Understanding the Rise of Anti-Political Correctness Sentiment: The Curious Role of Education

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Abstract

The anti-politically correct (PC) stance has been a key defensive position held by many conservative Americans for more than three decades. This position holds that being forced to be politically correct hinders open dialogue and debate on important yet sensitive issues, especially those around race and racism. However, scholars have questioned this anti-PC orientation and tied it to political orientation and racism. One caveat that stands as the basis of this paper is the role of education in moderating the impact of racial emotions on various outcomes. While some scholars, such as Seymour Lipset, highlight the liberalizing impact of education, others question such impact. Accordingly, this research examines how educational attainment, racial resentment, and White guilt concerning racial injustice interact to impact the likelihood of White Americans taking an anti-PC stance. Our data is drawn from the American National Election Study 2016 pilot survey. In line with past research, we find that racial re-sentment and White guilt indeed predict views toward political correctness; however, we find educational attainment does not change the effect of these variables on views toward political correctness. We discuss the importance of these findings in relation to prominent social theories on race and social dominance.

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Personal Reflexive Statement

The authors operate under the assumption that the inherent and obvious inequality that falls along racial lines in The United States and elsewhere, is the inevitable result of structurally embedded causes that have been maintained by those-both past and present-who actively enjoy the benefit of said inequalities. We believe this premise has been historically proven by various social sciences to such a degree that all relevant research should take it as given.

The authors of this paper have consistently, both personally and professionally, been advocates for affirmatively anti-racist policy in all institutional contexts. They believe that the principal function of our discipline should be the redress of social inequalities that extend along racial lines or any other ascribed dimension of diversity. We hope this research and all other research we produce, can contribute to an ever-growing body of knowledge that is maintained in the service of this mission.

Introduction

"Political correctness" (PC henceforth) has become one of the key flashpoints of our current fractious era in the United States. The term itself has become one of the more effective political cudgels of the cultural conservatives. It is used by the right as a pejorative to describe increased sensitivity in mainstream culture concerning marginalized groups (Sue 2016). It is portrayed as a growing problem of mainstream society that has its origins in the cultural and political left (Sue 2016; Weigel 2016). The subtext of this term and its associated narrative is that people, mainly liberals, do not engage in political correctness out of sincere concern for marginalized groups, but rather do so disingenuously to continually constrain and censor the bounds of acceptable discourse (Weigel 2016). As such, many conservatives pose that the PC sentiment blocks meaningful debate and directly attacks their freedom of speech.

Esposito and Finley (2019:4) note that, "there is no neat or clear history of the concept" when trying to trace the origins of political correctness. The earliest notable usage of the term is in the 1793 US Supreme Court decision for *Chisholm v. State of Georgia* (Wilson 2012); though in a markedly different, more legally oriented context than its current usage. The term functionally did not come into vogue until the latter part of the 20th century. PC emerged as a concept in the mainstream American zeitgeist in the early 1990s with the release of Kimball's (1990) *Tenured Radicals* and D'Souza's (1991) *Illiberal Education*; both books critiquing PC censorship on college campuses. The late 1990s saw anti-PC backlash in the rise of "shock culture" in popular media. Adult cartoon "South Park"' was perhaps most emblematic of this era in media, as the show aimed to be intentionally shocking, often crude, and always not PC (Wang 2013).

The criticism of PC has ranged from the childish satire of early seasons of "South Park," to dire warnings from op-ed writers like Bernstein (1990) who suggested PC creates a cultural atmosphere in which individuals faced "a pressure to conform to a radical program or risk being accused of a commonly reiterated trio of thought crimes: sexism, racism, and homophobia."

An anti-PC stance and continual stream of non-PC statements both online and in-person has been much of former President Donald Trump's appeal since his initial candidacy in 2015. This continued through his presidency and continues to this day as he leads a fervent cultural movement in his post-presidency unlike any previous ex-president. Trump regularly dismissed backlash to his most controversial proposals, such as a ban on immigration of Muslims to the United States, as merely his opponents being too PC (Gantt-Shafer 2017). The new era of American conservatism, largely defined by Trump, has reframed PC as a threat to our national security by claiming that it makes us blind to terrorism and the inherently violent nature of specific ethnic groups, particularly Islamic Middle Easterners, as well as Central and South Americans (Lamont et al. 2017).

This project seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics of anti-PC sentiment that may be obscured by the decades of political discourse. We do this using nationally representative data from the American National Election Studies 2016 Pilot Survey to explore the interplay between two potential explanatory factors: White individuals' feelings toward race relations (guilt and racism), and their level of educational attainment. Much like the fraught issue of so-called "political correctness," feelings about race relations and educational attainment are key points of divergence between the political right and left of the United States in the 21st century context. Accordingly, the overall purpose of this paper is twofold.

First, this analysis seeks to understand key factors that impact both pro and anti-PC viewpoints. Similar to past research (Carter and Roos 2020), we return to the argument that questions the genuineness of "anti-PC" viewpoints and assesses whether such a position is rooted in racial resentment. These scholars pose that holding an anti-PC viewpoint is merely a socially acceptable 21st century proxy for the same kind of underlying racial resentment that has been prominent in US race relations since the country's inception (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Carter and Roos 2020; Sue 2016; Weigel 2016; Wikstrom 2016). Racial resentment, at least among White Americans, is disproportionately found among conservatives (Carter and Roos 2020; Wallsten, Nteta, McCarthy, and Tarsi 2017; Wilson and Brewer 2013). An inverse emotion, White guilt concerning racial inequality, is disproportionately present among White liberals, which may also prove to be an important ingredient in understanding a lack of support for anti-PC viewpoints. Accordingly, this paper looks at the impact of these factors on impacting anti-PC viewpoints.

The second explanatory factor is predicated on another asymmetry between conservatives and liberals in the US: educational attainment. While educational attainment historically has been one of the more demonstrably effective demographic predictors of political orientation in the US in recent years (Bullock 2020; Motta 2017), debate

persists regarding the impact it has on racial attitudes and policies that are seen as racial in nature (Jackman 1994). Generally speaking, although some scholars view education as an important ingredient in producing more liberalizing racial attitudes and racial progress, others question this relationship (Carter and Roos 2020; Jackman 1994; Jackman and Muha 1984). In particular, this paper explores the potential moderating impact of education on anti-PC sentiments and two key racial emotions: racial resentment and white racial guilt.

As will be discussed in more detail below, we use race theory and social dominance theory to help understand the potential role education plays in moderating the effects of racial resentment and White racial guilt on anti-PC viewpoints. With respect to racial resentment, some scholars (Sniderman and Carmines 1997) pose that, especially among the most educated, views of whites toward hot button race issues (such as affirmative action) can be genuine and rooted in conservative views rather than racism. The more educated are able to overcome racial emotions and express opposition based on the perception that such policies are unfair to whites and in violation of the American values of individualism and meritocracy. However, race scholars such as Jackman (1994), question whether the effect of racism is minimized among the most educated. Accordingly, we assess whether racial resentment becomes less impactful among the more highly educated. Similarly, other scholars pose that white guilt will also be impacted by the education level of the respondent. This position, associated with the social dominance orientation, posits that education allows for a more nuanced and thus sympathetic understanding of racial issues among the more educated. Accordingly, we assess whether the effect of White guilt on PC viewpoints becomes stronger as education increases.

Accordingly, using aspects of social racism and social dominance theories, this project attempts to assess the role of education in moderating the impact of these key variables linked to anti- and pro-PC viewpoints. As will be seen below, these theoretical perspectives have unique predictions about the role of education in impacting an anti-PC orientation.

Literature Review

Many conservative thinkers stake-out a position of free speech absolutism, coupled with concern that repression of even hateful, sexist, or racist speech will lead to a chilling effect that tamps down on open discourse more generally (D'Souza 1991; Kimball 1990). Prominent American liberals and social scientists generally question the sincerity of arguments made against political correctness, like those espoused by Kimball and D'Souza. They claim instead that these arguments serve to disguise the true intention of protecting the rhetorical space for the kind of intolerant viewpoints that have historically thrived in American political discourse. Ultimately, they see the battle over political correctness as a proxy battle for conservatives in defense of the kind of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. that is now stigmatized after generations of its prior acceptability. Sue (2016) suggested that railing against PC gives conservatives an

ostensibly principled reason to shut down any critical discussion of inequality and maintain the rhetorical frames of White hegemony that has defined the United States since its inception. Dismissing all forms of critical social analysis and expressions of empathy towards oppressed groups as simply "political correctness" denies the basic rhetorical premises.

This debate occurs within the context of an America that, at least in public opinion surveys, seems to have trended toward liberalism in the past several decades. Starting with a series of papers published regularly from the 1950s to the 1970s in Scientific American, there has been growing evidence that the age of Jim Crow has given way to an America that is increasingly tolerant and where people feel increasingly positive about the state of race relations (Greeley and Sheatsley 1971; Hyman and Sheatsley 1956). More recently, the American National Election Study and the General Social Survey have consistently shown the US population becoming more tolerant over time (Carter and Borch 2005; Carter and Carter 2014; Carter and Corra 2014; Carter et al. 2014; Schuman et al. 1997).

Despite self-reported attitudes seeming to become more liberal over time in the United States, it has done little to change pronounced racial inequality (Jones, Schmitt, and Wilson 2018; Sears and Henry 2003). There remains a substantial gap between White and Black Americans on most relevant indicators of wellbeing including income, education, and mortality (Jones et al. 2018). While Americans express attitudes that are - at least in the abstract - more tolerant, they consistently express a dim view of policies that aim to tangibly reduce racial inequality (Bobo and Smith 1994; Carter et al. 2005; Schuman et al. 1997). Views toward such policies, such as affirmative action, have moved little since public opinion on these policies became consistently measured in the 1970s (Carter and Carter 2017; Carter et al. 2005). This is a phenomenon that increased education may do little to influence. Wodtke (2016) found that while White respondents with more developed vocabularies are more likely to express fewer racist attitudes and agree with the principles of racial equality more often, they are not more likely to support tangible policies aimed at addressing racial inequality than Whites with less developed vocabularies. This echoes a similar previous study by Wodtke (2016), that found increased education had a net null to slightly negative effect on White respondents' receptiveness to affirmative action hiring policies for underrepresented minorities.

The lack of connection between abstract attitudes on race and views on substantive racial policies has led researchers to search for better covariates for issues of race. Recently Chudy, Piston, and Shipper (2019) found that White collective guilt and racial resentment are more effective predictors of policy attitudes than political ideology, party identification, or even subscription to racial stereotypes-suggesting feelings concerning race are at the core of much of the conflict in American political discourse.

Explaining the schism between abstract attitudes toward racial minorities and attitudes toward concrete policy solutions to racial inequality has become a popular point of inquiry among contemporary social scientists. This phenomenon is what Wodtke (2016) calls "The Policy-Principle Paradox." A small contingency of scholars suggest that Americans are genuine in both their increasingly tolerant views on race and their

consistently negative views of racial equality-oriented policy. According to these scholars, views on race operate independently of policy views that are predicated on principled governing philosophies, especially when those governing philosophies run counter to the notion of government intervention to redress social injustice. Such a conservative/libertarian ethos is common in the United States (Kuklinski et al. 1997; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman et al. 2000). Sniderman and Carmines (1997) found that objections to policies like affirmative action are less influenced by racist attitudes, but greatly influenced by the perception that such policies are unfair to whites and in violation of the American values of individualism and meritocracy. This position is often labeled "principled objection" perspective, which implies that a lack of support found among many whites toward racial policies can be rooted in true principles.

While the reasons for this apparent shift away from overt racism are hotly debated and surely multi-faceted, increasing one's educational attainment is a commonly cited reason (Lipset 1960; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman et al. 2000). Heller and Hawkins (1993) have suggested educators and activists frequently treat it as the "magic bullet" to promote racial tolerance. During this period of seemingly increasing racial tolerance, the educational attainment of the average American had grown exponentially (NCES 2014). According to Sniderman and Piazza (1993), "…the better educated are better positioned to recognize when sentiment that they encounter in their everyday interactions violates the norms of larger society, and, recognizing this, more likely to reject sentiments that are offensive, punitive, or otherwise intolerant" (p. 47). Furthermore, a higher level of education may give individuals a better ability to disentangle their biases from their political principles. Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell (2000) demonstrated conservatives with more education were more likely to apply the ideal of "rugged individualism" more evenly across racial groups, whereas the less educated applied it as a double standard-disproportionately placing the bootstrap expectation on minorities. In other words, education makes a principled political stance that is truly independent of race more likely.

While only a handful of scholars like Sniderman and Piazza (1993) affirm the principled objection perspective, others have found that negative attitudes toward minorities are consistently associated with objection to policies aimed at ameliorating racial inequality, even when controlling for conservative political philosophies. Bobo and Tuan (2006) suggested that the link between racism and policies that promote White dominance is deeply rooted in history, consistently durable, and obvious. This coincides with the more pervasive view in literature that Whites are more prone to obscure overt racism to avoid social stigma while still advocating for positions that promote White dominance. This view has been articulated in different forms by different authors; each with different elements yet sharing this common thread. It has been called "symbolic racism" (Kinder and Sears 1981), "modern racism" (McConahay 1986), "racial resentment" (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tuch and Hughes 2011), "laissez-faire racism" (Bobo and Kluegel 1993), and most recently, a variation has been articulated as "colorblind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2018).

Theoretical Orientation

Prominent race scholars, such as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Joe Feagin, Lawrence Bobo, and Jim Sidanius, have long discussed the role of ideology in the reproduction of racism in the US and beyond. Bonilla-Silva (2018) spoke extensively on how ideology in general and abstract liberalism in particular, used by both racist and non-racists alike, act to prop up mechanisms that reproduce the racial status quo. He argued that Abstract liberalism helps to maintain the racial status quo through laissez-faire, neoliberal economics and rhetoric. For Bonilla-Silva, abstract liberalism rhetoric can be seen as "reasonable racism," where negative racial views can resemble rational and moral views. He saw Anti-PC viewpoints as one of those mechanisms that minimizes and even ignores the history of race and racism in the US, which allows for sentiment that benefits whites at the expense of marginalized groups. As such, many whites (and some non-whites) are able to express racial resentments and anti-policy views meant to reduce racial inequality openly as they reduce attempts of censorship due to political correctness run amok.

It is also notable that Bonilla-Silva and others posed that racist ideologies are not the tools of whites only, the ignorant, or the racist. Rather, ideologies are simply a part of the socio-political landscape that shape all viewpoints and provide the arsenal to oppose any movement toward inequality. This ideology, according to Bonilla-Silva (2018), is quite slippery and is able to minimize any legitimate issues facing minorities in a racist system. Indeed, to Bonilla-Silva and other race scholars, an Anti-PC stance is simply another mechanism that is used by whites (and some whites) in reaction to any movement for racial equality and justice.

Sidanius and Pratto similarly proposed a social dominance model in which inequalities are maintained through legitimizing myths. Legitimizing myths are "…attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes, and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for social practices that distribute social value within the social system" (Sidanius and Pratto 2001:45). It has been empirically demonstrated through previous survey research (Lotte et al. 2010) that by using legitimizing myths, dominant groups can spin narratives that they are experiencing victimization (e.g., censorship) as a means to justifying the social hierarchy already in place, and perhaps expand it. Feelings of racial resentment and mistrust that may be less than socially palatable, functionally manifest in those perpetuating legitimizing myths as they pursue political goals that implicitly maintain racial inequality.

For Sidanius and Pratto (2001), increased levels of education prepare dominant group members to utilize techniques such as legitimizing myths in the furtherance of social dominance. Educational attainment and the increased social status that it confers allows individuals to "dispense with overt expressions of prejudice and deploy subtler and more complex defense of their groups' interests" (p. 490). There is empirical evidence that suggests higher levels of educational attainment may counter-intuitively, exacerbate a social dominance orientation by allowing individuals to hone their rhetorical abilities to better engage in discourse that promotes a social dominance

agenda (Federico and Sidanius 2002; Jackman 1994; Jackman and Muha 1984). According to Jackman and Muha (1984:751), "...dominant social groups routinely develop ideologies that legitimize and justify the status quo, and well-educated members of these dominant groups are the most sophisticated practitioners of their group's ideology." They go on to demonstrate empirically through quantitative analysis of surveys that highly educated respondents are more likely to believe in and want to protect their personal individual rights over collective equal rights. Federico and Sidanius (2002) similarly found that the higher an individual's level of educational attainment, the less likely it is their objections to Affirmative action policies are rooted in conservative principles, and the more likely it is those objections are rooted in a social dominance orientation.

It is worth noting that above described evidence contradicts another, more prominent body of work that suggests that higher levels of educational attainment fosters greater liberalism, as well as sympathies for egalitarian principles and policies regarding intergroup relations (Bobo and Licari 1989; Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Lipset 1960; McClosky and Zaller 1984). Bobo and Licari (1989) used General Social Survey data to illustrate that educational attainment generally increases tolerance for people on both sides of the political spectrum on a range of social dimensions including sexuality, ideological diversity, and race. Using the same data, Bobo and Kluegel (1993) demonstrated that increased levels of educational attainment is associated with greater acceptance. Moreover, as noted above, Sniderman and Carmines 1997 hold education to be a key factor in freeing individuals up from racial emotions and helping them make logical decisions based on true conservative ideals.

Purpose

This research builds upon work by Carter and Roos (2020) using the National Election Studies 2016 pilot survey which demonstrated that rejection of political correctness is closely associated with racial animosity-even more so than political conservatism among White respondents. Major, Blodorn, and Blasscovich (2018) found that opposition to PC, is a concept that is strongly tied to Whiteness. Specifically, being a concept most relevant for White individuals who have a strong sense of ethnic identity. As such, we limit our sample to White respondents to continue to also build on work such as theirs that explore the key factors that impact PC views among those who identify as White.

As situated, with social dominance theory and racism theory as guiding frameworks, this study revisits the idea of whether education has a notable and significant moderating effect on white guilt and racism with respect to anti-PC sentiment. Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo (1996) found that indeed education was not the ultimate liberalizing mechanism it is often made out to be when looking particularly at views toward affirmative action. If the lack of impact of education holds for this study, these findings would fly in face of principled objection scholars who hold education to be an enlightening tool that helps individuals see past racial emotions and make logically sound

decisions from an informed conservative position about issues of race. In such cases among the educated, they are able to see the controversial issues from a very race neutral perspective; thus, making racism less of an impact on their final decision.

With that being said, we offer the following hypotheses

H[1]: Feelings of racial resentment will have a significant positive association with rejection of political correctness.

Given the findings of Carter and Roos (2020), Sidanius and Pratto's (2001) concept of legitimizing myths, and Bonilla-Silva's (2018) framework of colorblind racism, it is expected that there is a positive association between racial resentment and rejection of PC- as all of these mentioned suggest that racial resentment is the core motive animating anti-PC sentiment.

H[2]: Feelings of guilt about racial inequality will make it significantly less likely a respondent will reject political correctness.

If it is the case the theoretical premise asserted by Sidanius and Pratto (2001) regarding legitimizing myths is correct, then it must be the case that those rejecting PC are more receptive to, or at least more ambivalent to, hierarchical race relations and the social dominance inherent within them. Thus, those individuals with great guilt about racial inequality will be more likely to reject political correctness. The first hypothesis is intended to empirically establish this.

H[3]: The association between racial resentment and rejection of political correctness will be moderated by educational attainment with the impact of racism decreasing on anti-PC views among those with higher education.

This hypothesis is a direct test of the principled objection perspective, which holds that education is a mechanism that allows individuals to see past emotions and racism and make sound logical decisions about issues, particularly those about race and racism. That is to say, among the most educated, the impact of racism on anti-PC views will *decrease*.

H[4]: The association between feelings of guilt about racial inequality and rejection of political correctness will be moderated by educational attainment, with the impact of guilt increasing on anti-PC views increasing among those with higher education.

This is intended to test what Sidanius and Pratto (2001, Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo 1996) propose concerning the role of education in social dominance and confirm the results of Federico and Sidanius (2002) and Jackman and Muha (1984). If it is the case that rejection of PC is a nuanced means of advancing a legitimizing myth and a social dominance agenda, increased education should make utilization of this artful rhetorical

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Political correctness	3.033	1.060	1	4
Racial resentment	0.145	1.017	−2.037	1.361
Educational attainment	3.271	1.526	1	6
White guilt	4.330	0.951	1	5
Age	49.799	17.173	19	95
Proportion				
Liberal leaning	.330		0	1
Conservative learning	.402		0	1
Female	.515		0	1

n = 874; descriptives generated without survey weights.

strategy more likely among those with high levels of racial resentment. That is to say, among the most educated, the impact of guilt on anti-PC views will *increase*.

Methods and data Source

Our study utilized data from the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) pilot study based out of the University of Michigan and conducted in conjunction with Stanford University. The pilot study was collected from a previously established nationally representative YouGov panel of over one-million adults over the age of 18. The sample was constructed to be nationally representative by matching cases with three previously conducted surveys. The 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) was used to match for gender, age, race, and education. The 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS) was used to match for voter registration and turnout status. Lastly, the 2007 Pew Religious Life Survey was used to match for interest in politics and party identification. The field period for the study was late January 2016, in the heat of the 2016 presidential primaries. The total number of cases obtained by the ANES 2016 pilot study was approximately 1200.

Table 1 provides the unweighted descriptive statistics for the sample used in analysis. The sample utilized a total of 874 White respondents from the ANES study.

As is generally expected from a sample of White voters (Hill, Hopkins and Huber 2019), respondents are generally more conservative, older, and better educated than the population writ large.

Outcome Variable

The ANES 2016 pilot study provides two possible measures on how a respondent feels about PC, we combined these measures to create a dichotomous "Political Correctness Rejection" (PC) variable. The two measures in the ANES study were worded slightly

differently, but at their core similarly addressed attitudes toward PC. The respective questions were worded as:

> There's been a lot of talk lately about "political correctness." Some people think that the way people talk needs to change with the times to be more sensitive to people from different backgrounds. Others think that this has already gone too far and many people are just too easily offended. Which is closer to your opinion?

And

> Some people think that the way people talk needs to change with the times to be more sensitive to people from different backgrounds. Others think that this has already gone too far and many people are just too easily offended. Which is closer to your opinion?

> Both items used the same response categories:

> The way people talk needs to change a lot [coded as 1]

> The way people talk needs to change a little [coded as 2]

> People are a little too easily offended [coded as 3]

> People are much too easily offended [coded as 4]

A dummy variable for the two wording variations was created, but this was an insignificant predictor in all models, therefore we treat these alternate wordings as a single outcome henceforth.

Explanatory Variables

Racial Resentment. Although we expect some independent and significant impact of political conservatism on rejection of political correctness, the primary purpose of our chapter is to assess whether these views are partially explained by racial resentment. Kinder and Sanders (1996) define racial resentment as a new subtler racism (relative to traditional racism) that is rooted anti-Black affect and beliefs that Blacks are violating ethics of hard work and individualism. In so doing, racial resentment as devised emphasizes cultural deficiencies of Blacks rather than biological deficits commonly associated with traditional Jim Crow racism.

While the concept of racial resentment is abstract and difficult to measure; it has been of particular interest to race scholars over the past five decades (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Roos, Hughes, and Reichelmann 2019). The ANES includes several questions that have been labeled as racial resentment in past research (Crombach's Alpha: 0.876; Hancock's H: 0.853). These questions include the following and responses ranged from agree strongly (1) to disagree strongly (5):

Tryhard: "If Blacks tried harder, they would do as well as Whites"

Irishup: "Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities worked their way up, Blacks should do the same without special favors."

Slavery: "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way up."

Tryhard: "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites."

We recreate here the latent variable measurement techniques for racial resentment presented in Roos et al. (2019), which yields a continuous variable for racial resentment with a mean around zero (.145), a lower bound of −2.037 and an upper bound of 1.361, with a standard deviation around 1.

White Guilt. Since the framework of a social dominance orientation (SDO) was developed by Pratto, the construct has been operationalized in a variety of ways. These range from belief in a just world in spite of racial inequality (Lipkus, 1991; Lipkus, Dalbert and Siegler 1996), moral outrage at racial injustice-or rather a lack thereof being associated with SDO (Wakslak et al. 2007), and feelings toward redistributive policy (Lowery et al. 2007; Esping-Andersen 1990). But arguably the most consistent proxy for SDO is a sense of collective guilt among members of a dominant racial group (Kugler, Cooper, and Nosek 2010; Powell, Branscombe and Schmitt 2005).

White guilt has been extensively studied in this context, as it is indicative of how the individual interprets historic race relations and whether status-quo racial inequality is unjust or completely justifiable within a social dominance context (Swim and Miller 1999; Pinterits, Poteat, and Spanierman 2009). Spencer (1994) that proposed that White guilt and political correctness are inherently linked, because they are both fundamentally stem from recognizing the imbalance of power between dominant and subordinate social groups. In the American context, this means recognizing and acting in response to the legacy of White social dominance. Previous authors (Dull et al. 2021; Swim and Miller 1999) found guilt over a history of racial hegemony and/or status quo racial inequality, is a key antecedent for dominant group members in rejecting the ideology of social dominance.

Accordingly, our study utilizes a collection of three ANES variables concerning White guilt as a proxy for SDO. The variables utilize Likert scales to establish if the respondent "Feels(s) guilty due to association with the White race," "Feel(s) guilty/Not guilty about privileges and benefits received as a White," and "Feel(s) guilty/Not guilty about social inequality." These three variables correlated reasonably well with each other (alpha = .88), thus they were collapsed into a single summative scale (wglt). To maintain consistency in interpretation with the racial resentment variable, White guilt was coded so that a higher value represents *less* White guilt. A similar index was derived from the ANES 2016 pilot study by Chudy et al. (2019).

Education. The ANES study collected information on educational attainment for each respondent who took the survey. As noted, the sample was constructed to be

nationally representative on a variety of demographic factors, including education. The education variable (educ) established the highest level of education obtained by re- spondents based on six categories: "No high school," High school graduate," "Some college," "2-year college degree," 4-year college degree," and "Post-graduate college degree."

Analytical Strategy

Given we measure rejection of political correctness as a collapsed ordinal variable of an underlying unobserved construct, multivariate analysis was done with a generalized ordered logit model (also known as a proportional odds model). This technique is preferable to a standard ordinal logit when the researcher suspects that coefficients (or odds ratios) for some covariates may vary across levels of the dependent variable. While it is the case that a series of ordinary least squares regressions is possible, the generalized ordered logit is preferable in this context as it provides easier to interpret results without violating key statistical assumptions (Williams 2016).

Along with presenting proportional odds associated with the generalized ordered logit model, partial proportional odds are also given for a series of binary logistic regressions for various categories of the ordinal outcome variable that are collapsed in a series of ways into binary categories. Aside from the benefit of providing more granular summaries of the relationships, uniformity of results between the generalized ordered logit model and the various binary logistic regressions confirms we did not violate the proportional odds assumption of our model. The first model in our multivariate analysis is derived from our generalized ordinal logit while the second model is derived from the series of binary logistic regressions.

Findings

Table 2 below presents proportional odds of moving-up a step in the ordinal PC re- jection variable for each unit change in the explanatory and control variables. The outcome variable is PC rejection (pcall). The explanatory variables are racial re- sentment (rr), educational attainment (educ), and White guilt (wglt). The control variables are conservatism (cons), liberalism (lib), age (age), and a gender dummy variable (female). Political orientation dummies were drawn from a scale that asks if the respondent considers themselves either "Very," "Somewhat," or "Closer to" being liberal or conservative- or "Neither liberal nor conservative." Anybody that leaned toward one side of the political orientation spectrum were coded as "1" in their re- spective dummy variable. The partial proportional odds are also presented in the case that an effect is more pronounced at particular steps in the variable. To interpret these proportional odds; the likelihood of moving from the lowest category of PC rejection to the second lowest category increases by 109.3% for a one unit increase in racial re- sentment. The likelihood to move from the bottom two categories to the top two is greater, 130.3% for a one unit increase in resentment, and this grows to 210.6% for the

Table 2. Ordinal and Generalized Ordinal Logistic Regression Models.

	Model 1: proportional odds		Model 2: partial proportional odds[†]	
	tcl vs tcL, alo, amo	tcl, tcL vs alo amo	tcl, tcL, alo vs amo	
Racial resentment	2.490***	2.093***	2.303***	3.106***
Educational attainment	1.107+	1.103+		
White guilt	1.760***	1.825***		
Liberal leaning	.710	.658		
Conservative leaning	1.575+	.520+	1.623+	1.607+
Female	.680*	.678*		
Age	.995	.995		

All models estimated with survey weights.
N = 874; Odds Ratios.
pcall categories.
tcl = The way people talk needs to change a lot.
tcL = The way people talk needs to change a little.
alo = People are a little too easily offended.
amo = People are much too easily offended.
p < .05; *p < .01; **p < .001; ***p < .1=+ (not considered significant).
[†]Following Williams 2016; only one set of coefficients is presented for covariates that meet the proportional odds assumption.

last step. This is a monotonic increase in the effect of racial resentment on likelihood of rejecting PC, growing stronger the more likely to reject PC a respondent is, and this monotonic increase is independent of other covariates.

Additionally, in the figures below, you can see the predicted probabilities for a given case falling into each category of the PC variable based on a case's response on racial resentment (Figure 1), White guilt (Figure 2), or educational attainment (Figure 3). Each outcome on the PC variable is represented with a corresponding line, with outcome 1 representing the most pro-PC stance and outcome 4 representing the most anti-PC stance.

As was the case with Carter and Roos (2020), racial resentment proved to have a positive association with rejection of PC that was highly significant. The effect is somewhat more pronounced for respondents whose opinion on PC was "People are much too easily offended." This lends firm support to the first hypothesis. As can be seen (Figure 1), respondents who agreed with that stance on PC were the only respondents more likely to fall into the highest racial resentment category than any of the lower categories on racial resentment.

In support of hypothesis 2, white guilt also exhibited a significant negative association (recall the reverse coding scheme) with rejection of PC, with those exhibiting higher levels of White guilt being approximately 50% less likely to reject PC, across all cut points. These two results allow us to firmly reject the null hypothesis for the first and second hypotheses respectively and confirm that racial resentment is positively
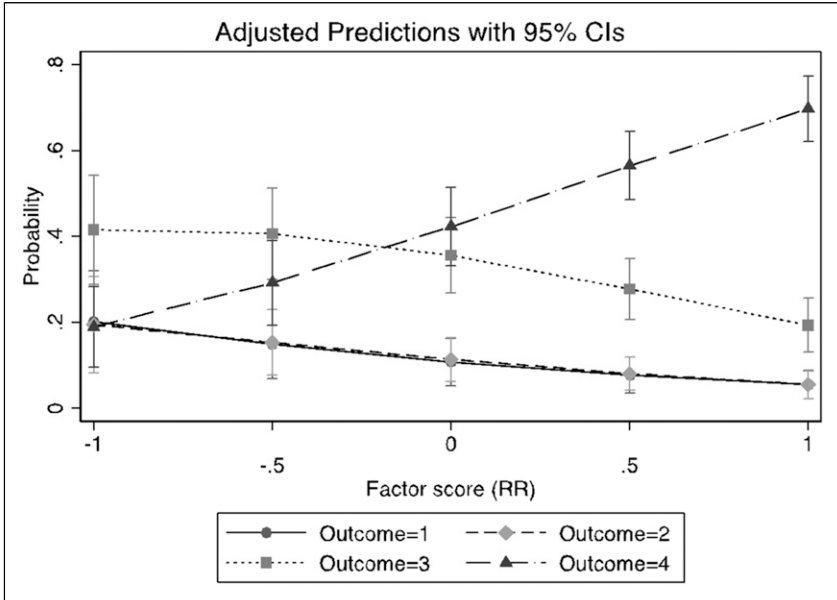
Figure 1. Probabilities of various levels of PC rejection by levels of racial resentment.
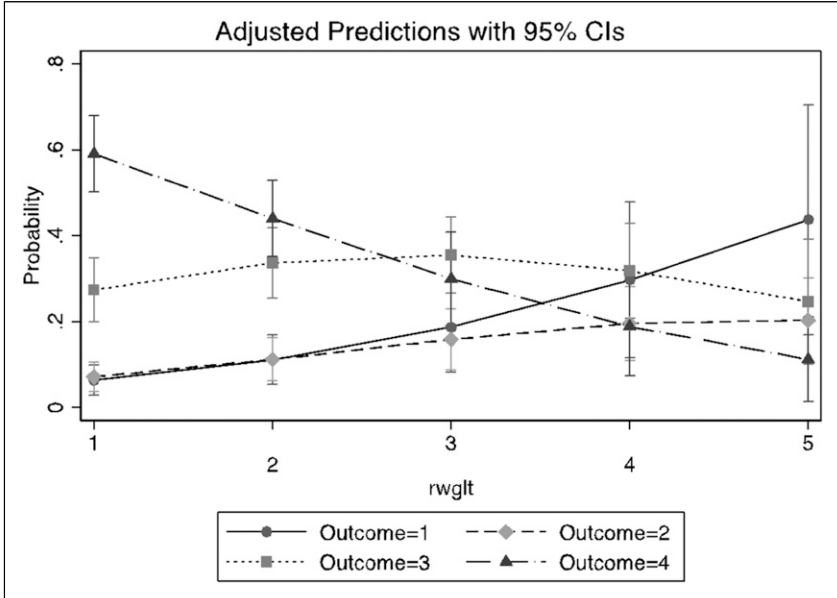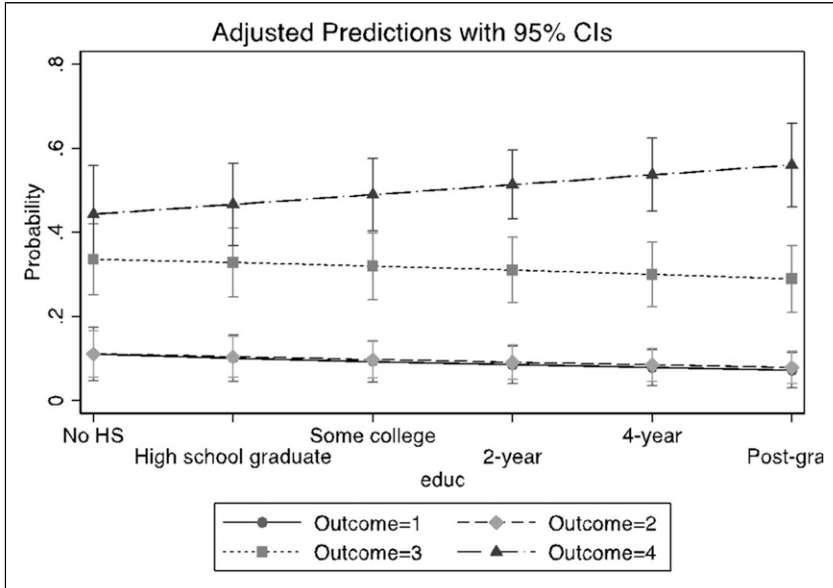

Figure 2. Probabilities of various levels of PC rejection by levels of white guilt.

Figure 3. Probabilities of various levels of PC rejection by educational attainment.

associated with PC rejection and White guilt negatively associated. The generalized ordinal logit allows for some coefficients to vary across steps in the outcome variable; and here we have allowed coefficients for Racial Resentment and conservative identification to vary as these coefficients failed the Brant test after estimating a standard ordinal logit model. Coefficients are transformed to odds ratios just as with standard ordinal logit regression.

It is also the case that one category on our variable is distinctly most likely to reject PC; those that express the least White guilt.

Equally notable is what is not significant in the models. Education does not have a significant effect on the odds of rejecting PC. We are unable to reject the null for the third and fourth hypothesis, and it can be presumed that educational attainment has little to no moderating effect on the relationship between PC rejection and racial resentment or White guilt. We found no evidence of a moderating effect of education for either white guilt or racial resentment on anti-PC attitudes. This was the case in both full models and simplified trivariate models.

Educational attainment produces almost no discernible change in the likelihood of a respondent falling into the lower to categories of PC rejection. Increased education among respondents appears to make it marginally more likely to fall into the highest category of PC rejection ("People are much too easily offended") and marginally less likely to fall into the third highest category ("People are a little too easily offended"). Though, as stated previously, education is not significant in our model displayed in

Table 3. Regression Models With Factorial for Education.

	Model 3	Model 4
Racial resentment	.487***	—
White guilt	—	.564***
Education	.035	−.050
Racial resentment*education	.014	—
White guilt*education	—	.029
Liberal leaning	−.189	−.400***
Conservative leaning	.144	.239**
Female	−.118	−.087
Age	−.000	−.002
PCDummy	−.082	−.077
R-squared	.3377	.3055

All models estimated with survey weights.
n = 874.
p < .05; **p* < .01; ***p* < .001; ****p* < .1=+ (not considered significant).

Table 2. When removed from the model, coefficients for racial resentment and White guilt change very little. Those with higher levels of PC rejection are somewhat more likely to have a higher level of education (Figure 3), but that does not correspond with a significant proportional odds coefficient. Thus, it is likely the result of natural variance within the sample.

As can be seen in Table 3, to further assess the impact of education as a moderating variable of white guilt and racial resentment, we include interaction terms in the model. Results demonstrate that again education had little effect. Education did not alter the impact of either racial resentment or white guilt on anti-PC views as predicted by hypotheses 3 and 4. With respect to hypothesis 3, the interaction between racial resentment and education was not significant; thus, the impact of racism on anti-PC views did not change as education increased. Said another way, the effect of racial resentment was similar among those with higher education as those with lower. Similarly for hypothesis 4, the interaction between white guilt and education was not significant; thus, the impact of white guilt on anti-PC views did not change as education increased. Thus, the effect of white guilt on views two PC was not impacted by being highly educated.

In summation, our analysis produced mixed results in terms of supporting our hypotheses. Both racial resentment and White guilt significantly predict the likelihood of PC rejection. This suggests that rejection of PC is often not straight-forward or done in good faith. Rather, this rejection rides atop an undercurrent of animosity based on race, and at very least an ambivalence toward hierarchal racial relations. At the same time, educational attainment does not significantly predict rejection of PC, nor does it impact that relationship that racial resentment or White guilt have on the likelihood of

PC rejection. Given the previously discussed competing bodies of literature that decisively suggest increased educational attainment either makes an individual more or less likely to pursue racialized social dominance, the null result in our analysis is surprising.

Discussion

The variables that showed to impact PC attitudes were the variables more intrinsic to racial attitudes. As was the case with Carter and Roos (2020), racial resentment was positively associated with the rejection of PC. This association only strengthened as respondents were shown to be more and more fervently opposed to PC. This result fundamentally bolsters the case that objection to PC among Americans is substantially motivated by racism. White guilt was negatively associated with rejection of PC. While White guilt only reflects one aspect of a social dominance orientation and serves an indirect indicator for the concept, this does lend credence to the notion of anti-PC stances being a rhetorical strategy in the maintenance of social dominance and the status-quo racial hierarchy-even if it is the case that education does not seem to bolster this effort. The association between White guilt and anti-PC attitudes is like the association Chudy et al. (2019) found between White guilt and opposition to racially progressive policies.

Concerning the competing narratives on the role of education and anti-PC sentiments, our analysis provided a rather striking assertation: education is not the moderating variable thought by some. That is to say, there is no significant interaction between racial resentment and guilt with education on anti-PC views. Thus, being at higher levels of education does not mean the impact of racial resentment is reduced nor does it mean that impact of white guilt increases. This result stands in stark contrast to what has become the prevailing narrative surrounding PC- that higher education is a panacea for racism and provides individuals with greater insights into issues faced by marginalized groups. In contrast to our proxy for social dominance orientation, it was clear that an increase in education did not increase the effect of guilt among our sample. Furthermore, it is also clear that an increase in education did not reduce the impact of racial resentment as well. As such, these findings provide little support that anti-PC viewpoints are born out of a genuine belief in conservative ideals. As implied by past scholars, the anti-PC movements seems more and more like another rhetorical strategy meant to minimize issues of racism and discrimination while propping up a racist ideology that benefits whites.

What motivates anti-PC stances among White Americans (and some non-Whites) is a subject ripe for further research and is surprisingly not well understood for a concept that fundamentally defines our current political moment. The emotional underpinnings are increasingly well understood, as racial animosity clearly plays a substantial role. But what spurs individuals to utilize this stance as a rhetorical tool for social dominance should be further explored. Understanding these rhetorical tools is arguably even more vital than understanding the emotions of grievance that undergird them, as they serve as

the direct justification for policies that tangibly maintain racial inequality. While education is a natural place to start, other political, demographic, and class dimensions of difference among White Americans could provide more viable explanatory factors.

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