

'INVISIBLE' INDICATORS: WHITE IDENTITY & EUROPEAN POLITICS

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Political Science (European Governance).

Chapel Hill
2023

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ABSTRACT

Brett Harris: 'Invisible' Indicators: White Identity & European politics
(Under the direction of Christopher Clark and Claudia Matthes)

In the wake of the elections of both Barack Obama and Donald Trump, the growing influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the COVID-19 pandemic, racial constructs and systems of oppression have been subject to renewed scrutiny and investigation, particularly in the US. In addition to making clear the effects of structural racism—for example, as it impacts communities of color in the forms of voter suppression (Hajnal, et al. 2017; Darrah-Okike, et al. 2021; Klain et al. 2020), policing and criminal justice (Lerman & Weaver 2014; Baumgartner, et al. 2015), and political efficacy and engagement (Phoenix 2019; Bowen & Clark 2014)—some strands also interrogate the causal mechanisms of these phenomena.

While theories of whiteness and white politics are gaining traction in the US, such studies are conspicuously absent in the context of European politics. Resulting from recent waves of migration to the continent and consequent rises in white nationalism and populism across Europe, scholars are devoting more attention to the experiences of immigrants, refugees, and ethnoracial minorities in European states (Givens & Maxwell 2012; Bloemraad & Schönwälder 2013; Loftsdottir, Smith, & Hipfl 2018; Barrett 2014; Modood 1997.) Though white racial solidarity often appears as an implicit driver of intercultural conflict in these occurrences, very little to no work has been devoted to empirically describing the impact of racial identity on European politics.

As such, I contribute to research on right-wing populism and attitudes toward migrants in Europe by theorizing whiteness as a salient, quantifiable factor in European politics. Specifically, I ask the following question: To what extent can indicators of (white) racial identity and solidarity explain variation in individuals' political views, such as their attitudes toward immigrants or ethnoracial minorities?

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, after France took the FIFA World Cup title, South African comedian Trevor Noah jokingly referenced the racial diversity of the team, proclaiming: “Africa won the World Cup! Africa won the World Cup!” to an audience of cheering and chuckling spectators.¹ One viewer, however, was not so taken with Noah’s comments.

The next day, Gerard Araud, French Ambassador to the United States, addressed a letter to Noah, responding with umbrage:

Sir... I heard your words about “an African victory”, nothing could be less true... Unlike in the United States of America, France does not refer to its citizens based on their race, religion, or origin... By calling them an African team, it seems you are denying their Frenchness...Finally, the identity of the French national team should not be defined by people that are not part of it.²

Implicit in Araud’s address is the sentiment that race is different in France; referring to, separating, or discriminating against individuals on the basis of their race is a distinctly American shortcoming. This position resonates with the conventional wisdom that race doesn’t matter in

¹ “France Triumphs at the World Cup & John Schattner Quits Papa John’s,” *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* (Comedy Central, July 16, 2018)

² Gerard Araud, “Letter from French Ambassador to the United States Gerard Araud to Mr. Trevor Noah,” July 18, 2018.

Europe—or at least not in the same ways as it does in the US. Yet, in Araud’s insistence on protecting the “Frenchness” of the team, he seems also to be denying their very real African heritage. What’s more, when Noah’s skit implicitly referenced the players’ Blackness (“You don’t get that tan by hanging out in the south of France”), Araud’s rebuttal avoids race altogether, expressing only anxieties that Noah’s remark “legitimizes the ideology which claims whiteness as the only definition of being French.” While Araud’s statement obtains logically, given the contemporary rise in white nationalism in France, his refusal to acknowledge the players’ race, or skin color—instead conflating an over-general African ethnicity with their phenotype—raises several key questions. Among them, if whiteness is *not* the only definition of being French, as Araud suggests, why would Noah’s recognition of the players’ Blackness and ‘African’ identities be a negation of their ‘Frenchness’? For better or worse, my attempt to answer this question requires a discussion of race.

In the wake of the elections of both Barack Obama and Donald Trump, the growing influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the COVID-19 pandemic, racial constructs and systems of oppression have been subject to renewed scrutiny and investigation, particularly in the United States (US). In addition to making clear the effects of structural racism—for example, as it impacts communities of color in the forms of voter suppression,³ policing and criminal

³ Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee, *Why Americans Don’t Join the Party: Race, Immigration, and the Failure (of Political Parties) to Engage the Electorate* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2011); Jennifer Darrah-Okike, Nathalie Rita, and John R. Logan, “The Suppressive Impacts of Voter Identification Requirements,” *Sociological Perspectives* 64, no. 4 (August 2021): 536–62; Hannah Klain et al., “Waiting to Vote: Racial Disparities in Election Day Experiences” (Brennan Center for Justice, June 3, 2020).

justice,⁴ and political efficacy and engagement⁵—some strands also interrogate the causal mechanisms of race-based discriminations. One contribution to this latter literature comes in the form of Ashley Jardina’s *White Identity Politics* (2019), in which the author provides evidence for white identity and racial solidarity as drivers of political occurrences, such as the election of Donald Trump.

While theories of whiteness and white politics are gaining traction in the US, such studies are conspicuously absent in the context of European politics. Resulting from recent waves of migration to the continent and consequent rises in white nationalism and populism across Europe, scholars are devoting more attention to the experiences of immigrants, refugees, and ethnoracial minorities in European states.⁶ Though white racial solidarity often appears as an implicit driver of intercultural conflict in these occurrences, very little to no work has been devoted to empirically describing the impact of racial identity on European politics.

However, even as the European Union (EU) works to disseminate “European” values of diversity, “non-discrimination, [and] tolerance,” the lack of research and data to describe and validate the racialized identities and existences of individuals living within its borders is a

⁴ Amy E. Lerman and Vesla M. Weaver, *Arresting Citizenship: The Democratic Consequences of American Crime Control*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014); Frank R. Baumgartner, Amanda J. Grigg, and Alisa Mastro, “#BlackLivesDon’tMatter: Race-of-Victim Effects in US Executions, 1976–2013,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 209–21.

⁵ Davin L. Phoenix, *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 2019); Daniel C. Bowen and Christopher J. Clark, “Revisiting Descriptive Representation in Congress: Assessing the Effect of Race on the Constituent–Legislator Relationship,” *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (September 2014): 695–707.

⁶ Terri E. Givens and Rahsaan Maxwell, eds., *Immigrant Politics: Race and Representation in Western Europe* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012); Irene Bloemraad and Karen Schönwälder, “Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Representation in Europe: Conceptual Challenges and Theoretical Approaches,” *West European Politics* 36, no. 3 (May 2013): 564–79; Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner, eds., *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity, and Community*, Postcolonial Encounters (London ; New York: Zed Books : Distributed by St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

shortcoming and a liability.⁷ For example, how can the EU Social Fund evaluate progress toward its investment priorities of the “[i]ntegration of marginalised communities” and “[c]ombating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation,” without data that explicitly acknowledge individuals’ racial identity?⁸ Despite the explicit acknowledgment in the Fund’s policy that individuals *do* discriminate based on race, the absence of variables considering race in measurement tools like the Eurobarometer or European Social Survey suggests a willful ignorance and bad faith on the part of the EU.

As Ambassador Araud argues, history is overflowing with examples of the harm caused by giving value to racial constructs, whether in the history of German National Socialism or the enslavement of and persistent violence against Black and Brown individuals in the US. However, the present is likewise replete with evidence that indicates individuals *do* see, assign value to, and discriminate between racialized identities. Moreover, I argue that, just as ‘African’ and Black identities are conflated, so too are white and ‘French,’ ‘European,’ and ‘American’ identities, for example. ‘Color-blindness’ is not the answer to a problem that is rooted in the narratives and privileges embedded in an identity that too often goes unquestioned and ‘unseen:’ that is, whiteness.

Building on Jardina’s work on white identity in the US, I undertake a comparative and quantitative approach to exploring the lacuna of research on race and whiteness in Europe. Specifically addressing claims that white identity is neither an aspect of national identity nor a driver of political opinion and attitudes, I ask the following question:

⁷ European Union, “Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,” *Official Journal of the European Union* 55 (October 26, 2012), Articles 2-3.

⁸ European Parliament, “Thematic Objective 9: Social Inclusion” (European Parliament, January 27, 2014).

- To what extent can indicators of (white) racial identity and solidarity explain variation in individuals' political views, such as their attitudes toward immigrants or ethnoracial minorities?

My inquiry into this topic will take the following structure: I begin with a review of literature on race and white identity in American politics, evidence of the impact of race on European politics in right-wing and identity-based movements, and obstacles to operationalizing indicators of race in European politics. Next, I theorize why racial identities are salient political factors in European politics by engaging historical, sociological, and philosophical accounts, and present my hypotheses. Then, I identify my cases and describe my methodology and data from the 2013 National and Civic Identities Panel of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). I then operationalize and analyze my indicators of white racial identity and solidarity and attitudes toward immigrants and racial minorities, and I conclude with a discussion of the results and avenues for future research.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Throughout the course of this inquiry, I engage with scholarship and present data that argue race matters when discussing politics—from macro-level electoral institutions to the specific emotions cued in politicians’ appeals. While there is a growing body of research to provide support for the salience of race as a political factor in the US, cultural differences regarding the categorization of identities and the collection of related data sometimes obscure these trends. Despite the absence of extensive, race-based demographic data, qualitative accounts of trends such as the growth of right-wing populist, white nationalist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic movements in Europe suggest that racial discrimination is not a uniquely American problem.

In an effort to clarify the relationship between race and politics in US and European contexts, this review of literature is divided into three sections. First, I consider literature on race and politics in the US, providing concrete examples of many of the ways race informs how Americans engage in politics. Second, I review research on trends in European politics that appear to have roots in racial discrimination, such as xenophobic and white nationalist movements, highlighting parallels between racialized politics in Europe and the US. Third and finally, I use this section to identify discussions on the collection and operationalization of data on racial identities in European contexts.

2.1 Race in US politics

Whether in the way it informs individuals’ attitudes toward government subsidies or its impact on individuals’ ability to vote, race matters in US politics. In the following section, I

provide a brief overview of contemporary scholarship which makes apparent the ability of race to explain variation in individuals' experience of and participation in different areas of US politics.

While it may seem simple to state, “race matters in US politics!” the ability to do so—and provide examples answering the inevitable “how?”—is the result of a relatively recent academic movement and a much older and frequently suppressed body of research on the Black and Brown experience. Despite the obvious influence of race in determining policy in the land that would later become the United States of America, such as the legal enslavement of Africans and Indigenous Americans by European settlers,⁹ the study of race in US politics was largely neglected by academic institutions until the 1960s,¹⁰ with the notable exception of Black scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois. Taking stock of existing research and identifying problematics of race and politics at the turn of the 21st century, Hutchings and Valentino (2004) focus on the potential effects of race on electoral behavior and outcomes and policy preferences, finding extensive support for claims that race influences American politics.

2.1.1 Political Engagement & Voting

On the topic of electoral behavior and outcomes, Hutchings and Valentino find drastic differences between Black and white voters' party alignments and preferences for candidates,¹¹ a

⁹ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (S.I.: Hachette Digital, Inc., 2017); “On Crazy We Built a Nation,” *Scene on Radio*, March 30, 2017, “Made in America,” *Scene on Radio*, March 16, 2017; Nikole Hannah-Jones and New York Times Company, eds., *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, First edition (New York: One World, 2021).

¹⁰ Vincent L. Hutchings and Nicholas A. Valentino, “The Centrality of Race in American Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (May 17, 2004): 383–408; Hanes Walton, Cheryl Miller, and James McCormick, “Race and Political Science: The Dual Traditions of Race Relations Politics and African-American Politics,” ed. James Farr, *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions*, 1995, 145–74; Rogers M. Smith, “The Puzzling Place of Race in American Political Science,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37, no. 1 (January 2004): 41–45.

¹¹ Hutchings and Valentino, “The Centrality of Race in American Politics,” 385-387.

finding supported by a growing body of literature. For example, La Fleur Stephens-Dougan (2020) advances a theory of “racial distancing,” hypothesizing that the majority of white voters will support candidates that make appeals to the maintenance of existing racial hierarchies.¹² Applying this theory, Stephens-Dougan finds evidence of an extensive calculus on the part of voters and candidates as they use race as heuristics for ideological placement and policy preferences and reward and sanction politicians for making explicit and coded racist appeals.¹³

Other work on the interplay between political messaging and race by Davin L. Phoenix (2019) likewise shows differences in white and Black voters’ responses to emotional appeals. Throughout the work, Phoenix provides an extensive body of evidence detailing the development of an “anger gap” between black and white voters, by which political elites establish and reinforce a hierarchy of political urgency that prioritizes the “grievances” of white voters over those of Black voters.¹⁴ Studying the consequences of these differences in cueing, Phoenix locates the apparent effects in resignation and dealignment from party structures among Black voters as politicians cue an anger that has been historically proscribed.¹⁵

In addition to work focusing primarily on different electoral habits of Black and white voters, Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee (2011) likewise observe increased dealignment from the US party structure among Asian-American, Latino, and Black voters. For instance, using survey data from 2006 and 2008, the authors find that “non-partisan” was the modal response among Latino

¹² LaFleur Stephens-Dougan, *Race to the Bottom: How Racial Appeals Work in American Politics*, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 10-65.

¹³ Stephens-Dougan, *Race to the Bottom*, 92-161.

¹⁴ Phoenix, *The Anger Gap*, 245-258.

¹⁵ Phoenix, *The Anger Gap*, 248-252.

and Asian-American respondents when prompted to provide their party affiliation, comprising 38% and 36% of each group, respectively.¹⁶ Building on this finding, the authors provide additional evidence for the different political socialization and (mis)incorporation of different racial groupings in the US, and further predict consequences for the possibility of multiracial political alliances in a system that prioritizes the preferences of white voters.¹⁷

Building on more theoretical discussions of voter alignment, preferences, and cueing, researchers in the US have also observed concrete differences in more tangible aspects of American politics, such as the effects of increased representation of communities of color in different levels of government, the effects of an individual's racial identity on their ability to vote, and how engagement with government institutions varies depending on an individual's racial identity. Within this former category of race and representation in US politics, Daniel Bowen and Christopher Clark (2014) find evidence that descriptive representation among members of Congress—that is, having a representative with the same racial or ethnic identity—strongly improves the relationship between Black and Latino constituents' and their representatives.¹⁸ Similarly, Brink Kerr, et al. (2013) find that descriptive representation of Black and Latino constituents on city councils and mayor's offices often results in increased diversity vis-à-vis the employment of Black and Latino individuals in public government roles, such as departments of parks and recreation or public welfare.¹⁹ Furthermore, at the state level of representation, Rocha

¹⁶ Hajnal and Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party*, 199, table 5.4.

¹⁷ Hajnal and Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party*, 357.

¹⁸ Bowen and Clark, "Revisiting Descriptive Representation in Congress," 701-702.

¹⁹ Brinck Kerr et al., "When Does Politics Matter? A Reexamination of the Determinants of African-American and Latino Municipal Employment Patterns," *Urban Affairs Review* 49, no. 6 (November 2013): 896, 899.

et al. (2010) find that the increasing number of Black and Latino representatives can drive voter turnout among these same groups from 10-40%.²⁰In essence, these studies show that recognizing race via descriptive representation is critical for encouraging coethnic political participation within a diverse, multicultural society.

Researchers have also found that race plays an important role in the more mechanical processes of democratic politics, such as voting. An investigation by Jennifer Darrah-Okike, et al. (2020) indicates that voter ID laws, which require voters to identify themselves through the presentation of varying forms of identification, have a particularly strong suppressive impact on voter turnout among Latino voters,²¹ who comprise about 14.3% of the US electorate.²² Similarly, a report published by the Brennan Center for Justice (2020) observed disparities between racial groups regarding the conditions of their voting experience. For instance, Latino and Black voters waited 46% and 45% longer on average than white voters.²³ Additionally, in the process of identifying racial disparities, the report also observed a decline in electoral resources such as voting machines and poll workers in counties where average income had decreased since the previous election cycle, increasing the burden of voting on individuals with fewer resources.²⁴

²⁰ Rene R. Rocha et al., “Race and Turnout: Does Descriptive Representation in State Legislatures Increase Minority Voting?,” *Political Research Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (December 2010): 890–907.

²¹ Darrah-Okike, Rita, and Logan, “The Suppressive Impacts of Voter Identification Requirements,” 550.

²² Anusha Natarajan and Carolyne Im, “Key Facts about Hispanic Eligible Voters in 2022” (Pew Research Center, October 12, 2022).

²³ Klain et al., “Waiting to Vote: Racial Disparities in Election Day Experiences,” 4.

²⁴ Klain et al., “Waiting to Vote: Racial Disparities in Election Day Experiences,” 10.

2.1.2 Policing & Criminal Justice

Likewise, individuals' experiences with law enforcement are informed by racial identity and can have consequences that inform individuals' later (dis)engagement with political institutions. Data from the Stanford Open Policing Project (2023) find that Black drivers are pulled over at higher rates than white drivers, and that Black and Latino drivers are searched at nearly twice the rate of white drivers.²⁵ However, in constituencies where the majority of representatives on a city council are Black, traffic stops—which result in approximately 10% of police killings annually²⁶— and search rates decrease for individuals of all races, according to research by Leah Christiani et al. (2021).²⁷ Frank Baumgartner et al. (2015), provide a much more disturbing snapshot of the unequal valuation of lives by the legal system in the US. The authors find that among individuals executed for homicide, the ratio of white inmates who killed Black individuals is less than 1, while the ratio of Black inmates who killed white individuals is typically greater than 3.²⁸

It is little wonder then, that researchers find persistent effects of interactions with law enforcement on other forms of political participation. Amy Lerman and Vesla Weaver (2014) conducted interviews and observed that individuals who have had encounters with the carceral system (ranging from traffic stops to imprisonment) were less likely to vote or take action to receive food stamps or welfare benefits or engage in other political acts that might result in an

²⁵ Emma Pierson et al., “A Large-Scale Analysis of Racial Disparities in Police Stops across the United States,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 4, no. 7 (May 4, 2020): 736–45.

²⁶ Samuel Sinyangwe, “Mapping Police Violence,” February 28, 2023.

²⁷ Leah Christiani et al., “Better for Everyone: Black Descriptive Representation and Police Traffic Stops,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 10, no. 5 (October 20, 2022): 6.

²⁸ Baumgartner, Grigg, and Mastro, “#BlackLivesDon'tMatter,” 216.

encounter with government apparatuses.²⁹ Given the aforementioned racial disparities in rates of encounter with law enforcement, these observations would likewise suggest resultant, unequal rates of participation in political life among racial identity groups.

2.1.3 Summary

A brief review of the expansive literatures on race and politics in the US, these studies show unequivocally that race is an integral piece of American politics. Whether in the decisions voters make about candidates and policy, or even the decision to engage in or avoid politics, race is a key factor in explaining how and why American individuals act politically the way they do.

2.2 Race, ethnicity, & cultural identity in Europe

Of course, it could be simple for critics to argue that the above phenomena are unique to America, and that such a focus on race is, in fact, the cause of the injustices scholars are documenting. Just as America's retention of capital punishment and its ailing welfare system might be held up as artifacts of a peculiar democratic experiment, so too might my review of scholars' extensive study of race be the symptom of a pathologically race-centric society. Indeed, accounts of the US' racial "dilemma"³⁰ and "obsession"³¹ are omnipresent throughout American history.

However, positioning the US as the sole originator and perpetrator of racialized identities and discrimination would be preemptive, to say the least. In this subsection, I review literature on

²⁹Lerman and Weaver, *Arresting Citizenship*, 199-216.

³⁰Gunnar Myrdal and Sissela Bok, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Black and African-American Studies (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996).

³¹Dirk Philipsen, "Investment, Obsession, and Denial: The Ideology of Race in the American Mind," *The Journal of Negro Education* 72, no. 2 (2003): 193.

racial and ethnic identities in European politics, providing evidence that Europe is not so color-blind as critics might claim. Furthermore, I consider literature on the collection of demographic data in Europe. Specifically, I focus on the lacuna of data on racial identities and enables a reticence to adequately research disparities between ethnic and racial groups within Europe.

2.2.1 Historical & Philosophical Perspectives

Although quantitative accounts of race in European politics are difficult to find, there is a long tradition of qualitative and theoretical inquiry into the subject. In particular, Black sociologists and thinkers have provided compelling evidence that racial categories and discrimination have been integral to European development. Providing an historical account, American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois (1947) considers the political economy of global white supremacy, especially as it became central to projects of imperialism. Beginning with a review of the intense nationalism of European nations in the nineteenth century, Du Bois describes the emergence of “the theory that a minority of the people of Europe are by birth and natural gift the rulers of mankind; rulers of their own suppressed labor classes and, without doubt, heaven sent rulers of yellow, brown, and black people.”³² Yet even as the doctrine of white supremacy “justified” the actions of European nations,³³ Du Bois notes the near-unanimous refusal of European nations to be held accountable for its consequences: “They forgot or never were told just how white superiority wielded its power or accomplished this dominion.”³⁴ In essence, despite the

³² W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History* (New York, NY: Viking, 1947), 12.

³³ Tukufu Zuberi, *Thicker than Blood: How Racial Statistics Lie* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*.

³⁴ Du Bois, *The World and Africa*, 17.

centrality of white supremacist notions of the “white man’s burden” or “*mission civilisatrice*” to European imperialism,³⁵ contemporary explanations of topics such as global inequality all too frequently omit their racist causes.

A more contemporary voice, Cameroonian political theorist Achille Mbembe (2017) observes a similar camouflaging of racial identity and discrimination in present-day Europe. Mbembe preempts claims of a nonracial Europe, arguing that the history of race as a social construction makes it adaptable, allowing states to privilege or preserve different cultures or religions and achieve the same end as race/phenotypic discrimination. Detailing the emergence of this “racism without races,”³⁶ Mbembe’s argument harmonizes with political science scholars who posit that “new” forms of racism substitute heuristics of cultural difference, such as work ethic, for phenotype while maintaining the outcomes of prejudice based on skin color.³⁷

2.2.2 Trends in Contemporary Europe

Similarly, Milada Vachudova (2020), investigating populism in eastern Europe, notes the explicit “racialization” of Muslim refugees in the 2015 migration surge, contrasting this with the multitudes of regional, white migrant workers who enter eastern European states but are not targeted by populist elites. Considering the rise of ethnopopulist movements in eastern Europe,

³⁵ Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *Out of Ashes: A New History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 19-46.

³⁶ Achille Mbembe and Laurent Dubois, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 7.

³⁷ Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears, “Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism versus Racial Threats to the Good Life.,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40, no. 3 (March 1981): 414–31; Stanley Feldman and Leonie Huddy, “Racial Resentment and White Opposition to Race-Conscious Programs: Principles or Prejudice?,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 1 (January 2005): 168–83; Christopher D. DeSante, “Working Twice as Hard to Get Half as Far: Race, Work Ethic, and America’s Deserving Poor: *Deservingness in Black and White*,” *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 2 (April 2013): 342–56.

Vachudova observes that ethnopopulism allows elites “greater flexibility” than ethnonationalism in by combining appeals to “the defense of “the people” with the defense of an ethnicity, culture, nation, religion and/or race,” supporting Mbembe’s claims of racialized discrimination centering religion or culture.³⁸ Throughout the course of her argument, Vachudova attempts to explain why ethnopopulist elites have been so successful in “the most homogenous states in the EU east” as well as some of the “most prosperous.”³⁹ Explaining the former phenomenon, Vachudova notes the explicit racialization of Muslim refugees in the 2015 migration surge, contrasting this with the “tens of thousands of workers from Ukraine and other eastern neighbor[ing] states, suggesting that the difference may be rooted in visible markers of difference, rather than less apparent behavioral or cultural markers.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, work by scholars Gökçe Yurdakul and Anna C. Korteweg (2021) provides evidence that race undergirds characterizations of native German citizens and immigrants from outside of Europe. Analyzing political and media responses to the widespread sexual assault during the 2015 Silvesternacht celebrations in Cologne, the authors observe that although 40% of the perpetrators were identified as Syrian and Iraqi, politicians claimed that this “imported violence” of sexual assault was caused by supposedly North African immigrants, who comprised only about 20% of the group of 628.⁴¹ Arguing that this recasting of identity was an effort to associate foreigners and Black individuals with crime and sexual violence, the authors observed that this

³⁸ Milada Anna Vachudova, “Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe,” *East European Politics* 36, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 318–40, 318.

³⁹ Vachudova, “Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe,” 319.

⁴⁰ Vachudova, “Ethnopopulism and Democratic Backsliding in Central Europe” 320.

⁴¹ Gökçe Yurdakul and Anna C. Korteweg, “Boundary Regimes and the Gendered Racialized Production of Muslim Masculinities: Cases from Canada and Germany,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 9.

political trend was accompanied by racialized media campaigns. In the weeks following the event, several high-profile news outlets published pieces on the event with cover images of white women's bodies in various configurations of proximity and vulnerability to black hands and arms.⁴² Together, these political and media suggest a concerted effort at uniting a white, German “we” against a Black, foreign— and violent—“them,” which is supported by a growing body of work on the racialization of immigrants in Germany, such as Arab communities and family groupings⁴³ and Turkish families and mothers.⁴⁴

Researching prejudice and tolerance in the Netherlands, Paul Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn (2007) find similar “ethnic hierarch[ies]” of prejudice. Testing respondents’ association negative attributions (e.g., selfishness, inferiority, violence) with Turks, Moroccans, refugees, and Surinamese as groups, the authors found 6 of the 8 traits in the inventory were consistently applied to individuals in all groups.⁴⁵ In other words, respondents who chose to apply negative labels to members of these groups did so indiscriminately across the groups, suggesting that the motive for prejudice is not rooted in these specific ethnic (with the exception of “refugees”) identities. This indiscriminate prejudice against these ethnic groups was likewise reflected in measures of social difference. Comparing respondents’ reported social distance from Turks, Moroccans, refugees, Surinamese, Spaniards, and Germans, the authors found tiers of distance, with Moroccans, Turks, and refugees forming the lowest tier, followed by Surinamese, with

⁴² Yurdakul and Korteweg, “Boundary Regimes,” 10.

⁴³ Özgür Özvatan, Bastian Neuhauser, and Gökçe Yurdakul, “The ‘Arab Clans’ Discourse: Narrating Racialization, Kinship, and Crime in the German Media,” *Social Sciences* 12, no. 2 (February 15, 2023): 104.

⁴⁴ Gökçe Yurdakul and Tunay Altay, “Overcoming Stigma: The Boundary Work of Privileged Mothers of Turkish Background in Berlin’s Private Schools,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, December 13, 2022, 1–22.

⁴⁵ Paul M. Sniderman and A. Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 52.

Spaniards as the least distant group.⁴⁶ While the authors attribute the placement of Germans in the most distant tier, due to animus stemming from German occupation during World War II, the ranking of Surinamese in the middle tier—below Spaniards—despite shared historical and linguistic heritage again suggests the presence of a different driver of distance, such as race.

In each of these qualitative accounts, researchers have provided evidence that, at the very least, Europeans *do* see color, or race. As with the US, European states played a part in the development of racial categories and discrimination during periods of colonization in order to justify the exploitation of other lands and people. Despite claims to the contrary, individuals in European states do see and attribute value to markers of visible difference, such as skin color or headscarves.⁴⁷ Moreover, these markers of difference are leveraged actively by politicians to make appeals to white European constituents.

2.3 Identity and data in European politics

Readers will likely have noticed the qualitative turn of the previous section relative to the US literature. In large part, this discrepancy is due to a large difference in US and European data, namely: Europe, in large part, does not collect data on race. The following section provides a brief review of the factors motivating this trend, as well as some of the difficulties this decision causes for both researchers and communities of color in Europe.

Before beginning, it is helpful to clarify my previous statement on data collection and race in Europe. The term “race” in the US, according to the Census Bureau, denotes a socially

⁴⁶ Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*, 59.

⁴⁷ John Richard Bowen, *Why the French Don't like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*, 1. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008).

constructed category, typically conflated with skin color and natural origin, rather than biological, anthropological, or genetically defined categories.⁴⁸ While this has not always been the case, race in the contemporary US, for the purposes of this investigation, is a marker of difference, typically skin color, but also extending to other cultural markers, such as religious dress or accent. For instance, individuals may identify as white, Black, mixed or Mestiz@, or Indigenous. At the same time, individuals may assign race to others, such as the previously referenced racialization of Afro-Germans, migrants, or Muslims. However, in European contexts, the term retains much of its baggage from the 19th and 20th centuries, connoting histories of pseudoscience, eugenics, and genocide. As such, data on race are exceedingly rare.

Patrick Simon (2017) provides an engaging summary of the state of racialized data in European states. Observing that Europe lags behind most continents in the collection of racial and ethnic data, Simon explains, “The fear of reification of fake identities, grounded in a history of domination and scientific and colonial racism, is still prevailing against all other consideration on the positive use of ethno-racial statistics.”⁴⁹ In essence, European societies, bearing significant responsibility for the development of racial constructs, feel guilty to the point that they refuse to acknowledge race at all, presumably to avoid further discrimination. However, even as individuals, organizations, and nations reject biological racism and racial discrimination in various forms, the absence of data on social concepts of race, such as skin color, hamper advocacy efforts that might seek to validate unequal experience with data. Instead, many states in Europe, and the EU, collect data on ethnicity, which typically refers to national or subnational groups. However, in the case of

⁴⁸ US Census Bureau. “About the Topic of Race.” United States Census Bureau, March 1, 2022.

⁴⁹ Patrick Simon, “The Failure of the Importation of Ethno-Racial Statistics in Europe: Debates and Controversies,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 13 (October 21, 2017): 2327.

heterogenous states, or those with strong civic identities, such as South Africa or France (for example), these indicators can obscure racial difference in their overly general conflation of phenotype with nationality.

A second intriguing point raised by Simon rests on the fact that racial constructs are not always translatable. In contrast to the UK, where the population has been less homogenous for longer than the continental states, Simon argues that equivalent “ethnoracial cultural frames cannot be found in continental Europe.”⁵⁰ This assertion raises many questions for future research, particularly as to the mechanics of how continental Europeans categorize visible difference (i.e., racial phenotypes), and to what degree the presence or absence of ethnoracial frames mediates or enables discrimination. Observing a similar trend, Irene Bloemraad and Karen Schönwälder (2013) distinguish between the terms used to describe racial and ethnic minority groups in Europe, listing “‘immigrants’, ‘ethnic minorities’ and people of ‘non-Western’ origin” as three potential starting points, each with its own theoretical and methodological baggage.⁵¹ Primarily, the authors position ‘non-Western’ as the category most useful for measuring racial discrimination, with the caveat that “this becomes a challenge not only conceptually, but also empirically when researchers must rely on statistical data collected by government or publicly funded agencies, each with their unique categorisations,” as many scholars must.⁵² Here, particularly, the use of a negation to define racial

⁵⁰ Simon, “The Failure of the Importation of Ethno-Racial Statistics in Europe,” 2329.

⁵¹ Bloemraad and Schönwälder, “Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Representation in Europe,” 565.

⁵² Bloemraad and Schönwälder, “Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Representation in Europe,” 566.

groups within primarily white states is telling, as many critics argue the failure (or refusal) to name race or whiteness is instrumental in preserving systems of white supremacy.⁵³

Turning toward more academic perspectives, Irene Bloemraad and Karen Schönwälder (2013) provide an overview of the European literature on minority status, race, and descriptive representation (i.e. the election of politicians who share the identities of those electing them). Motivating their research with statistics on disparities in the descriptive representation, the authors provide the following figures:

France did not have any Maghrebians among the elected members of its National Assembly in 2007 even though many of the original North African migrants came as French nationals...By 2011, about 3 per cent of the members of the German national parliament had a migration background, a low proportion compared to the estimated 20 per cent of the population with migrant origins.⁵⁴

While these statistics are unfortunately standard, they are notable in their uncertainty. In contrast to US studies of descriptive representation, where minute data can be leveraged to identify real-world effects of political inclusion and exclusion of members of different racial groups, Bloemraad and Schönwälder have to settle for using vague quantifiers such as “many” and “estimated” percentages just to point out that a problem exists. Moreover, as in the case of Germany, the most reliable indicator of racial difference—migration background—becomes unwieldy as it includes migration within the European continent, and may not capture individuals who are second or third-

⁵³ Mbembe and Dubois, *Critique of Black Reason*; Du Bois, *The World and Africa*; Hannah-Jones and New York Times Company, *The 1619 Project*; Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*.

⁵⁴ Bloemraad and Schönwälder, “Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Representation in Europe,” 564-65

generation immigrants. Even in their main claim, “clearly, significant barriers prevent or retard the full political incorporation of immigrants,” the authors likewise face significant barriers in identifying and describing the challenges to political incorporation.⁵⁵

Pivoting to the lived impacts of this lack of data on race in Europe, scholars Terri Givens and Rahsaan Maxwell observe that European avoidance of racial categories hampers the political participation of racialized groups. Tracing European reluctance to acknowledge the impact of socially constructed racial categories on the experiences of migrants to the Holocaust, the authors describe a double standard by which “these factors created a tricky situation in which nonwhite ethnic minorities in many European countries could not use race as a basis for political mobilization despite facing racial discrimination.”⁵⁶ Examples of these difficulties include the inability to implement party quotas, or even the ability to accurately estimate how widely one’s group is represented in the domestic population. On the reverse, the authors also note the importance of data in securing real changes for equity, such as desegregating schools, or enacting hiring practices that encourage greater workplace diversity.⁵⁷ Essentially, by failing to collect data that give voice to the lived experiences of racial and ethnic groups—despite politicians’ apparent comfort with using race to curry favor among the electorate—states maintain a highly unequal status quo while preempting attempts to point out systemic inequities.

Despite the presumably positive intent of de-racialization and hesitance to adopt racial frameworks for data collection, these practices are still predicated on a refusal to acknowledge race, and further discredit the realities of racial minorities as seeking to reify identities that were

⁵⁵ Bloemraad and Schönwälder, “Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Representation in Europe,” 564-65.

⁵⁶ Givens and Maxwell, *Immigrant Politics*, 4.

⁵⁷ Givens and Maxwell, *Immigrant Politics*, 17-18.

in fact developed in Europe. Just as Mbembe predicts, European states—benevolently or not—deny Black and Brown individuals figurative “a space in which to stand” through the refusal to name and quantify their experiences. In a very real way, Black lives “do not count” in these data, which are instrumental in determining the allocation of resources. On the other side, the privileging of identities, such as whiteness, is likewise obscured.

3. THEORIZING WHITE POLITICAL IDENTITY

Although inquiries into the impact of race on European and US politics are often distinct in their methodologies, similar trends are apparent in each. In both the US and Europe, the study of race in politics is a relatively recent phenomenon, and there is a marked reticence on the part of governments and academic institutions to acknowledge the real political impacts of this construct. Moreover, the lion's share of research frames race by foregrounding the inequalities experienced by racialized communities and individuals in the US, while the privileges of deracialized—that is, white—individuals are often left in the background; they are as the unseen “reference category” in the regression table. As a result, scholars, lawmakers, and laypeople may think of race as something held only by people of color, and attribute disparities to race rather than identifying the causal mechanism of white supremacy.⁵⁸

In the following section, I turn to the primary focus of this inquiry, namely the role of white political identity in sustaining inequities in US and European politics. Beginning with a more descriptive approach, I gather research from scholars in both regions that offers insight into the interplay between whiteness, national identity, and politics in both regions. Building on this foundation, I theorize how white political identity can be measured and operationalized in European contexts.

⁵⁸ Zuberi, *Thicker than Blood*, 95-97.

3.1 White political identity in Europe and the US

Much like the study of race in politics, research on white identity in politics only began to gain traction in the 1990s, sparking interest and upset in equal measure.⁵⁹ The concept of whiteness as a group identity has long escaped critical inquiry, and continues to evade public understanding. Anecdotally, Amanda Lewis (2004) provides the following example of a student's confusion when confronted with her own racialized identity:

Sally had just stated that she was glad she had taken my Race and Ethnic Relations course because she had learned a great deal about “minority groups.” When I asked her what she had learned about her own group she replied, “What group?”⁶⁰

In this instance, a white student expresses confusion at the assertion that she is a member of a group with a shared racial identity, that is, whiteness. Rather, her response indicates that she conceptualizes race as something attributed to people of color, and whiteness fails even to register as a race or ethnicity.

That this confusion might be shared by a great many white individuals is no accident. Rather, both the development and concealment of whiteness as a racial identity evolved simultaneously with racial categories such as Blackness. W.E.B. Du Bois details this development in an analysis of the economic factors that enabled the US' enslavement of Black individuals. Essentially, Du Bois argues race was instrumentalized by wealthy whites to divide Black and immigrant labor classes, the impact of this quote is apparent. In an effort to maintain the support of poor European immigrants, the upper class racialized slavery to insulate these immigrants from

⁵⁹ Amanda E. Lewis, “‘What Group?’ Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of ‘Color-Blindness,’” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 4 (December 2004), 624.

⁶⁰ Lewis, “What Group,” 623.

the possibility of competition with the cheap labor of freed Black workers.⁶¹ In pivoting from a single discourse of abolition to twin discussions of Black and white slavery, the political class created a coalition of white solidarity between affluent and landed Americans—who were almost exclusively of European descent—and European immigrants, such as the Irish, who gradually “became white” as this economic cleavage became established and they assimilated culturally.⁶²

Today, we see the effects of this racialization in the conflation of whiteness with American identity. Because citizenship and suffrage in the US were initially granted to landed males, who were most often—though not always⁶³—white, the gradual expansion of suffrage to other groups such as poor European immigrants, white women, Black men, and Black women, effectively conflated the American dream with the process of becoming like (or at least gaining the rights of) a white man.⁶⁴ However, as whiteness became the reference category for so many privileges, the structural inability of marginalized and racialized groups to achieve “whiteness” as it were, resulted in the production of a cultural “discourse that demonizes people of color for being victimized..., hiding the privileges of whiteness by attributing them to family values, fatherhood, and foresight—rather than to favoritism.”⁶⁵ In other words, rather than admitting that policies such as redlining, for example, negatively impacted communities of color while privileging white homebuyers, white politicians, researchers, and laypeople, developed and spread false narratives

⁶¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 20-34.

⁶² Zuberi, *Thicker than Blood*, 115; Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), 120; Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning*, 170, 358.

⁶³ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 7-10.

⁶⁴ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 20.

⁶⁵ George Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the ‘White’ Problem in American Studies,” *American Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (September 1995), 379.

of the inferiority of racialized groups. Essentially, white racial solidarity took the form of animus toward people of color, reinforcing racial constructs and discrimination.

In contemporary politics, this white identity is an immense power resource. Just as German politicians and media responded to the Silvesternacht attacks in Köln with images that reinforced a framing of sexual violence as a conflict between white Germans and Black foreigners, theorists observe appeals to whiteness across a broad spectrum of political issues. For example, Sara Smith et al. analyze the discursive significance of family separations resulting from Donald Trump's "zero tolerance" policy, which promoted the separation of migrant children from their families while applying for asylum. Drawing from diverse perspectives on family and kinship, the authors find evidence that "anti-migrant narratives service a white nation-state by projecting fear toward racialized others."⁶⁶ This phrasing is particularly powerful in its acknowledgment of whiteness and its association with power, while also implying the projection or construction of race as a signifier applied to individual migrants. Situating "zero tolerance" in a framework of "racial violence as policy" the authors consider how previous practices of separating families throughout American history produced ties of "fictive kinship [to] the white nation-state," by which the conflation of Americanness and whiteness is made possible.⁶⁷

Outside the US, researchers observe a similar conflation of white and national identities. Examining the development of "Nordic" whiteness and racial archetypes, Catrin Lundström and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum recount a process of racialization, through which "Nordic" came to mean "white." Indeed, the claiming of whiteness in the Nordic states, e.g., Sweden, actually arose from

⁶⁶ Sara Smith et al., "Breaking Families: Whiteness, State Violence, and the Alienable Rights of Kin," *Political Geography* 72 (June 2019), 144.

⁶⁷ Smith et al., "Breaking Families," 145.

a heavily politicized eugenics campaign, by which the Swedish state produced pseudoscientific propaganda to prove its whiteness and superiority in the early 20th century.⁶⁸ Notably, the parties in these states that most vocally oppose immigration by non-European nationals take the stance of defenders of the nation, as in the case of the “Sweden Democrats,” “Danish People’s Party,” and the “Finns Party.”⁶⁹

Especially in France, where secular civic identity, or *laïcité*, is held as the defining feature of Frenchness, the subtle conflation of whiteness and national identity is a source of immense privilege. Interviewing a young Muslim woman living in France, John Bowen (2008) observes a compelling case of this conflation:

I put on a scarf this morning, because I had not done my hair. A teacher said ‘Take it off!’ and I said ‘Why?’ Others in the classroom, not to be racist about it, they have their crosses, so you see they are Christians⁷⁰.

The young woman’s account emphasizes the way European, white identities are treated as the norm and deracialized, while symbols of Islamic faith are racialized and prohibited for their incompatibility with French ideals of nationhood. Even linguistically, this paradox remains, argues sociologist Éric Fassin, “‘whiteness’ itself is hardly ever named in French; actually, the word itself is only beginning to be used: *négritude* is as common and old as *blanchité* is rare and new.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Catrin Lundström and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, “Nordic Whiteness: An Introduction,” *Scandinavian Studies* 89, no. 2 (July 1, 2017), 153.

⁶⁹ Lundström and Teitelbaum, “Nordic Whiteness,” 154.

⁷⁰ Bowen, *Why the French don’t like Headscarves*, 225.

⁷¹ Éric Fassin, “(Sexual) Whiteness and National Identity: Race, Class and Sexuality in Colour-Blind France,” in *Theories of Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Karim Murji and John Solomos, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 237.

In short, building on the theoretical foundations of Black scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois, contemporary researchers provide a growing body of evidence that white racial identity exists. Furthermore, inquiries into the politics of this identity show that it is deeply rooted in the political economy of the US and European states, as well as concepts of national identity.

3.2 Operationalizing white political identity

So far, we have observed evidence that race is a salient factor in both US and European politics. Despite a dearth of data on racialized groups in European states, qualitative inquiries suggest that, just as the development of racial categories occurred in both the US and European states during periods of colonization and imperialism, politicians continue to leverage racial appeals to mobilize white coethnics against immigrants and people of color. Meanwhile, scholars find that deracialized white identity is both instrumental in maintaining systemic inequities and often synonymous with national identity. In this section, I provide insight into how I connect and operationalize indicators of white identity and its effects in European politics.

My theorization of white political identity in Europe builds on the work of Ashley Jardina (2019) on white political identity in the US. Challenging common tropes of the aggrieved white male Trump voter, Jardina adds nuance to discussions of racialized politics in the US. In particular, Jardina provides evidence that, rather than poor, uneducated, racially resentful white men, Trump benefitted from the support of a more diverse coalition of white voters who wish to preserve the racial hierarchies of the US.⁷² This theorization marks a departure from conventional wisdom in that it does not theorize voting for Trump (for example) as an act of outright racial animus, but as

⁷² Jardina, Ashley. *White Identity Politics*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 2019, 22.

one of coethnic solidarity, and more subtle manifestations of white supremacy.⁷³ Utilizing individuals' responses to items such as, "How important is being white to your identity," Jardina shows not only that white identity is a distinct driver (from say, religion, ideology, or SES) of white individual's public opinion and preferences,⁷⁴ she also provides significant evidence that white identity informs preferences for both policies and candidates that preserve the racial status quo, or the inequitable allocation of privilege and resources to white individuals at the expense of individuals of color.⁷⁵

In essence, Jardina argues that the more central whiteness is to an individual's identity, the more likely it is to impact their political attitudes. Furthermore, we can expect those attitudes to reflect a preference for measures that preserve racial hierarchies of power and resources. Finally, while the available data may not allow for extensive quantitative interrogation of the impact of racial categories on political preferences, evidence of the conflation of national and white identities in Europe and the US suggests that national identity could serve as a viable proxy for white racial identity.

Taking cues from the earlier literature and theory, I test the assumption that individuals' attachment to ethnic identity as a component of national identity is a viable proxy for the importance they place on white identity. Because the literature suggests that there is often a conflation of white racial identity with European (and also American) national identities, and given the lack of demographic data on racial identity in Europe, I theorize that the more value individuals place on ethnicity as a component of national identity, the more value they place on whiteness,

⁷³ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 33-34.

⁷⁴ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 91-117.

⁷⁵ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*, 155, 187, 216.

similar to Jardina's operationalization of white identity as the importance individuals placed on their own whiteness. However, rather than the whiteness of the individual, my measure might more accurately describe the importance placed upon the "Europeanness" or whiteness of the nation.

Because the literature shows that whiteness is an identity that is afforded myriad privileges in American and European societies, I further theorize that this white identity will be sensitive to perceived threats against structures that enable white supremacy. In other words, individuals who place value on whiteness will want to preserve that value by defending the economic and cultural status quo (for example). As such, an individual who strongly values their whiteness might be less sensitive to structural inequalities in their country, more likely to perceive immigrants as threats, or more strongly oppose policies that redistribute wealth to racialized groups. From this theoretical foundation, I advance the following hypotheses:

- H1. The more someone sees ethnicity as an important part of national identity, the more proud they will more proud be of the outcomes of extant racial hierarchies (i.e., less sensitive to inequalities between groups);
- H2. The more someone sees ethnicity as an important part of national identity, the more they will perceive racialized groups, such as immigrants, as threats to existing cultural, economic, and security structures; and finally,
- H3. The more someone sees ethnicity as an important part of national identity, the less they will support actions that disrupt racial hierarchies, such as redistributing wealth among racialized groups.

4. METHODS & DATA

In this section, I describe the research design and operationalization of data. Broadly, this inquiry comprises a series of regression analyses across the cases of the US, France, Germany, and Sweden, using data from the 2013 *National Identity and Citizenship Panel* of the International Social Survey Program.⁷⁶ In the following subsections, I present the data and justify my selection of cases.

4.1 Methods & Indicators

Throughout the course of the following analyses, I deploy indicators of respondents' ethnicity and the importance they place on ethnicity as a part of national identity to explain variation in respondents' attitudes toward groups or trends that could pose a threat to racial hierarchies in their country. Using linear regressions taking the general form $D_x = a + bI_1 + cI_2 + dI_3 + C_1 + eC_2 + \dots$, where D represents a dependent variable, I_1 represents the value the respondent places on white ethnic heritage, I_2 and I_3 represent measures of the respondent's ethnicity, and C represents control variables, I provide evidence that white identity plays an important role in shaping respondents' attitudes across transatlantic national contexts. In the following subsections, I provide detail on the construction and operationalization of these indicators. Additional descriptive statistics are provided separately for each country in section 4.2.

⁷⁶ ISSP Research Group, "International Social Survey Programme: National Identity III - ISSP 2013 International Social Survey Programme: National Identity III - ISSP 2013" (GESIS Data Archive, 2015).

4.1.1 Dependent Variables

I conduct regression analyses on five outcome variables targeting different aspects of respondents' attitudes toward racial hierarchies in their country.

The first measure, Perception of Equality, measures the extent to which respondents take pride in the equal treatment of groups in their country. This variable is coded on a 4-point Likert scale, which I have reverse coded as 1= "Not proud at all" 4= "Very proud," in response to the following question:

- "How proud are you of [COUNTRY] in its fair and equal treatment of all groups in society?"

Drawing from observations in the literature that suggest immigrants and issues related to them are often racialized in the US and European contexts to mobilize white constituencies, the next three items tap into attitudes toward immigrants, namely: that immigrants undermine national culture (Cultural Threat), increase crime (Threat to Safety), and take jobs away from deserving citizens (Economic Threat). As implied by the variable names, I conceptualize these attitudes as threats to extant racial hierarchies that place white individuals at the top of a racialized system of "deservingness."⁷⁷ In other words, I test the extent to which respondents feel (presumably racialized) immigrants disturb these hierarchies by diverting resources and disrupting norms. Each variable is coded on a Likert scale ranging from 1-5, which I have reverse coded as 1= "Disagree Strongly" and 5= "Agree Strongly" with the following statements:

- Cultural Threat: "[COUNTRY's] culture is generally undermined by immigrants."

⁷⁷ Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, Studies in Communication, Media, and Public Opinion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

- Threat to Safety: “Immigrants increase crime rates.”
- Economic Threat: “Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in [COUNTRY].”

Finally, support for assistance measures how respondents feel about the redistribution of resources to racialized groups in their country by the government. Coded as a Likert scale ranging from 1= “Agree Strongly” to 5= “Disagree Strongly,” the variable measures individuals’ responses to the following statement:

- “Ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to preserve their customs and traditions.”

4.1.2 Independent Variables

I utilize three independent variables to test my hypotheses. First, Ethnicity Importance is a measure of the value respondents assign to ethnicity as an aspect of national identity. The variable is a Likert scale with values ranging from 1-4, which I recoded as 1= “Not important at all” and 4= “Very important,” in response to the following question:

- “Some people say that the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think [it] is... to have [COUNTRY NATIONALITY] ancestry.”

Whether or not it was intended as such, in the cases of majority-white countries like the US, France, Germany, and Sweden, where the conflation of national and white identities is well-documented, this question might be read as “How important is being *white* for being truly [Nationality]?” As

such, Ethnicity importance is my primary indicator of the value respondents assign to (presumably, their own) white identity.

As a measure of white demographic identity, I deploy two variables. First, White Parents is a constructed variable from the M_BORN and F_BORN variables in the 2013 ISSP dataset, which recorded the place of birth of respondents' parents. In an effort to capture white respondents, I coded these two variables as binary indicators, with 1 equal to being born in a European or predominantly white country, such as the US, Canada, or Australia, and 0 equal to being born in countries where the majority of the population is not white. I then created a new variable, White Parents, which ranges from 0-2, with 0 indicating that the respondent has no parents who were born in a predominantly white country, and 2 indicating that both parents were born in a predominantly white country.

Cognizant that White Parents is an imperfect measure for ascertaining a respondent's race, I also employ country-specific ethnicity variables for my cases. These variables (represented as "White Ethnicity" in the following tables) presented respondents with a variety of ethnic groups with which they might identify (e.g., "European," "Ghanian," "Basque"). For each country, I recoded the variable as a binary indicator with 0 representing non-white ethnicities and 1 representing white ethnicities.⁷⁸ With its broader descriptive power, this variable will hopefully supplement White Parents as a more general ethnic identifier.

⁷⁸ For each of the latter two variables, it should be noted that demographic questions such as these are derived from national surveys, to which the ISSP is often appended. More information is available at: https://www.gesis.org/fileadmin/upload/dienstleistung/daten/umfragedaten/issp/members/codinginfo/BV_guidelines_for_issp2013.pdf

In the absence of racial demographic data, both White Parents and White Ethnicity provide conservative estimates of white racial identity in my samples. White Parents may include individuals whose parents were born to people of color living in a predominantly white country, or white individuals born in countries that are not predominantly white, for example, which I expect to decrease the magnitude of any white racial cohort effects I might observe. Similarly, White Ethnicity only captures an individual's primary ethnic affiliation, which as the survey makers note "may also contain multi-dimensional categories, such as, for example, a combination of nationality and language."⁷⁹ As a result White Ethnicity likely underestimates the effect of white racial identity in the sample due to its omission of white-identifying (or -passing) individuals who may have opted to select a different primary ethnic affiliation, or its inclusion of people of color who may identify primarily as American, French, German, or Swedish.

4.1.3 Control Variables

Finally, I control for age, gender, education, and ideology in my analyses. Age is coded as an interval variable from 18-112, with the response representing the individual's age in years. Education ranges from 0-6, with 0 representing no formal education and 6 representing advanced tertiary education (e.g., an MA or PhD). For gender, 0 represents male respondents and 1 represents female respondents. Conservatism ranges from 1-5, with 1 representing a far-left ideological placement and 5 representing a far-right ideological placement. These values are derived from national survey items which ask about the parties the respondent voted for in the previous election.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ ISSP Demographic Methods Group, "ISSP Background Variables Guidelines" (GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, June 26, 2012).

For each of these controls, I expect minimally significant effects, as respondents' valuation of racial hierarchies should be consistent across traditional cleavages. However, structural societal changes regarding education on race, diversity, and history in the past 50 years, at least in the US, may lend themselves to small effects among young and highly educated people, who might be less invested in racial hierarchies by socialization or by choice.

Finally, in the case of Germany, I include a regional indicator for East Germany (0= Not East German, 1= East German). The recency of Germany's reunification (as opposed to the secession of the southern US), the lack of domestic migration to East Germany,⁸¹ and the disproportionately high performance of the right-wing AfD party in East Germany⁸² suggest that there may be structural differences regarding the valuation of whiteness and national identity among respondents in the territory of former East Germany. Descriptive statistics for control variables in each country are available in Appendix tables 10-13.

4.2 Case Selection & Descriptive Statistics

This comparative study was designed to test the durability of white-identity effects across national and cultural boundaries in transatlantic politics. Building on the case of the US, in which theories of white identity have been tested, I export and apply theories of white political identity in the cases of France, Germany, and Sweden. The remainder of this section rationalizes the

⁸⁰ Because this variable is derived from an item asking which party respondents voted for in the previous election, between 1/4 -1/3 of respondents had to be excluded in the US, French, and Swedish cases to account for nonvoters. Additionally, because the US is a 2-party system, respondents were coded as either 3 (Center-left/liberal) or 4 (Center-right/conservative), exhibiting less variation than the European cases.

⁸¹ "East-West Migration," Migration Flows (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023).

⁸² Maria Pesthy, Matthias Mader, and Harald Schoen, "Why Is the AfD so Successful in Eastern Germany? An Analysis of the Ideational Foundations of the AfD Vote in the 2017 Federal Election," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 62, no. 1 (March 2021): 69–91.

inclusion of these cases and provides descriptive statistics for the variables used in each analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for selected independent & dependent variables

Variables (Range)	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
<i>Independent</i>				
Ethnicity Importance (1-4)	2.359 (1.102)	2.427 (1.100)	2.315 (0.986)	1.797 (0.978)
White Parents (0-2)	1.694 (0.675)	1.822 (0.532)	1.963 (0.252)	1.897 (0.401)
White Ethnicity (0-1)	0.746 (0.436)	0.801 (0.400)	0.975 (0.156)	0.976 (0.153)
<i>Dependent</i>				
Perception of Equality (1-4)	2.699 (0.868)	2.418 (0.867)	2.564 (0.733)	2.370 (0.810)
Cultural Threat (1-5)	2.480 (0.968)	2.912 (1.428)	2.743 (1.057)	2.589 (1.158)
Threat to Safety (1-5)	2.576 (1.011)	3.154 (1.373)	3.319 (1.141)	3.187 (1.146)
Economic Threat (1-5)	2.885 (1.051)	2.791 (1.345)	2.586 (1.050)	2.320 (1.035)
Support for Assistance (1-5)	3.774 (0.934)	3.618 (1.153)	3.058 (1.067)	3.238 (1.061)
<i>N</i>	671	1166	865	706

Note: Means are shown with standard deviations in parentheses

Data from the ISSP 2013 National Identities module

4.2.1 US

I chose to include the US in my analysis to provide a baseline for comparison with the European cases. Given extant research on white identity in US politics, I use the US case as a barometer for my research design. Since scholars have shown that white identity is a salient factor in determining voters' preferences for policies and candidates in the US, drastic unexpected variation in the US case can serve to highlight flaws in my design or data, which by necessity rely

on constructed and inferred indicators, given the lack of racial demographic data in European contexts.

In Table 1, I present descriptive statistics for my independent and dependent variables in the US. All values are comparable to those in the other cases, with the exception of white ethnicity, which has the lowest value of all cases. Given high levels of immigration to the US throughout its development, we can attribute the lower proportion of individuals identifying as white, European, American, etc. to the presence of a sizable variety of ethnic and racial groups in the country. Additionally, American respondents display a lower average perception of immigrants as a threat to safety than the European cases. Again, we might attribute this difference to the increased population share and age of immigrant communities within the US.

Interestingly, the US also has the highest mean response value for support for assistance, which may stand in contrast to conventional wisdom regarding the US residual welfare state, or attitudes toward redistribution generally.

4.2.2 France

I include France in my analyses as a most similar case to the US. With the second-lowest proportion of individuals identifying as ethnically white or European among the four cases, France is one of the more diverse European states. Likewise, with its colonial history and strong civic identity, France provides a historically similar case to the US in terms of its racially diverse constituency and political messaging about national identity.

The descriptive statistics for my independent and dependent variables in the French case are presented in Table 1. As mentioned above, France has the second-lowest proportion of

individuals who claim white European ethnicity as their primary affiliation. Interestingly, the mean response for the ethnicity importance item is the highest in France, which might be unexpected, given the prevalence of civic nationalism in France, rather than ethnic nationalism. However, considering France's political incorporation of colonies as overseas departments, and the relative strength of civic concepts of national identity, this statistic could be a sign that France's civic nationalism does indeed transcend ethnic categories.

4.2.3 Germany

Germany serves as a mixed case in this design for several reasons. Demographically, Germany is estimated to be less diverse than France or the US. Similarly, Germany's longstanding *ius sanguinis* conception of citizenship is a marked difference from the more civic concepts of American and French citizenship. However, Germany's recent (circa 2000) adoption of *ius soli* paths to citizenship, along with its strong cultural policy of Holocaust remembrance suggest a nuanced engagement with ethnic identity on par with conversations in the US about race. Furthermore, Germany's de facto leadership role in European fora such as the EU, which positions itself as a champion of diversity on the continent, is central to understanding European-level trends. Finally, Germany's recent partition and reunification during the Cold War could provide an interesting glimpse into Eastern and Central European politics of diversity and ethnic identity, particularly for other post-communist states like Czechia, for example.

As may be fitting for a mixed case, the descriptive statistics for Germany presented in Table 1 are rather nondescript. Most notable are the indicators for white ethnicity and threat to safety, which are the second highest and highest values for each variable across the cases, respectively. For the former, the proportion of individuals with European ethnicity as their primary affiliation

seems suspiciously high-- this could be due to the inclusion of individuals with Turkish heritage under the umbrella of European ethnicities. Additionally, this difference could be due to the age of the dataset, which was released in 2013, prior to a large wave of immigration to the country due to the Syrian civil war and instability in the Near East and North Africa.

4.2.4 Sweden

Finally, Sweden is included in my design as a most different case from the US. Unlike the US, which is in many ways defined by its diversity and consequent challenges, Sweden is much more racially and ethnically homogenous, as evidenced by the high proportion of respondents with primarily European ethnicity in Table 1. Interestingly, Sweden has the lowest mean response value for ethnicity importance of all the cases. One reason for this trend could be the high levels of ethnic homogeneity in Sweden—as with other Nordic states, low levels of migration into these states from outside of Europe have resulted in a culturally and ethnically monolithic state.⁸³ In a context where ethnic difference is less common, respondents may place less of a reason to even think of, let alone place value on, ethnic identity. A second explanation could arise from the close relationships between Nordic states. Just as research shows young people in EU countries increasingly identify as European, rather than their specific nationality,⁸⁴ longstanding cultural and political ties, such as reciprocal welfare arrangements,⁸⁵ between Nordic states could cause

⁸³Eric Einhorn and John Logue, “Scandinavia: Still the Middle Way?,” in *Europe Today: A Twenty-First Century Introduction*, ed. Ronald Tiersky and Erik Jones, Fifth edition, Europe Today (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁸⁴Reingard Spannring, Claire Wallace, and Georg Datler, “What Leads Young People to Identify with Europe? An Exploration of the Impact of Exposure to Europe and Political Engagement on European Identity among Young Europeans,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 9, no. 4 (December 2008): 480–98.

⁸⁵Diane Sainsbury, *Welfare States and Immigrant Rights: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion*, 1st ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Dorte Sindbjerg Martinsen, “Migrants’ Access to Social Protection in Denmark,” in *Migration and Social Protection in Europe and Beyond (Volume 1)*, ed. Jean-Michel Lafleur and Daniela Vintila, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 123–35.

respondents to underestimate the importance of Swedish ethnic identity to Swedish nationality in favor of cultural determinants of a broader Nordic ethnic identity.

5. ANALYSIS

In this section, I use linear regression analysis to evaluate the explanatory power of individuals' valuation of white national identities on items pertaining to racial hierarchies in their country, such as equal treatment of different groups in society, perceptions of racialized immigrant groups, and attitudes toward redistribution of resources in society to benefit marginalized groups.

5.1 Perception of Equality

To test my first hypothesis—that individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity as a part of national identity will be more likely to be proud of the outcomes of extant racial hierarchies than those who place less value on ethnicity—I regress measures of the importance respondents place on ethnicity and white ethnicity/ancestry over individuals' stated amount of pride in the equal treatment of groups in their country, as shown in Table 2. I also take this opportunity to test specified and unspecified regression models across cases.

Broadly, the data show modest support for my hypothesis in all four cases. In the models including all variables, the importance of ethnicity trends positively with pride in equal treatment of groups, though with varying magnitude and significance. The effect of the importance of ethnicity is strongest in the US, which, considering the timing of the survey, could be attributed to

the popular conception of a "post-racial" US at this time when Barack Obama won his second term as US president.⁸⁶ Similarly, the prominence of "Equality for All" in US rhetoric may cause respondents to have an inflated sense of equality between groups in society. Among the European cases, both Germany and Sweden display similar, though slightly smaller results, suggesting that this theory of white political identity is viable even in "colorblind" contexts.

Curiously, the French case exhibits a negative effect of the importance of ethnicity on perceptions of equality in the uncontrolled model, though both direction and magnitude reverse when controls are included. Paired with the significant positive effects of age and education increasing perceptions of equality, it seems that individuals' socialization regarding themes of equality in France may preempt the majority of individuals' conceptualization of ethnic or racial identity as targets of discrimination, and only those who actively reflect on ethnicity are aware of the impacts of discrimination on different groups in society. This trend is mirrored significantly in the positive effect of education in Sweden, whereas the US, a case with a degree of public education focusing on historical racial and ethnic discrimination— shows a significant negative effect of education.

Looking more closely at the control variables, I observe mixed and often insignificant effects across cases, which is generally in line with my assumption that white political identity will be consistent across typical cleavages. However, in the case of Germany, all controls except education exhibited significant effects. Interestingly, the East Germany variable is significantly

⁸⁶ Bettina Love and Brandelyn Tosolt, "Reality or Rhetoric? Barack Obama and Post-Racial America," *Race, Gender & Class* 17, no. 3/4 (2010): 19–37.

negative, which we might attribute to economic inequality between East and West German regions since the period of reunification.⁸⁷

Controls also increased the coefficient and significance of the importance of ethnicity in Sweden, in addition to increasing the predictive power (r^2) of all models. Moreover, the additional information provided by controls helps to develop a more nuanced picture of the impact of white political identity as it interacts with other factors, such as its relatively large effect in comparison with conservatism in the US, French, and German cases. As such, all following models include all control variables in the remainder of this analysis.

A final point of interest is the consistently negative effect of having white parents across cases, which is significant in all cases except Sweden. While this trend is moderated by a smaller and insignificant, positive effect of white ethnicity, its relatively large magnitude—enough to cancel the effect of individuals placing the highest importance on ethnicity in most cases—demands further thought. Revisiting Jardina’s work in the US, the author shows that white individuals are not only embedded in racial hierarchies of privilege but are also aware of them.⁸⁸ This in mind, the consistently negative impact of white parentage across cases may suggest that white individuals writ large are aware of the privileges afforded to them in the political economies of their home countries. However, whether this awareness is accompanied by willingness or action to dismantle these systems is a different story, which I explore in the following sections.

⁸⁷John Gramlich, “East Germany Has Narrowed Economic Gap with West Germany since Fall of Communism, but Still Lags” (Pew Research Center, November 6, 2019).

⁸⁸ Jardina, *White Identity Politics*.152

Table 2: White identity and pride in equal treatment of groups in [Country]

VARIABLES	(1) US Model 1	(2) US Model 2	(3) France Model 1	(4) France Model 2	(5) Germany Model 1	(6) Germany Model 2	(7) Sweden Model 1	(8) Sweden Model 2
Ethnicity Importance	0.179*** (0.0300)	0.142*** (0.0313)	-0.0411* (0.0235)	0.0141 (0.0255)	0.0414 (0.0254)	0.0279 (0.0267)	0.0840*** (0.0311)	0.131*** (0.0328)
White Parents	-0.0764 (0.0519)	-0.0780 (0.0508)	-0.146*** (0.0515)	-0.131*** (0.0507)	-0.111 (0.101)	-0.0850 (0.0973)	-0.0571 (0.0846)	-0.0593 (0.0835)
White Ethnicity	0.136* (0.0806)	0.0216 (0.0847)	0.119* (0.0682)	0.0828 (0.0675)	0.536*** (0.162)	0.520*** (0.157)	-0.0501 (0.221)	-0.0605 (0.219)
Education		-0.0686** (0.0266)		0.0755*** (0.0159)		0.0105 (0.0214)		0.0730*** (0.0187)
Age		0.000184 (0.00203)		0.00499*** (0.00149)		-0.00376** (0.00147)		-0.00217 (0.00206)
Women		-0.0348 (0.0644)		-0.0433 (0.0499)		-0.219*** (0.0487)		-0.0406 (0.0614)
Conservatism		0.376*** (0.0682)		-0.0913*** (0.0205)		0.128*** (0.0224)		0.0214 (0.0291)
East German						-0.165*** (0.0622)		
Constant	2.305*** (0.116)	1.471*** (0.277)	2.689*** (0.104)	2.350*** (0.161)	2.163*** (0.231)	2.072*** (0.247)	2.376*** (0.213)	2.097*** (0.260)
Observations	671	671	1,166	1,166	865	865	706	706
R-squared	0.052	0.103	0.012	0.057	0.016	0.095	0.012	0.042

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

5.2 Perception of “Threats” to Racial Hierarchies

To test H2, that individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity as a part of national identity will be more likely to perceive immigrant groups as threats to existing racial hierarchies than those who place less value on ethnicity—I regress the importance of ethnicity over perceptions of immigrants as cultural, security, and economic threats to extant racial hierarchies in their countries.

5.2.1 Perception of Cultural Threat

Table 3: White identity and perceived threat of immigrants to culture in [Country]

VARIABLES	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
Ethnicity Importance	0.225*** (0.0341)	0.468*** (0.0331)	0.306*** (0.0369)	0.479*** (0.0400)
White Parents	-0.129** (0.0554)	0.0667 (0.0659)	-0.0669 (0.135)	0.152 (0.102)
White Ethnicity	0.105 (0.0923)	-0.0770 (0.0877)	-0.324 (0.217)	-0.0970 (0.268)
Education	-0.110*** (0.0289)	-0.135*** (0.0207)	-0.133*** (0.0296)	-0.155*** (0.0228)
Age	-0.00455** (0.00221)	0.00113 (0.00193)	-0.000406 (0.00203)	-0.00429* (0.00251)
Women	0.120* (0.0702)	-0.0253 (0.0649)	-0.183*** (0.0674)	-0.0723 (0.0749)
Conservatism	0.330*** (0.0743)	0.352*** (0.0267)	0.134*** (0.0310)	0.160*** (0.0355)
East German			0.352*** (0.0861)	
Constant	1.568*** (0.302)	1.070*** (0.210)	2.723*** (0.342)	1.930*** (0.317)
Observations	671	1,166	865	706
R-squared	0.143	0.412	0.166	0.302

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

First, I consider the impact of the individuals' valuation of ethnicity in determining their perceptions of immigrant groups as threats to the country's culture, as shown in Table 3. The data consistently trend positively and with the largest magnitude of any variables, with the exception of conservatism in the US and the regional control in Germany. Individuals' valuation of ethnicity as a part of national identity increases individuals' perception of immigrant groups as threats to culture across all cases, with the strongest effect in Sweden, and the weakest in the US. While France and Sweden have comparable coefficients for the importance of ethnicity, the smaller magnitudes in Germany and the US could be the result of cultural differences in narratives around citizenship and ethnicity in these countries. For example, the US' founding as a country of immigrants might make an item asking about citizenship less reliable than one asking explicitly about the importance an individual assigns to race. In the case of Germany, where excessive nationalism or patriotism are less common,⁸⁹ it makes sense that respondents may place less value on the concept of national identity, making the importance placed on ethnicity a less effective indicator of attachment to white identity.

Regarding demographic markers of white identity, both variables exhibit variation in direction and magnitude across cases. In the US, Sweden, and France, a negative trend in one variable is balanced with a positive sign of comparable magnitude in the other. However, in the German case, both variables trend counter to expectation, with a sizable, though insignificant magnitude of the impact of white ethnicity. This trend could be due to Germany's policy of Holocaust remembrance, which promotes multiculturalism, or to Germany's prominence in the

⁸⁹ Cornelia Wilhelm, ed., *Migration, Memory, and Diversity: Germany from 1945 to the Present*, Studies in Contemporary European History, volume 22 (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017).

EU, in which it is frequently engaged in topics and policies surrounding diversity and social inclusion.

Turning to control variables, education consistently trends negatively with significance, indicating that attitudes toward immigrants are moderated by continued education as one might expect. However, the magnitude of the effect is smaller in all cases than individuals' valuation of ethnicity, a trend that is reflected in the coefficients for age and gender. Conservatism also consistently positively correlated with perception of cultural threat across all cases, with a larger magnitude in the US case than the importance of ethnicity. The power of this variable might be attributed to the choice of a dependent variable which specifically mentions immigrants, a group that is frequently targeted by conservative and far-right political parties. Altogether, these trends support my claim that white political identity is distinct from typical political cleavages, and that it retains significance and strength beyond those attributable to factors such as education or gender.

For the East Germany control, the positive coefficient approaches the magnitude of the main independent variable, which may indicate that this region of Germany has distinct attitudes toward immigrants in comparison to the rest of Germany, which is supported by the disproportionate success of the AfD, Germany's right-wing anti-immigrant party, in the region.

5.2.2 Perception of Threat to Safety

Moving on to Table 4, I present the results of regressions of individuals' perceptions of immigrant groups as a threat to security, or as agents that increase crime rates, over their valuation of ethnicity. Again, individuals' valuation of ethnicity has the strongest effect of any variable in the French and German cases, and the second-strongest in the US and Sweden, providing support for H2. As in the previous table, Sweden has the highest coefficient, while the US has the lowest,

with Germany and France closely following the Swedish case. Thinking back to the theoretical foundations of this inquiry, this similar effect in the European cases may suggest that the racialization of crime and immigrants is more commonplace or uniform in European states, possibly because they experience smaller immigration flows than the US.⁹⁰

Table 4: White identity and perceived increase in crime due immigration to [Country]

VARIABLES	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
Ethnicity Importance	0.240*** (0.0356)	0.399*** (0.0325)	0.422*** (0.0375)	0.437*** (0.0410)
White Parents	0.102* (0.0579)	0.0581 (0.0647)	0.0423 (0.137)	0.108 (0.104)
White Ethnicity	0.128 (0.0964)	0.0538 (0.0862)	-0.0554 (0.221)	0.567** (0.274)
Education	-0.0646** (0.0302)	-0.0983*** (0.0203)	-0.155*** (0.0301)	-0.0968*** (0.0234)
Age	0.00136 (0.00231)	0.00711*** (0.00190)	0.00454** (0.00207)	-0.00218 (0.00257)
Women	-0.0358 (0.0734)	-0.145** (0.0637)	-0.178*** (0.0685)	-0.224*** (0.0767)
Conservatism	0.347*** (0.0777)	0.352*** (0.0262)	0.178*** (0.0315)	0.165*** (0.0364)
East German			0.240*** (0.0875)	
Constant	0.755** (0.316)	1.031*** (0.206)	2.300*** (0.348)	1.768*** (0.325)
Observations	671	1,166	865	706
R-squared	0.141	0.387	0.260	0.253

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

Unlike the model for perception of immigrants as a cultural threat, the coefficients for the white demographic behave with greater consistency across cases when explaining varying

⁹⁰ *Word Migration Report 2022* (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2021).

perceptions of immigrants as a cause of crime. With the exception of the negative trend of white ethnicity in the German case, the coefficients are consistently positive with modest magnitudes. In the Swedish case, white ethnicity has the strongest effect in the model, with the importance of ethnicity a comparable second. The relatively strong effect of this variable in comparison to other models would suggest that crime is a particularly salient topic among Swedish voters and is likely cast as a racial or anti-immigrant issue.

In regard to perceptions of immigrants as a threat to security, the control variables also behave with much more uniformity and significance. As in previous models, education has a moderating effect on negative perceptions of immigrants across cases, while older individuals appear to have more negative views. Also of note is the consistent negative effect of gender, which indicates that women are significantly less likely to perceive immigrants as a threat to security than men. This is particularly interesting given the frequent positioning of women and women's bodies as victims of crime, as in the aforementioned Silvesternacht media campaign that characterized sexual assault as a racialized form of violence. Increasing conservatism also has a sizable positive effect on negative attitudes toward immigrants, which is likely due to conservative parties' frequent utilization of "law and order" narratives.⁹¹

As in the previous model predicting attitudes toward immigrants, the East Germany variable has a coefficient of similar magnitude and significance, suggesting that the region has a distinct culture of bias against immigrants in comparison with individuals living in the former West Germany.

⁹¹ "The Republican Party Platform," *Congressional Digest* 99, no. 9 (November 2020): 10–15; Anna Vachudova, "Ethnopoliticism and Democratic Backsliding."

5.2.3 Perception of Economic Threat

Table 5: White identity and perceived threat of immigrants to job security in [Country]

VARIABLES	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
Ethnicity Importance	0.191*** (0.0369)	0.480*** (0.0312)	0.412*** (0.0354)	0.418*** (0.0366)
White Parents	0.338*** (0.0600)	0.0981 (0.0621)	0.00640 (0.129)	0.0726 (0.0932)
White Ethnicity	0.0236 (0.0999)	-0.146* (0.0826)	-0.270 (0.208)	-0.291 (0.245)
Education	-0.0881*** (0.0313)	-0.179*** (0.0195)	-0.127*** (0.0284)	-0.127*** (0.0209)
Age	0.000222 (0.00240)	-0.00742*** (0.00182)	-0.000748 (0.00195)	0.000746 (0.00230)
Women	0.120 (0.0760)	-0.0861 (0.0611)	-0.0449 (0.0646)	0.00205 (0.0685)
Conservatism	0.253*** (0.0805)	0.254*** (0.0251)	0.119*** (0.0297)	0.0565* (0.0325)
East German			0.188** (0.0826)	
Constant	1.248*** (0.327)	1.816*** (0.198)	2.130*** (0.328)	2.003*** (0.290)
Observations	671	1,166	865	706
R-squared	0.147	0.412	0.222	0.269

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Results from the final item for H2, the impact of individuals' valuation of ethnicity on their perception of immigrant groups as an economic threat, are presented in Table 5. As with the previous items, the importance of ethnicity has a strong, significant, and positive impact on individuals' perception of immigrant groups as "taking jobs" from "deserving" citizens. As in the prior cases, the effect is consistently positive and the strongest variable in the European cases, and third-strongest in the US. The effect is particularly strong in France, and weakest in the US, with Sweden and Germany falling in the upper-middle of the range. The demographic measures of

white identity perform inconsistently in these models, with modest positive effects for white parents, and comparable negative effects for white ethnicity, except for the US.

As for the control variables, respondents with more education are more likely to have positive views toward immigrants, rather than seeing them as an economic threat. As in the previous regressions, gender shows mixed effects, and conservatism consistently drives negative attitudes toward immigrants across cases. Finally, the control for East Germany continues to show a moderately strong positive effect on individuals' perception of immigrants as an economic threat.

5.2.4 Summary

To conclude, in this section I presented the results of three regression analyses to test my hypothesis that individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity as a part of national identity will be more likely to perceive immigrant groups as threats to existing racial hierarchies than those who place less value on ethnicity. Each model tapped into a different perceived “threat” posed by immigrants to the national cultural, security, and economic hierarchies that privilege white individuals. Across all items and cases, the importance individuals' place on ethnic identity as a part of national identity was a moderate to strong significant predictor of the perception of immigrants as a threat. Put another way, individuals who conflate the presumably white ethnicities of America, Germany, France, and Sweden with national identity are more likely to view immigrants as economic, security, and cultural threats—with the strongest effects visible in France, Sweden, and Germany.

In the case of America, the importance of ethnicity consistently underperformed relative to conservatism, a trend which is reflected across all regressions. Given the consistency of this pattern, which still provides support for H2, I expect that this underperformance is driven by the

decreased salience of ethnicity in the US relative to race. As discussed in previous sections, ethnicity, while it is the most comparable indicator available, is not a perfect substitute for measuring attitudes driven by racial difference in the US.

While my primary independent variable (the importance placed on ethnicity) provided strong evidence in support of my hypothesis, my demographic measures of white identity—having white parents and identifying with a typically white primary ethnicity—were less consistent across cases, though performing as expected with varying significance in 15 of 24 comparisons. Of the 9 comparisons that trended counter to expectation, 6 were in the two most homogenous cases of Sweden and Germany. Given that these countries show over 97% of respondents identifying with white European ethnicity, the demographic variables may perform poorly because they are redundant, trying to describe variation that is less present than in France or the US.

While increased education consistently resulted in a moderating effect of negative views toward immigrant groups, as might be expected, the other controls for age and gender performed inconsistently across items and cases. However, conservatism displayed a consistently positive and relatively strong impact on attitudes toward immigrants, which can likely be attributed to the use of anti-immigrant rhetoric by conservative politicians. In comparison with the consistent and strong performance of the importance of ethnicity in explaining negative perceptions of immigrants, the decreased magnitude and often inconsistent significance and direction of these controls indicates that white identity is a structurally distinct driver of European and American public opinion that crosses traditional cleavages, in line with my theorization. Moreover, this white political identity exhibits a clear inclination toward preserving hierarchies of white supremacy by identifying racialized outsiders—in this case immigrants—as threats to the economic, cultural, and power structures that disproportionately benefit white individuals.

5.3 Attitudes toward Government Assistance to Racialized Groups

In the previous section, I found evidence supporting the hypothesis that individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity as a component of national identity are more sensitive to racialized “threats” to systems of white supremacy. In this final section, I test my third hypothesis, namely: individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity as a part of national identity will be less likely to support actions that disrupt racial hierarchies than individuals who place less value on ethnicity. In other words, I expect individuals who set a higher value on white identity to act in ways that defend that investment, such as by opposing measures that would redistribute wealth to other ethnic or racial groups.

Table 6: White identity and opposition to government assistance for minority groups in [Country]

VARIABLES	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
Ethnicity Importance	-0.0659** (0.0320)	0.0495 (0.0333)	0.154*** (0.0393)	0.160*** (0.0413)
White Parents	0.215*** (0.0520)	-0.0447 (0.0663)	0.250* (0.143)	0.0411 (0.105)
White Ethnicity	0.337*** (0.0866)	0.237*** (0.0882)	0.0223 (0.231)	0.396 (0.276)
Education	0.00775 (0.0272)	-0.00747 (0.0208)	-0.0610* (0.0315)	-0.0973*** (0.0236)
Age	0.00792*** (0.00208)	0.00635*** (0.00194)	-0.000969 (0.00216)	-0.000903 (0.00259)
Women	-0.0395 (0.0659)	-0.0124 (0.0653)	-0.0641 (0.0717)	-0.0864 (0.0773)
Conservatism	0.443*** (0.0698)	0.217*** (0.0268)	0.159*** (0.0330)	0.206*** (0.0367)
East German			-0.0245 (0.0916)	
Constant	1.371*** (0.284)	2.452*** (0.211)	2.095*** (0.364)	2.359*** (0.327)
Observations	671	1,166	865	706
R-squared	0.188	0.088	0.071	0.115

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

In Table 6, I present the results of a regression of individuals' opposition to government spending for the preservation of minority cultures over respondents' valuation of ethnicity. Among the European cases, the results trend positively with comparably strong magnitudes relative to other variables. In other words, individuals who place a higher value on ethnicity are more likely to oppose government measures to allocate resources to minority groups. Moreover, white ethnicity trends even more strongly and positively all four cases—white individuals, regardless of their attachment to their ethnic identity, are more likely to oppose government support for minority groups. Curiously, among the controls, education has a weak moderating effect in the European cases. Age has a significant, small impact among American and French respondents, perhaps reflecting generational biases between racial groupings. Though insignificant, gender has a consistently negative effect across cases, suggesting that women are slightly more in favor of redistribution than men, though the effect pales in comparison to that of the demographic variables. Most notably among the controls, conservatism consistently and significantly increases opposition to government support for minority groups, as one might expect from this group's ideological positioning.

In the case of the indicator for East Germany, the result is insignificant and relatively small, suggesting that, although East German respondents have a clear bias against immigrant groups, there seems to be little difference between East and West German respondents in regard to their preferences for maintaining the status quo regarding the allocation of resources in Germany.

Finally, the results continue the trend of underperformance of the importance of ethnicity in the US case, this time yielding a small, yet significant, moderating effect on individuals' opposition to the allocation of resources to minority groups. While (and because) the large positive effects of white ethnic identity more than account for this upset, it is still worth exploring. In light

of this variable's consistently low magnitude across analyses of perceived threat, I expect that this negative effect is in part due to the decreased salience of ethnicity in American politics. While being ethnically French, German, or Swedish might conjure an image of a pale, light-haired, individual, being ethnically American is a little harder to define given its status as a "melting pot" of a country. Indeed, the aforementioned process of Irish immigrants to America "becoming white" suggests that, while whiteness may be tied to visualizations of Americanness, ethnicity may be harder to connect to the concept of "America." Similarly, the proliferation of "-American" identities, many of which include people of color, make answers to the question of defining Americanness less straightforward than in more ethnically homogenous states. While alternative formulations of questions tapping into this conflation of racial and ethnic identity do provide results more in line with expectations (see Table 9 in the Appendix), this item highlights the difficulty of measuring the effect of race with items designed explicitly to avoid the subject.

In summary, this section tested the hypothesis that individuals who place higher value on ethnic identity would be more likely to oppose the allocation of resources to minority groups, as this redistribution might occur at the expense of "deserving" white co-racials. Among the European cases, I find significant, moderate support for this hypothesis, with even stronger significant effects of demographic measures of whiteness. In essence, white individuals are more likely to oppose measures that would comprise a dismantling of structures of white supremacy or the benefits derived from them. While the indicator of the importance of ethnicity did not perform as expected in the US case, its consistent weakness relative to European cases across items in sections 5.2 and 5.3 suggest that ethnicity is not as useful a heuristic for race in the US as it is in Europe.

6. DISCUSSION & SUMMARY

Building on a broad foundation of theoretical and quantitative work in US and European contexts, this inquiry set out to prove that race is a relevant factor in European politics. Furthermore, I argued that white racial identity is a major driver of public opinion in both the US and Europe. After reviewing literatures on race and white identity in US and European politics, racial and ethnic data collection in Europe, and the interplay between white and national identities, I advanced three hypotheses testing the assumption that individuals who place a higher value on ethnic identity as a component of national identity will be less likely to perceive inequalities in their societies, more likely to view racialized groups such as immigrants as threats to economic, cultural, and security systems that are built to privilege whiteness, and more likely to oppose measures that comprise a dismantling of these systems vis-a-vis the allocation of support to minority groups by the government.

Utilizing data from the ISSP 2013 panel on National Identity, I found significant support for all three hypotheses. The importance individuals place on ethnic identity as a part of national identity consistently explains variation in individuals' attitudes in all but one comparison, that of US respondents' attitudes toward redistribution. Furthermore, the importance of ethnicity regularly outperforms indicators of typical political cleavages in European countries in magnitude of effect. Foremost, these results demand further investigation of the impact of race on European politics. White identity has a clear and strong impact on individuals' attitudes toward inequality, "othered" and racialized groups, and redistribution of wealth in society. These attitudes have very real

implications for policy and representation—both at the domestic and EU levels, and especially given the latter’s self-positioning as a champion of diversity on the continent.

This project also highlighted the challenges and limitations of studying race in a context that refuses to acknowledge racial difference. While this project clearly shows the impact of racial identity on public opinion in the US and Europe, it required considerable effort to identify and construct reliable indicators for racial identity from the inconsistent ethnic categories used by different countries—all of which could have been avoided with the regular and standardized collection of data on race. As this project shows, data on race serves not only the purpose of identifying and combatting inequality, it also begins to make clear the ways in which white supremacy impedes progress toward equity. At the very least, the results of this inquiry should encourage researchers to think creatively to circumvent the systemic barriers to accounting for the impact of racial identities and discrimination in European politics. At its most aspirational, this project is a call for policymakers to recognize the ways in which “colorblind” data maintain systems of white supremacy and take action to collect data that advance equity.

In terms of future research, this project highlights the need for investigation in several areas. Foremost, more work needs to be done to provide quantitative backing for the rich qualitative literature on racialized politics in Europe. Second, in the absence of an immediate overhaul of decades worth of data collection practices, scholars should work to find heuristics for racial identity that are viable across regional and national contexts to identify, evaluate, and dismantle analogous political structures of discrimination and white supremacy.

APPENDIX

Descriptive Statistics (Control Variables)

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for selected independent & dependent variables

Variables (Range)	(1) US	(2) France	(3) Germany	(4) Sweden
Age (18-112)	52.06 (16.35)	48.48 (17.36)	50.38 (17.27)	51.91 (15.64)
Women (0-1)	0.538 (0.499)	0.491 (0.500)	0.448 (0.498)	0.506 (0.500)
Conservatism (1-5)	3.434 (0.496)	3.058 (1.312)	2.805 (1.101)	2.878 (1.053)
Education (0-6)	3.973 (1.263)	3.509 (1.681)	4.390 (1.159)	3.846 (1.804)
East German (0-1)			0.186 (0.389)	
<i>N</i>	671	1166	865	706

Note: Means are shown with standard deviations in parentheses

Data from the ISSP 2013 National Identities module

Closeness to National Identity (US)

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for alternative independent variable (US)

VARIABLE	(1) N	(2) mean	(3) sd	(4) min	(5) Max
Identify with Country	671	3.330	0.724	1	4

Observations for the identify with country variable are coded as a Likert scale from 1-4 (1= not close, 4=Very close) in response to the question “How close do you feel to your country?”

Table 9: White identity (alternative variable) and opposition to government assistance for minority groups in the US

VARIABLES	(1) US
Identify with Country	0.1000** (0.0469)
White Parents	0.205*** (0.0517)
White Ethnicity	0.351*** (0.0859)
Education	0.0230 (0.0263)
Age	0.00630*** (0.00206)
Women	-0.0302 (0.0664)
Conservatism	0.415*** (0.0698)
Constant	1.003*** (0.303)
Observations	671
R-squared	0.189

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

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