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Know Better, Do Better? Do Higher Levels of Education Predict White Democrats' Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Action?

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ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom says that when you know better, you do better. Various theories of racism generally conform to this popular understanding, motivating colleges and businesses to invest in anti-bias trainings and other educational interventions. This study aims to make contestable the logic of 'know better, do better' as applied to racism through asking the question: does education predict white Democrats' antiracist attitudes relative to their political action? Informed by Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance and Hersh's (2017) concept of 'political hobbyism,' I propose that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, score higher on an 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale than white Democrats with lower levels of education. I also propose that white Democrats with higher levels of education will score lower on a 'Political Action' scale. Finally, I propose that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale relative to the 'Political Action' scale than white Democrats with lower levels of education. I test these hypotheses using the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey. The results show that education has a complicated and somewhat contradictory effect on white Democrats' antiracist attitudes, political action, and antiracist attitudes relative to political action.

INTRODUCTION

Conventional wisdom says that when you know better, you do better. Early theories of racism generally conform to this popular understanding. Early theorists used terms like "dogma" (Benedict 1945), "set of beliefs" (van den Berge 1967) and "doctrine" (Schaefer 1990) to describe racism as a "purely ideological phenomenon" characterized by prejudice (Bonilla-Silva, 1996:465). The implicit solution to an ideological problem is simple: education. If racism is understood as a type of 'bad knowing,' then correcting that knowing should be racism's silver bullet.

This logic does not begin and end in the Academy; diversity trainings in schools and in workplaces, efforts to promote antiracism in curriculum, and discussion groups hosted by various organizations and institutions all reflect a belief in the value of education. Certainly, education matters. For example, research suggests that classroom knowledge can help build connections between the past and present in a way that positively affects antiracist attitudes (Griffen and Bollen 2009). But the theoretical link connecting education, antiracist attitudes, and political action is too often assumed rather than the site of earnest scholarly inquiry. Sociology is a discipline uniquely positioned to critically examine taken-for-granted truths. As such, sociologists have a responsibility to the public to meaningfully question education as the default response to racism. What use is the theoretical insight that education might influence antiracism if education's impact on antiracist attitudes *and* action are not explicitly defined?

This study aims, in its small way, to make contestable the belief that knowing better means doing better. It does so through examining attitudes and action separately *and* relative to one another. This study focuses on whites' antiracist attitudes and action, based on the belief that whites harbor particular investment in and responsibility for the persistence of racial hierarchy. I

3

focus on white Democrats because racial attitudes in the United States are partisan. Eighty-eight percent of white Democrats support Black Lives Matter in September 2020 relative to 16% of white Republicans (Pew Research Center, Thomas & Horowitz: 2020). Most Joe Biden supporters (59%) agree with the statement: "white people benefit a great deal from advantages in society that Black people do not have," while most Trump supporters (95%) disagree (Pew Research Center 2020). White Democrats' relatively high levels of support for antiracist ideas make them an opportune demographic for testing the relationship between attitudes and action.

This study asks: does education predict white Democrats' antiracist attitudes relative to their political action? Informed by Mueller's (2020) Theory of Ignorance and Hersh's (2017) concept of "political hobbyism," I formed three hypotheses:

1. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.
2. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score lower on the 'Political Action' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.
3. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale relative to the 'Political Action' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The maxim 'know better, do better' has long dominated scholarship on whites' racial cognition and praxis. Even in the post-Civil Rights era, as support shifted away from "purely ideological" theories of racism, faith remained in the sequence of 'knowing' then 'doing.' First, I show how the legacy of ideological theories of racism live on in Color Blind Theory (CBT), perhaps the most dominant critical theory of contemporary racism. Second, I show how ignorance scholars, and particularly Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance (TRI), resist the pull of 'know better, do better.' Finally, I show how Mueller's (2020) Theory of Ignorance and Hersh's (2017) concept of 'political hobbyism' root whites' racial knowing *and* political

action in "material ends" rather than "ideological rules," casting doubt on the effectiveness of education as a response to racism (Mueller and Washington 2020:3).

Racism as Ideology

In the post-Civil Rights era, a growing number of theorists rejected "purely ideological" theories of racism (Sears 1988; Bobo Kluegel, and Smith 1997; McConahay 1986; Bonilla Silva 1996). "Symbolic racism" (Sears 1988), "modern racism" (McConahay 1986), and "laissez-faire racism" (Bobo and Smith 1997) all "situate ideology" in a broader social, political, and economic context (Burke 2016:104). Modern theorists' insight that structure and ideology are not opposing explanations for the persistence of racial inequality but rather are in some way mutually reinforcing has particular relevance to the question of education. If ideology and structure are codependent, would changing whites' racial knowing through education in turn change social, political, and economic structures that produce racial inequality?

Color Blind Theory (CBT)

Perhaps the most favored critical theory of contemporary racism, Color Blind Theory (CBT), seems to imply that the answer is yes. Bonilla-Silva (2001:26) describes colorblindness as a "racial ideology" made up of four "frames": "abstract liberalism," "naturalization," "cultural racism," and the "minimization of racism." These frames serve as "set paths for interpreting information" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:26). Like earlier ideological theories of racism, colorblindness is theorized as a type of 'bad knowing,' but unlike earlier theories, that bad knowing is not thought of as "irrational" or "incorrect thinking" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:468). Instead, CBT sees racial ideology as "meaning in the service of power" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:26). Ideology is simultaneously born out of the material order *and* a mechanism for protecting it. Colorblindness sets the terms for *how* whites see the social world, and in so doing, *what* whites see. CBT, like

earlier theories, explains the persistence of racial inequality in ideological terms: "why is there racial inequality… in a 'postracial' society? Because people employ [racial ideology] to rationalize, legitimate, and thereby (re)produce a social order of stratification based on race" (Hughey et al. 2015:1350).[1] CBT seems to argue that if whites had different "frames" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:26) or "organizational map[s]" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:470) for understanding the social world, racial hierarchy would be significantly disrupted. While rejecting theories which describe racism as 'purely ideological,' CBT maintains a belief that whites *knowing* better would mean their *doing* better.

Ignorance Scholars' Criticism of CBT

Not all scholars agree. For example, Mueller (2017) tests whether whites *choose* colorblindness "under conditions that make ignorance difficult" (220). Through analyzing white undergraduates' essays on intergenerational wealth transmission, Mueller finds four "epistemic maneuvers" white students used to "bypass racial awareness" and "justify ongoing domination" (225). Mueller's (2017) findings challenge Color Blind Theory's assumption that if whites had different "frames" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:26) or "organizational map[s]" (Bonilla-Silva 1997:470) they would 'know better' and then 'do better.' Mueller's (2017) study finds that even in the presence of antiracist frames, whites metabolize racial knowledge in such a way as to maintain their ideological attachments to white domination. This finding flies in the face of CBT and calls into question the effectiveness of education as a response to racism.

Mueller's (2017) finding that white ignorance 'fights back' joins a chorus of scholars (Mills 1997; Steyn 2012; Teeger 2015) who argue that ignorance is more nuanced than the

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[1] [1]It is important to note that although this logic is reminiscent of early theories of racism, in that it emphasizes the role of ideology in maintaining racial hierarchy, CBT sees ideology as developing out of and in response to the social order. Therefore, it would be incorrect to equate CBT with "purely ideological" theories. CBT is similar, however, to the extent that it implies correcting 'bad knowing' as a central part of eliminating racial hierarchy.

absence of knowing (Mueller 2018:2). Although the western academic tradition is mostly

dismissive of ignorance, equating it with irrationality or bad knowing, ignorance scholars argue

that ignorance fulfills certain social, political, and economic functions. For example, in Steyn's

(2012) research on South Africans' recollections of apartheid-era childhoods, ignorance is found

to be a tool whites use to evade responsibility, protect psychological wellbeing, and maintain

disproportionate ownership over material resources. Maly (2013) and Lavelle (2017) also find

ignorance to be "functional" among whites who grew up in racially integrating neighborhoods in

Chicago and among white Southerners respectively. In both cases, whites construct their

memories consistent with a "white victim narrative" (Lavelle 2017:528). This narrative allows

whites to maintain innocence during segregation and claim victim status during integration.

These findings (Mueller 2017; Steyn 2012; Maly 2013; Lavelle 2017) together highlight that

knowledge is not neutral. Despite the dominant western understanding that knowledge

production is a process of logical deduction, these findings suggest that white racial knowing is

built in the image of power. This is not a new idea. CBT makes a similar claim: that racial

ideology is "meaning in the service of power" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:26). Ignorance scholars

challenge CBT theorists by following that claim to its logical end.

Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance

   If racial ideology is "in the service of power" can it also be power itself? CBT seems to

argue yes: that the persistence of racial inequality is explained by whites recycling color blind

frames. This logic seems to equate power with the mechanism for defending it. In other words, it

is another ideological theory of racism, despite its claims otherwise. As Mueller and Washington

(2020) point out, ideology cannot simultaneously be the mechanism through which racial

inequality persists and racial inequality itself. Using Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial

Ignorance, Mueller and Washington (2020) argue that white cognition and praxis would be better characterized as "ends-based" (3). Relative to CBT, which describes whites' racial cognition as dictated by certain "ideological rules," or "frames" to use Bonilla-Silva's term (2001:26), TRI "recalibrates that casual narrative" by grounding white cognition in "material ends" (Mueller and Washington 2020:3). More specifically, Mueller and Washington (2020) argue that whites think and act in accordance with the "twin convictions" that whiteness is "wonderful" and that it is "the ownership of the Earth forever and ever, amen!" (21). Knowing this casts further doubt on education as a formidable intervention. If white racial cognition and praxis is "ends-based," it would logically follow that interventions should challenge the material order. Although certainly education can play a role in this, through "shap[ing] a broader citizenry dedicated to equity and justice," there is reason to doubt that knowing better translates into doing better: "for all their [white students] learning, [Mueller and Washington] observed very little appetite let alone impulse toward antiracism" (20). It is this insight that most directly informs this study's hypothesis: that while education might increase antiracist attitudes among whites (emphasis on might, see Mills 1997; Steyn 2012; Teeger 2015; Mueller 2017), it will also broaden the gap between attitudes and action. If white racial knowing and praxis is "rooted in material ends," perhaps rather than investing in educational interventions, resources would be better directed towards abolishing the material conditions that make up whiteness. "After all," Mueller and Washington (2020) say, "one cannot 'confess' or think their way into the undoing of privilege; creating structures that dismantle the systems that enable these privileges is the only thing that can deliver on that end" (23).

White Political Action

Political action has a long history as a tool used by the people in their fight to establish more just and equitable social, political, and economic structures. In white supremacist societies like the United States, white people hold particular power over and privilege in these structures, and therefore have "an important role to play in creating social change" (Meleady and Vermue 2018:307). For this reason, numerous scholars have taken up the question: what motivates whites' political action?

There is no scholarly consensus. Some studies (Selvanathan et al. 2018; Meleady and Vermue 2018) find that "positive intergroup contact" between white and Black people is positively associated with whites' willingness to engage in "solidarity-based collective action" (Meleady and Vermue 2018:309). Other scholars identify ideological motivators (Drakulich et al. 2020; Cole 2020; Case 2012). Common across these theories of white political action is the importance of an external motivating factor. This observation might seem obvious. In general, the racial status quo materially benefits whites in white supremacist societies, so of course white engagement in political action must require some external motivator. Though obvious, this insight is socially and politically consequential. So much so that Hersh (2017) builds a theory of mass political behavior, called "political hobbyism," to explain the civic behavior of a mostly white, male, and highly educated "comfortable class of citizens" (4).

Political Hobbyism (2017)

Political hobbyism refers to civic behavior undertaken not out of a sense of duty, but rather as a hobby (Hersh 2017). While some engage in politics out of necessity, to challenge policies which discriminate against them, for example, Hersh (2017) argues that a sizeable group of the American electorate- and a particularly sizable group of the Democratic base- engages with politics as if it were a sport. Political hobbyists engage in politics not out of a sense of duty,

or solidarity, but rather as a "leisure activity" (Hersh 2017:11). The casualness with which political hobbyists treat politics is reflected in the type of civic action they engage in. In a 2018 survey, Hersh (2017) found that despite white people reporting having spent more time reading, talking, and thinking about politics than Black and Latino people, Black people and Latinos were twice as likely to volunteer for political organizations. This pattern in which white people engage with politics as an intellectual exercise rather than as a practice is only made more extreme among highly educated whites. Despite reporting spending more time on politics that other groups, highly educated whites overwhelmingly spend that time reading the news, discussing with others, and "contemplating politics alone" than volunteering for political organizations (less than 2 percent of the total time).

Theory of Racial Ignorance (2020) and Political Hobbyism (2017)

Hersh's (2017) findings tell a story about highly educated whites that is mostly consistent with Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance. Whites' civic engagement is disproportionately ideological, with very little time spent engaging in collective action, in the form of participating in social movements. Hersh (2017) suggests that this pattern is only made worse by education, because highly educated whites are more likely to have free time and to have a "daily experience" and "personal history" of "comfort" relative to other groups (23). Here, Hersh (2017) implies that highly educated whites' mostly ineffective political behavior is not a consequence of poor political calculus. Rather, Hersh (2017) suggests, and Mueller's (2020) theory supports, that highly educated whites' political behavior is a reflection of their investment in an "anticipated future" (Tavory and Eliasoph 2013) in which they "maintain the spoils of racism without being racist" (Mueller and Washington 2020:3). In other words, for highly educated whites, knowing better can actually mean doing *less.*

Gaps in the Literature and Contributions of the Current Study

In both the case of white antiracist attitudes and political action, there is considerable evidence that calls into question the effectiveness of educational interventions in meaningfully challenging racial hierarchy. Whites' investments in "knowing badly" (Mueller and Washington 2020:2) and treating politics as a sport (Hersh 2017) pose significant obstacles to whites playing a progressive role in affecting racial inequality. Despite these obstacles, the jury is not out on whether whites knowing better means their doing better. As previous studies skew qualitative, evidenced by the scholarship cited above, this quantitative study is needed. This study is also needed because it considers antiracist attitudes *relative* to action, whereas for too long, researchers have considered antiracist attitudes and action to be one and the same. Even studies which differentiate between attitudes and action often focus on one or the other. This means there is very little scholarship which considers attitudes relative to action. By design, this study addresses these oversights in the literature. Through operationalizing action as non-electoral civic engagement- signing petitions, joining protests, and donating money to a social or political organization- this study also meets that oversight in the literature on white action, which disproportionately emphasizes voting.

METHODS

Data Source and Sample

For this study, I used the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) data set. The unit of analysis was individual respondents. The ANES survey includes questions on, among other topics, Americans' electoral participation and voting behavior as well as their attitudes on matters of public concern. The ANES survey's focus on public opinion and political behavior

makes it an apt data set for this study: which examines white Democrats' antiracist attitudes and political action.

The 2016 ANES survey was conducted through two 'modes': a 'face-to-face' mode and an 'internet' mode. The 'face-to-face' mode sampled from a population of 222.6 million US citizens who were 18 years or older at the time of the survey and who lived in the 48 contiguous states of the US or in DC. The 'internet' mode sampled from a population of 224.1 million US citizens who were 18 years or older at the time of the survey and living in the 50 US states or DC. The sample for the 'face-to-face' mode was a multi-stage stratified cluster sample, and for the 'internet' mode, the sample was a random draw with equal probability for selection.

The 2016 ANES survey was also conducted in two waves (pre- and post-election). Participants were first interviewed between September 7th and November 7th 2016 (pre-election), then again between November 9th and January 8th 2017 (post-election). In-person interviews were conducted by trained interviewers after an initial screening process. Respondents were compensated with $5 in cash initially, then $25 or $50 depending on the challenge of reaching respondents in that area. Sometimes respondents in areas with low response rates were compensated $100. Online surveys were first introduced through mail, in which would-be respondents were asked to visit the survey's website. The initial online survey included a screening instrument that randomly assigned one US adult from the household access to the ANES survey. Internet respondents were compensated with $40 or $80, depending on response rates. The pre-election survey included 1,181 face-to-face respondents and 3,090 internet respondents, for a total sample size of 4,271 respondents. The re-interview rate on the post-election survey was 90%, leaving the 2016 ANES survey with a total sample size of 3,843 participants. After deleting missing cases and subsetting the data to include only white

Democrats (more on this under the sub-heading "Variables"), this study has a final sample size of 1,139 respondents. For more information on the ANES, including more information on the study design and sampling methods as well as the pre- and post-election questionnaires, reference the ANES website or codebook (for further information, go to: https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2016-time-series-study/).

Variables

This study's research question is: does education predict white Democrats' antiracist attitudes relative to their political action? The broad sociological concepts that must be operationalized in order to address this question are race, political ideology, education, antiracist attitudes, political action, and antiracist attitudes relative to political action.

White Democrats Subset

First, this study aims to explore the relationship between education, antiracist attitudes, and political action *among white Democrats*. To ensure that this study only includes respondents who identify both as white and as Democrats, I created a subset which excludes all respondents who identify with other racial groups and/or as Republicans. The ANES asks all respondents to self-identify with one of six racial groups: white; Black of African-American; American-Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; or Other. The ANES also asks respondents to self-identify with one of six political groups: "Strong Republican," "Moderate Republican," "Independent who leans Republican," "Independent who leans Democrat," "Moderate Democrat," and "Strong Democrat." This study only includes respondents who identified as "white" and respondents who identified as either "Independent who leans Democrat," "Moderate Democrat," or "Strong Democrat."

Dependent Variables

This study includes three dependent variables: antiracist attitudes, political action, and antiracist attitudes relative to political action. To operationalize each of these dependent variables, I constructed three scales: an ''Antiracist Attitudes' scale,' a 'Political Action' scale, and an 'Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action' scale. First, I will describe the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale and the 'Political Action' scale separately. Then, I will describe how they were both used to construct the 'Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action' scale.

Antiracist Attitude Scale

Antiracist attitudes were operationalized using a "racial resentment" scale widely cited in the literature, most notably by Drakulich et al. (2020:11). While this scale operationalizes racial resentment, I argue that by reverse coding, this scale could also operationalize antiracist attitudes. Table 1 lists the variables included in the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale and the possible responses.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

As Table 1 shows, I recoded the second and third variables of the scale to reflect *antiracist* attitudes: namely, a receptiveness to structural rather than individualistic or cultural explanations of racial inequality (Bobo et al., 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2018). A Cronbach's alpha test (.858) showed that the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale has high levels of internal consistency, and therefore high reliability.

'Political Action' scale

This study's second dependent variable is political action. Like antiracist attitudes, political action is also operationalized by a scale made up of four variables. Table 2 lists the variables included in the 'Political Action' scale and the possible responses.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

As shown in Table 2, these variables were originally coded on a scale from 1 to 2, with 1 meaning 'have done this in the past 12 months' and 2 meaning 'have not done this in the past 12 months.' I recoded all variables so that having done the action in question is coded high. The results of a Cronbach's alpha test (.524) showed that the 'Political Action' scale has moderate reliability .

Antiracist Attitudes Minus 'Political Action' scale

The final dependent variable in this study measures antiracist attitudes *relative* to political action. To operationalize antiracist attitudes relativ*e* to political action, I created a scale which subtracts the respondent's score on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale minus their score on the 'Political Action' scale. To create this scale, I first had to ensure that the antiracist attitudes and 'Political Action' scales shared the same maximum value. To do this, I reviewed the maximum score of the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale and of the 'Political Action' scale and determined what factor they would each need to be multiplied by to become scales out of 100.

For example, the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale consists of four variables with responses coded from 1 to 5. The maximum score possible on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale (before weighting) would be 20. This is relative to the 'Political Action' scale, which has a maximum score (before weighting) of 8. To ensure that each scale is measured out of 100, I multiplied scores on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale by 5 and scores on the 'Political Action' scale by 12.5.

After ensuring that both scales shared a common maximum value, I created the antiracist attitudes relative to 'Political Action' scale by subtracting them from each other. For example, if R scored a 100 on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale (meaning they answered in the maximum antiracist direction for every question) but had not taken any of the political actions include in the 'Political Action' scale in the past twelve months (earning them a score of 4, because 'have

not done this in the past 12 months' is coded as 1) R would earn a score of 96 on the 'antiracist attitudes minus political action' scale.

Independent Variable

This study's main independent variable is education. The original education variable included 16 values, ranging from 'less than 1st grade' to 'doctorate degree.' I recoded the variable into categories ranging from 'not a high school graduate' to 'doctoral degree,' because there were very few cases in each category below a high school degree. The recoded education variable is ordinal, with higher levels of education coded high.

Control Variable

The control variables are age and liberalism. I recoded age to exclude the 'older than 89' category, recognizing that while the distance between 18 and 19 years old, for example, is one year, the distance between 88 and 'older than 89' could be any number of years. The recoded age variable ranges from 18 years old to 89 years old, with older people coded high. I also control for liberalism (within the subset of white Democrats). Liberalism consists of respondents who identified as either "Independent- Democrat," "Moderate Democrat," or "Strong Democrat" when describing their party identification. The liberalism variable is ordinal, with "Strong Democrat" coded high.

FINDINGS

Univariate

Before considering the relationships between this study's independent, dependent, and control variables, it can be helpful to first consider characteristics of the sample. Are the white Democrats included in this sample politically active? What is their average score on the

'Antiracist Attitudes' scale? Questions like these can be best answered through univariate analysis, by looking at distributions and considering mean and median values.

Consider the 'Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Action' scale, which measures the difference between a respondent's score on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale minus their score on the 'Political Action' scale. Knowing the mean, median, and distribution of this variable could give insight into how white Democrats included in the sample prioritize knowing relative to doing.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The scale ranges from -67.5 (maximum *action* relative to antiracist attitude) to 50 (maximum *antiracist attitude* relative to action). The mean is 4.09 ± 21.091 and the median is 7.50 (see appendix for means table). Both the mean and median are positive, suggesting that most respondents score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale than they do on the 'Political Action' scale.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1 shows a slight positive skew, confirming that most respondents score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale than on the action scale.

Now turn to the antiracist attitudes and action scales respectively. Where does the sample fall with regard to these? The 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale had a mean of 67.45 ± 22.108 and a median of 70. Because the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale ranges from 20 to 100, a mean and median score near 70 suggests that most respondents held more antiracist attitudes than explicitly racist attitudes.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The action scale tells a different story: on a scale from 50 to 100, the mean score was 63.37± 13.572 and the median score was 62.50.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

The relatively low mean and median and the significant negative skew shown in Figure 3 suggest that most respondents engage in low levels of political action. So far, univariate analysis on the antiracist attitudes relative to 'Political Action' scale, the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale, and the 'Political Action' scale suggest that white Democrats are more antiracist in attitude than they are engaged in political action.

Univariate analysis also provides clarity for this study's independent variable: education. Figure 4 shows that the largest percentage of respondents in the sample have a Bachelor's degree (24.8%) followed by some college (18.4%).

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Figure 4 also shows that respondents whose highest degree of education is high school are in the minority, only accounting for 20.9% of the total sample.

Bivariate

While univariate analysis provides insight into the sample, bivariate correlation tests relationships between variables. Table 3 shows that all the dependent, independent, and control variables had statistically significant relationships with one another at the .01 level except for: age and antiracist attitudes relative to action; liberalism and action; liberalism and education; and age and education.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The research question for this study is: does education predict antiracist attitudes relative to political action? Education, the main independent variable, was found to have a statistically

significant (p<.01) relationship with all three dependent variables. Education had a weak, positive relationship with antiracist attitudes relative to action (r=.212) and a slightly stronger positive, moderate relationship with both antiracist attitudes (r=.389) and political action (.304) respectively.

Both of the control variables, liberalism and age, had statistically significant (p<.01) relationships with two of the three dependent variables. Liberalism had statistically significant and positive relationships with antiracist attitudes relative to political action (.098) and with antiracist attitudes (.121) alone. In both cases, the relationships were very weak. Liberalism had no statistically significant relationship with political action. Age had statistically significant and negative relationships with antiracist attitudes (-.115) and political action (-.113) but no statistically significant relationship with antiracist attitudes relative to political action. Ages' relationship with antiracist attitudes and political action were both weak.

Multivariate

Perhaps the most powerful statistical analysis included in this study is multivariate regression. Like bivariate correlation, multivariate regression speaks to the relationships between variables. Unlike bivariate correlation, however, multivariate regression is able to test an independent variable's relationship with a dependent variable *net of other factors*. In the context of this study, multivariate regression allows the researcher to test whether education net of the other variables included in this analysis predicts white Democrats' antiracist attitudes relative to their political action. Before turning to the multivariate regression findings, recall this study's three hypotheses:

1. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.

2. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score lower on the 'Political Action' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.
3. I hypothesize that white Democrats with higher levels of education will, on average, *score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale relative to the 'Political Action' scale* than white Democrats with lower levels of education.

With these hypotheses in mind, turn to Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

The first hypothesis stated that white Democrats with higher levels of education would, on average, score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale than white Democrats with lower levels of education. The multivariate regression findings support this hypothesis. The antiracist attitudes model was statistically significant (F=86.072), at the *p* < .01 level. Education was found to be a positive predictor (β=.388) of antiracist attitudes among white Democrats controlling for age and liberalism, followed by age (-.149) and liberalism (.141). Education, age, and liberalism accounted for 18.5% (R^2=.185) of the variation in antiracist attitudes.

The second hypothesis predicted that white Democrats with higher levels of education would score lower on the 'Political Action' scale than white Democrats with higher levels of education. This hypothesis was rejected. Education was found to be a statistically significant (F=46.815) and *positive* (β=.305) predictor of political action controlling for age and liberalism, followed by age (-.131). Consistent with the bivariate findings, there is no statistically significant relationship between liberalism and action. Education and age accounted for 11% (R^2=.110) of the variation in political action. Though significant and positive, education was a weaker predictor of political action (β=.305) than it was for antiracist attitudes (β=.388). Education (along with age and liberalism) accounted for less of the variation in political action (R^2=.110) than it did in antiracist attitudes (R^2=.185).

The third hypothesis stated that white Democrats with higher levels of education would, on average, score higher on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale than on the 'Political Action' scale.

This hypothesis was supported. Education was found to be a statistically significant (F=23.641) and *positive* (β=.211) predictor of antiracist attitudes relative to political action controlling for age and liberalism. Liberalism was also found to be a positive predictor of antiracist attitudes relative to political action (.107). Like in the bivariate correlation, age was found to be a nonsignificant predictor for this model. Of the three dependent variables, education was the worst predictor of antiracist attitudes relative to political action. Its standardized coefficient (β=.107) was weaker than it was for political action (β=.305) and for antiracist attitudes (β=.388). Education, age, and liberalism also accounted for less of the variation in antiracist attitudes relative to political action (5.9%) compared to the two other models.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study generally support existing literature on white racial knowing and political action. The main finding, that higher levels of education predict higher scores on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale relative to the action scale, is consistent with both Mueller's (2020) Theory of Ignorance and Hersh's (2017) concept of political hobbyism.

This is not, however, the whole story. This study's unique contribution is in its finding that though education predicts a broader divide between antiracist attitudes and action, education also predicts higher scores on the antiracist attitude scale and the 'Political Action' scale respectively.

Education predicting higher scores on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale is not inconsistent with Hersh's (2017) political hobbyism argument. In fact, Hersh (2017) argues that political hobbyists often are high information. This finding does at first seem to contrast with Mueller's (2020) theory. While Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance suggests that "ignorance

21

fights back," this study finds that higher levels of education *do* predict higher scores on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale.

But as Mueller (2020) notes, "in a world looming with racial disparities, resistance, and counter-framed critiques from people of color," white "racial reproduction" often requires "refashion[ing] new tools" in support of maintaining the racial status quo (233-234). Perhaps antiracist attitudes represent one such 'refashioned tool,' where learning about racism and professing antiracist attitudes allows whites a positive self-perception that, in turn, becomes an "insulating medium for the reproduction of a hierarchical racial order" (Steyn 2012:21). Possibilities like these make further research necessary, particularly on the *function* of antiracist attitudes for whites, to contextualize this study's finding that higher levels of education predict higher scores on the 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale.

Education predicting higher rates of political action among white Democrats also presents inconsistencies with Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance. If whites think and act in accordance with maintaining the racial status quo, why do higher levels of education predict higher rates of political action, a form of resisting the status quo?

This finding also challenges Hersh's (2017) concept of political hobbyism- Hersh (2017) suggests that education is a conservative influence on political action, as it often reflects a certain level of comfort with 'politics as usual.' Finding that education has the opposite effect in this study is worth noting.

Here again it is critical to note how political action was operationalized. The four variables which made up the 'Political Action' scale included: joining a protest, signing a petition, posting on social media about politics, and donating to a social or political organization. It is plausible that a respondent may score highly on all of these measures for participating in

political action around an issue other than racial justice. If this is the case, then this study's finding that education predicts higher levels of political action among white Democrats is not in tension with Mueller's (2020) Theory of Racial Ignorance, nor does it challenge Hersh's (2017) concept of 'political hobbyism.'

Though not in tension with either of these theories, if whites choose to participate in political action that does not threaten the racial status quo, this is an interesting finding in and of itself. It contrasts with dominant understandings of white identity politics, which are often described as reactionary politics that aim to limit immigration or affect other policies whites perceive as 'threatening' white identity. If education does predict higher levels of white Democrats' political participation, but that participation is designed to avoid challenging the racial status quo, this presents a type of white identity politics characterized by absence, or perhaps what Forman and Lewis (2006) called 'apathy.' Perhaps racial apathy is white identity politics on the left. Future research on highly educated, white Democrats and their political action is needed to better understand this finding.

Another limitation of the study is the potential influence of time. Perhaps white Democrats' antiracist attitudes, political action, and antiracist attitudes relative to political action change in response to contemporary events. For example, perhaps the period of sustained, Black-led protest this past summer led to a surge in white Democrats' political action, and perhaps at the same, white Democrats dedicated particular attention to racial learning. If this was the case, then it would suggest that factors beyond education, such as contemporary events, are at play in predicting white Democrats' antiracist attitudes and political action. This was not measured in this study, and perhaps some of the variation currently being explained by education might actually be due to current events.

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings do welcome further analysis on the role of education in predicting whites' antiracist attitudes and political action. More specifically, future research could critically examine the function of education for white Democrats beyond political action, paying particular attention to any 'mediating effects' education might have on white antiracism. Future research is also needed on white Democrats' political action, and especially the role of apathy in Democratic white identity politics. Finally, future research could better engage the question of time, identifying consistencies between 'racisms' across time and space, as well as novel characteristics brought on by historical events or particular material conditions.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the question: if white Democrats know better, do they do better? Its findings paint a complicated picture. What is clear is that whites' knowledge and political action are nuanced and sometimes contradictory in ways that mimic the deeply unjust world they simultaneously build and inhabit. For those who dream education to be the answer to white racism, this study offers little evidence. And to those who would argue for political action, this study offers reason to pause. In its refusal to concede to a single, simple truth, this study necessarily implicates alternative ways of thinking about white racial knowing and political action that meet the urgency of racial inequality. Imagining beyond 'know better, do better' frees up bolder, more committed responses around wealth redistribution and insurgency that no amount of education alone can create.

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Question	Original Coding	Recode
'Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Agree' to 5= 'Strongly Disagree'	N/A
'Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Agree' to 5= 'Strongly Disagree'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Disagree' to 5= 'Strongly Agree'
'Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Agree' to 5= 'Strongly Disagree'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Disagree' to 5= 'Strongly Agree'
'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.'	1-5; 1= 'Strongly Agree' to 5= 'Strongly Disagree'	N/A

Table 1. Variables and Coding for the 'Antiracist Attitudes' Scale

Question	Original Coding	Recode
During the past 12 months, have you joined a protest march, rally, or demonstration?	1= 'Have done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months'	1= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have done this in the past 12 months'
During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or a paper about a political or social issue?	1= 'Have done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months	1= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have done this in the past 12 months'
During the past 12 months, have you ever posted a message on Facebook or Twitter about a political issue?	1= 'Have done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months'	1= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have done this in the past 12 months'
Not counting a religious organization, during the past 12 months, have you given money to any other organization concerned with a political or social issue?	1= 'Have done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months'	1= 'Have not done this in the past 12 months' 2= 'Have done this in the past 12 months'

Table 2. Variables and Coding for the 'Political Action' scale

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	S.D.
Anti-Racist Attitude Scale	20.00	100.00	67.45	70.00	22.108
Political Action Scale	50.00	100.00	63.37	62.50	13.572
Anti-Racist Attitudes Relative to Action	-67.50	50.00	4.09	7.50	21.091
Liberalism	1.00	3.00	2.141	2.00	.828
Education	1.00	7.00	4.12	4.00	1.643
Age	18.00	89.00	48.77	50.00	17.541

Table 3. Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action, Education, Age, and Liberalism

Variable	Anti-Racist Attitudes Scale	Action Scale	Liberalism	Education	Age
Anti-Racist Attitudes Relative to Action	.804*	-.245*	.098*	212**	-.048
Anti-Racist Attitudes Scale		.380*	.121*	.389*	-.115*
'Political Action' scale			.045	.304*	-.113*
Liberalism				.023	.192*
Education					.018

*p < .01
N-1,139

Table 4. Bivariate Correlations Between Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action, Education, Age, and Liberalism

Variable	Anti-Racist Attitudes Minus Action β	Anti-Racist Attitudes Scale β	Action Scale β
Education	.211*	.388*	.305*
Age	-.072	-.149*	-.131*
Liberalism	.107*	.141*	.063
F (3, 1135)	23.641*	86.072*	46.815*
R^2	.059	.185	.110

*$p < .01$, n= 1,139

Table 5. Regression of Education, Liberalism, and Age on Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action, Antiracist Attitudes, and Political Action
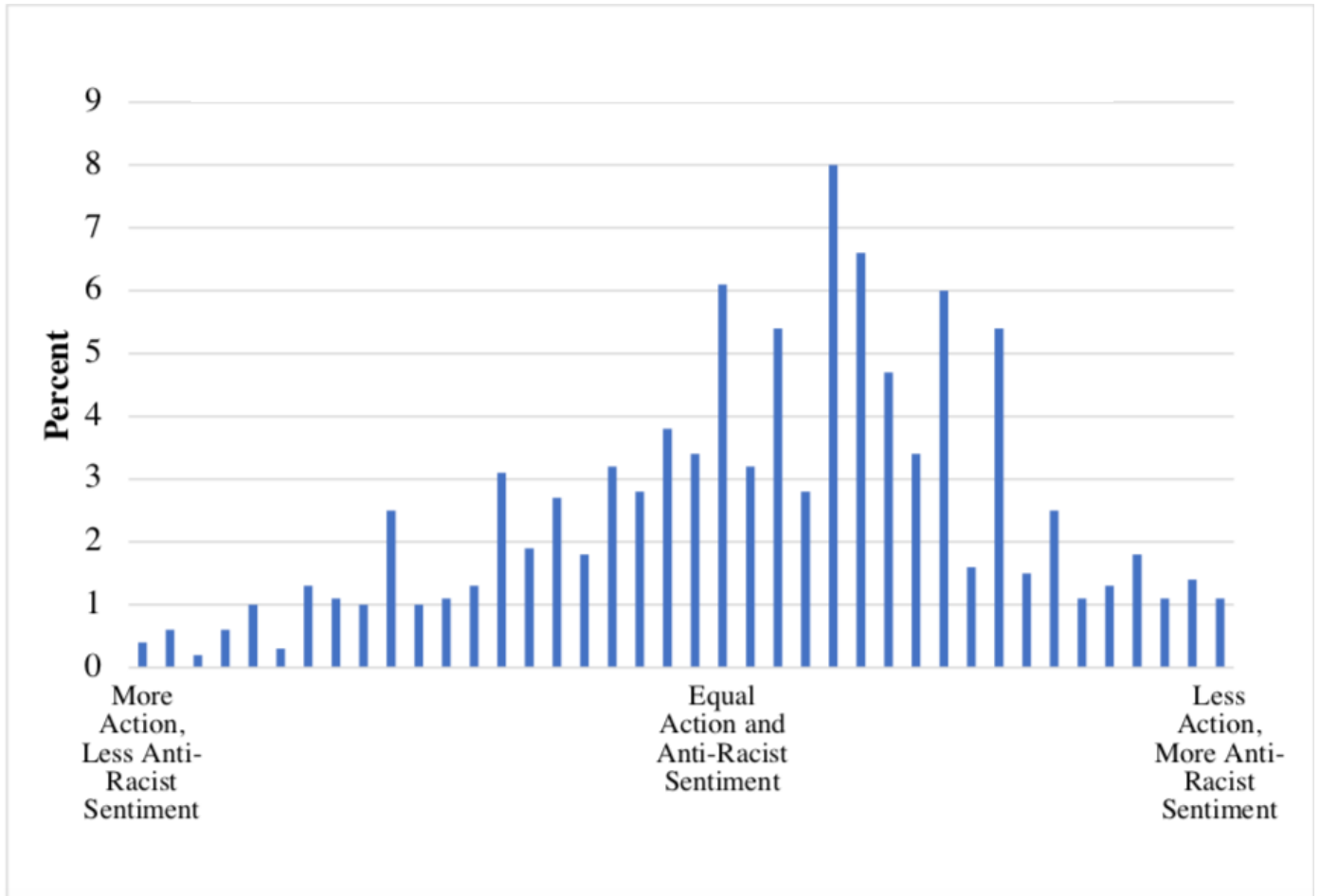
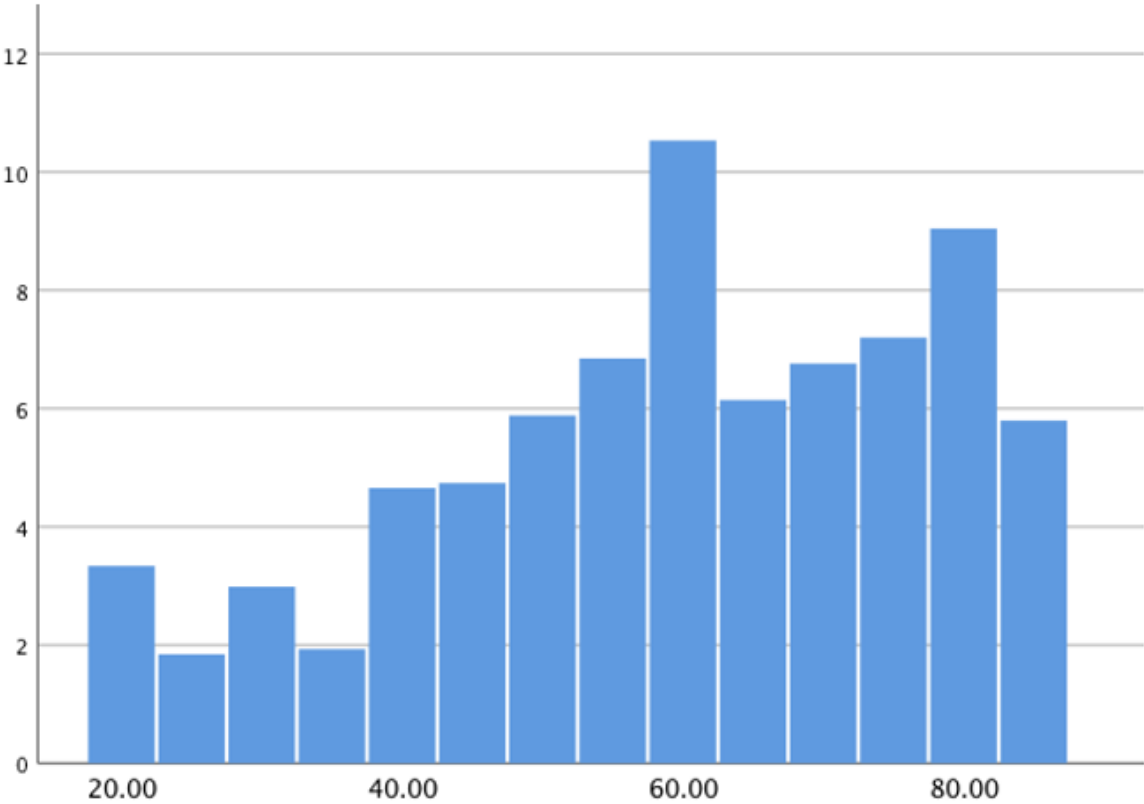**Figure 1. 'Antiracist Attitudes Relative to Political Action' scale**

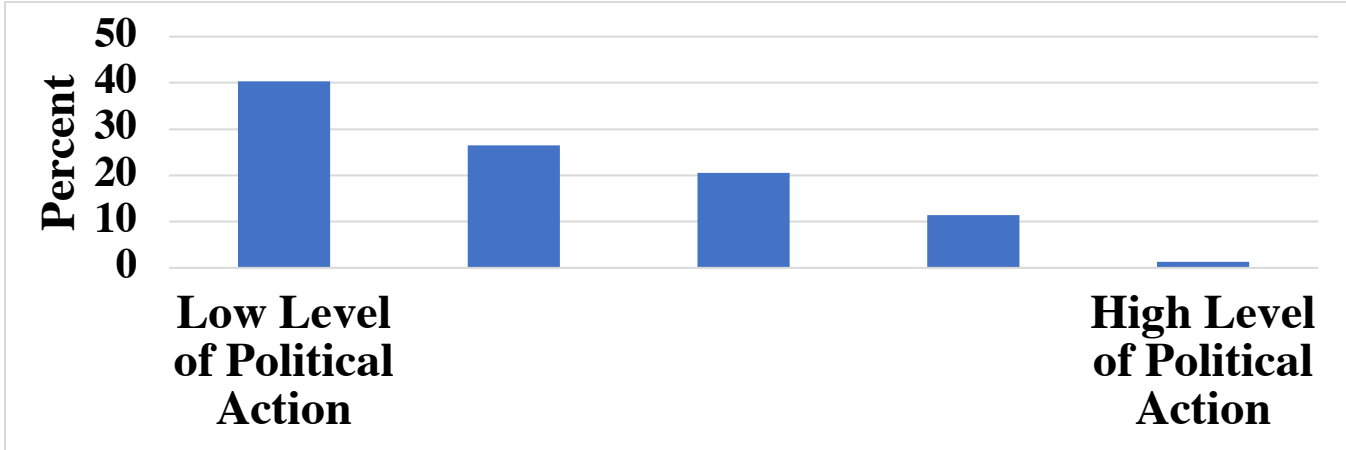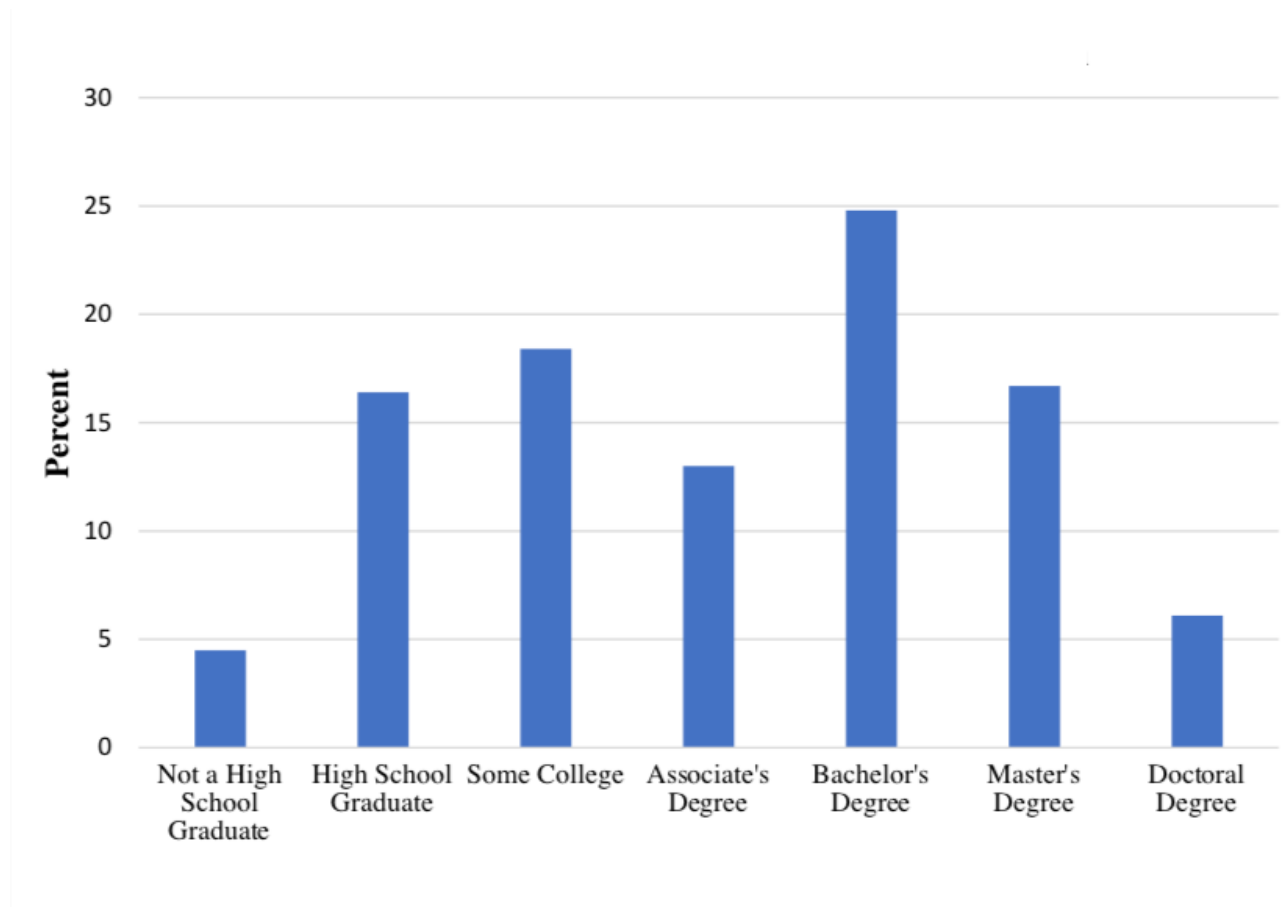**Figure 2. Histogram of 'Antiracist Attitudes' scale**

Figure 3. Bar Graph of 'Political Action' scale

Figure 4. Bar Graph of Education