The Desperate Need to Better Understand & Adapt to the Public's Needs: Assessing the

Relationship Between Populism & Racial Attitudes in 2020

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Abstract

The subfield of American political behavior is struggling to catch up with a rapidly changing electorate that is heading towards a potentially undemocratic future. Contemporary efforts to gauge sources of populist attitudes have shed light on economic and cultural forces that can help explain recent instances of populism in the U.S. and Europe (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mols & Jetten, 2016; Patenaude, 2016; Rhodes-Purdy et al., 2021; Spruyt et al., 2016). Using data from the 2020 American National Election Study (ANES), I analyze four indices of populism: 'majoritarian rough politics', 'distrust of government', 'declinism', and 'distrust of experts', as measured by James Guth & Lyman Kellstedt (2021). To help explain the individual-level variation among each of these themes, I consider the effect of individuals' racial resentment scores, hostility to immigration, traditionalism, and scores on the ANES egalitarianism index alongside political, economic, and demographic controls. Having a better understanding of the underpinnings of contemporary populist sentiment can redirect policy and political institutions to address the sources of disillusionment. I also consider the insufficiencies of traditional measurements of racial attitudes in my discussion of the results.

Introduction

The existing historical and contemporary literature is expansive on the concept of populism. Yet, competing theories still exist that attribute different, and often converging, factors that affect the likelihood of rising populism in a society. In terms of the theories guiding previous literature on the sources of populism, much of the literature seems to belong to one of two camps. The first camp presupposes the determining effect of the economy on populism (Autor et al., 2016; Colantone and Stanig, 2018; Goodwin & Heath, 2016; Kriesi et al., 2006; Patenaude, 2019; Rodrik, 2018; Spruyt et al., 2016). These works have contributed to our knowledge of

economic processes and their capacity to produce 'winners' and 'losers' that transform the dynamics of societal mobilization as exemplified by globalization (Kriesi et al., 2006). Research on this issue has found that economic factors can predict support for right-wing and left-wing populism (Autor et al., 2016; Colantone and Stanig, 2018; Rodrik, 2018).

A dominating theory driving research on the economic factors affecting populism is the 'left behind' thesis. Willis Patenaude (2019) is driven to believe that contemporary levels of income inequality in the U.S. are rising to heights that are likely to generate anger and feelings of discontent among a specific group that faces 'disproportionate' threats: white, rural, and less educated Americans. Patenaude claims that the events of the 2008 financial crisis, along with a realignment of values around equity and fairness could have primed this demographic for increased reception of populist values. This theory drives the author to distinguish 'economic anxiety' and 'racial resentment' as the two independent variables of significance in his study. Similarly, Bram Spruyt and his colleagues (2016) are driven by the same worldview; they believe that globalization has created 'losers' that are weakened in positionality whose newfound vulnerability is likely lead them to believe in an 'us' vs. 'them' mentality that characterizes populism. Instead of looking at economic anxiety as the previous example, they choose to distinguish 'education' and 'educational identification' as the main independent variables since the less educated are seen to be facing the heavy economic losses by globalization and the knowledge economy. They build on this to theorize that the creation of an identity group built out of this frustration could be the driving force of populist attitudes.

The second camp presupposes that the determining factors on populism are cultural rather than economic. (Guth & Kellstedt, 2021; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Inglehart & Norris, 2017). Inglehart and Norris (2016) are more interested in cultural backlash as their main independent

variable comprised of five cultural value scales that include anti-immigration, mistrust in global governance, mistrust in national governance, authoritarian values, and right-wing self-placement. They believe that when cultural effect is controlled for, economic insecurity will no longer play a significant role in determining support for populist leaders since they are guided by the theory of populism rising as a reaction to the silent revolution of value change. They believe that the change of values is spurring a counterrevolution by older, white, and less educated populations that are embracing traditional values vehemently, leading them to embrace populism as well. James Guth and Lyman Kellstedt (2021) are instead concerned with another cultural effect, that of religion. Building on the theoretical frameworks of ethnocultural theory and religious restructuring, they believe that competing theologies have established historical divisions across party lines that sustain today. They theorize that this relationship as well as Donald Trump's religious appeal throughout his campaign and term in office have contributed to the sustained role of religion in determining political attitudes and therefore propensity towards populist attitudes. Therefore, they place religion, measured by 'ethnoreligious tradition' and 'theology' as the main independent variables of their study.

More recent efforts have been bridging this divide in the literature by simultaneously assessing cultural and economic factors that inform one another. Rhodes-Purdy and his colleagues (2021) are driven by a theoretical explanation in line with Patenaude and Spruyt's discussed above, as they believe that perceived economic threat causes anxiety and anger among individuals that alienates them by making them feel as though they are not respected in society due to their values or identities. They believe that the effects of the economy bleed into other facets of political and social life, such as cultural discontent, due to the strong emotions associated with economic losses that manifest themselves into populist attitudes. Therefore, their

primary independent variable is 'affective political economy' and 'cultural grievances'. This is in line with Frank Molls & Jolanda Jetten's (2016) approach, in which they determine the main independent variables to be 'perceived relative deprivation' and 'perceived relative gratification'. They are trying to assess how populism can gain traction during times of economic prosperity and are driven by the theory that perceived threat can be employed to mobilize supporters for populist politicians just as real threats over the economy are able to do.

Outside of the debate between economic and cultural factors lie some literature that attributes populism to other causes. One example of this is a study that is driven by a theory around anger and anxiety similar to Rhodes-Purdy's (2021) article discussed earlier. What distinguishes this article is that they believe these feelings are mediated by feelings of nostalgia that arise to help individuals cope with threats, especially concerning national identity (van Prooijen et al., 2022). Therefore, they test out their theory by utilizing measures of 'personal' and 'collective nostalgia' as their main independent variables.

The literature heavily indicates that populism arises out of perceived threat among individuals. Van Prooijen and his colleagues (2022) find that experiences of threat, anger more so than anxiety, induce nostalgia and subsequent support for populist movements through their observational study. While their experiment failed to find a causal effect between induced nostalgia and populist attitudes, their third study showed that exposure to populist rhetoric induces feelings of nostalgia, which subsequently increases populist attitudes. Rhodes-Purdy and his colleagues (2021) similarly find anger and fear to be playing a huge role in attracting individuals to populism. They find that these feelings develop as a response to perceptions of economic threat, and anger again here is found to have a significant effect by inducing cultural discontent. This cultural discontent is significantly associated with the dimensions of populism

they measured. Patenaude (2019) confirms that economic threat is a driving force behind populism as the data in 2010 and 2016 corroborate that populist support occurs when economic anxiety is heightened or in times of economic crises and recession. They find that economic concerns shape attitudes around immigration and racial resentment. As a result, there was a positive relationship between Modern American Populism (MAP) and racial resentment, but the effect of racial resentment would be weakened without economic anxiety. Interestingly, Mols and Jetten (2016) find evidence to suggest that even in times of economic success, symbolic threat narratives can divert from the healthy economy to instill threats over relative gratification that attracts people to populism.

Consistent with economic explanations, Spruyt and his colleagues (2016) find a significant effect of education on populist attitudes. They also find an identity component embedded in the effect of education; the stronger less educated people feel that they are similar to others with similar education levels, the stronger they support populism. This indicates that education alone is not the only predictor of populist beliefs, but that the threat of losing power to the more educated is playing a large role as well. Inglehart and Norris (2016) also find that identity plays a large role as the greatest support for populist parties was among older voters, men, more religious individuals, the less educated, and majority populations. These are groups that have historically held more power, but progressive tides of value changes may threaten that power. Populist support was strengthened by all five of their cultural value scales, and they conclude that those combined with demographic controls explain support for European populist parties more so than any other factors, including economic insecurity, challenging Patenaude's findings. The final study similarly asserts the importance of identity and culture, Guth and Kellstedt (2021) find that religion has a significant effect on populist attitudes. Specifically,

theology but also to a lesser degree ethnoreligious tradition were observed to have large effects on two dimensions of populism: 'majoritarian rough politics' and 'distrust of experts', and a slightly smaller effect on 'distrust of government'. The attitudinal structures or policy beliefs they use to gauge conservative populism: white nationalism, social traditionalism, and welfare chauvinism were all affected significantly by conservative theology and to a slightly lesser degree by ethnoreligious tradition. These results suggest that economic, social, and cultural threats as well as identity politics propel populist attitudes and subsequent support for populists.

This study builds on the theories and findings of previous studies by exploring how economic and cultural concerns can culminate around racial attitudes, making racial attitudes predictors of populist attitudes and behavior due to their capacity to develop out of perceived threats and a salience of identity. Assessing possible causes and predictors of populist attitudes helps us gain a better understanding of the citizenry and their anxieties responsible for belief in populist attitudes. Therefore, we should be examining any possible elements that may help explain why populism is gaining traction and undermining democracy. This study examines individual-level variation of populist attitudes to discern what other factors, beyond what previous research has observed, can predict belief in populist dimensions among the American population.

Theory & Hypotheses

Much of the literature on this topic attributes feelings of threat and concerns about identity as propellants of populist attitudes. Inglehart and Norris (2017) explain that insecurity has fostered feelings of cultural discontent or backlash that induces individuals to support populist authoritarian parties. They attribute this insecurity to the silent revolution and rise in postmaterialist values among younger generations that created a new political axis with an

emphasis on non-economic issues. Inglehart and Norris outline "peace, environmental protection, human rights, democratization, and gender equality" as some of the issues that have garnered support as a result of the silent revolution and shift toward post-materialist values that have been more hospitable to social change. It might be beneficial to probe how these dynamics have manifested themselves differently in the United States compared to other affluent states, especially due to the distinctive nature of American politics and the American Political Economy as a result of systemic racial division (Hacker et al., 2022). The American political environment is highly racialized; despite seeming to follow other developed nations in the trajectory toward postmaterialist values, the actual value systems that have changed in recent decades might be more prevalent on issues regarding race.

This dynamic is observed in recent literature on political tolerance among Americans, where only tolerance of hate speech is declining, while tolerance of other controversial groups is not decreasing at all (Boch, 2020; Chong et.al, 2021). Younger and more educated people are becoming 'less tolerant' only in so far as they are socialized to disapprove of hate speech, indicating a growing focus on the effect of marginalized groups and the relationship between equity and the 1st amendment. This new cohort utilizes a double standard, which underscores a growing focus on equity, and not necessarily equality. They are distinguishing between groups and accounting for perceived harm instead of equally applying the 1st amendment. What was once not a racial consideration, now is. This change of values could be attributed to a top-down process where the white Liberal demographic is producing and consuming what reaffirms their beliefs. This could also indicate a realignment of values based on an emphasis on equity, rather than equality which has been pushed by community-based and grassroots actions and political and social movements in recent years. Historical considerations of the lack of necessary

initiatives to right the wrongs of pre-civil rights era laws have led to the prevalence of attitudes centering on empowerment of marginalized communities, specifically the Black community.

Amid these considerations, recent works across different disciplines have observed how racism has been employed to fuel populist sentiment. Ariel Hochschild's (2016) sociological investigation into support for Trump among Louisiana Tea Party supporters sheds light on the perceived disenfranchisement of working and middle-class Southern whites. Their declining economic conditions may have initially sparked feelings of discontent, but when their complaints were met with contempt and pushback due to the change in value systems that characterized their complaints as bigoted and politically incorrect, they were driven to further resent social and cultural changes in society making them susceptible to Trump's rhetoric and appeal.

What Hochschild observed through her field work fits into the larger Republican strategy that has been able to maintain support from their base despite the disconnect between the Republican party's stance and the realities of disaffected white working-class voters who stand to benefit from an increased role of the state and social safety nets (Grumbach et al., 2022). The Republican party employing racialized rhetoric to increase the salience of identity among their base in "red spaces" has blurred the line between economic and cultural grievances. As a result, second dimension social issues such as racial and cultural backlash have become the central focus for economically disadvantaged whites (Grumbach et al., 2022). This newly radicalized subset of the American population is likely to express their dissatisfaction of their declining material status by rejecting the recent changes around race and the inclusion of minorities.

Recent studies have attempted to explain voter support for Donald Trump and found that, unsurprisingly, opposition to immigration (Cox at al., 2017) and racial resentment (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018) were both major predictors of support for Trump in the 2016 election. The

rising salience of identity among the American electorate could be responsible for the rise in

populist attitudes and decline in democratic confidence observed in recent years. If populist

attitudes arise out of feelings of self-preservation amid perceived threat and insecurity, we might

expect racial attitudes to be predictors of populist attitudes in 2020. Considering the populist

elements in Donald Trump's rhetoric, it might be the case that what explains the variations

among candidate support in 2016 can also explain variations among populist attitudes among the

American electorate. Therefore, my first testable hypothesis is based on the theory that

disaffected white Americans are perceiving their dissatisfaction around rising economic

inequality in racialized terms driving them towards increased populist belief.

H1- Higher scores on the 'Racial Resentment' index will predict increased belief in populist

attitudes.

Considering the amount of previous literature attributing populism to dynamics arising

out of globalization, we might observe that anti-immigrant sentiment be another predictor of

populist belief as well. Therefore, my second hypothesis is based on the theory that disaffected

working-class Americans, and those without a college degree, are likely to perceive their

declining status an effect of immigration and cultural change.

H2- Anti-immigrant sentiments will predict increased belief in populist attitudes.

The changing value belief systems around equity and the historical considerations of

marginalized identities is undergirded by an element of justice. Therefore, we may expect people

with a heightened concern of justice and the belief that people are entitled to equal opportunities,

to be much more accepting of this change and less likely to resort to populist rhetoric in reaction

to the changing dynamics.

H3- Higher belief in egalitarian values will predict decreased belief in populist attitudes.

My last hypothesis then is based on the idea that those that emphasize tradition, and a rigid and unchanging moral standard would be much more likely to feel left behind than those that support adjusting our view of morals to better fit today's society. Since those feeling left behind are more prone to populist appeals, those that reject today's changing morals would be more likely to hold populist attitudes.

H4- Rejection of changing morals within society will predict increased belief in populist attitudes.

Operationalizing Populism

To be able to measure populism, we need to identify its characteristic features. Cas Mudde (2004) reduced populism to its core components: anti-elitism, antagonism between the elite and the people, and the belief that politics should respond to people's general will. This conceptualization of populism delineates populism as an ideology that moves beyond dissatisfaction with politicians and the political process, but instead includes an entire belief system concerning political representation and preferences of ordinary people over elites to be in governing positions (Spruyt, 2016).

There are a multitude of ways researchers have been attempting to broach the concept of populism, all of which have been extremely valuable to our understanding of populism as it develops within and across societies. Much of the literature is attempting to distinguish what, among individuals, causes people to resort to populism (Guth & Kellstedt, 2021; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Mols & Jetten, 2016; Patenaude, 2019; Spruyt et al., 2016; van Prooijen et al., 2022). Others attempt to distinguish what changes in society cause people to resort to populism (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Rhodes-Purdy et al., 2021). While both approaches are interested in

discerning the origins of populism, the analysis of attributes among individuals versus the analysis of societal-level attributes have driven previous research in different directions.

Even among those interested in the same research question, looking at what attracts individuals to populism, the authors slightly diverge in the measures of populism they employ. Before developing measures that tap into populist attitudes, the literature relied on employing measures of political trust and external political efficacy. While measures of political trust are helpful in providing insight into individuals' anti-elitist attitudes, it fails to tap into the other components of populism (Geurkink et al., 2019). Previous literature finds a correlation between levels of trust and voter support for populist parties (Akkerman et al., 2017; Norris, 2005), however these trends were more consistent for supporters of right-wing populist parties than supporters of left-wing populist parties. Past research has also found exceptions to this relationship in specific contexts (Norris, 2005), which warns us about measuring populism exclusively with measures of trust. External political efficacy, understood as feelings of one's ability to influence the political process and extent to which the political process is responsive to one's demands (Craig, 1979), can tap into feelings of political discontent inherent in populism (Rodujin et al., 2016). However, they both fail to capture the essence of populism by not tapping into the antagonistic relationship between a corrupt elite and a superior 'people' whose will should prevail. Therefore, to capture all of the elements of populism, we have to resort to developing measures that simultaneously tap into the specific elements outlined by Mudde. The political attitudes approach is currently the traditional method of measuring populism among individuals (Akkerman et al., 2014; Castanho Silva et al., 2019), and has been observed to be a good predictor of voting for populist parties (Akkerman et al., 2014; Hawkins et al., 2018).

Spruyt and his colleagues (2016) as well as Jan-Willem van Prooijen and his colleagues (2022) choose to measure populist attitudes utilizing the measure constructed by Agnes Akkerman, Cas Mudde, and Andrej Zaslove in 2014. This is an 8-items populist attitudes scale to gauge the four ideals they believe to be central to populism: a belief in the separation of the 'people' from the 'elite' into two homogenous groups, an antagonistic relationship between said groups, a preference for the 'people' due to their virtuosity compared to the corrupt 'elite', and a belief in the 'people' being the main source of legitimacy. While Matthew Rhodes-Purdy's study (2021) is looking at societal changes instead, their measure of populism is somewhat similar, as they measure 3 dimensions of the concept: anti-elitism, popularism, and Manichaeism via the Castanho-Silva scale. Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2016) view populism as a loose political ideology comprising of a set of attitudes such as negative affect of politicians, emphasis of national interests, xenophobia, and traditional values. Yet, they do not attempt to measure these attitudes among individuals, and rather measure populism as support for populist parties.

This is also the case with two other studies that choose to measure populism based on voting behavior (Mols & Jetten, 2016; Patenaude, 2016). Both of these studies differ from Inglehart and Norris' research since they are specifically concerned with what they both call 'right-wing populism' rather than a broad conceptualization of the concept that also captures left-wing instances of populism. Specifically, Frank Molls and Jolanda Jetten (2016) capture populist attitudes through support for anti-immigration politicians while Willis Patenaude (2016) measures populism through votes for Richard Nixon in 1972, support for the Tea Party in 2010, and votes for Donald Trump in 2016. In another study that is interested in conservative populism (Guth & Kellstedt, 2021), the authors choose instead to employ another measure, one that is not too different from Akkerman's index of the Castanho-Silva scale, in fact it covers all the

dimensions used by the other measures while adding more policy dimensions to make up what they call an attitudinal complex that also takes account of 'white nationalism', 'declinism', and 'welfare chauvinism'.

In this study, to measure populist attitudes, my dependent variable. I am employing the four dimensions of populism outlined by Guth and Kellstedt (2021): 'Majoritarian Rough Politics', 'Distrust of Government', 'Declinism', and 'Distrust of Experts'. I employ this operationalization of populism since these elements are not unique to left-wing or right-wing strains of populism but can capture support for both strains of populism. I believe this measure to be more helpful in understanding the sources of populism than measuring voting behavior, since it will allow us to assess the effects of racial considerations on specific dimensions of populism. This measure taps into more items than Akkerman's measure, and therefore can provide us with a more nuanced account of populism as it relates to racial attitudes. Guth & Kellstedt ran a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to assess the applicability of items measured in each of their separate dimensions of populism, increasing my confidence in utilizing their dimensions to operationalize populism in this study. Unrotated first principal component scores from a PCA produced eigenvalues larger than 3, and all items loaded higher than .40.

The 'Majoritarian Rough Politics' index taps into the pluralist elements of populism, the belief in sovereignty belonging to the people, specifically the will of the majority. This ideology includes elements of authoritarianism since it includes the belief in the will of the majority over the rights of minorities and democratic and procedural safeguards (Guth & Kellstedt, 2021). This measure taps into 15 items from the ANES 2020 battery as seen in **Figure 1**.

The antagonism between the corrupt elite and the people that characterizes populism can be captured by the 'Distrust of Government' and 'Distrust of Experts' scales. The 'Distrust of

Figure 1- ANES Items Used to Measure Majoritarian Rough Politics
Support for force to deal with protest and unrest
Will of the majority should prevail over the rights of minorities
People are too easily offended by political language
Pro-gun Scale (4 items)
Minorities should adapt to existing customs and traditions
Authoritarianism scale (4 items)
Favoring strong leadership
Opposing limits to presidential power
Skeptical of Compromise

Figure 2- ANES Items Used to Measure Distrust of Government
Politicians do not care enough about the people
Politicians only care about the rich
Corruption is widespread among politicians
Politicians are the main problem
Politicians are untrustworthy
Government wastes money
Low trust in government to do what is right
Government is run by a few big interests

Government' index taps into 9 items from the 2020 ANES battery capturing the extent to which

individuals trust the government, perceived corruption inherent in government, and negative

characteristics of government such as lacking trustworthiness and caring more about the rich

than other people. The list of items tapping into this dimension of populism can be found in

Figure 2.

The third dimension of populism, 'Declinism' is the belief in hopelessness in the

country's situation in contrast to the better days the country has seen before. This index is

comprised of 16 items from the 2020 ANES battery (**Figure 3**) tapping into feelings of worry,

nervousness, fear, anger, irritation, outrage, unhappiness, and a lack of pride and hope about the

country, as well as believing that the country is on the wrong track, that the economy has gotten

worse over the past years, and that it has become much harder in the past 20 years to achieve

upward social mobility.

Figure 3- ANES Items Used to Measure Declinism
Worried about the country
Nervous about the country
Afraid for the country
Angry about the country
Irritated by the country
Outraged by the country
Unhappy about the country
Not proud about the country
Country is on wrong track
Not hopeful about the country
Economy has gotten worse over the past year
Mobility scale (4 items)
Income gap is larger than it was 20 years ago

Figure 4- ANES Items Used to Measure Distrust of Experts
Feeling thermometer of Anthony Fauci
Feeling thermometer of journalists
Science is not important for making decisions about COVID-19
Feeling thermometer toward scientists
Low trust in news media
Schools and media lie
Trusting ordinary people over experts to make public policy decisions
Do not need to rely on experts for information on science and health
Not worried about government undermining media's power
Risks of vaccinations outweigh their health benefits
Oppose vaccine requirements in schools
Favor restricting journalists' access

The last dimension of populism, 'Distrust of Experts' (**Figure 4**) taps into 12 items from the ANES battery. This measure captures negative attitudes of scientists, journalists, news media, and educational institutions. It also captures the divide between elite and ordinary people, and the preference of ordinary people to make decisions over policy, as well as apprehension about vaccine safety.

Data & Methods

Data Source

I use the 2020 American National Election Study survey of 8,240 respondents pre-election and 7,449 respondents post-election conducted via internet, phone, and video from August to December 2020 that is nationally representative of the adult U.S. population. The ANES contains items tapping into the populist attitudes in the four dimensions I am observing as well as a host of racial attitudes to examine the relationship between changing values around race and populism.

American National Election Studies. 2021. ANES 2020 Time Series Study Full Release [dataset and documentation]. July 19, 2021 version. www.electionstudies.org

Measures

The Independent variables I measure to assess what explains individual level variation in each of the populist attitudes discussed above are 'Racial Resentment', 'Opposition to Immigration', 'Egalitarianism', and 'Rejection of Changing Morals.'

Racial Resentment is measured on a scale of 1-5, where higher scores mean more racial resentment, comprised of a summary of responses to 4 equally weighted questions tapping into this attitude:

1. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors." (Agree)*
2. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class." (Disagree)*
3. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve." (Disagree)*
4. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "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." (Agree)*

Opposition to Immigration is measured on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means increased a lot, and 5 decreased a lot responding to the question:

- *"Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the United States to live should be increased a lot, increased a little, left the same as it is now, decreased a little or decreased a lot?"*

<u>Egalitarianism</u> is measured on a scale of 1-5, where higher scores mean more egalitarianism, comprised of a summary of responses to four equally weighted questions tapping into this attitude:

1. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed." (Agree)*
2. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: this country would be better off if we worried less about how equal people are." (Disagree)*
3. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "it is not really that big of a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others." (Disagree)*
4. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "If people were treated more equally in this country we would have fewer problems." (Agree)*

<u>Rejection of Changing Morals</u> is measured on a scale of 1-5, where 5 means increased rejection to changing morals, comprised of a summary of responses to two equally weighted questions tapping into this attitude:

1. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "The world is always changing and we should adjust our view of moral behaviors to those changes." (Disagree)*
2. *Agree/Disagree with the statement: "This country would have fewer problems if there were more emphasis on traditional family ties." (Agree)*

I also include measures of political, demographic, and economic controls that are all likely to have a considerable effect on individuals' populist attitudes. For political controls, I include a measure of partisanship, measured on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is strong Democrat and 7 is strong Republican. I also include a measure of self-identified political ideology measured on a scale of 1-7, where 1 means extremely liberal and 7 means extremely conservative. For demographic controls, I include measures of sex, age, race/ethnicity, religious group, and religious identification (with categorical responses: Charismatic/Pentecostal, Traditional, Mainline, progressive, Non-traditional believer, Secular etc.). Finally, I include two economic

controls, one of income, and another of economic insecurity. My measure of economic insecurity is measured on a scale of 1-5, where 1 means not at all worried, and 5 means extremely worried about the national economy.

I examine these independent variables' direct effects on my dependent variables, each of the populist dimensions discussed above (Majoritarian Rough Politics, Distrust of Government, Declinism, and Distrust of Experts) separately through OLS regression models. This method allows me to distinguish variations among different elements of populism that may act differently in response to who is occupying the presidency at the time.

Results

The OLS regression results are summarized in **Figure 5**, and while this table does not include the effects of education, age, income, and religion that were included in the model, I include a summary of the results of these independent variables in this section.

Majoritarian Rough Politics

For every point increase on the racial resentment index, an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics is predicted to be higher by .166 points. For every unit increase on the egalitarianism index, an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics is predicted to be lower by .095 points. For every one unit increase in my index of rejection of changing morals, an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics is predicted to be higher by .061 points. For every one unit increase in opposition to immigration, an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics is predicted to be higher by .036 points.

For a one unit increase in my measure of ideology, moving from 'Extremely Liberal' to 'Extremely Conservative', an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics is predicted to be higher by .061 points. For every unit increase in my measure of partisanship, moving from

Figure 5-OLS Regression Analysis on the Dimensions of Populism

	Majoritarian Rough Politics	Distrust of Government	Declinism	Distrust of Experts
Constant	2.063***	2.742***	3.363***	3.056***
	(.062)	(.082)	(.077)	(.113)
Racial Resentment	.166***	.060***	-.057***	.149***
	(.007)	(.009)	(.008)	(.013)
Opposition to Immigration	.036***	.038***	.001	.084***
	(.006)	(.008)	(.007)	(.010)
Egalitarianism	-.095***	.034**	.078***	-.182***
	(.008)	(.010)	(.010)	(.014)
Rejection of Changing Morals	.061***	-.003	-.035***	.125***
	(.007)	(.009)	(.009)	(.013)
Economic Insecurity	-.026***	.061***	.234***	-0.84***
	(.005)	(.007)	(.007)	(.010)
Party ID (Strong Democrat-Strong Republican)	.052***	.011*	-.080***	.095***
	(.004)	(.005)	(.005)	(.007)
Political Ideology (Extremely Liberal-Extremely Conservative)	.061***	.012	-0.41***	.093***
	(.006)	(.007)	(.007)	(.010)
Race (ref: white)				
Black	.168***	.013	-.155***	.357***
	(.021)	(.028)	(.026)	(.039)
Asian	-.101***	-.050	-.153***	-.125**
	(.027)	(.037)	(.035)	(.051)
R^2	.680	.091	.561	.594
N	5051	5299	5329	5219

Notes: This model also controlled for education, age, income, and religion.
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001
Standard error in parentheses
This is weighted to represent the national population.
Source: 2020 ANES

'Strong Democrat' to 'Strong Republican', an individual's support for majoritarian rough politics

is predicted to be higher by .052 points. Relative to being white, being Asian predicted a

decrease in individual's support for majoritarian rough politics by .101 points, but being Black predicted an increase of .168 points. Economic insecurity in this model seemed to have a surprising effect, with every degree of insecurity predicting a decrease in an individuals' support for majoritarian rough politics by .026 points.

Distrust of Government

For every point increase on the racial resentment index, an individual's distrust in government is predicted to be higher by .060 points. For every unit increase in opposition to immigration, an individual's distrust in government is predicted to be higher by .038 points. Contrary to my hypothesis, for every unit increase on the egalitarianism index, an individual's distrust in government is predicted to be higher by .034. However, my index of rejection of changing morals did not have a statistically significant effect on an individual's attitudes of distrust in government.

When controlling for all other variables, ideology, income, and sex all failed to prove they had a non-zero effect on individuals' attitudes of distrust in government. For every unit increase in my measure of partisanship, moving from 'Strong Democrat' to 'Strong Republican', an individual's distrust in government is predicted to be higher by .011 points. Every one degree of economic insecurity predicted an increase in distrust of government by .061 points. Relative to being white, identifying with multiple races predicted an increase in individual's distrust in government by .111 points while other races had no significant difference in their distrust of government.

Declinism

All variables held constant, the effect of opposition to immigration was statistically insignificant in relation to attitudes of declinism. Contrary to my hypotheses, for every point

increase on the racial resentment index, an individual's attitudes of declinism are predicted to be lower by .057 points. For every unit increase on the egalitarianism index, an individual's attitudes of declinism are predicted to be higher by .078 points. For every one unit increase of my index of rejection of changing morals, an individual's attitudes of declinism are predicted to be lower by .035 points.

For a one unit increase in my measure of ideology, moving from 'Extremely Liberal' to 'Extremely Conservative', an individual's attitudes of declinism are predicted to be lower by .041 points. For every unit increase in my measure of partisanship, moving from 'Strong Democrat' to 'Strong Republican', an individual's attitudes of declinism are predicted to be lower by .080 points. Every one degree of economic insecurity predicted an increase in distrust of government by .234 points. When controlling for all other variables, age, education, income, and sex all failed to prove they had a non-zero effect on individuals' scores on the declinism index. Relative to being white, being Black predicted a decrease in an individual's declinism score by .155 points, being Asian predicted a decrease in individual's declinism by .153 points, and being Hispanic predicted a decrease in declinism by .113 points.

Distrust of Experts

For every unit increase on the egalitarianism index, an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be lower by .182. For every point increase on the racial resentment index, an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be higher by .149 points. For every degree of rejection of changing morals, an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be higher by .125 points. For every one unit increase in opposition to immigration, an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be higher by .084 points.

For a one unit increase in my measure of ideology, moving from 'Extremely Liberal' to 'Extremely Conservative', an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be higher by .093 points. For every unit increase in my measure of partisanship, moving from 'Strong Democrat' to 'Strong Republican' an individual's distrust of experts is predicted to be higher by .095 points. Economic insecurity in this model continued to have a negative relationship, with every degree of insecurity predicting a decrease in an individuals' distrust of experts by .084 points. Relative to being white, being Black predicted an increase in individual's distrust of experts by .357 points and identifying with multiple races predicted an increase of .099 points. On the other hand, being Asian predicted a decrease in distrust of experts of .125 points.

Summary of Results

The effects of scores on the racial resentment index on individual variation of populist attitudes were statistically significant on all four dimensions of populism, confirming the predictive power of racial resentment on populism. As predicted by hypothesis 1, higher scores on the 'Racial Resentment' index predicted an increase in support for majoritarian rough politics, distrust of government, and distrust of experts. However, on one dimension of populism, declinism, racial resentment predicted a decrease in attitudes of declinism. This suggests that as a consequence of Donald Trump being in office at the time this survey was conducted, individuals with populist attitudes were hopeful and optimistic about the state of the country (Guth & Kellstedt, 2021). This same relationship was observed in terms of the effect of hostility to immigration. As predicted by hypothesis 2, anti-immigrant sentiments predicted an increase in support for majoritarian rough politics, distrust of government, and distrust of experts. However, the predictive effect of anti-immigrant sentiments lost its statistical significance entirely on declinist attitudes.

While the effects of racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment on distrust of government confirmed the relationships described in hypotheses 1 and 2, that was not the case for some of the other variables used in this study. As predicted by hypothesis 3, higher belief in egalitarian values predicted a decrease in support for majoritarian rough politics and decreased distrust of experts. However, the relationship switched on the other two dimensions of populism, where egalitarianism instead predicted increased distrust of government and declinist attitudes. This was also the case for rejection of changing morals, which as predicted by hypothesis 4, predicted an increase in support for majoritarian rough politics, and distrust of government. Contrary to hypothesis 4, rejecting changing morals had no effect on distrust of government, and predicted a decrease in declinist attitudes. Considering that political ideology also lost its predictive power on distrust of government, and the effect of partisanship was significantly dampened, it should not be too concerning that egalitarianism and rejection of changing morals did not affect this dimension of populism in the expected directions. This can also be observed with the effects of economic insecurity, which predicted decreased support for majoritarian rough politics and decreased distrust of experts but predicted increased distrust of government and increased declinist attitudes. However, it is worth noting that since racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment remained strong predictors of distrust of government in 2020, this increases confidence in our results connecting racial attitudes to populism.

In terms of the control variables included in the model, the results of sex were inconsistent while the results of income were only significant in predicting attitudes concerning majoritarian rough politics and distrust of experts. Education seemed to have no statistically significant effect on declinist attitudes but predicted low levels of the other populist attitudes. Similarly, age had a significant effect on the three other dimensions of populism (majoritarian

rough politics, distrust of government, and distrust of experts) but the relationship observed here was surprising, as increases in age predicted a decrease in populist attitudes on this dimension. Religion had inconsistent effects, while Evangelical Protestantism predicted higher populist attitudes than Catholicism or Jewishness, there was no statistically significant difference between self-ascribed progressives and traditional believers on most dimensions of populism.

Discussion

Racism has always been a substantively important issue facing American political, social, and economic life. For as long as political scientists have been grappling with the concept of race and racial attitudes, the field nevertheless fails to answer our questions due to the difficulties facing methodological study. The racial resentment scale has been upheld as the standard measure of racism, or specifically anti-black affect among white respondents for years, aimed to measure the new form of racism (symbolic racism) that is believed to be acquired through socialization. Researchers developed this measure to distinguish a 'new' form of racism, in contrast to old-fashioned racism (OFR) that is much more blatant and direct (Tesler, 2013). Kinder and Sears (1981) found this measure of 'symbolic racism' to be a driving force of political behavior among the white population, as prejudice seems to be a major determinant of voting behaviors. Since then, the conversations around race, both in the canon and mainstream, have transformed considerably. The literature on the subject in the past three decades has helped us reach a better understanding of this measure, specifically in that it has become a tool to show perceptions about sources of political inequality, rather than as a measure of racism itself (Cramer, 2020). Researchers have grappled with the efficacy of the racial resentment scale, often calling it the "racial animosity scale". While some efforts shine a light on the scale being a valid measure of antiblack prejudice by tapping predispositions on issues that cannot be explained by

conservative ideals (Wallsten et al., 2017). Other research doubles down on this question and finds that the scale is measuring attitudes on conservatism and fairness more so than just racism. Ziegerell's work on this issue found that even statistical controls are insufficient in diluting the conservative components of the scale. Symbolic racism, as measured by the racial resentment scale, is too closely tied with nonracial dependent variables, making it difficult to associate high scores on the scale with anti-black prejudice (Zigerell, 2015). When researchers used the racial resentment scale for other identities, they found significant evidence that the scale captures broad and general resentment to many groups, consistent with the just world belief or a psychological orientation that the world rewards those who work hard (Carney and Enos, 2017). However, when attempting to differentiate between symbolic and operational ideology, Adam Enders (2021), found that while ideological self-identification correlates with racial resentment, ideological principles do not. Challenging the "principled conservatism thesis", Enders (2021) finds that racial resentment acts as a good predictor of racial policy issues, and he suggests that partisan cueing may be the culprit of the connection between ideology and racial resentment. Racial resentment predicting populist attitudes could be a consequence of the Republican party employing "dog whistles" and racial cues (Mendelberg, 2001).

Even if we understand the racial resentment scale to be a better measure of worldview and ideology than bigotry, we should be striving to investigate the relationship between seemingly nonracial or race blind attitudes and attitudes explicitly about race and understand how they relate to one another beyond the surface. This could help shed light on this country's history that has produced a unique and specific form of anti-black prejudice that is undeniably tied to a broader system of beliefs. The historic plight of Black Americans has brought on decades of policy and action that has been able to achieve much needed progress that undeniably

transformed the American political, social, and economic spheres. These actions and policies have always faced backlash from considerable shares of the population and political society. Contemporary efforts that have mobilized around racial equity receives the same treatment today as it challenges core ideals of conservatism by advocating for equal opportunities. Racial resentment being a strong predictor of populist attitudes should be an indication of the disillusionment experienced by holding on to a world view that may be faltering. The just world belief can be difficult to reconcile with amid increased economic inequality, and as a result many Americans are resorting to undemocratic principles.

Decreased trust in government and experts is dangerous due to its perceived spillover into an abandonment of democratic norms. Distrust makes it harder to get things done due to lack of opportunities for cooperation, it drives anti-incumbent behavior, and threatens compliance with the law (Citrin and Stoker, 2018). This distrust is bound to fuel populist sentiments among the electorate as parties are weakening amid growing polarization. The public is also less trusting than ever in the media and academia, causing a cycle of separated media environments fueling more polarization and therefore more distrust (Salmon, 2021). Information is becoming much more ideological, especially with the rift of Republican voters from empiricism and objectivity. Perceptions of widespread bias in journalism and academia have created a right-wing media eco-system and a network of policy experts, causing Democrats and Republicans to be engaged in separate conversations with an ever-shrinking understanding of the other's premises (Grossman and Hopkins, 2016). Distrust delegitimized mainstream outlets in the eyes of a considerable number of Americans, and the alternatives growing out of the partisan conflict are then engaging in creating more distrust through separating the information atmospheres of people on the right from those on the left. This is extremely dangerous, especially since right-of-center media and

policy experts can continue to move farther on the right to accommodate for the changing electorate that they are responsible in constructing, threatening unprecedented divisions and violence. Of course, skepticism is rational, and in moderation is necessary for a healthy democracy where voters are constantly reevaluating their opinions based on the government's responses to their concerns. What makes today's environment extremely volatile are the biases that prevent people from objectively judging their politicians and institutions.

Limitations

While this research is based on data from the ANES, a nationally representative sample that may allow me to generalize about Americans, there are a few caveats and limitations of this research. By employing a cross-sectional observational method, this research has shown how correlated racial attitudes are to the dimensions of populism. However, lacking a time component makes it difficult to assume that reverse causation may not be present. In fact, there could be a feedback loop present, where racial resentment and anti-immigration sentiment can induce populist attitudes, but that these attitudes stimulate individuals to support populist candidates whose messaging may intensify feelings of racial resentment and opposition to immigration among supporters.

The time period in which this dataset was collected, mid to late 2020, is also a very specific time in history that could be responsible for the results of this study. To draw generalizations about individual-level populist attitudes among Americans, future studies would need to gauge the relationship between racial resentment and the dimensions of populism in different years. Specifically, we would need to understand if that relationship existed in the years before Donald Trump was elected, and if so, how it has changed in the years following. We would also observe how that relationship has changed in 2022 with the election of Joe Biden to

eliminate the possibility that this relationship was unique to the year 2020. Therefore, this research, in its current iteration, can help us draw conclusions about the American public facing the 2020 election. We would need a time-series component to prove the long-term relationship between our independent variables and populist attitudes.

Conclusion

Any efforts that aim to better our understanding of populist attitudes and how they form among individuals is extremely beneficial. Our democratic institutions have already begun to receive threats and attacks by considerable segments of the population, and to act proactively we need to ascertain features among the population that have contributed to the current precariousness of our democracy. The results of this research point to feelings of threat caused by the recent change in values over equity and racial considerations that have inspired people to fall victim to populist rhetoric and appeals. Future research attempting to distinguish other determinants of populism should include measures of racial resentment, anti-immigrant sentiment, and other measures of racial attitudes in their models since they seem to have been stronger predictors of populist attitudes than economic measures. Finally, while more research should be done to further increase our confidence in the results and allow us to evaluate how this relationship changes over time, it still offers a valuable contribution to better understanding the underpinnings of contemporary populist sentiment.

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