attitudes across Canada’s regions reveals some notable patterns. As Figure 3 shows, levels of White ingroup identification and Indigenous resentment vary in distinct ways across Canada. Residents of Québec express strikingly higher attachment to Whiteness than Canadians elsewhere. By contrast, White Canadians living west of Ontario, and particularly White Canadians living in the prairies, tend to express higher levels of Indigenous resentment.

Figure 3: Distribution of White Identity and Indigenous Resentment by Region



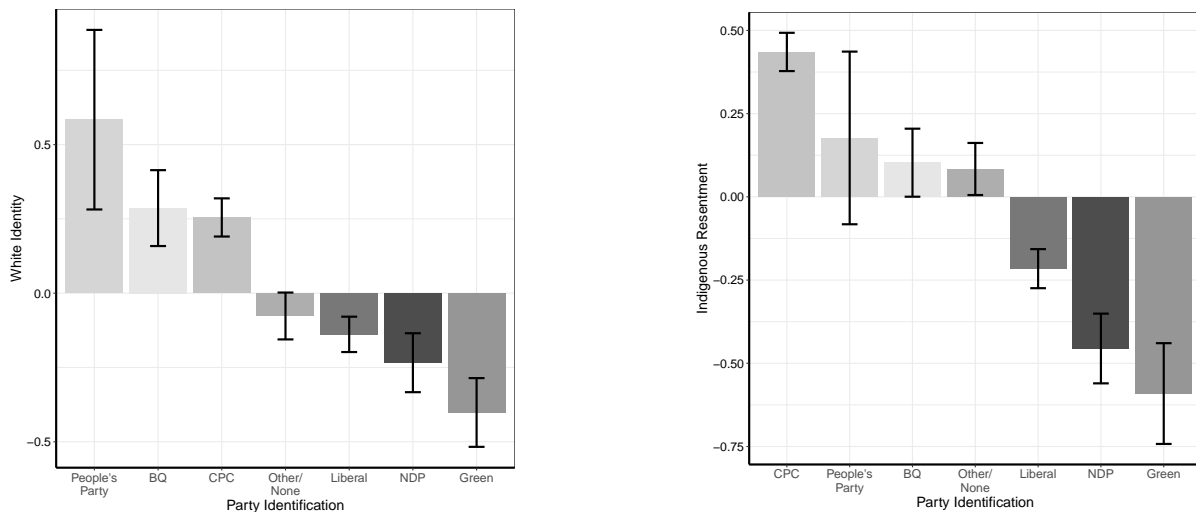
With respect to religion, respondents who identify with one of Canada’s “Founding” White peoples’ religions—Catholicism or Protestantism—express a greater investment in Whiteness. Both Catholics and Protestants express higher identification with their racial ingroup than Whites who identify as agnostic/ atheist (Figure 4). Figure 4 also shows that Catholics express higher levels of White identity than Protestants. Catholics and Protestants are indistinguishable in terms of their—on average more negative—evaluations of Indigenous peoples, relative to those who are not religious or those who practice a minority religion.

Figure 4: Distribution of White Identity and Indigenous Resentment by Religion



With respect to partisanship, People’s Party identifiers unsurprisingly express the highest levels of White identity—although the confidence intervals are wide due to the small number of People’s Party partisans in the sample (Figure 5). What is perhaps most interesting is that people who normally think of themselves as being Bloc Québécois (BQ) express similarly high levels of White ingroup identification as People’s Party or Conservative Party-identifiers. With respect to BQ-identifiers, this really seems to be an ingroup, rather than outgroup, phenomenon—BQ partisans express significantly lower levels of Indigenous resentment than Conservative partisans. Congruent with existing research (Beauvais, 2020), we find that Conservative partisans express the most negative outgroup evaluations. Non-sovereigntist left party identifiers—and especially partisans of the more “postmaterialist” Green Party—are the least invested in Whiteness and express the lowest levels of Indigenous resentment.

Figure 5: Distribution of White Identity and Indigenous Resentment by Partisanship



4.2 Policy Spending

Having sketched some of the contours of White identity and anti-Indigenous attitudes in Canada, we turn our attention to the political consequences of racial ingroup identification and outgroup attitudes. Regressing attitudes toward pension spending on White identity and Indigenous resentment while controlling for a host of confounding variables, we find that, like

in the United States, White identity increases support for policies that disproportionately benefit Whites (Canada/Québec Pension Plans). Attitudes toward Indigenous peoples do not impact Whites’ preferences for a policy that disproportionately benefits their racial ingroup.

As hypothesized, we also find that Indigenous resentment significantly reduces support for welfare spending. Although it does appear that, controlling for Indigenous resentment, Whites’ identity with their racial ingroup increases support for welfare spending, the positive association between White identity and support for welfare spending should be treated with caution. The substantively small relationship that we find in our sample is highly sensitive to model specification: it falls from significance under different operationalizations of White identity (i.e., using the three-item measure of White identity that is also popular in the literature (Jardina, 2019, 2020)). Note that the other findings reported here are robust to alternate model specifications.

Table 1: OLS Models Predicting Support for Policy Spending

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Support for Pensions	Support for Welfare
	(1)	(2)
White Identity Scale Score	0.122*** (0.030)	0.077* (0.038)
Indigenous Resentment	-0.057 (0.032)	-0.349*** (0.041)
Constant	3.975*** (0.143)	3.138*** (0.183)
Observations	829	835
R ²	0.121	0.218
Adjusted R ²	0.088	0.189
Residual Std. Error	0.753	0.965
F Statistic	3.652***	7.479***

Controlling for generation, gender, education, region, language, religion, ideology, partisanship, income, unemployment, and economic evaluations.

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

4.3 Vote Choice

In Canada outside of Québec, our sample provides some evidence that White ingroup identification predicts voting for right-of-centre parties. Controlling for partisanship, region, and other confounding variables, there is a positive relationship between White identity and voting for a right-of-centre party (Table 2). Note, however, that this finding is not robust to alternate specifications (using the three-item measure of White identity). All other findings related to vote choice are robust to alternate operationalizations of White identity.

Corroborating existing research on anti-Indigenous attitudes, we find that Whites' racially resentment attitudes toward a salient outgroup, Indigenous peoples, strongly motivate electoral support for right-of-centre parties. Contrary to American research showing that White identity reduced electoral support for President Obama, America's first Black presidential candidate of colour, we find no evidence that White ingroup identification reduced support for the NDP under the leadership of Jagmeet Singh, the first candidate of colour to lead a Canadian federal political party.

Table 2: Multinomial Regression Predicting Vote Choice in Canada Outside Québec

	<i>Outcome options (Liberal reference):</i>			
	Liberal	NDP	Conservative	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
White identity	–	0.222 (0.205)	0.406* (0.190)	0.275 (0.167)
Indigenous resentment	–	–0.100 (0.241)	0.653** (0.207)	0.216 (0.190)
Constant	–	2.870** (0.875)	–8.942** (1.687)	–2.778* (1.118)
Observations	601	601	601	601

Pseudo R² 0.3930

Controlling for generation, gender, education, region, language, religion, ideology, partisanship, income, unemployment, and economic evaluations.

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

In Québec, we found that White identity significantly predicts voting for the BQ, even controlling for partisanship and other potential confounders (Table 2). This is not just a function of comparing voting BQ to voting Liberal (the reference category in (Table 2). Treating voting BQ as the reference shows that White identity significantly predicts voting BQ relative to any of the other parties. Interestingly, negative outgroup evaluations do not appear to increase the probability of voting for the BQ. Insofar as sovereigntist voting is motivated by Whites’ racial attitudes, these politics are motivated by stronger attachment to the White ingroup rather than by negative attitudes toward a salient outgroup.

Table 3: Multinomial Regression Predicting Vote Choice in Québec

	<i>Outcome options (Liberal reference):</i>				
	Liberal (1)	NDP (2)	BQ (3)	Conservative (4)	Other (5)
White identity	–	–0.067 (0.356)	0.659* (0.334)	–0.014 (0.299)	–0.995** (0.339)
Indigenous resentment	–	–0.302 (0.429)	–0.579 (0.412)	–0.282 (0.360)	0.109 (0.343)
Constant	–	–2.637 (2.144)	–12.42** (2.324)	–11.31** (2.603)	–4.921** (1.671)
Observations	254	254	254	254	254

Pseudo R² 0.4080

Controlling for generation, gender, education, region, language, religion, ideology, partisanship, income, unemployment, and economic evaluations.

Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

5 Discussion

Although there is a growing interest in how White Canadians’ racial attitudes—and in particular, negative evaluations of Indigenous peoples—impact Canadian politics, Canadians have paid far less attention to the political consequences of racial identities and racism as compared to scholars south of the border. This may be because there is a conventional un-

derstanding in the Canadian scholarship that one of defining differences between the United States and Canada is that “the formative ethnic divide in the United States centres on race... while in Canada the main fault line has historically been between English and French, more recently between Québec and the rest of Canada” (Citrin, Johnston and Wright, 2012, p. 535). Drawing on this intuition, a great deal of the empirically-oriented Canadian scholarship on intergroup relations has focused on distinctions between “old” versus “new” Canadians, and particularly on the identities of and conflicts between White settlers of French-speaking, Catholic heritage in Québec and White settlers of English-speaking, Protestant heritage in the rest of Canada (and occasionally, Indigenous peoples) (e.g., Soroka, Johnston and Banting, 2006).

This research provides important insights into the nature of the Canadian polity. However, when studying the legacy of European imperialism and colonialism, it is important to keep in mind the central role that belief systems about the hierarchical ordering of peoples (or “races”) played in European imperial conflicts and settler colonization. In Canada’s early history, colonial administrators motivated by White racism explicitly tried to eliminate Indigenous peoples, partially through forced assimilation. P. G. Anderson, Canada’s Indian Affairs Superintendent, expressed a clear belief in White racial superiority when he explained the concept of residential schools to the General Council of Indian Chiefs and Principle Men, stating that: “your children shall be sent to schools, where they will forget their Indian habits and be instructed in all the necessary arts of civilized life, and become one with your White brethren” (quoted in Baldwin, 1846, p. 7).

Furthermore, although the usage of the word “race” has changed over time, the concept of race, and the perceived inferiority of the French race, was central to arguments made by Lord Durham and others who advocated in favour of French Canadian assimilation (Scott, 2016). The French Québécois fought against the political and economic subordination of the French Québécois, against the devaluation of their identity, and to preserve the French language and Québec’s culture. However, anti-imperial discourses in Québec have not always been framed

in terms of breaking down hierarchies to empower all people in collective decision-making about issues that affect them, regardless of social group membership. At times, voices championing Québécois empowerment and Québec sovereignty have made the discursive link between Québécois identity, self-determination, and *Whiteness*, making an entitlement claim that reinforces social hierarchies. Our analysis reveals that this continues to matter for politics today, as identification with the White ingroup increases the likelihood a voter in Québec casts their ballot for the Bloc relative to any other party.

Our analysis offers a look at the contours of White identity politics in Canada. We find that Protestants and Catholics are more invested in Whiteness than White Canadians who do not practice these religions. We also find that White ingroup identification is highest in Quebec. The regional distribution of anti-Indigenous attitudes follow a different pattern: Indigenous resentment is highest West of Ontario, particularly in the prairies, where the proportion of settlers is lower. Contrary to some theoretical accounts of the construction of Whiteness in Canada (O’Connell, 2010; Cairns, 2013), the correlation between White identity and residing in a rural area is very low. With respect to differences across party identifiers, White voters who normally think of themselves as Conservatives, People’s Party, or Bloc Québécois express the highest levels of identification with their White ingroup. BQ-identifiers express significantly lower levels of Indigenous resentment than Conservative-identifiers, who tend to hold the most negative views of Indigenous peoples.

With respect to the political consequences of White racial identification and anti-Indigenous attitudes, we find that, like in the United States (Jardina, 2019), White identity significantly increases support for policies that disproportionately benefit Whites (Canada/Québec Pension Plans). We also find that, congruent with both the American (Gilens, 1995, 1996; DeSante, 2013) and Canadian (Harell, Soroka and Ladner, 2014; Harell, Soroka and Iyengar, 2016; Beauvais, 2020) scholarship, Indigenous resentment significantly reduces support for welfare spending. We find some evidence that, in Canada outside of Québec, identification with the White ingroup appears to increase the likelihood of voting Conservative. However,

this finding is not robust to alternate specifications of White identity (i.e., to using a three-item measure of White identity). Scales with fewer items are, by definition, less reliable and noisier than scales with a greater number of items, so it is not surprising that the five-item scale provides a stronger “signal” of White identity. However, the fact that this finding is not robust to a slightly noisier measure casts some doubt on how important White identity is vote choice in Canada outside Québec. It is possible that in Canada, like in the United States, White identity is not as strong and reliable a predictor of right-party vote choice as negative outgroup attitudes (Jardina, 2020). In Canada, Indigenous resentment is a strong and consistent predictor of voting Conservative. In Québec, identification with the White ingroup is associated with a higher likelihood of voting for the Bloc relative to any other party (and this finding is robust to alternate operationalizations of White identity).

6 Conclusion

Canadian scholars have thoroughly analyzed how settlers’ linguistic and religious cleavages have shaped Canadian policy preferences and political behaviour (e.g., Johnston, 1985, 1991; Blais, 2005). Our work builds on this tradition by clarifying how Whites’ *racial identities* have shaped policy preferences and political behaviour using data collected as part of the CES 2019. Our descriptive look at the contours of White identification in Canada should be useful to scholars interested in developing and exploring new hypotheses about the interplay between White identity, social attributes, and political behaviour in Canada. We find that in Canada, like in the United States, White identity increases support for a policy that disproportionately benefit Whites (Canada/Québec Pension Plans), while anti-Indigenous attitudes decrease support for a policy that is often perceived as disproportionately benefiting Indigenous and racialized peoples (welfare). With respect to political behaviour, we show voters in Canada outside Québec who express more negative evaluations of Indigenous peoples were more likely to vote Conservative. In Québec, White identity increased the

likelihood of casting a ballot for the Bloc relative to any other party.

Our study suffers certain limitations. Most notably, our sample only includes White, non-immigrant respondents. Future studies should endeavour to include—and even oversample—settlers of colour and Indigenous peoples, to clarify how different racial and Indigenous ingroup identities and outgroup attitudes shape political attitudes and behaviour. It would also be interesting to oversample White immigrant Canadians, to clarify whether immigration status impacts identification with the White ingroup. Future studies should also aim to include variables tapping into different group identities, including both White identities and “Canadian” identity more broadly. Research shows that Americans who prioritize a more general “American” identity over the more restrictive “Caucasian” identity are more open to policies that help Black Americans (Smith and Tyler, 1996). Distinguishing between White Canadians who identify strongly with Canada and disavow Whiteness from White Canadians who identify strongly with Canada might offer even more nuanced insight into the relationship between identity and support for redistribution in Canada. Future scholars might also endeavour to oversample residents of Québec and Alberta, to gain further insight into the relationship between White identity and support for separatist parties.

Canadian society remains deeply divided by racial inequalities. Indigenous and racialized peoples are more likely to live in poverty and on average experience lower market returns from the Canadian labour market, earning notably less than their White settler counterparts (Government of Canada, 2015). Indigenous peoples are dramatically overrepresented in the criminal justice system—although Indigenous peoples comprise roughly 5% of the Canadians population, a full 26% of Canadian inmates are Indigenous (DOJ, 2019). Indigenous and Black peoples are far more likely to be victims of police killings (Marcoux and Nicholson, 2017). Our analysis provides an important step toward understanding how Whites’ identification with the White ingroup and negative outgroup evaluations shape Canadian political attitudes and behaviour. Understanding how the racial attitudes of White Canadians—Canada’s most empowered social group members—shape attitudes toward redistribution

and which parties they want to see voted into office is an essential step toward understanding how the interplay between attitudes, identities, institutions, and policies reinforce racial hierarchies and race-based inequities.

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A Supplementary Material

S1.1 Details About Variables and Scaling

Table S1: Variable Distributions

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
How important is being white to your identity?					

Table S2: Reliability Analysis of the White Identity Items

	α -if-deleted	Item-rest score
“How important is being white to your identity?”	0.61	0.44
“White people in this country have a lot to be proud of.”	0.65	0.34
“Whites in this country have a lot in common with one another.”	0.61	0.43
“How likely is it that many whites are unable to find a job because employers are hiring minorities instead?”	0.63	0.39
“How important is it that whites work together to change laws that are unfair to whites?”	0.57	0.51
Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.67$		

Figure S1: Scree Test of the Dimensionality of the White Identity Items

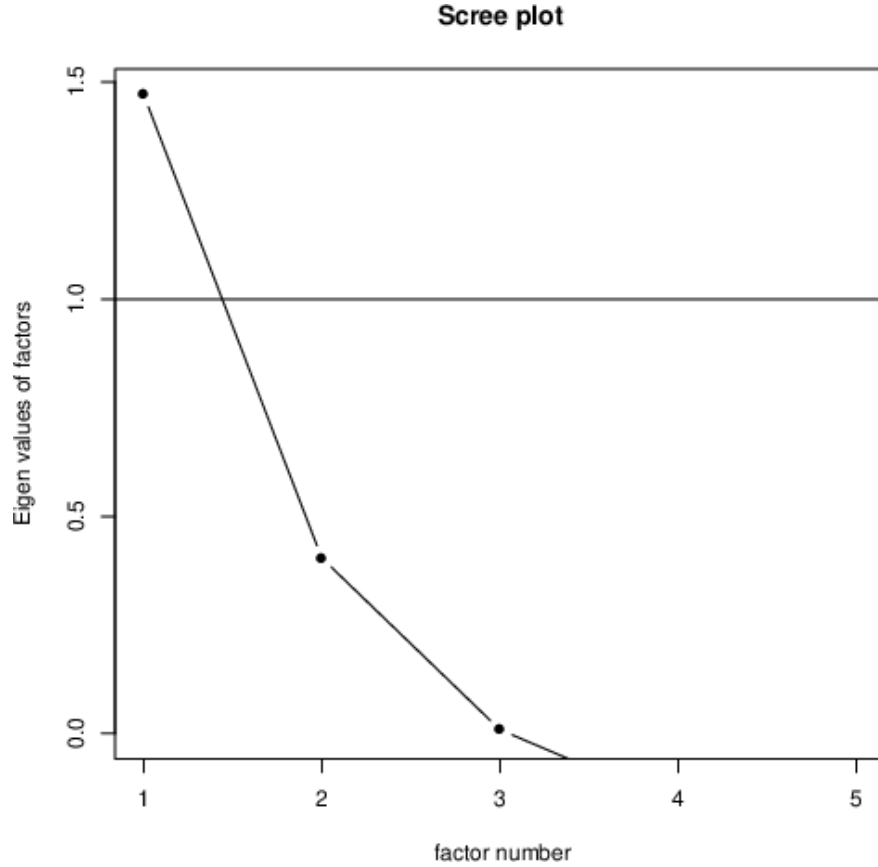
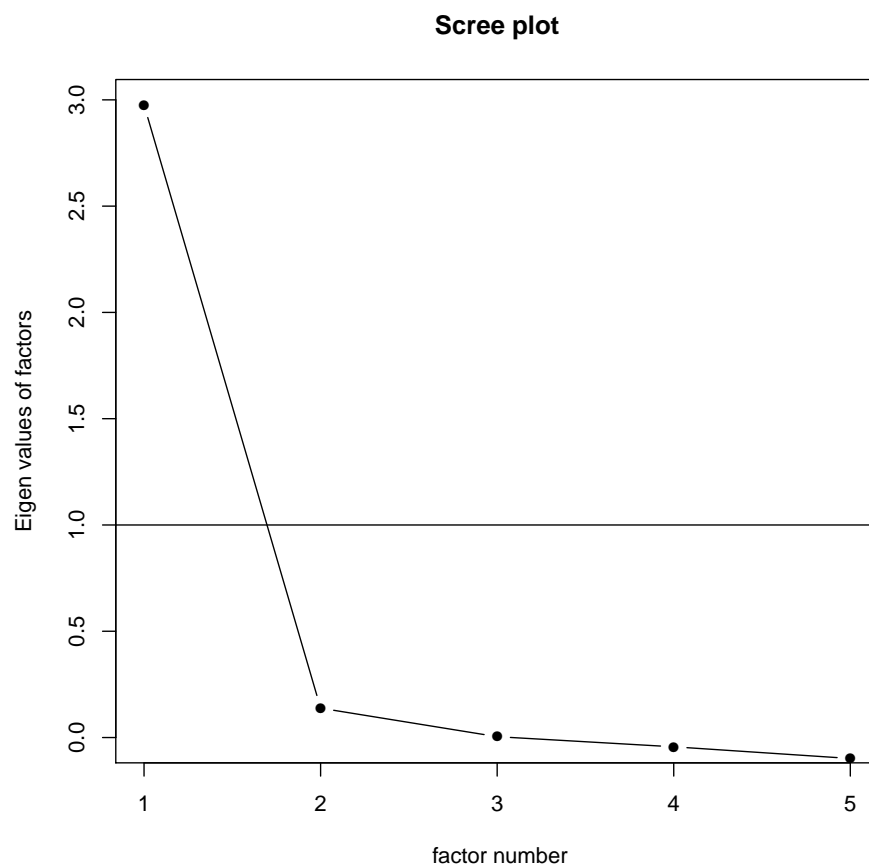


Table S3: Reliability Analysis of the Indigenous Resentment Items

	α -if-deleted	Item-rest score
“Aboriginals are getting too demanding in their push for land rights.”	0.84	0.73
“Over the past few years, Aboriginal peoples have gotten less than they deserve.”	0.83	0.78
“Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Aboriginal peoples should do the same without any special favours.”	0.85	0.68
“The government does not show enough respect toward Aboriginals.”	0.85	0.69
“Generations of colonialism and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Aboriginal peoples to work their way out of the lower class.”	0.85	0.68
Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.87$		

Figure S2: Scree Test of the Dimensionality of the Indigenous Resentment Items



S1.2 Missing Values

Table S4: Missing Values

Item	Number of Missing Values	Procedure
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S2 Full Tables

Table S5: OLS Models Predicting Support for Policy Spending

Dependent variable:

Support for Pensions Support for Welfare

	(1)	(2)
White Identity Scale Score	0.122*** (0.030)	0.077* (0.038)
Indigenous Resentment	-0.057 (0.032)	-0.349*** (0.041)
Gen X	0.177* (0.077)	0.100 (0.098)
Boomer	0.295*** (0.078)	0.105 (0.098)
Silent	0.303** (0.096)	0.166 (0.124)
Man	-0.082 (0.055)	0.135 (0.071)
University	-0.093 (0.070)	-0.010 (0.089)
30K-60K	-0.024 (0.076)	0.329*** (0.097)
60K-90K	-0.055 (0.078)	0.199* (0.101)
90K-150K	-0.257** (0.079)	-0.140 (0.102)
150K+	-0.188 (0.116)	0.011 (0.149)
Pacific	0.061 (0.086)	0.238* (0.111)
West	0.175* (0.086)	0.186 (0.111)

	(0.079)	(0.101)
Québec	-0.067	-0.076
	(0.136)	(0.176)
Maritimes	-0.048	-0.052
	(0.112)	(0.142)
French	-0.082	0.239
	(0.145)	(0.186)
NDP	0.148	0.002
	(0.091)	(0.117)
Greens	-0.065	-0.043
	(0.131)	(0.166)
Other/none	0.027	-0.172
	(0.083)	(0.106)
Conservative	-0.164*	-0.513***
	(0.080)	(0.103)
PP	-0.199	-1.023***
	(0.267)	(0.307)
BQ	0.159	0.010
	(0.143)	(0.180)
Ideology	0.001	0.013
	(0.013)	(0.017)
Urban	-0.188	0.323*
	(0.129)	(0.161)
Unemployed	-0.026	-0.308**
	(0.088)	(0.112)
Same	0.192*	-0.414***
	(0.095)	(0.122)

Worse	−0.028 (0.072)	−0.043 (0.092)
Catholic	0.030 (0.073)	0.122 (0.092)
Protestant	−0.130 (0.114)	0.136 (0.146)
Other	−0.029 (0.074)	−0.032 (0.094)
Constant	3.975*** (0.143)	3.138*** (0.183)
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Observations	829	835
R ²	0.121	0.218
Adjusted R ²	0.088	0.189
Residual Std. Error	0.753	0.965
F Statistic	3.652***	8.384***
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Note:

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001