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## **The (De)merits of Radical Progressivism: Commentary on Negy & Ferguson (2025)**

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Sonia Yanovsky, Rutgers University, USA. E-mail: [sonia.yanovsky@rutgers.edu](mailto:sonia.yanovsky@rutgers.edu)

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The study by Negy and Ferguson aimed to explore personality and attitudinal variables that might predict endorsement of radical progressive ideology (RPI), which is characterized by ideas rooted in critical race theory (CRT) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks. Key findings revealed strong correlations between RPI and left-wing authoritarianism ( $r = .84, p < .001$ ), anti-White attitudes ( $r = .71, p < .001$ ), and anti-U.S. attitudes ( $r = -.67, p < .001$ ). Other variables – need to belong, victimhood identity, autonomous thinking, sadistic tendencies – showed no significant correlations with RPI. The study was exploratory, and it used correlational and regression analyses without predefined hypotheses.

I think this type of study is important to have on hand when discussing the merits or demerits of the ideology associated with “critical theory” and DEI, whether it is called “wokeism” or, as the authors here call it, radical progressive ideology. There are some things I would like to point out that I think may help make this study and future studies like it stronger – one theoretical point from a devil’s advocate perspective, and a few design suggestions. I would also like to add that usually a sample of undergraduate psychology students is considered not ideal, but in this case, they are a valuable source of information in understanding the current sociopolitical climate.

Now, a reason why “Whites, men, heterosexuals, cisgenders, social conservatives, Christians, Republicans, and even non-Whites who are critical of DEI commonly report not feeling accepted by proponents of DEI” may be because they feel threatened by those groups that are becoming more prominent due to more “diversity” and “inclusion.” These groups were historically underrepresented and marginalized and are now being given the opportunity to level the playing field with the more privileged groups. There would be no need for a scale like the RPI scale, and no need to find correlations between RPI and attitudes towards the U.S. and Whites, if the U.S. and White people were more embracing of DEI initiatives in the first place. The fact that some people are made uncomfortable by the ideas proposed by CRT and DEI is itself evidence that pro-RPI efforts are necessary.

Speaking of diversity, did racial/ethnic identity, gender, or sexual orientation have any effect on RPI or the other variables? For instance, were minority or majority group members more likely to score highly on RPI? As for another variable of note, it might make it easier to explain and interpret if the Attitudes Towards the U.S. variable (ATUS) was reverse-scored so that higher scores indicate more negative attitudes toward the U.S., rather than saying something like “RPI and ATUS were negatively correlated,” which may be confusing.

The RPI scale may be comparable to Lahtinen’s (2024) Critical Social Justice Attitude Scale (CSJAS). Were the authors aware of CSJAS before developing RPI? Both scales are designed to measure “woke” attitudes and the items are very similar. If CSJAS was not an inspiration for the RPI scale, then the literature can only benefit from having more than one measurement of the same construct on the books. However, CSJAS has an advantage that the RPI scale does not yet have: it went through vigorous factor analysis to determine the validity and reliability of the measurement. Performing confirmatory factor analysis on the RPI scale could help strengthen the structure of the construct. Another way to strengthen the design of the RPI scale would be to prevent acquiescence bias – by updating it with different response options (not agree/disagree), for example.

Even though this was not part of the overarching theoretical question, I would have been interested to see right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) included as a variable, to see if it negatively correlates with RPI (opposite to LWA) or does not correlate at all. However, this might require a different sample, as it is probably less likely (though not impossible) to find right-wing authoritarians among college students. Of course, it is still not resolved in the literature whether LWA and RWA are mirror images of each other, but perhaps extending this work to include an analysis with RPI would help contribute to such a resolution. Another future direction might be a model predicting RPI with LWA as a mediator or moderator, since LWA was correlated with the other two variables of interest, anti-White attitudes ( $r = .67, p < .001$ ) and anti-U.S. attitudes ( $r = -.65, p < .001$ ),<sup>1</sup> the two of which were also correlated with each other ( $r = -.57, p < .001$ ).<sup>2</sup>

The ideology of radical progressivism is not new or unique to the current zeitgeist. Some details may be singular – for example, it was never the case that the dichotomy of biological sex was disputed on a national level – but the overall framework has its ties, some would say directly, to communist regimes, which is, of course, where “critical theory” has its origins. We just happen to live in a time and place where we can perform modern empirical research on what we see in the world, which is what’s unique.

<sup>1</sup> This is a negative correlation given the U.S. attitudes variables are scored in the opposite direction to the other measures.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.