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ABSTRACT

The “White Replacement” conspiracy theory, that governments and corporations are “replacing” white people, is linked to several mass shootings. Given its recent ubiquity in elite rhetoric, concerns have arisen about the popularity of this conspiracy theory among the United States mass public. Further, political scientists have noted a need to understand why people believe or act upon this conspiracy theory. Using a 2022 US national survey ($n = 2001$), we find that a third of Americans agree that leaders are replacing white people with people of color. These beliefs are related to anti-social personality traits, various forms of nationalist and authoritarian sentiments, and negative sentiments toward immigrants, minorities, women, and the political establishment. Regression analysis however fails to find significant effects of partisanship and ideology on these beliefs. Further, we observed that these beliefs are related to a desire to engage in both normative (e.g., run for political office) and nonnormative political participation (e.g., commit violence). Given the popularity of White Replacement conspiracy theories in the US and elsewhere, our findings suggest new avenues for research into potentially dangerous beliefs, as well as xenophobia, antisemitism, racism, sexism, extremism, and political violence.

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The “White Replacement” conspiracy theory claims that powerful elites are systematically replacing white people with people of color who provide cheaper labor and reproduce at higher rates than whites (e.g., Camus 2021). Given that the *replacement* (i.e., eventual elimination) of white people is the intended result of the supposed

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conspiracy (Obaidi et al. 2022), and that these beliefs are linked to anti-democratic views and radicalization (Peucker and Spaaij 2023), White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs are not simply an extreme along a continuum of attitudes about immigration policy. Thus, beliefs in White Replacement conspiracy theories go beyond mundane feelings of status threat (Mutz 2018), fears of demographic change (Craig and Richeson 2014a), or suspicions that Democrats will enjoy an electoral advantage from liberalized immigration policy (Mayda, Peri, and Steingress 2016). To wit, these more mundane feelings, fears, and suspicions are typically conceived of by scholars as revolving around changing cultural, economic, political, and social conditions (Craig and Richeson 2014c; Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011) as opposed to the replacement or elimination of the majority race (Feola 2021). To this point, White Replacement conspiracy theories have been a motivating factor in numerous mass killings (Every-Palmer 2021; Stanley 2022).

Alarmingly, these beliefs are at once a “primal fantasy” involving the replacement of an entire race (Kelly 2022) as well as a “flexible political discourse” (Ekman 2022) that can be deployed by both mainstream and fringe movements (Halford 2022). Indeed, conservative political and media elites have increasingly used White Replacement conspiracy theories as talking points (Belew and Gutierrez 2021; Lee 2022). For example, Senator J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) warned of an immigrant “invasion” that would “replace” voters (Peoples 2022) and former Fox News Host Tucker Carlson promoted white replacement conspiracy theories on his primetime show more than 400 times (Harvey 2022). Such elite propagation (Nacos, Shapiro, and Bloch-Elkon 2020), combined with the ongoing recruitment efforts of white supremacist groups (Ekman 2022), could make violent incidents – like the 2022 shooting in Buffalo, NY, in which 10 African Americans were murdered, and the 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA in which 11 people were murdered – more frequent.

While social scientists have learned much about more general attitudes such as anti-immigrant sentiment (Reny, Collingwood, and Valenzuela 2019), racial resentment (Kam and Burge 2019), and white identity (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), they have paid only limited attention to White Replacement beliefs (Moses 2019). This current study seeks to both remedy this gap in the literature and spark further scholarly inquiry into White Replacement and similar beliefs. Unlike some conspiracy theories, which may be adopted for their entertainment value (e.g., alien cover-ups), conspiracy theories alleging that a racial group is being systematically “replaced” by the “other” may be enough to motivate individuals to act against the perceived plot (Kelly 2022). Further, such ideas may appeal most to people who are inclined toward prejudice, criminality, and violence (Jolley, Mari, and Douglas 2020; Reyna, Bellovary, and Harris 2022), who may then act to thwart the supposed replacement by committing violence against civilian targets (Wilson 2022). This combination of belief, believer, and target suggests that White Replacement conspiracy theories may constitute a perfect storm of sorts that is in desperate need of further study (Obaidi et al. 2022).

We employ a 2022 US national survey (n = 2001) to (i) examine the prevalence of White Replacement beliefs, (ii) evaluate the explanatory power of the many presumably foundational psychological, political, and social antecedents of these beliefs, and (iii) identify the political attitudes, intentions, and self-reported behaviors of believers. Our findings should not only motivate political scientists to pay greater attention to White Replacement and similar beliefs, but also to reexamine how we think about these

beliefs in relation to mainstream political and social identities. We conclude by discussing the popularity of White Replacement views outside of the US and calling for further research.

White Replacement

Fears of immigrants and racial “others,” whether those fears revolve around jobs, mating partners, or culture, have long been a part of the human experience (Lee 2019; White 2020; Yakushko 2018). To assuage these fears, governments have limited both the total amount of immigration and the amount of immigration from certain regions (e.g., Ngai 1999). Despite numerous legal restrictions on immigration, many Americans (and other Westerners), feel that their way of life, culture, economic well-being, and status are being threatened by newcomers (Craig and Richeson 2014b; Finzsch and Schirmer 2002; Jaret 1999). Thus, immigration is often a salient issue in American politics (Liu et al. 2014), and scholars show that attitudes towards immigrants and immigration are closely related to support for presidential primary candidates (Tucker et al. 2019), presidential vote choice (Reny, Collingwood, and Valenzuela 2019), and support for the president (Baker and Bader 2022), particularly when candidates and politicians publicly take positions on issues related to immigration (Enns and Jardina 2021; Matos and Miller 2021). However, some people’s views of immigration go beyond considerations of social status, changing demographics, and cultural norms toward a more catastrophic, conspiratorial, and xenophobic stance animated by beliefs that the influx of immigrants pose a threat to the existence of an entire race and that this threat has been purposely engineered by powerful sinister forces (Kupper et al. 2022).

The “White Replacement,” or “White Genocide,” conspiracy theory – as argued by Renaud Camus and others who have adopted such beliefs – argues that powerful government and corporate elites are secretly replacing white people with cheaper non-white laborers from outside the US (Cosentino 2020). According to proponents of the theory, the powerful elites – the “replacists” (Camus 2021) – would benefit from having cheaper labor at their disposal, but the result for society would be the genocidal elimination of whites (Nilsson 2022). Further, the theory often suggests that the powerful elites behind the plot are Jewish (Ekman 2022) and cites abortion, feminism, and the LGBTQ+ community as factors contributing to the replacement (Svatoňová and Doerr 2024) through their supposed role in declining white birth rates (Ophir et al. 2023) and increased rates of interbreeding (Winston 2021). Therefore, in White Replacement theories, immigrants are not merely altering the culture, taking jobs, or affecting politics and policy, they are pawns in a plot to *intentionally replace* white people (Obaidi et al. 2022). As such, White Replacement theories speak not to the effects of numerous unintentional forces slowly leading to demographic change, but to a purposely orchestrated threat to whites that has been organized by powerful elites acting in secret (Feola 2021; Obaidi et al. 2022).

In the last decade, proponents of White Replacement conspiracy theories have perpetrated mass killings in the United States and elsewhere (Stanley 2022). The manifestos written by the killers – such as Anders Behring Breivik – explain the reasoning behind their actions, usually focusing on a perceived looming “replacement” of whites by non-white populations. Similar rationales have been cited by subsequent killers as inspiration

for subsequent mass shootings (Cheung-Blunden et al. 2022). For example, Payton Gendron argued in his manifesto, written shortly before killing 10 people in a Buffalo, NY supermarket, that immigration was, “an assault on the European people that, if not combated, will ultimately result in the complete racial and cultural replacement of the European people ... All through immigration. This is ethnic replacement. This is cultural replacement. This is racial replacement. This is WHITE GENOCIDE” (Gendron 2022).

Variations of White Replacement conspiracy theories have in recent years seeped from white nationalist publications (Dixit 2022), white nationalist websites (de Keulenaar and Tuters 2024), and fringe manifestos (Fisogni 2020) into mainstream conservative discourse (Vysotsky 2022). For example, former Fox News Channel host Tucker Carlson claimed to his large audience that, “you’re being replaced and there’s nothing you can do about it,” “our country is being invaded by the rest of the world,” and “[the] policy is called the ‘Great Replacement’ ... [it’s the] replacement of legacy Americans with more obedient people from faraway countries” (Graziosi 2024). Polls have found support for White Replacement conspiracy theories among numerous Americans (Bump 2022) and Europeans (France24 2018); however, it is unclear if such views among the public are on the rise, perhaps due to elite propagation, or have been stable for some time given the ubiquity of immigration related conspiracy theories throughout history (Weir 2023). We can however conclude at the very least that current mainstream political discourse is raising the salience of the White Replacement conspiracy theories that have inspired recent mass killings. Understanding who is most likely to adopt White Replacement beliefs among the population is therefore an imperative.

Theoretical orientation

We have strong reason to suspect that beliefs in White Replacement conspiracy theories are driven by the same or similar factors that have been previously hypothesized to predict both attitudes towards immigration and immigrants and, more importantly, beliefs in conspiracy theories more generally, as White Replacement ideas are typically conspiracy theories. The extensive literatures on conspiracy theory beliefs (e.g., Douglas et al. 2019) and immigration attitudes (e.g., Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014), as well as the much smaller literature addressing White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs specifically (e.g., Bracke and Hernández Aguilar 2023; Davis 2024; Obaidi 2022), provide us with strong priors regarding the types of presumably foundational factors that are associated with White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs.

The literature on conspiracy theory beliefs has identified numerous psychological (e.g., emotional states and personality traits), political (partisan and ideological identities, views towards the system, feelings of power and efficacy within the system) and social predictors (income and education factors, group identities) (Hornsey et al. 2023; Uscinski et al. 2022a). In particular, the literature suggests that conspiracy theories that address racial and religious groups are strongly associated with high levels of anti-social, or “dark,” traits (Cichocka et al. 2016; Kay 2021; Uscinski 2022a). In addition, the literature has begun to focus on the individual’s information environments (i.e., where do they get news from) (Gil de Zúñiga, Scheffauer, and Zhang 2023; Romer and Jamieson 2021) and their views towards epistemic authorities (i.e., experts) and science (Merkley 2020; Stecula and Pickup 2021; Uscinski 2020; Winter 2022).

The literature on immigration attitudes also suggests that left-right political orientations and ideologies (Hout and Maggio 2021) play a large role in fostering views towards immigration, as do racial attitudes (Ayers et al. 2009), feelings about immigrants (Berg 2015; Cheung-Blunden et al. 2022; Fussell 2014), and attitudes towards gender and sex (Filindra and Nassar 2024; Sarasin 2015; Smilan-Goldstein 2023; Vochocová 2021). The emerging literature addressing White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs focuses on the influence of exposure to traditional and social media messages (Blazak 2024; de Keulenaar and Tuters 2024) and exposure to elite rhetoric (Hills 2020; Weir 2023).

Given what researchers have learned about conspiracy theory beliefs, immigration attitudes, and White Replacement beliefs, we can begin our analysis on firm footing given that numerous variables, or at least substantive categories of variables, have previously been hypothesized (and, in many cases, empirically demonstrated) to predict White Replacement or similar such beliefs. Thus, rather than hypothesizing new factors that might explain White Replacement beliefs, we contend that the literature, at this stage, is best advanced by examining many of these previously identified factors in tandem so as to compare their relative explanatory power in relation to each other when simultaneously accounted for. Further, our approach, utilizing a 25-minute survey allows not only for the measurement of a large array of such factors, but allows us to make broader investigations into which *types* of variables (e.g., psychological factors vs. political factors vs. views towards epistemic authority and science vs. views towards racial minorities, immigrants, and women) are most predictive. This allows for the construction of a robust theoretical explanation of why people might believe White Replacement conspiracy theories and who those believers are.

The broad theoretical argument we advance is as follows: strategic political and media elites cue audiences to conspiracy theories containing an existential threat (Bonikowski and Zhang 2023; Uscinski 2021); these cues are transmitted through various media increasing the salience of that conspiracy theory (Marchlewska 2018; Prooijen 2020), particularly for people who were already believers, or who were already disposed to believe the conspiracy theory (Langer 2022; Uscinski 2016) or the elites transmitting it (Uscinski et al. 2020). Those who already believe or are predisposed to conspiracy theories involving an existential threat emanating from an outgroup will, on average, exhibit relatively high levels of antisocial personality traits which, on average, lead them to be (i) impervious to efforts to change those beliefs (Cichocka, Marchlewska, and Biddlestone 2022) and (ii) likely to engage in antisocial and nonnormative behaviors due both to their underlying traits and to the internal social reality created by their beliefs (Pummerer 2022; Sternisko et al. 2023; Uscinski 2022c). This combination of elite cues with audiences who are both predisposed toward belief and predisposed towards action due to their underlying traits can create a “perfect storm” (Zacher 2024), in which nonnormative vigilante-style behaviors become increasingly frequent (e.g., Nacos, Shapiro, and Bloch-Elkon 2020).

This theoretical account differs from many popular (e.g., Collins 2020) and scholarly (Goertzel 1994) accounts of conspiracy theories which often imply strong “hypodermic” effects in which exposure to a conspiracy theory from a media source persuades people to adopt those conspiracy theories as beliefs, and in turn, those beliefs then lead directly to further behaviors and behaviors. In contrast to such models, our model accounts for (i) the large body of scholarship that casts doubt on the ability of messages to

“hypodermically” persuade (e.g., Altay et al. 2023; Selb and Munzert 2018), (ii) the emerging body of work showing that beliefs in conspiracy theories tend to be longstanding and stable at both the individual (Mancosu and Vassallo 2022; Romer and Jamieson 2020; Williams 2024) and aggregate levels (Oliver and Wood 2014; Uscinski 2022b), and (iii) recent questions about the ability of conspiracy theory beliefs to exogenously cause behaviors (Enders et al. 2022; Mercier and Altay 2022). With this said, our theoretical framework comports with widely accepted theories about the roles of elite influence (Zaller 1992), group dynamics (Tajfel 1981), and psychological traits in influencing beliefs and behaviors (Furnham, Richards, and Paulhus 2013). With this said, a cross-sectional survey cannot test all parts of our argument, though it can shed light on certain parts, such as who the believers are, and what their other beliefs and behaviors, on average, look like.

Data and method

We partnered with Qualtrics to survey a sample of Americans approximating census records on sex, age, race, education, and income from May 26 to June 30, 2022 (N = 2001). Appendices 1–2 provide information addressing IRB approval, informed consent, participant compensation, sample composition, efforts to maintain response quality, and full item wordings.

Dependent variable

To measure White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs, we developed three items about an intentional plot to replace whites with non-white immigrants (see Table 1). We note that in polling conspiracy theory beliefs, there are no official versions of conspiracy theories; like fan fiction, anyone can alter a conspiracy theory, adopting a bespoke version (Uscinski and Enders 2023). For example, there are hundreds of different JFK assassination conspiracy theories, each offering different villains, motives, and methods of assassinating President Kennedy. The same is true here: the proponents of, and people who have acted upon, White Replacement conspiracy theories have espoused differing pieces of evidence and details. Some proponents have written lengthy books and manifestos laying out copious claims and pieces of “evidence” justifying their beliefs. Resource limitations and respondent attention spans do not, however, allow us to poll on every permutation of the theory or on every detail. Thus, while White Replacement

Table 1. White Replacement beliefs.

Question	% “Agree” and “Strongly Agree”	
	whites only	All respondents
Powerful politicians and corporate leaders are trying to replace white people in the US with cheaper foreign laborers.	33	32
White people in Europe are being replaced with cheaper non-white workers because that is what powerful politicians and corporate leaders want.	27	27
In the last 20 years, the government has deliberately discriminated against white Americans with its immigration policies.	33	31
N	1560	2001

conspiracy theories often invoke notions of unwanted cultural change, economic hardship, increased crime, and changing religious values (e.g., Feola 2021), our goal here was to capture the general aspects of the White Replacement conspiracy theory (so as to capture everyone who subscribes to at least some version of it) while being sure that our items clearly evince the idea of whites being intentionally “replaced” via the nefarious actions of powerful people. This is similar to how JFK conspiracy theories are polled: with general items asking if there was a “conspiracy” or “one man” responsible for the assassination (Swift 2013); the “conspiracy” option would signify that respondents agree with at least one version of JFK assassination conspiracy theory. With our White Replacement items in Table 1, we are specifying the villains (“powerful politicians and corporate leaders” in two items and “government” in the other), and two of the items explicitly state “replace.”

While our items speak to the economic incentives of the powerful elites who are orchestrating the replacement (i.e., to get cheaper labor) and through the method (i.e., discriminatory policy), these items go beyond the more mundane status threats that people might perceive from immigration (i.e., that immigrants will take jobs or that immigrants will occupy a larger portion of the population than in the past). Our items are instead specifically about “replacement,” and our language in the items is specific to that point: “replace white people in the U.S.”; “white people in Europe are being replaced,” and “deliberately discriminated against white Americans.” The White Replacement theory is not merely about perceived economic or cultural threat, even though “replacement” necessarily means economic and cultural loss for the group who has been replaced. Replacement, in this context, is about eliminating people of one race in exchange for those of another. Hence, our items do not ask whether “white workers” are being replaced with “non-white workers,” which might imply only a loss of jobs; rather, we ask whether “white people” writ large are being replaced.

Readers will notice that these White Replacement conspiracy theory items differ from predispositions like racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment because they do not address feelings towards any particular racial group; they only address a supposed scheme to replace whites with immigrants. With this said, dispositions such as racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment are likely to undergird White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs. Also, these items differ from other beliefs, such as those addressing other policy issues (i.e., policy preferences regarding immigration, or support for affirmative action), in terms of substance: belief in White Replacement asserts that the white race is being intentionally replaced. This carries implications that go far beyond typical policy preferences.

Respondents could respond to our three items along a 5-point Likert scale, as opposed to a simpler yes/no response option, so that they could register stronger/weaker levels of (dis)agreement. Respondents rated each on a five-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Table 1 provides the percentage agreeing and strongly agreeing with each; these percentages are similar when examining white respondents only compared to all respondents. For completeness, our analyses below include results for all respondents and for white respondents only.

Up to a third of Americans agree with each of the three items; these numbers are in line with those produced by commercial polling organizations working with media outlets (e.g., Bump 2022). Using an iterated principal factor analysis, we found that all

three items loaded positively on a single factor (eigenvalue of 1.99) accounting for 99.2% of the variance. We therefore calculated a “White Replacement” index by averaging responses across the statements ($\alpha = 0.84$). To assess its validity, we compared this index to other conspiratorial items regarding immigration (Appendix 3). Pearson correlations with agreement with “The government is deliberately hiding the true cost of immigration to taxpayers and society” and “The government is deliberately hiding the truth about how many immigrants live in this country” ($r = .68$, $p < .0001$, and $r = .68$, $p < .0001$, respectively) indicate that our index tracks negative and conspiratorial sentiments toward immigration and immigrants.

Independent variables

As we have strong reasons to suspect that beliefs in White Replacement conspiracy theories are driven by forces similar to those that have been previously hypothesized to predict beliefs in conspiracy theories and attitudes towards immigration more generally, we include a broad sampling of these factors, including measures of respondents’ psychological, sociological, and political characteristics, information environments, views towards epistemic authority and science, and views towards minorities, immigrants, and women. In addition to examining the effect of numerous individual predictors, we are also able to assess the role of each group of variables (i.e., psychological) in relation to others. While we make no causal claims, these predictors (listed in detail below), at least theoretically, are foundational to the White Replacement beliefs we wish to predict. Further information is included in the Appendix.

Psychological factors

For personality traits, we included *Need for chaos* (6 items; $\alpha = .79$) (Arceneaux et al. 2021), *Dark tetrad* (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, sadism; 16 items; $\alpha = .92$), *Paranoia* (3 items; $\alpha = .91$) (Green et al. 2008), *Dogmatism* (3 items; $\alpha = .69$) (McClosky and Chong 1985), *National narcissism* (3 items; $\alpha = .80$) (Sternisko et al. 2023), *Victimhood* (4 items, $\alpha = .90$) (Armaly and Enders 2022), *Right-wing authoritarianism* (4 items; $\alpha = .66$) (Bizumic and Duckitt 2018), and *Left-wing authoritarianism* (3 items; $\alpha = .64$) (Costello et al. 2022). To account for respondents’ emotional states over the prior week, we include *Positive affect* (10 items such as “excited;” $\alpha = .84$), and *Negative affect* (10 items such as “irritable;” $\alpha = .88$) (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988).

Sociological factors

We include standard demographic indicators measuring *Sex*, *Race*, *Household income*, *Education*, and *Age*. We also include measures of generalized *Religiosity* (3 items; $\alpha = .85$) and *Christian nationalism* (5 items; $\alpha = .82$) (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018).

Political factors

We employ standard measures of *Partisanship* and *Ideology* (greater values reflect stronger Republican or conservative identification). “Folded” versions – *Partisan strength* and *Ideological strength* – account for respondents’ extremity, regardless of direction. We include measures of non-left/right political orientations including *Anti-establishment*

orientations (9 items; $\alpha = .86$) (Uscinski et al. 2021) and *Trust in government* (“The government can be trusted”).

Information environment

Legacy news media use (5 items; $\alpha = .79$) measures how often respondents get “information about current events, public issues, or politics” from network television, cable news, local television, print newspapers, and radio; *Online news media use, mainstream* (8 items; $\alpha = .84$) measures use of online newspapers, online news magazines, blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TV news websites; *Online news media use, fringe* (4 items; $\alpha = .84$) measures use of less traditional sources including Reddit, 8kun, Telegram, and Truth Social. *Follows politics* is a single item measuring the extent to which respondents access information about politics and current events.

Views towards epistemic authority and science

As cognition and thinking styles have been found to be associated with White Replacement beliefs (Jedinger, Masch, and Burger 2023), and because these beliefs run contrary to much available authoritative evidence, we include *Anti-intellectualism* (7 items; $\alpha = .92$) and *Confidence in the scientific community*, a single item measure (Merkley 2020), to account for attitudes towards scientists and experts. *Denialism* (4 items; $\alpha = .82$) measures a general predisposition to resist authoritative information (Uscinski et al. 2020). Furthermore, we measure *Scientific literacy* by summing respondents’ correct answers to six true/false general knowledge questions (Okamoto et al. 2001).

Views towards minorities, immigrants, and women

Racial resentment (4 items; $\alpha = .78$) and *Anti-immigrant sentiment* (4 items; $\alpha = .75$) account for attitudes towards minorities and immigrants. Given that White Replacement theories often blame declining white birth rates on women’s reproductive freedom and the acceptance of gay marriage, we account for *Male role normativity* (e.g., Levant, Hall, and Rankin 2013), capturing attitudes towards gender roles and homosexuality (4 items; $\alpha = .78$), *Gendered nationalism* (Christley 2022; Deckman and Cassese 2021), encompassing gendered views towards US political leadership (3 items; $\alpha = .86$), and *Sexism* (4 items; $\alpha = .68$), accounting for discriminatory views towards women.

Method of analysis

Given that the independent variables described above may function in different ways for people of different races and ethnicities (Kam and Burge 2019; Pérez and Hetherington 2014), our results are presented separately for white respondents and all respondents pooled regardless of race or ethnicity. We use multiple linear regression to test whether and how the above independent variables predict variation in White Replacement beliefs (full results in Appendix 5). Shorrocks-Shapley R^2 decomposition was used to examine the relative predictive power of our independent variables as grouped above (Shorrocks 2013). This post-estimation procedure estimates the regression model using all possible combinations of the six groups of predictors discussed above, thereby showing which group(s) demonstrate the most explanatory power in the model (Lipovetsky 2006). Put differently, this procedure allows us to distill the results

of a large regression model down to more general sets of findings, focusing less on individual variables and more on substantive groupings of variables. The Appendix includes the VIF estimates, confirming that multicollinearity is not a concern, as well as bivariate correlations between our independent variables and White Replacement beliefs, which show patterns nearly identical to the regression results presented below. Further, we replicate the models below using each of the three White Replacement items as its own dependent variable; those findings show that each item shares correlates similar to the index (see Appendix).

Results

Modeling White Replacement beliefs

Figure 1 presents the regression coefficients grouped by type as described above (e.g., psychological, sociological, and the like) in descending order of magnitude for each group (full results in Appendix). Darker bars indicate the results for white respondents only, while lighter bars indicate results for all respondents pooled. Taken together, the results vary little between white respondents and all respondents.

More specifically, beginning at the top of Figure 1, positive psychological predictors of White Replacement beliefs include *Need for chaos*, *National narcissism*, *Paranoia*, *Left-wing authoritarianism*, and the *Dark Tetrad*. Psychological factors unrelated to belief in White Replacement include *Right-wing authoritarianism*, *Affect* (both positive and negative), *Victimhood*, and *Dogmatism*.

Moving down Figure 1, sociological factors positively related to belief in White Replacement include *Sex* (i.e., women are more likely to believe than men), *Income*, and *Christian Nationalism*. Sociological factors unrelated to belief in White Replacement include *Age*, our more general measure of *Religiosity* (in contrast to the positive result for the more specific Christian Nationalism measure), *Education*, and in the all respondents model *Race* (i.e., no significant difference between whites and people of all other races and ethnicities).

Regarding political factors, the only one included in the analysis that is significantly related to belief in White Replacement is our measure of *Anti-establishment orientations*. Importantly, the remainder of the results for political factors show that establishment left-right political predispositions, including *Partisanship* and *Ideology* (as well as the strength of both), and *Trust in Government* are not correlated with White Replacement beliefs.

Moving further down Figure 1, the results for information environment show no significant relationships between media use of any form, nor one's level of attention to politics and current events, and belief in White Replacement. In contrast, the results for views towards epistemic authority and science show that *Denialism* is positively correlated with belief in White Replacement, while *Confidence in the scientific community* is negatively correlated. *Anti-intellectualism* and *scientific literary* are unrelated to White Replacement beliefs.

The final portion of Figure 1 shows that a variety of attitudes towards minorities, immigrants, and women are strongly related to belief in White Replacement. Specifically, people with stronger *Anti-immigrant* sentiment, *Gendered nationalism*, *Racial resentment*, and *Sexism-related* attitudes are more likely to believe in White Replacement. In

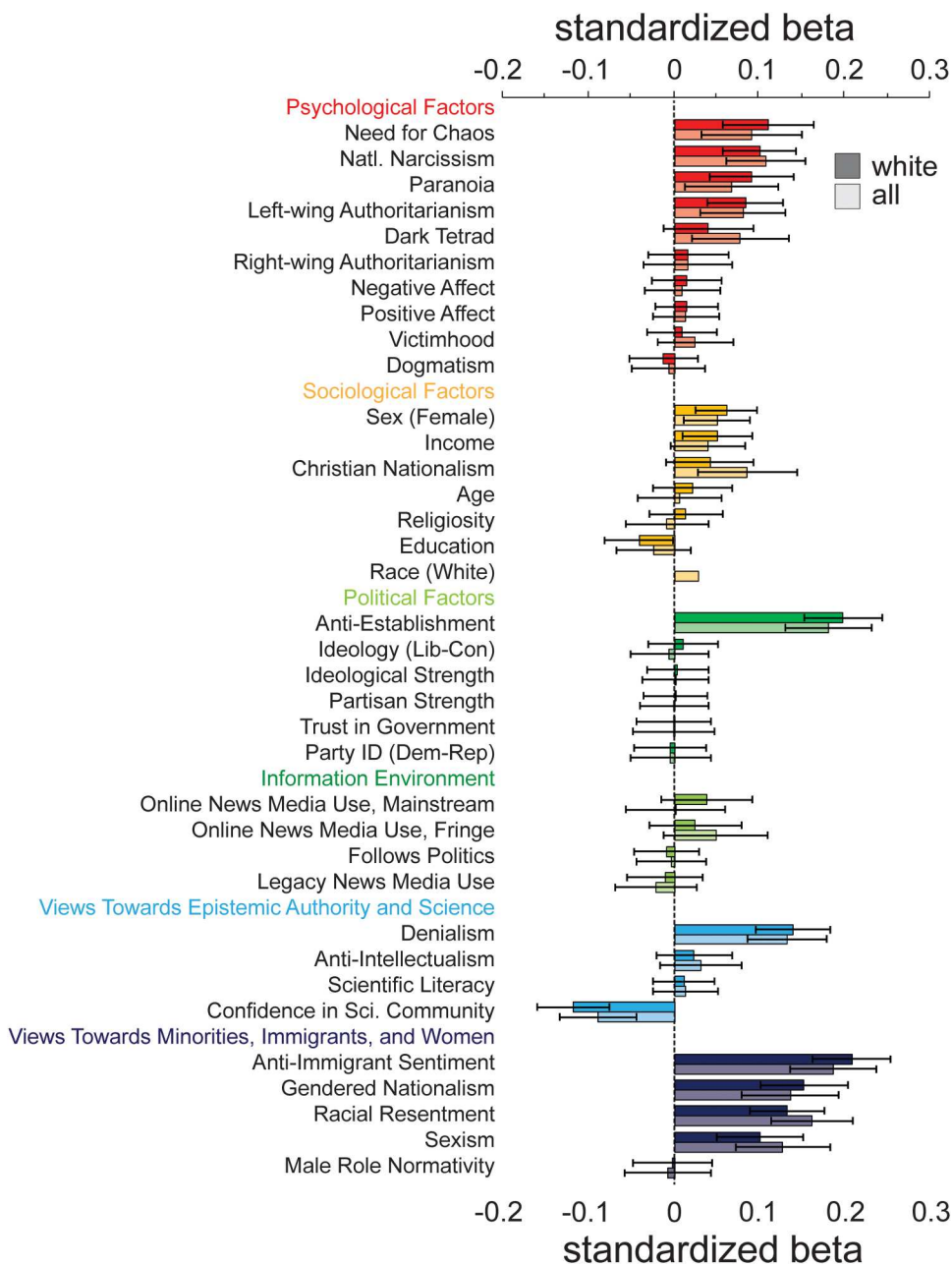


Figure 1. Standardized beta coefficients predicting White Replacement beliefs for white respondents (adjusted $R^2 = .69$) and all respondents (adjusted $R^2 = .65$). Full model results in Appendix 5.

contrast, attitudes regarding *Male role normativity* are unrelated to White Replacement in the models.

Table 2 presents the explained variance decomposition of the models presented in Figure 1, organized by type of predictor. The results are sorted, top to bottom, in order of explained variance. Starting at the top, and perhaps not surprisingly, nearly

Table 2. Proportion of explained variance by independent variable group (Shorrocks-Shapley R^2 decomposition).

Independent variable group	White respondents only	All respondents
Views Towards Minorities, Immigrants, and Women (<i>Racial resentment; Anti-immigrant sentiment; Male role normativity; Gendered nationalism; Sexism</i>)	28.14%	29.86%
Psychological Factors (<i>Need for chaos; Dark tetrad; Paranoia; Dogmatism; National Narcissism; Victimhood; Right- and left-wing authoritarianism; Positive affect; Negative affect</i>)	21.28%	22.36%
Political Factors (<i>Partisanship; Ideology; Partisan strength; Ideological strength; Anti-establishment orientations; Trust in government</i>)	18.93%	17.20%
Views Towards Epistemic Authority and Science (<i>Anti-intellectualism; Confidence in the scientific community; Denialism; Scientific literacy</i>)	16.41%	14.83%
Sociological Factors (<i>Sex; Race [all respondents model only]; Household income; Education; Age; Religiosity; Christian nationalism</i>)	11.19%	11.53%
Information Environment (<i>Legacy news media use; Online news media use, mainstream; Online news media use, fringe; Follows politics</i>)	4.06%	4.22%
Adjusted R^2	.69	.65

Notes: Values calculated using the “shapley2” module in Stata (Wendelspiess Chávez Juárez 2015). Full regression results are listed in Appendix 5.

30% of the variance in White Replacement beliefs explained by our models is accounted for by views towards minorities, immigrants, and women (e.g., anti-immigrant sentiment). The next most influential group of variables in the models, accounting for just over 20 percent of the explained variance, are (dark) psychological factors (e.g., need for chaos). Following psychological factors are political factors (e.g., anti-establishment orientations), which account for 19 percent of the explained variance among white respondents and 17 percent among all respondents.

Sociopolitical beliefs

To better understand the social and political views that are associated with White Replacement beliefs, Figure 2 shows the bivariate statistical associations (full items in Appendix). Our intent is not to explain the attitudes and beliefs in Figure 2, nor is our argument that White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs *cause* these attitudes and beliefs. Instead, we argue that the respondents who believe in White Replacement conspiracy theories might also share a range of other attitudes and beliefs – some of which are nonnormative. Thus, we present correlative, rather than predictive analyses. As with Figure 1, dark bars indicate the results for white respondents while light bars indicate all respondents pooled. As with the regression results in Figure 1, the result here are comparable for white respondents and all respondents.

Notably, White Replacement beliefs are positively correlated with the beliefs that the number of Jewish people killed in the Holocaust has been purposely exaggerated, that there is a secret agenda to “turn” children gay or trans, that climate change is a hoax, and that *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned. White Replacement beliefs are also associated with positive feelings towards extremist groups (e.g., Proud Boys, White Nationalists, QAnon, Antifa) and belief in conspiracy theories, misinformation, and other dubious claims related to vaccines, COVID-19, GMO food, the “deep state,” Barack Obama’s citizenship, and government/Hollywood sex trafficking rackets. While White Replacement beliefs are positively correlated with support for both Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, they are negatively correlated with support for Bernie Sanders and Joe

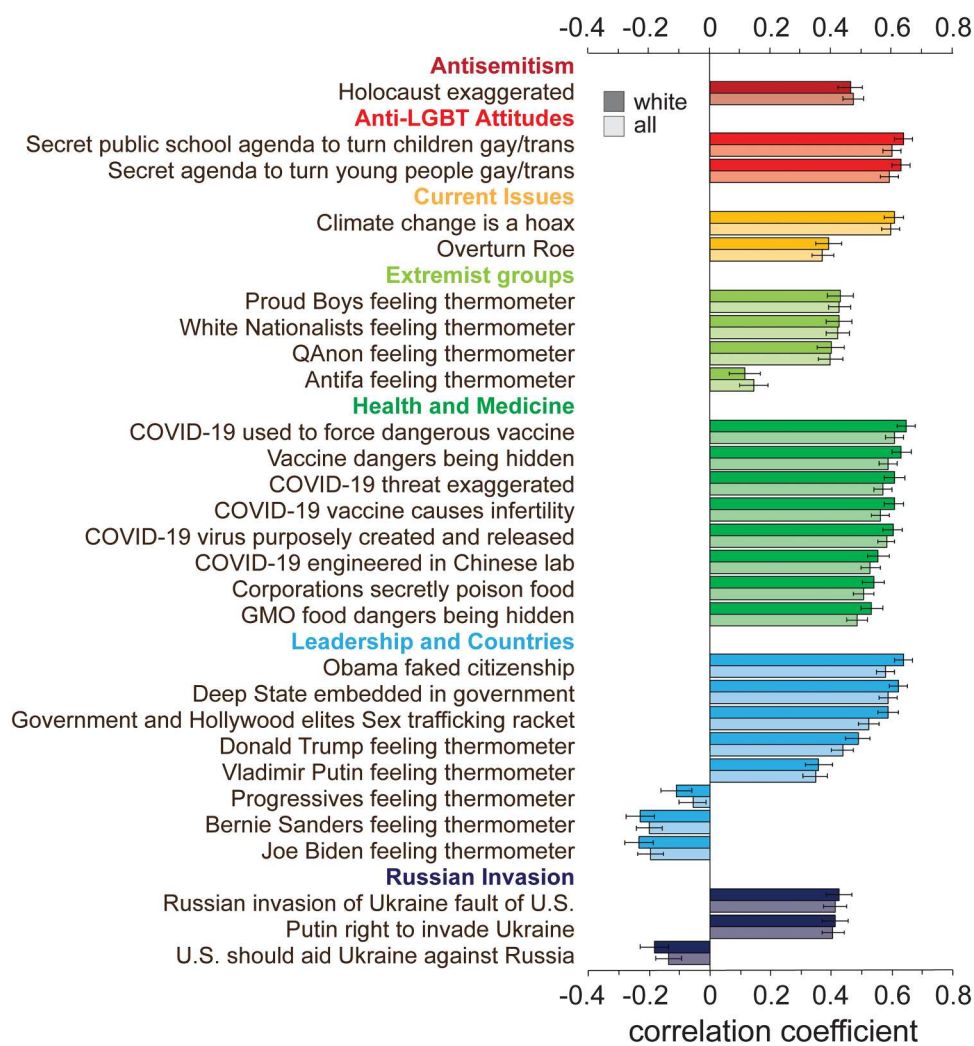


Figure 2. Pearson correlations between White Replacement beliefs and sociopolitical beliefs for white respondents and all respondents. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Biden. Finally, people holding higher levels of White Replacement beliefs are more likely to support the Russian invasion and reject US aid for Ukraine. In short, White Replacement beliefs associated with beliefs in other conspiracy theories, support for domestic extremist groups and positive feelings towards Trump and Putin.

Behavioral intentions and behaviors

Figure 3 shows the statistical associations between White Replacement beliefs and 17 behavioral intentions and self-reported behaviors (item wordings in Appendix 8). As with Figure 2, we do not argue that White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs cause the intentions and behaviors in Figure 3; rather our point is that people who believe in White Replacement conspiracy theories are also likely to share a range of potentially

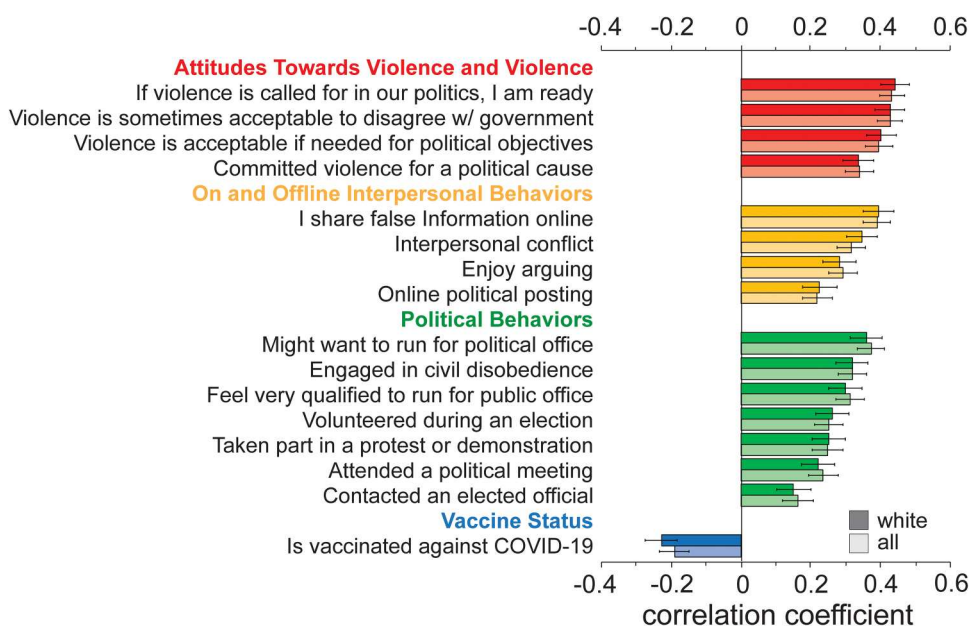


Figure 3. Pearson correlations between White Replacement beliefs and intentions and behaviors for white respondents and all respondents. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

nonnormative intentions and behaviors. Again, dark bars indicate the results for white respondents while light bars indicate all respondents pooled. As with all previous results, the correlates here are comparable for white respondents and all respondents.

The results in Figure 3 show that White Replacement beliefs are most strongly correlated with agreement with three statements about political violence, including, “If violence is called for in our politics, I am ready.” Given that surveys may overestimate intentions to commit actual violence (Westwood et al. 2022), we also asked respondents if they had committed violence for a political cause in the previous 12 months, finding that White Replacement beliefs are also correlated with these self-reports.

Beliefs in White Replacement are also correlated with knowingly sharing false information online, enjoying arguing with others, engaging in interpersonal conflict to settle disagreements, and posting online about politics. Respondents with higher levels of White Replacement beliefs reported being more interested in running for political office and feel more qualified to do so. Further, White Replacement beliefs are positively correlated with engaging in protests, demonstrations, and civil disobedience, volunteering during elections, attending political meetings, and contacting elected officials. Finally, respondents with higher levels of White Replacement beliefs are more likely to report purchasing cryptocurrency and less likely to report being vaccinated against COVID-19.

The relationship between partisanship and ideology and White Replacement beliefs

Attitudes towards immigration are closely intertwined with partisanship and ideology (Enders and Uscinski 2021), and as such, many scholars, policymakers, and journalists

link White Replacement beliefs to the political right, usually the “far” right (e.g., Ekman 2022). While conservative and Republican identification are linked to White Replacement beliefs in bivariate correlations (Appendix 6), they are not predictive of it once other psychological and political factors are accounted for (Figure 1). Thus, White Replacement beliefs might not be an “extreme” version of traditional conservatism or Republicanism, but rather an outgrowth of other psychological and political motivations, including nonnormative ones.

Given our findings, the “far-right” label for White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs may be deceptive if it is taken to imply that White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs are believed exclusively or mostly by people identifying as a “strong” Republican or as “very” conservative on surveys (Allam 2022). To further investigate this, Figure 4 shows the distribution of White Replacement beliefs across partisan and ideological identification. Neither slope is particularly steep, and those identifying the furthest to the right show average levels of agreement with the three White Replacement items that are just barely above “neither agree nor disagree.” On average, the “far-right,” as measured here, are best described as ambivalent. Moreover, the two correlations depicted here – .24 (ideology) and .21 (partisanship) – pale in comparison to that between the three White Replacement items and anti-establishment orientations (.57). Thus, while White Replacement beliefs may be slightly more prevalent on the right, numerous other factors, like antagonisms towards the political establishment, are more predictive of these beliefs than partisanship and ideology, and particularly so once other variables are accounted for (Figure 1). Thus, Figure 4 suggests that increased discussion of White Replacement conspiracy theories by conservative elites might not be persuading audiences as much as it raises the salience of such ideas for people who are already believers.

To contextualize Figure 4, consider the “manifestos” authored by White Replacement killers that seem to transcend mainstream left-right divisions. For example, Payton Gendron, who killed 10 people in Buffalo, claimed to be “left wing,” “right wing,” and “socialist,” “depending on the definition” used, and he criticized conservatism (Appendix 9). He claimed stronger ties to neo-Nazism, antisemitism, and racism.

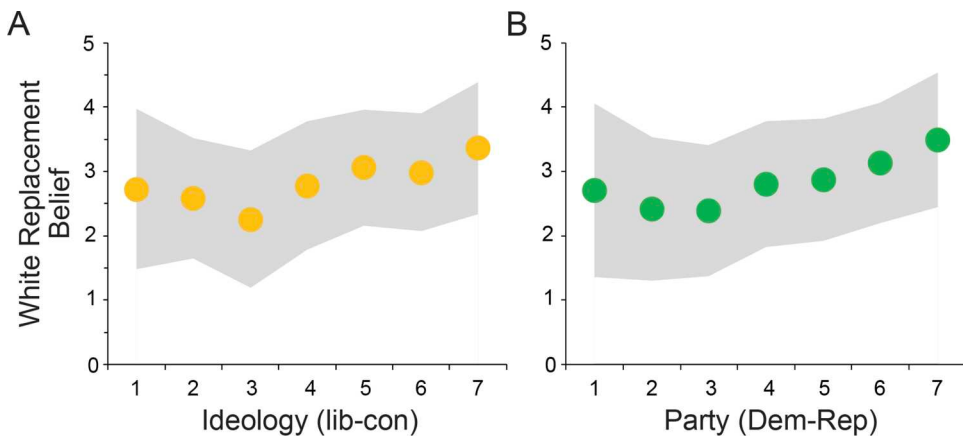


Figure 4. Average level of White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs for all respondents. Gray area represents standard deviation.

None of this, however, should be taken to absolve conservative elites who traffic in White Replacement rhetoric. Numerous media personalities and politicians on the right have, in recent years, trafficked in these and similar ideas repeatedly (Confessore and Yourish 2022). Therefore, there is good reason to be concerned that the relationship between White Replacement views and traditional conservatism/Republicanism could further intertwine over time if Republican and conservative elites continue propagating them (Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021) or attempt to build coalitions with White Replacement believers (Uscinski et al. 2021). But as far as our results show, factors other than partisanship and ideology are the most predictive of White Replacement beliefs, and efforts to address these potentially dangerous beliefs will not be aided by misattributing their causes or incorrectly identifying who the believers are.

Discussion and conclusion

Social scientists have paid close attention to the public's attitudes towards immigration and minorities (e.g., Jardina 2019; Sides 2018). Here, we have focused on beliefs in White Replacement conspiracy theories: beliefs that whites are being replaced at the whim of powerful elites in government and corporations (Obaidi et al. 2022). Such beliefs have been closely associated with several mass killings (Stanley 2022) and have been made salient in recent years by conservative elites (Bump 2022; Harvey 2022; Peoples 2022).

We find that views towards immigrants, minorities, women (Table 2; Figure 1), explain the most variance in White Replacement beliefs. This is likely because such beliefs touch on immigration from non-white countries, white birth rates, and gendered roles in reproduction (Ophir et al. 2023; Svatoňová and Doerr 2024). Psychological factors, particularly a need for chaos, national narcissism, and paranoia, explained around 21 percent of the variance in White Replacement beliefs. Political factors explained around 19 percent of the variance, with the only significant political variable being anti-establishment sentiment. These findings suggest that White Replacement beliefs have strong psychological underpinning and are more related to anti-system animus than traditional left-right identities like partisanship and ideology.

Furthermore, we found that White Replacement beliefs are associated with a range of nonnormative beliefs, intentions, and behaviors (Figures 2 and 3). This lends support for our broad theoretical orientation that elite discussion of White Replacement conspiracy theories can raise their salience, potentially activating people who already possess non-normative traits and intentions into mainstream politics. Not all conspiracy theories target vulnerable minority groups or differentially attract believers with anti-social and nonnormative traits (Enders et al. 2021). But some, like the White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs examined here, do. As such, we encourage further investigations into these and similar beliefs, especially given their association with violence, as well as into the causal pathways that may drive such violence.

White Replacement believers tend to possess higher levels of left-wing authoritarianism (e.g., forcefully taking away money and status from the wealthy) (Figure 1), believe the antisemitic trope that the Holocaust is exaggerated (Figure 2), exhibit elevated levels of sexist views and gendered nationalism (Figure 1), and favor restrictions on abortion (Figure 2). These findings likely reflect that, beyond targeting non-white immigrants, White Replacement conspiracy theories often scapegoat wealthy, Jewish elites for

orchestrating the conspiracy, as well as feminists and the LGBTQ + community for declining white birth rates (Ophir et al. 2023).

Finally, polls as well as incidents of violence outside the US show that Americans are not alone in holding White Replacement beliefs (Appendix 10). Indeed, a 2018 cross-national survey of 8 European countries reveals that between 12% (Portugal) and 48% (Hungary) believe that “The Government is deliberately hiding the truth about how many immigrants really live in this country.” Likewise, between 17–23% of the public in Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Italy, France, and Hungary believe that “Muslim immigration to this country is part of a bigger plan to make Muslims a majority of this country’s population.” Cross-cultural comparative studies are clearly needed to determine the cultural, social, and political conditions under which these beliefs flourish.

Future research should track White Replacement beliefs *over time* and experimental studies should investigate how elite rhetoric enflames or dampens these beliefs. Scholars should also invest further in measuring these beliefs, perhaps with varying item construction and richer scales. While our scale of White Replacement focused on general propositions, researchers should consider richer scales in the future that can determine what it is that White Replacement conspiracy theory believers are most concerned about (e.g., cultural change, economic change, religious change, crime). Such scales could also examine how much views about sexuality affect White Replacement views, given their association with white birth rates.

Given that the results for the whole sample were very similar to the results for the sample including only white respondents, researchers in the future should examine why White Replacement beliefs appear to appeal to minority respondents. Several hypotheses could be tested, for example, that economic uncertainty has led to concerns about the impacts of immigration in minority communities. Larger samples of minority respondents would be valuable towards this end. Examinations into the effect of the prominent people of color who have recently either expressed White Replacement ideas or are linked to groups that espouse similar ideas (e.g., Nick Fuentes, Ye, Ali Alexander, Enrique Tarrio) might also prove valuable.

Scholars should also consider how White Replacement conspiracy theory beliefs relate to policy attitudes regarding immigration and to other policy issues, as well as to other racial attitudes. While scholars have identified promising avenues for diminishing conspiracy theory beliefs (Benegal and Scruggs 2018; Bode and Vraga 2021; Mernyk 2022), more work in this vein is necessary. White Replacement conspiracy theories, to most scholars, likely seem bizarre. However, their frequent appearance in contemporary political rhetoric suggests that scholars can no longer ignore these theories or their believers.

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Ethical approval

Approval to conduct research with human subjects was granted by the University of Miami Human Subject Research Office on May 13, 2022 (Protocol # 20220472).

Author contributions

Designed research: JU, CK, OC, AE, MS, AD; Performed research: CK, JU, AE, SL; Analyzed data: CK, AE, SW; Wrote the paper: JU, CK, OC, AE, AD, SL, SK, MM, KP, MS, JF, DV, SW; Designed Figures: SW. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Data sharing plans

All data, documentation, and code used in this analysis is available on the Harvard Dataverse: "Replication Data for: Belief in White Replacement", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WQ9AMS>

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