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The Influence of Racial and Partisan Cross-Pressures on Political Attitudes

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Political Science

by

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March 2024

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The Influence of Racial and Partisan Cross-Pressures on Political Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The Influence of Racial and Partisan Cross-Pressures on Political Attitudes

By

Daniel Gomez

Both scholars and public commentators are rightly concerned about the future of

democracy in the US. A coalescing set of phenomena contribute to backsliding and the threat of

authoritarianism and even violence. One key contributor is affective polarization, which

hamstrings institutions and creates animus among citizens, leading to cascades of

problems. Another is racial identity, especially as it leads to a backlash among social

conservatives to changing demographics, decades-long advancements in civil rights, and the loss

of the cultural dominance they once enjoyed. Racial resentment is tied to many of the array of

problems connected to populist and extremist politics in the US. While scholars have developed

a rich understanding of polarization and racial identity politics, these phenomena are primarily

understood separately. Yet, there are theoretical reasons to expect that these may intersect. The

key to the potential intersection of affective polarization and racial resentment is people's

assumptions about race and partisanship, especially about Black Americans. Since the

realignment of the South with the Republican Party, the Democratic Party is more strongly

associated with civil rights. The public widely assumes Black Americans vote overwhelmingly

Democratic. For example, in the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections, over 90% voted for Democratic

candidates. With racial and partisan identity linked in people's minds, the implications for an

interesting question about which little is known is the following: Do racial attitudes, including

racial resentment, interact with affective polarization, and if so, how? That question motivates

this study. Utilizing a randomized survey experiment (n=1126), this study explores the impact of

messaging that challenges the assumptions about racial and partisan identities. Ultimately, the

experiment produces null statistical results. Finally, I explore the possibilities for the null results

and offer suggestions for future research.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

During the 2020 U.S. presidential elections, the two major candidates both appeared to embrace implicit racial dynamics as they related to partisanship. During an interview with rapper Charlamagne the God, Democratic candidate Joe Biden discussed his opponent, then-incumbent President Donald Trump. As the interview concluded, Biden quipped, "Well, I tell you what, if you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't black" (Bradner et al., 2020). Biden would later apologize for these statements (Herndon & Gluck, 2021), though there didn't appear to be any political consequences for the statement as support for Biden among African Americans remained steady, and he would eventually go on to win the 2020 election.

During the same election, the social media platform Twitter deleted a handful of fake accounts, all of whom featured stock images of Black users, primarily men. These accounts all posted similarly, highlighting their racial identity and support for Republican candidate Trump. These accounts featured statements, including "YES IM BLACK AND IM VOTING FOR TRUMP!!!" (Lee, 2020). These accounts were clearly fictitious, with the photos the accounts used being taken from news reports, and in some cases, had text reading "Black Man Photo." While it remains unclear if these accounts were directly related to Trump's campaign, the implication is that they were designed to inflate the level of perceived support for Trump among Black voters (Collins, 2020).

These examples illustrate the commonly accepted dynamics of racial identity and partisanship in the United States. While White Americans are generally assumed to belong to

either party in roughly equal numbers, Black Americans are assumed to belong to the Democratic Party (Ahler & Sood, 2018). There is some degree of merit to this assumption. Historically, the two parties have done equally well among white voters. In contrast, Black voters have been a stronghold in the Democratic Party mainly in response to the Civil Rights Act and the civil rights movement (Schickler, 2016). In recent years, the two parties have become increasingly distinct on demographics, including race, education, and urbanity (Mason, 2015). The two parties have become more ideologically homogenous, with liberals now more likely to be Democrats and conservatives more likely to be Republicans than in the past (Levendusky, 2009).

Despite these demographic and ideological sorting trends, the match between demographic identities and partisanship is far from perfect. One of the most high-profile campaigns of the 2022 Midterm elections was that of the US Senate race in the state of Georgia. What was notable about the race was that it featured two Black candidates, the incumbent Democrat Raphael Warnock and the Republican Challenger Herschel Walker. Walker's claim to fame came from his history as a prolific American football player and long-term resident of Texas. Despite Walker's minimal political experience, he was personally recruited by former President Donald Trump to run (Gibson, 2021). Gaffes and bizarre statements characterized Walker's campaign. In many ways, it appeared that the primary draw that Walker brought to his campaign was an attempt to appeal to the predominantly Democratic Black population of Georgia. Warnock would eventually go on to win in the second round of the race by a margin of 96,000 votes.

The race was among the most critical in the midterm elections, not only because it would eventually give the Democrats a narrow majority in the Senate but because of the

race's closeness. The high-profile media attention drew increased scrutiny to the campaign and focused on the intriguing dynamic of two Black men opposing one another in a general election. A significant part of the novelty of the race was the presence of a politically inexperienced Black Republican, challenging typical stereotypes of race and partisanship within the US. However, Walker is not the only high-profile Black Republican seeking major office.

In early April 2023, South Carolina Senator Tim Scott announced an exploratory committee investigating a possible 2024 Presidential run. In late May of the same year, he officially announced his candidacy for President of The United States. Scott is the only Black Republican Senator and the first to serve the Southern United States since Reconstruction. Scott's announcement came on the heels of increased media presence, including offering the Republican response to President Biden's State of the Union address. Scott's candidacy, and much of his political career, has been characterized by the reality that he is a rarity in American politics. The demographic combo of being Black and a Republican in the United States is historically and contemporarily uncommon among the public, let alone among elected representatives.

Two of these anecdotes illustrate in a broad sense our common assumptions about racial identity and partisanship in American politics, while two others offer a challenge to these assumptions. While the degree of overlap between racial and partisan identities has become familiar to the point where some politicians and their campaigns can't conceive of a conflict between these two identities, the overlap is not perfect. The Herschel Walker and Tim Scott cases show the unique presence of Black Republicans and the attention they can garner. However, these are only the most high-profile cases.

There is a considerable population of Black conservatives in the United States, and their presence in mainstream political life is often overlooked (Jefferson, 2020). Indeed, the percentage of all racial minorities identifying as Republican has increased since the early 2000's (Farrington, 2016). Contrary to the expectations and political stereotypes held by the general public, it's not altogether uncommon for Black Americans to hold conservative views or belong to the Republican Party.

A. Outline

The remainder of this dissertation attempts to address the question of the consequences of citizens witnessing challenges to their perceived stereotypes in the form of social media discussion. When preconceived notions about the combination of racial and partisan identities conflict with what respondents witness in a political discussion, do they update their attitudes? If respondents update their attitudes in response to stereotype-challenging discourse, which identity has the more significant influence, race or partisanship?

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds to address these questions. Chapter 2 lays out the study's theoretical rationale and presents hypotheses to be tested. Chapter 3 briefly describes the data and data-generating process used in the analyses. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 test each set of hypotheses. Chapter 4 focuses on attitudes towards racially coded policies; Chapter 5 explores racial and partisan polarization; and Chapter 6 focuses on democratic norms. Chapter 7 discusses the results of the previous chapters, with a particular focus on exploring the possibilities for the results, or lack thereof, in the previous chapters. Finally, Chapter 8 serves as a conclusion and presents suggestions for future research.

II. Theory

A. *The Basics of Political Cognition*

How citizens come to their political understanding of the world and use it to make decisions has been a primary concern of those who study American government since its founding. A critical disagreement between sects of the founders centered around the ability of the American public to gather, understand, and utilize information to make democratically informed decisions (Hamilton, 1788). The information environment in the United States has changed drastically since its founding. Information is now readily available and abundant (Bimber, 2003), literacy rates and education have reached heights the founders could only dream of (Roser & Ortiz-Espinoza, 2016), and the opportunities for direct democratic actions by the American public have increased in all facets of public life (Tolbert & Smith, 2006). Given this, it is possible that the American public can think and act rationally in political matters.

For a time, the assumption of the American citizenry as rational political actors had normative and analytical support (for an example, see Campbell et al., 1960). Scholars operated under the assumption that how individuals made political decisions operated rationally through individual analysis of costs and benefits and chose the option that maximized their benefit for as little cost as possible. This understanding of how citizens made decisions was the dominant form of thinking in areas such as party identification (Carlsen, 1988) and vote choice (Downs, 1957).

The fiercest and most critical challenge to these assumptions came in Converse's (1964) analysis of how attitudes are organized in the minds of the public. Converse percent analysis tells us that most Americans do not think in terms of left or right ideology. Many Americans' opinions on issues are essentially random, subject to fluctuations and change

from one moment to the next. Rather than being rational actors who base their political

attitudes on information and analysis of alternatives, individuals hold attitudes without

understanding the basis for them.

Numerous scholars have echoed this presumed shortcoming of the American public

following Converse. For example, Dell Carping and Keeter (1996) illustrate Americans' low

levels of basic political facts and the consequences of this lack of knowledge. Lenz (2013)

also suggests that the conception of knowledge of costs and benefits preceding choices and

attitudes needs to be revised. Instead, Lenz shows that rather than using information on

policy stances to choose which candidate to support in an election, individuals select their

preferred candidate and update their positions on policy to match.

Individuals have actual attitudes and preferences on policy alternatives. However,

these are not based on the rational cost-benefit analysis assumption that informed much early

public opinion research. If this is not the case, the question emerges about how individuals

come to their policy preferences and make decisions. Two factors structure how individuals

come to their attitudes and rationalize them: affect and group identities.

Affective thinking drives attitudes in American politics. Rather than cold, rational

calculations based on shared information, individuals make decisions and come to their

attitudes via "hot" affective thinking (Lodge & Taber, 2013). Emotion is the primary driver

of decision-making. Individuals often react to events or information from an emotional

perspective first and rationalize their reactions after the fact (Taber & Lodge, 2006).

Group identities are the other organizing feature of political attitudes in American

politics. One feature of Converse's (1964) early findings indicated that for most areas of

political reality, citizens had no organizing structure to their opinions or attitudes, with the

notable exception of group identities. Even individuals on the lower end of opinion sophistication could accurately identify policies that assisted different groups over others. Later work that illustrated the shortcomings of the American public also found this unique feature of attitudes and knowledge towards differing groups. Delli Carpini and Keeter also noted that minority groups tended to have greater political knowledge about policies and issues related to their groups. In this way, group identity can be a cognitive shortcut for making political decisions that help mitigate the lack of informed, rational action.

Identities are primarily formed not in a vacuum but socially. Indeed, the primary vector for transmitting attitudes to the American public is not via information gathering and rational weighting but social transmission, primarily via political elites (Zaller, 1992). However, group identities are often biologically via family in the case of race or ethnicity or socially transmitted via family and peer groups, such as partisanship (Jennings & Niemi, 1968). While this can constrain attitudes together so that individuals have a sense of "what goes with what" to form an ideology, this grouping can also serve as the basis for identities (Adams, 1985).

Attitudes and their groupings lead to forming identities primarily by developing group norms of what is acceptable and correct for in-group members to subscribe to (Groenendyk et al., 2022). Identity and ideology are then intrinsically linked to one another, with the question of causality challenging to disentangle. It is not a matter of which comes first, attitudes or identities, but instead a question of how they shape, reinforce, and conflict with one another.

B. Racial and Partisan Identities in the United States

Two forms of identity, partisanship and race, are critical for understanding how

individuals situate themselves in American politics. These two identities prove to carry unique importance to American politics. While for much of the nation's history politics was purely the realm of land-owning White men, the steadily increasing openness of the American political system has brought with it both normatively positive pluralism for minority groups but also new tensions between the dominant power groups and those who seek to achieve greater political representation and influence (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2015). To better understand how perceptions of race and partisanship in the US have become so closely linked, I now address the importance of each in turn.

Partisanship is, arguably, the most critical construct shaping political behavior and attitudes among the American public (Bartels, 2002; Campbell et al., 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, 2002). Competing strands of thought conceptualize partisanship in different ways. On the one hand, the functional perspective of partisanship conceives of partisanship as a running tally of the performance of politicians and parties and ideological beliefs on policy arenas (Fiorina, 1981). This view bases its intellectual roots on the assumption of rationality that underpinned research on political attitudes for some time.

A competing approach to partisanship, however, contends that partisanship is an enduring identity that connects to social affiliations with social groups that make up the parties (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe, 2015; Mason and Wronski, 2018). This expressive approach to partisanship is rooted in social identity theory, which holds that "people derive self-worth from their sense of membership in social groups and deploy in-group favoritism and out-group chauvinism to boost their sense of group esteem" (Turner et al. 1987, p. 42; but also see: Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This expressive form of partisanship is best articulated by significant research that finds citizens form partisan attachments with little

ideological reasoning, carry political opinions that lack constraint (Converse, 1964; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008), and prefer to alter their opinions on specific policy areas than alter their partisan support when the two are in conflict (Carsey and Layman, 2006).

This conception of partisanship as a form of identity helps place the nature of Converse's (1964) arguments about the ideological structure of mass opinions. Recent work has tested these assumptions, and while many Americans lack the cognitive infrastructure to think in terms of ideology, it is not a lack of knowledge or understanding that makes their attitudes seem inconsistent. Instead, it is a meaningful disagreement between individuals and the mainstream beliefs of their party.

As heartening as it may seem to see citizens as knowledgable and informed enough to disagree with their party rather than unthinkingly follow when they disagree, Groenendyk and his colleagues (2022) illustrate that awareness of ideological differences between oneself and their party and adherence to norms of expected attitude structure are different things. While individuals may hold reasonable disagreements on policy with the mainstream of their party, partisans are less likely to express these disagreements when prompted to consider what attitudes a "good" in-group member holds. Thus, individuals tend to fall into ideological line when primed to consider their identities in a social context around their partisanship.

The expressive conception of partisanship and understanding of how group norms provide pressure focus our understanding of party support as identity-based and social and often affectively driven rather than ideologically driven. This conception doesn't end at one's partisan identity but extends to perceptions of opposing partisans. Americans increasingly express animosity or hostility toward opposing party members (Iyengar and Westwood,

2015). Again, these feelings don't often have any ideological reasoning and instead seem to be driven almost exclusively by affective considerations or social conceptions.

Race is the fundamental cleavage in American politics and closely maps onto divisions in partisanship (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2016). Indeed, while many Americans don't appear to have ideological reasons for their partisan orientation and belong to parties mainly on symbolic bases (Conover, 1984; Achen and Bartels, 2016), one of the most crystallized areas on which Americans do hold consistent attitudes is about social groups such as race (Dawson and Cohen, 2002; Converse 1964). Historical cleavages have led to the close link between racial identity and partisanship, primarily among Black Americans. Major political realignments have followed racially egalitarian public policies such as the Civil Rights Act (Mayhew, 2008), which have pushed Whites in the South to the Republican Party and Black Americans to the Democratic Party. Long-term trends in American politics have also established two clear racial orders in the US (King & Smith, 2005).

On the one hand, the egalitarian transformative order strives for policy and government action to minimize historic and systemic racial gaps. On the other hand, the white supremacist order seeks to maintain the hierarchical structure of racial inequality to maintain the privilege of whites. While King and Smith (2005) argue that the match between racial orders and the two parties is distinct among those in the egalitarian transformative order, with this group primarily made up of liberal Democrats, this is not the case for the white supremacist order. The white supremacist order is not made up solely of Republicans but also a share of moderate Democrats. Thus, racial attitudes and partisan orientation are linked, but the overlap between partisanship and racial progressivity is far from perfect.

Part of the overlap between racial preferences and partisanship is due to the two parties becoming better sorted on demographics, including race. As the two parties have become more ideologically distinct due to advancements in messaging and electoral strategy, they have also become more demographically distinct (Mason, 2015). Black Americans increasingly find their political home in the Democratic Party, while for Whites, it is education and geography that seem to matter for their partisanship (Enders & Thornton, 2022). These long-term trends have connected partisanship and race as identities and, in turn, link racial and partisan attitudes together (Westwood and Peterson, 2019).

The link between racial attitudes and perceptions of partisanship leads many Americans to link the two and make notable assumptions about partisans that don't accurately reflect reality. For example, Americans typically overestimate the number of wealthy Americans in the Republican party and the number of African Americans in the Democratic party (Ahler and Sood, 2018). Further, Americans think of one another in both ideological and trait-based ways, with negative feelings toward opposing partisans heavily influenced by conceptions of individual personality or social traits (Rothschild et al., 2019).

Attitudes on race and partisanship influence one another in numerous ways. A significant portion of Republican activism since the election of President Barack Obama has been predominantly driven by racial animus (Tesler, 2016). Racial animus has driven Republican sects such as the Tea Party and the House Freedom Caucus (Parker & Barreto, 2014), with much of their organizing power coming from racial animus. Hostility between partisan groups has been the most pronounced among those with the most extreme racial attitudes (Enders & Thornton, 2022).

Partisanship and racial identity are powerful organizing forces for how individuals

see themselves and one another in a political context. Yet, as previously discussed, the relationship between racial and partisan identity is not a perfect match. Despite being helpful categorization schemes with significant overlap, group norms are violated when racial and partisan identities conflict. The novelty of witnessing an unexpected pairing of racial and partisan identities can influence political attitudes.

C. *Identity and Group Norms*

The link between attitudes and identities is generally well established, if only sometimes well understood. The pluralistic ideal of the United States is based on the idea that groups with differing interests will compete for favorable policy, whether these groups are based on identity or merely shared interest (Dahl, 1961). Individuals tend to have more concrete attitudes about issues directly affecting their group (Delli Karpini & Keeter, 1996).

Identity groups don't only serve to help organize individuals and offer them common ground from which to act but also provide group norms for proper behavior (Pickup et al., 2020). Boundaries exist between appropriate and improper in-group behavior and attitudes. In some ways, this has a natural ideological infrastructure to build. Democrats will find little ideological consistency if they hold numerous politically conservative attitudes, for example. Additionally, fellow Democrats would likely be confused at the disconnect between ideology and partisanship. Simply put, what it takes to be a good Democrat does not match up well with what it takes to be a good conservative.

Members of these groups must understand these norms of good behavior to exert their effect on policing group attitudes and behavior (Pickup et al., 2020). Individuals can have attitudes and exhibit behaviors inconsistent with the mainstream of their identity groups. However, social pressure prompts individuals to fall in line. Most individuals will fall in line

when prompted with what a "good" in-group member is supposed to do or believe. In this way, group norms and expectations can exert a form of policing.

How do individuals respond when they hold multiple identities with norms that clash? This reality is far from uncommon but appears to be more common for some groups than others. Despite increasing demographic sorting within the two parties, several identities that hold norms conflict. Hispanics, for example, tend to belong to the Democratic Party. However, they also tend to be Catholic (Cassese, 2020). One source of tension comes in the form of expected policy support on social issues such as abortion or LGBTQ+ rights. Good Democrats tend to support open access to abortion and more protection and visibility for LGBTQ+ individuals. Good Catholics, on the other hand, tend to hold attitudes in the opposite direction. This tension emerges directly as a result of cross-cutting identities.

Whites and Black Americans tend to be better sorted between the two parties than Hispanics, for example. Despite this, racial identity as a predictor of partisanship is stronger among Black voters than it is among Whites (White & Laird, 2020). In this sense, it is more common for cross-cutting pressures based on race among Whites than among Black Americans. However, a nontrivial number of Black Republicans do exist, exerting a cross pressure on ideological beliefs that place these individuals in the Republican Party and both the historical and contemporary racial hostility that exists within the Republican establishment (Wright Rigueur, 2015).

Black Americans hold fundamentally different understandings of the types of identity-based group norms that police what it means to be a "good" Black person in American society. Partisanship drives these differences (White & Laird, 2020). The disagreement stems primarily from partisan alignment in a historical context. As previously

discussed, the passage of the Civil Rights Act effectively helped start sorting the two parties based on race. Black Democrats see the history that has followed this realignment as critical to norms of good in-group behavior. In the face of racially hostile policy, pushes for voter suppression, and dog whistle messaging from the Republican Party, Black Democrats tend to see political organizing, activism, and support for the Democratic Party as a core tenant of what it means to be a "good" Black citizen.

In contrast, among Black Republicans, the norms of what it means to be a "good" Black citizen are rooted not in recognition of historical injustice and organizing to overcome it but in individual economic interest. A significant driver of Black Republican Party identification is rooted in economics, with Black Republicans typically being wealthier than their Democratic counterparts (Baumann, 2016). Norms of what it takes to be a "good" Black citizen for Black Republicans echo arguments of assimilation and integration into the more extensive political system typically dominated by Whites (Jefferson, 2022).

However, the number of Black Republicans remains much smaller than the number of Black Americans who identify as conservative (White & Laird, 2020). Indeed, many registered Black Democrats identify as conservative, tend to be in opposition to policies designed to reach racial inequality, and tend to be more conservative than most Democrats on social issues such as LGBTQ rights. While the two parties are better sorted ideologically, this clean sorting doesn't apply as clearly to Black Americans as it does to White Americans.

The considerable loyalty to the Democratic Party amongst Black voters is primarily driven by norms and social pressure among other Black voters (White & Laird, 2020). The pressure exerted by other Black voters and institutions encourages Black conservatives to maintain group loyalty and cohesion in their partisanship. This social pressure is referred to

as radicalized social constraint (White & Laird, 2020, p. 27) and further illustrates how group norms and identity can exert pressure on individuals' political attitudes. In this case, we see how racial social identity can overwhelm individual political preferences, just as earlier examples have illustrated how partisan identity can overwhelm individual policy preferences (Lenz, 2013).

Individuals rarely face political cross-pressures from their group identities, primarily due to the sorting of the two parties. However, when messaging exerts political cross-pressures, which identity exerts more influence? In general, the answer to that question depends upon two factors: identity strength and messaging strength.

Individuals can belong to many identity groups at once, and it's not unreasonable to assume that some groups have norms of in-group attitudes or behavior that clash with the norms of other groups. However, these group members don't all feel the same level or degree of attachment to their groups as other members. Individuals may have stronger feelings of belonging toward one group rather than the other. In this case, group attachment strength helps overcome this ambivalence, with members differing to the group norms they feel more firmly attached to (van Zomeren et al., 2018).

Cross-cutting group membership among partisans has the additional benefit of reducing inter-party hostility. Individuals who are better demographically sorted into their political party (religious Republicans or LGTBQ Democrats, for example) have lower ratings of the opposing party than those with cross-cutting identities that make them less well sorted (Mason & Wronski, 2018).

The strength of messaging also influences which of two competing group membership identities exerts a more significant influence on attitudes. When individuals

receive messaging that cross-pressures two group identities, the messaging with a stronger appeal to identity exerts a more significant impact. In a study on competing identity frames, Klar (2013) illustrates that Democrats, who are also parents, can be influenced in their level of policy support when framed differently to trigger these identities in a competing way. Messages that strongly prime respondents to think of themselves as parents first tend to be less supportive of social spending to secure government services for future generations. On the other hand, respondents primed to think of themselves as Democrats first tend to be more supportive of immediate government spending, even if it means putting more pressure on future generations.

Individuals think of one another in terms of their social groupings and identities. A fundamental way individuals make judgments about one another is not by merely evaluating their characteristics but by creating a prototype that captures a set of attributes and perceptions that maximize the distinctiveness of a given group. We use this prototype to evaluate individuals belonging to differing social groups rather than their characteristics (Turner et al., 1987).

One's attitudes and group identities play a significant role in how these prototypes assist in evaluating messaging and interactions with others. For example, several negative stereotypes of Blacks held by many White Americans exist (Sigelman & Tuch, 1997), one of which is the assumption of the tendency to use historic discrimination to shame Whites into supporting racially progressive policy (Mendelberg, 2001). Because individuals use group membership as a means of identity self-preservation, Whites may then rely on a negative prototype of Black people to evaluate messaging from a Black speaker (Lane et al., 2019).

When prototypes are violated, however, individuals tend to modify their perceptions

of individuals rather than update their prototypes. Compared to Black speakers, White speakers are evaluated more favorably when discussing Black Lives Matter, even when they are supportive (Lane et al., 2019).

Norms of group behavior are the basis for policing in-group membership. Individuals are expected to follow what the mainstream of a social group deems appropriate or face sanction (Pickup et al., 2021). However, individuals have multiple group identities and can often conflict with one another. This not only applies to oneself but also to how individuals perceive one another and how they evaluate messaging and behavior from others. This raises the empirical question of how individuals update their preferences when witnessing political discussions that violate their preconceived notions of partisanship and race.

D. Hypotheses

Americans hold a set of expectations about the ways that racial and partisan identities go together. Through a combination of historical realignment in response to racially charged policy (Mayhew, 2008; Schickler, 2016), increased demographic sorting among the two parties (Levendusky, 2009; Mason, 2015), and elite communication (Zaller, 1992), Americans have typically come to associate Black people with the Democratic Party, while being more ambivalent about their assumptions of the party orientation of Whites (Ahler & Sood, 2018). These sets of expectations provide a prototype of out-group members, which individuals then use to evaluate messages and interactions between individuals (Turner et al., 1987). However, we know that while functional constructs, prototypes may not always reflect the reality of group identities. Furthermore, individuals within groups hold norms of acceptable attitudes and behavior for their in-group members and update their perceptions of messages and individuals when these norms are violated (Groenendyk et al., 2022).

The empirical question posed by this underlying theory is how individuals update their attitudes when they witness partisan disagreement that upsets their expectations about the combination of race and partisanship. Put another way, how do individuals react when faced with political hostility that places their expectations about racial identity and their expectations about partisan identity into conflict with one another? I explore four attitudinal areas on which disagreement may have some influence that upsets respondents' expectations: support for racially charged policy, racial attitudes, partisan attitudes, and commitment to democratic norms.

a. *Policy Support*

The basis for policy preferences in the United States is varied. While much has been made about the lack of ideological consistency and constraint among the general public (Converse, 1964; Lenz, 2013), individuals have actual policy preferences that they will freely express. Rather than rational calculations and analysis of benefits and costs, individuals tend to base their policy judgments and preferences on their group identities (Delli Karpini & Keeter, 1996). Individuals update their presences on policy based on massaging and norms from the in-group, often falling in line with their partisan identity (Lenz, 2013).

The most stable preferences individuals have are those that are rooted in their group interests, whether this be in terms of favoring their group or punishing the out-group. White Americans, for example, have historically been opposed to welfare policy when they are primed to think of welfare policy as benefitting black Americans. On the other hand, they are generally more supportive of welfare policy when it's framed as predominantly helping poor Whites (Gillens, 1991).

Individuals also update their policy preferences when messaging on the policy comes

from sources that are evaluated in a more positive regard (Lane et al., 2019). This can include messaging from an in-group member on a more favorable policy towards out-group members than one's group. For example, Whites who give pro-Black Lives Matter messages are evaluated as more trustworthy by other Whites, which in turn provides more support for the Black Lives Matter movement itself.

This leads to how individuals update their policy preferences in the face of hostility that violates their expectations about race and partisanship. Given the strength of the influence of identity, we should expect to see updated preferences in the face of identity triggers. However, when race and partisanship conflict, which exerts more influence? Ultimately, we should expect that disagreement in which respondents share racial identity with a co-partisan should have little effect on policy support, as it simply confirms what respondents already expect. However, when individuals witness disagreement in which their co-partisan is of a different race and the opposing partisan is of the same race, we should expect decreased policy support, as negative prototypes reduce the willingness to agree with out-group members (Schultz & Maddox, 2013).

H1a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in racially coded policy support compared to a control group.

H1b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should express lower support for racially coded policy compared to a control group.

While the above hypotheses address situations where racial and partisan identities work, whether in tandem or opposition, this implies the existence of cases where only one of the two identities is clearly at work. Thus, Research Question 1 asks whether one identity exerts a more substantial effect on its own than the other.

RQ1: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on policy preferences than when only partisan identity is evident?

b. *Affective Political and Racial Polarization*

Americans commonly express distrust and hostility toward the "other side." Measures of partisan animus have recently shown a sharp increase, coupled with decreases in meaningful dialogue that could bridge differences (Iyengar et al., 2019). The rise of this "negative partisanship" (Abramowitz, 2010) among Americans sets the stage for the current dysfunction in government institutions.

The political biases associated with polarization are one of many forms of prejudice that have plagued U.S. citizens since the founding and have continued to shape public policy. Individuals are well understood to exhibit implicit biases towards others along the lines of race, gender, age, region, and now political party (Cramer, 2016; Tessler, 2016; Bettcher, 2007). These biases lead to summary judgments about others and condition responses before engagement begins. These judgments often translate into preferences for public policy that can be undemocratic.

The roots of this partisan hostility are not meaningful differences in policy preferences, though those do exist (Levendusky, 2009). Instead, political hostility amongst the American public is driven by affect (Mason, 2018; Iyengar and Westwood, 2015) or

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personal feelings about oneself and other party members.

Partisan hostility and resulting differences in policy support stem heavily from perceptions and stereotypes that partisans hold about their party and the other party (Rothschild et al., 2019; Ahler & Sood, 2018). The "pictures in [their] heads" that the public carry around serve as mental shortcuts when making summary judgments about their party and the opposing party. The social and interpersonal characteristics associated with these mental images color perceptions of the deservingness of social policy and respect, along with feelings of social similarity of the opposing partisans (Gilens, 1999). The fundamental question this conception of partisan biases draws is when race-related biases fuel political polarization by reinforcing identity assumptions.

Regardless of whether affect towards opposing partisans or stereotypes of opposing partisans come first, they are explicitly linked to one another (Valentino and Zhirkov, 2018). Thus, when called upon to pass judgment on opposing partisans, a critical factor in how individuals assess the opposition is who they think it is (Mason, 2018; Klar, 2018).

At the same time, Americans are becoming increasingly isolated in their networks and political circles. Americans associate more frequently with others who share their political beliefs online and offline (Huber and Malhotra, 2017; Levendusky, 2009). As a result of more frequent interaction with members of their party, Americans are likely exposed to a wider variety of ideological positions within their party, with the potential to see nuanced opinions held by co-partisans. On the other hand, lack of exposure to members of the opposite party reduces the range of opinion and nuance that opposing partisans may carry (Taylor, Mantzaris, and Garibay, 2018). The linkage between social characteristics and perceptions of co-partisans can further compound this, with perceptions of dissimilarity on

social characteristics further "otherizing" opposing partisans and reducing perceptions of nuance in opinion.

Feelings of hostility and dissimilarity can further complicate perceptions of the general public. Individuals tend to "see their own behavioral choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances" (Ross, Greene, and House, 1977). This tendency to overestimate levels of agreement between ourselves and others is moderated by issue importance, with the tendency stronger on issues we consider important to us (Leviston, Walker, and Morwinski, 2013), primarily the types of issues common in politics. The compounded elements of perceiving opposing partisans as different from oneself on social and ideological characteristics offer the possibility that respondents will perceive opposing partisans who look different than they do as especially novel in society.

Ultimately, it's clear that assumptions and perceptions of the "other side," be it across partisan or racial lines, are a fundamental element of affective polarization. Given the hostile nature of political discourse in modern America, we shouldn't expect disagreement to increase affective polarization. When individuals witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations, this lack of novelty should have little influence on their feelings toward opposing partisans. Only when the hostility they witness runs contrary to their expectations should their attitudes towards opposing partisans be affected.

H2a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in measures of affective political polarization compared to a control group

H2b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should show higher levels of affective political polarization compared

to a control group.

Again, the above hypotheses address situations where racial and partisan identities work, whether in tandem or opposition; this implies the existence of cases where only one of the two identities is clearly at work. Research Question 2 again asks about their individual effects.

RQ2: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on affective polarization than when only partisan identity is evident?

The relationship between partisanship and race runs in both directions, with racial identity prompting individuals to ascribe to a particular partisanship. However, partisanship also significantly predicts racial attitudes (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). Republicans are typically less in favor of racially egalitarian policy than Democrats (CITE). Historical trends have situated Republicans as less racially egalitarian than Democrats at large (King & Smith, 2005). The relationship between racial attitudes and partisanship has also significantly influenced American politics in the post-Obama era, contributing to the rise of the Tea Party (Parker & Barreto, 2014) and, in turn, the electoral success of Donald Trump (Tester, 2016).

Just as it's conceivable that perceptions of the racial and partisan combination of others can influence affective polarization, these assumptions can play a role in racial attitudes as well. I also explore the occasions when only one identity is evident.

H3a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in measures of racial polarization compared to a control group

H3b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of

race and partisanship should show higher levels of racial polarization compared to a control group.

RQ3: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on racial polarization than when only partisan identity is evident?

c. *Commitment to Democratic Norms*

Concerns regarding the health of democracy and numerous global challenges to it have prompted some researchers to grapple with the question of "how democracies die" (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). Indeed, many experts argue that democracy is in a state of near crisis, compounded by increasingly weakened respect for democratic norms and institutions on the part of citizens (Bartels, 2020; Bennett and Livingston, 2018).

Fundamental to this weakening of democratic governance is the increase in partisan animus among citizens toward those who disagree with them (Iyengar et al., 2019). The rise of this "negative partisanship" (Abramowitz, 2010) among Americans sets the stage for the current dysfunction in government institutions. In turn, the weakening of institutions and hollowing out of the center erodes citizen trust in the responsiveness of democratic governments (Bennett and Livingston, 2018), making the public further vulnerable to undemocratic actions and manipulation from demagogues.

One of the most critical tenets of democracy is that citizens accept and acknowledge political differences between one another as legitimate. The grounding of mutual respect derives from more general conceptions of respect by 18th Century Philosopher Immanuel Kant (Nerveson, 2002). This mutual respect for citizens of different political orientations undergirds the critical democratic practices of peaceful transitions of power and the safe and open exercise of political voice. Partisan hatred, fueled by increasingly negative interactions

and aggressive rhetoric by media outlets and political elites, decreases the potential for meaningful dialogue that could bridge political differences and contribute to a more respectful political climate. Dangerous instances of political violence, such as the armed assault on the U.S. Capitol on January 6th, 2021, in response to encouragement from former President Donald Trump, illustrate the grim possibilities that this partisan hostility can bring in the face of electoral defeats.

Perceptions of otherness and antagonism toward ethnic groups that do not match one's own have also been shown to decrease commitment to democratic norms and ideals (Bartels. 2020). Perceptions of ethnic cleavages that fundamentally can't be bridged through democratic means serve to motivate citizens to support more drastic measures, including violence. Political disagreement, election outcomes that favor opposing partisans, and public policy that favors the opposition party are not the normal functioning of day-to-day politics in a democratic society but high-stakes ventures in which losing is not seen as a viable option. Compounding perceptions of differences between social characteristics and partisan differences (Westwood and Peterson, 2019) can make the stakes of democracy seem even higher and not worth leaving in the hands of untrusted democratic practices.

Racial attitudes are explicitly tied to partisan attitudes, often activating one activates the other, making them work in tandem (Westwood and Peterson, 2019). This, again, typically follows patterns in which individuals make biased assessments (Ahler and Sood, 2018). However, when the assumptions regarding the relationship between race and partisanship are challenged, individuals may temporarily temper their commitment to democracy.

H4a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race

and partisanship should show no difference in measures of commitment to democratic norms compared to a control group

H4b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should show lower levels of commitment to democratic norms compared to a control group.

Finally, I continue exploring whether one identity can exert a more significant influence over attitudes when primed than the other.

RQ4: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on commitment to democracy than when only partisan identity is evident?

E. Conclusion

Despite the high hopes of early scholars, the American citizen is only a partially rational actor when it comes to political decision-making. Instead, the influence of identity and affect combine to prompt citizens to make decisions that seem counter to their self-interest or, indeed as if, random. Racial and partisan identities are among the most salient in American politics and serve to orient individuals' thinking and help situate themselves in American political discourse. However, assumptions about the relationship between race and partisanship among the general public lead to prototypical thinking that may not always reflect reality, and the preceding chapter has presented a set of hypotheses about how individuals respond to discourse that both reinforces and challenges their beliefs. The next chapter explains the data-generating procedure and the data used to test these hypotheses.

III. Data and Methods

The previous chapter proposed a set of 6 hypotheses to test. To test these hypotheses, I utilized a randomized survey experiment. The remainder of this chapter explains the data-generating procedure and the resulting data.

A. Design

To explore the hypotheses, I ran a survey experiment from July 7 until July 20, 2022, with 1126 participants utilizing Lucid's survey platform to recruit the sample. The survey experiment was designed to present participants with a situation in which they witness partisan-based hostility while manipulating the racial makeup of the participants in the disagreement.

Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of 5 conditions. The first four conditions exposed respondents to three fictional tweets from the Associated Press covering two salient policy issues (gun control and policing) and one non-political message about pet pampering. Each tweet featured comments from two fictitious Twitter users. The manipulation in each treatment was the race and signaled partisanship of the users. Thus, the four conditions provided hostile discourse between two opposing partisans, with the racial breakdown being manipulated across the four conditions. The final condition served as a control group, as respondents in this group were not exposed to any tweets or comments.

I opted to utilize two policy areas with some degree of cleavage among the general public. The first, gun control, is an issue with a clear partisan breakdown. Democrats typically support gun control, and Republicans generally are opposed (Miller, 2019). The second policy I chose to utilize is policing, an issue that divides Americans predominantly along racial lines. Brought to fresh salience in the summer of 2020 following the killing of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, by four White police officers, police reform was an issue

that divided Black and White Americans in their degree of support (DeSilver, 2020). I opt to utilize these two policies as they will both prime respondents to think of these policies from the perspective of their identities. A third policy area features a nonpolitical message about pet owners creating a spa for their pets, serving as a distractor question to help conceal the true nature of the research to reduce the impact of potential response bias.

Respondents' self-reported race was captured via Lucid's internal sample recruitment system. Respondents volunteered their partisan orientation in response to a question asking which of the two major parties they consider themselves a member of. Respondents who identified a third or no party were then prompted to indicate which of the two major parties they leaned toward. This follows the common practice of treating partisan leaners as partisans, as their voting behavior are similar (Klar & Krupnikov, 2016). Based on the respondents' partisan and racial identities and the treatment conditions they were randomly assigned to, I constructed four treatment groups: confirming, race only, partisan only, and double.

The partisan-only condition refers to a situation where the respondent shares a racial identity with both fictional commenters. Thus, the respondent only sees partisan messaging. In the race-only condition, the respondent is of a different race than both fictitious commenters. Thus, the messaging is partisan, but the respondent's fictitious co-partisan is of the opposing race. The confirming condition is where the respondent shares partisan and racial identities with one fictitious commenter and has opposing racial and partisan identities with the other. Thus, this condition has no cross-pressure, as both identities are being reaffirmed. The double condition refers to the respondent sharing a racial identity with one fictitious commenter of the opposite race.

In contrast, the other commenter shares a partisan identity with the respondent but has the opposite racial identity. Third-party identifying partisans were assigned based on their response to the question about which of the two major parties they leaned toward. Table A1 in Appendix 1 provides an example of the treatment and identity pairings. Figures A1 through A3 provide examples of the treatments themselves. Figure A1 shows the initial tweet that respondents see. All respondents in any treatment condition saw the same tweet. Figure A2 shows the resulting reply chain. The wording of each tweet was the same across all treatment groups; the only manipulation was the names and images of the individuals to whom the replies were credited. Figure A3 shows the profile information for the same fictitious individuals in the treatment. Respondents saw the tweet, the replies, and the profiles in that order, all on the same page.

The dependent variables focus on four concepts. The first is attitudes toward the three messages: support for police reform, gun control reform, and euthanizing shelter animals. Table A2 in Appendix 1 provides question-wording and scale structure for the five questions in this concept.

The second concept is broadly construed as affective polarization. This concept encompasses measures such as feeling thermometers towards supporters of the Democratic and Republican parties and measures of social distance (Iyengar et al. 2019), but also less richly explored topics of perceptions of legitimacy, extremity, and presumed consensus (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019). Table A3 in Appendix 1 illustrates the question wording for the measures. I refer to the first subset of polarization questions as social polarization, as they tap into questions of social distance and comfort with interpersonal relationships. I refer to the second subset as measures of legitimacy, as they tap into the presumed underpinnings

of how the two parties and their supporters view one another and their existence as legitimate in the Democratic process.

The third concept is racial attitudes. I measure this concept with feeling thermometers towards White and Black people and the racial resentment scale (Feldman & Buddy, 2005). Table A4 in Appendix 1 presents question wording and scale structure.

The final concept is a commitment to democratic norms, measured by support for six core tenets of liberal democracy, presented in Table A5 in Appendix 1. These measures are adapted mainly from Bartels's (2020) work on the roots of anti-democratic sentiment.

In the subsequent chapters, I utilize these measures to test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. For each analysis, I conducted two-way ANOVA tests for differences in means of the dependent variables, with the independent variables being treatment conditions. I subset the results by partisanship to capture any potential differences in treatment effects by the two parties.

B. Sample

The final sample to be used in the following analyses consists of 305 Republican respondents, 509 Democratic respondents, and 312 respondents claiming other party affiliation. Those who claimed other party affiliation also answered a question indicating which of the two major parties they leaned towards to create an affective polarization index. Racially, the respondents were broken down into 379 Black respondents and 729 White respondents. Further details about the characteristics of the sample are in Tables A6 and A7 in Appendix 2.

Before turning to the analyses to test the previously proposed hypotheses, it is essential to address one assumption underlying the previous argument. The hypotheses are

based on the assumption that individuals primarily view Black people as belonging to the

Democratic Party and view Whites more ambivalently. To test this assumption, I utilize a set

of four questions. The first pair asks the respondents to rate what percentage of Black people

are Democrats and what percentage supported Donald Trump in the 2020 election,

respectively. The second set asks respondents what percentage of Whites they believe are

Republicans and supported Joe Biden in 2020. The exact question wording for each is

presented in Table A8 in Appendix 2. I then reverse-coded the second question in each set

and created an average of respondent stereotypes towards race and partisanship.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of respondent attitudes towards race and

partisanship across the entire sample of respondents.

Figure 1: Partisan Stereotypes
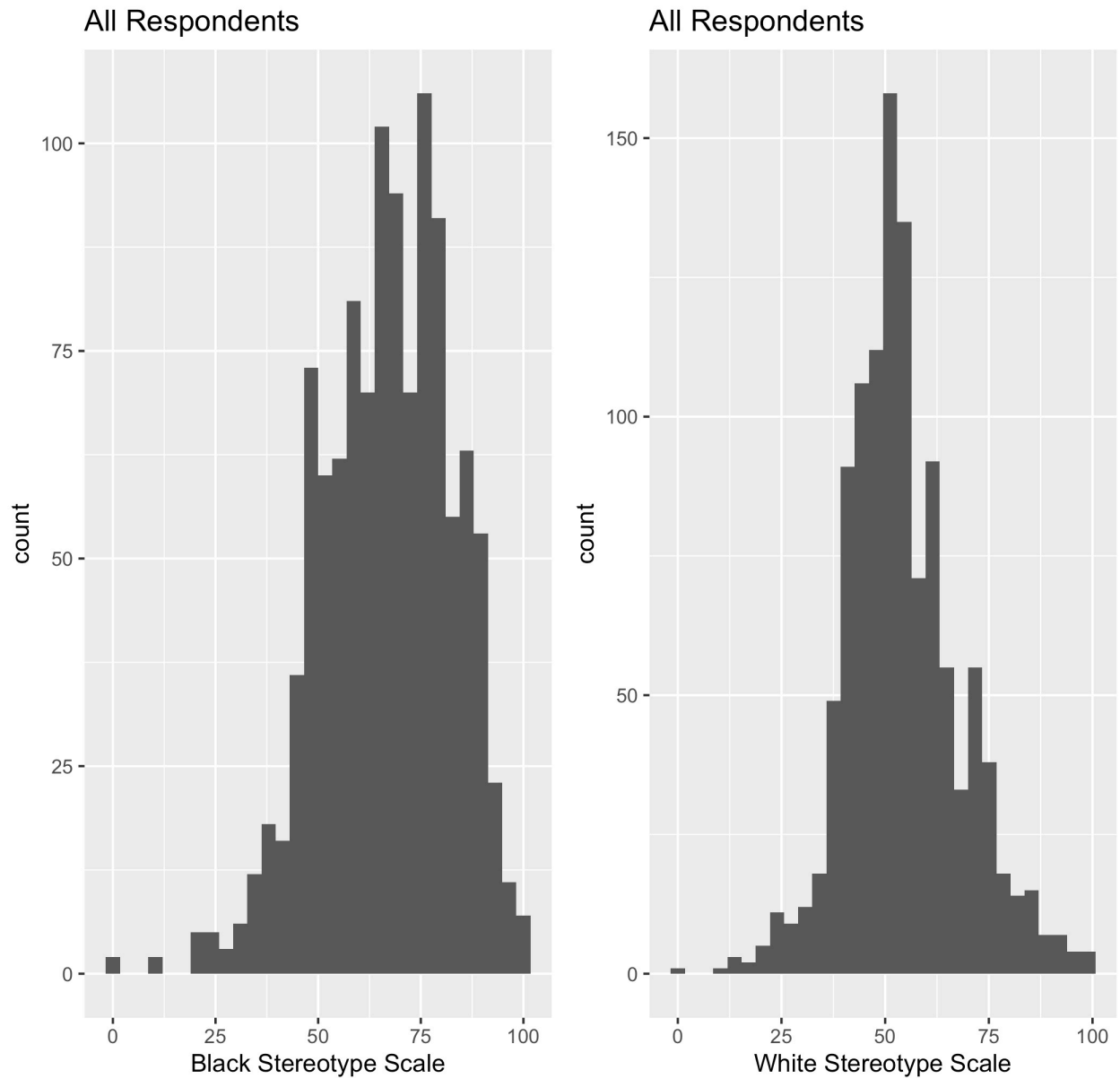
Ultimately, this assumption finds support. The mean for the Black stereotype scale is approximately 66 while being right-skewed. In comparison, the mean for the White stereotype scale is approximately 54, with a much tighter distribution. These plots indicate that respondents are generally more confident in stating that Black people belong to the Democratic Party while also opposing Republican politicians than they are saying that Whites support the Republican Party and oppose Democratic Politicians.
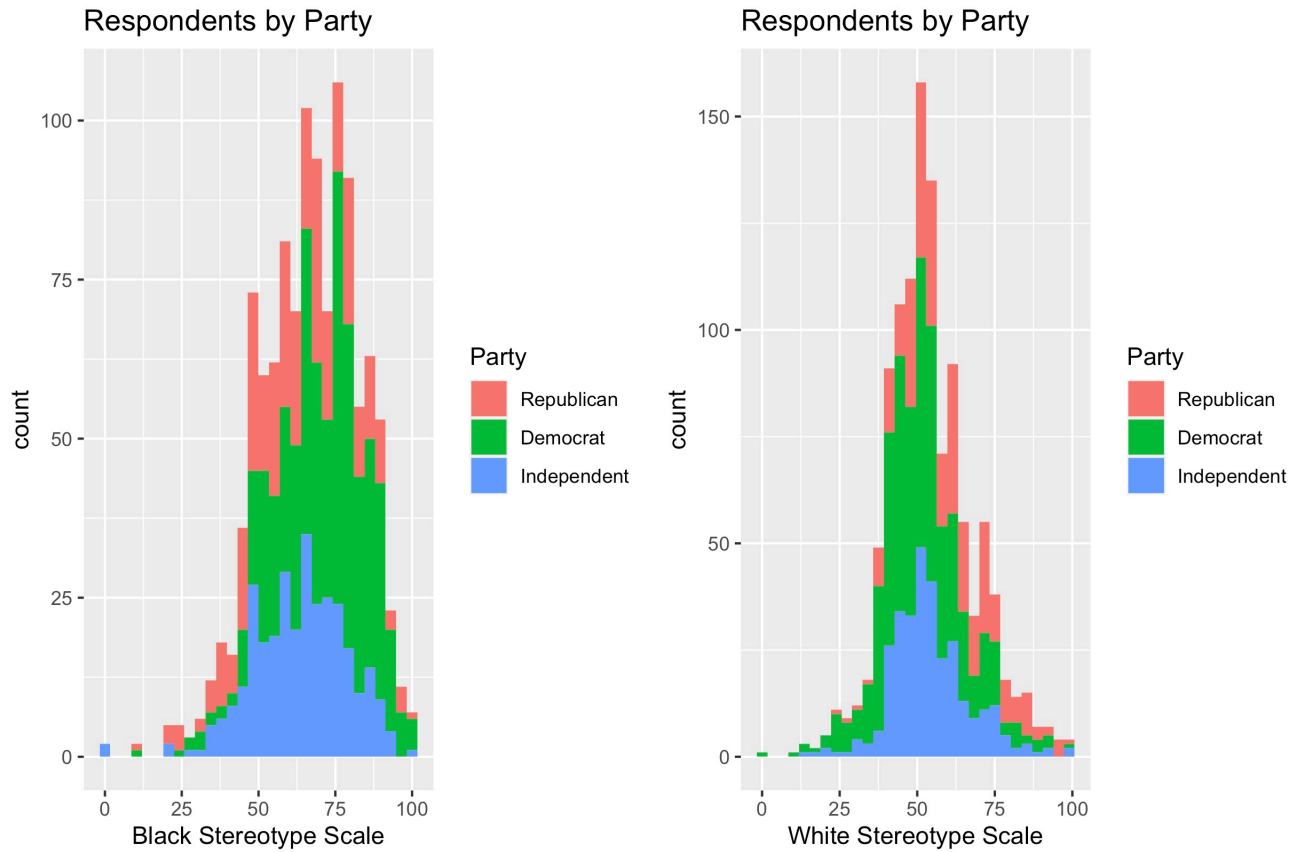
Figures 2 and 3 present the same scale broken down by race and partisanship.

Figure 2: Partisan Stereotypes by Race
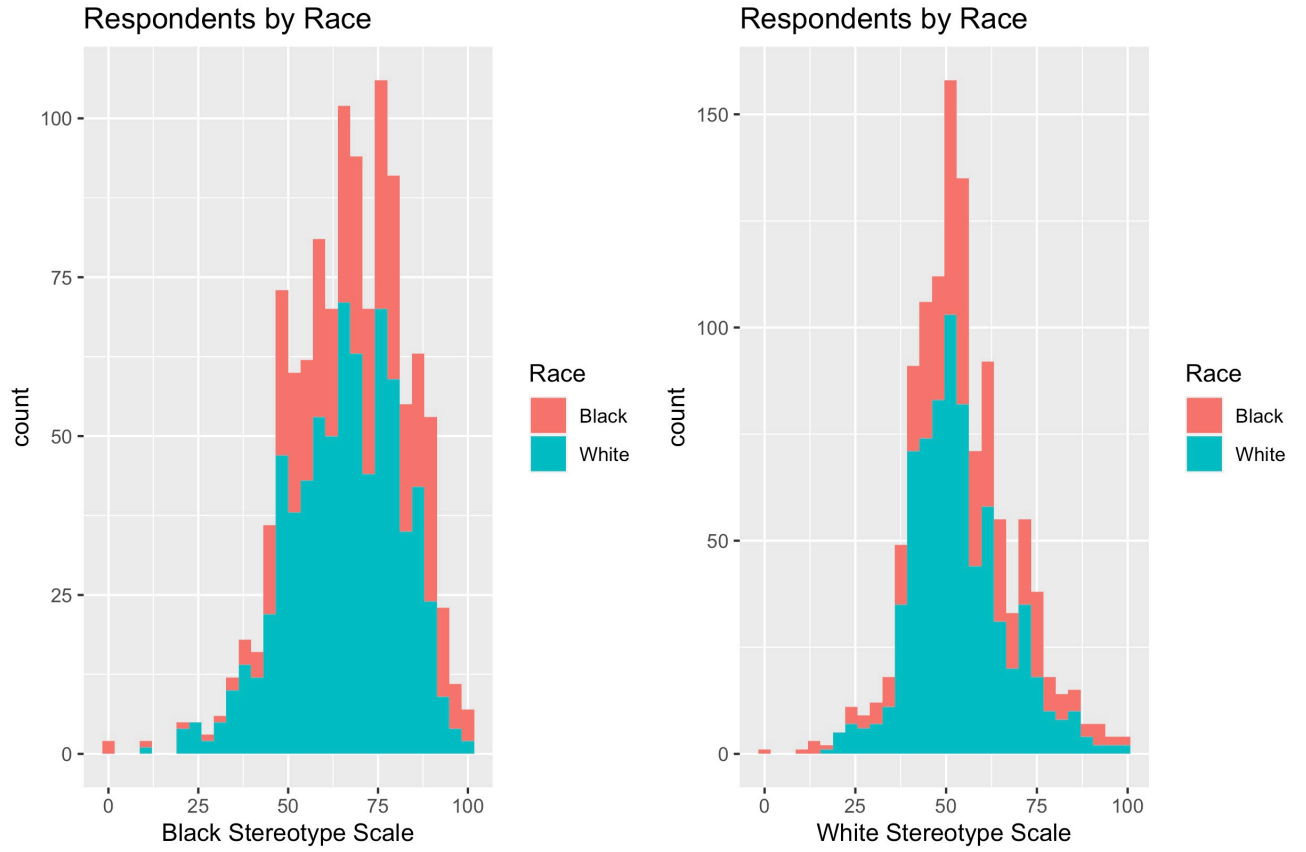
Figure 3: White Partisan Stereotypes

The distributions among subgroups don't differ from those in the total sample. Further, across both figures, it is clear that there are no apparent differences in the distribution across racial or partisan identities. Ultimately, the assumption is that individuals tend to view the relationship between being Black and being a Democrat as closer than the relationship between belonging to either party and being White.

Utilizing the previously described data set, the subsequent chapters will explore each set of hypotheses to understand better how challenges to the assumptions about the relationship between race and partisanship influence political attitudes.

IV. Policy Attitudes

To begin the analyses that will help address the hypotheses presented in previous chapters, this chapter will analyze the effects of partisan hostility that challenge assumptions about partisan and racial identities on support for public policy.

A. Theory and Hypotheses

Policy attitudes are often primarily rooted not in the analysis of the costs and benefits of the policy (Lenz, 2013); indeed, most Americans often have little knowledge of the details of the policies they support. Instead, Americans utilize their identities and perceptions of groups as heuristics for deciding whether or not to support specific policies. It is worth noting, however, that individuals tend to have higher levels of political knowledge (Delli Karpini & Keeter, 1996) and more constrained opinions (Converse, 1964) on issues that directly affect their groups.

For these reasons, I opted to test the effects of witnessing partisan hostility that both confirms and challenges stereotypes about the relationship between racial and partisan attitudes on several public policies. As discussed in a previous chapter, the three policies explored are attitudes toward gun control and policing. I opted for these two policies specifically because gun control is a policy with cleavages primarily based on partisanship (Miller, 2019) and policing due to the racialized nature of the discourse surrounding police reform (DeSilver, 2020). A third policy, support for restrictions on animal euthanasia, serves as an apolitical distractor policy. Specific wording for policy support questions can be found in Table A2 of Appendix 1.

The hypotheses this chapter will test are presented below. Fundamentally, these hypotheses will explore how individuals' policy preferences respond to assumption-

confirmatory and assumption-challenging partisan hostility.

H1a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in racially coded policy support compared to a control group.

H1b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should express lower support for racially coded policy compared to a control group.

RQ1: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on policy preferences than when only partisan identity is evident?

B. Results

To test hypotheses 1a and 1b, I rely on ANOVAs for differences in group means. Fundamentally, I will compare the levels of policy support across different treatment groups and subsets by partisanship.

Figure 2 presents the results of ANOVAs between groups on five policy measures. Across all measures, no significant mean differences exist between the treatment and control groups. This indicates that partisan conflict overwhelms the potential influence of racial cues.

Figure 2: Policy Measures
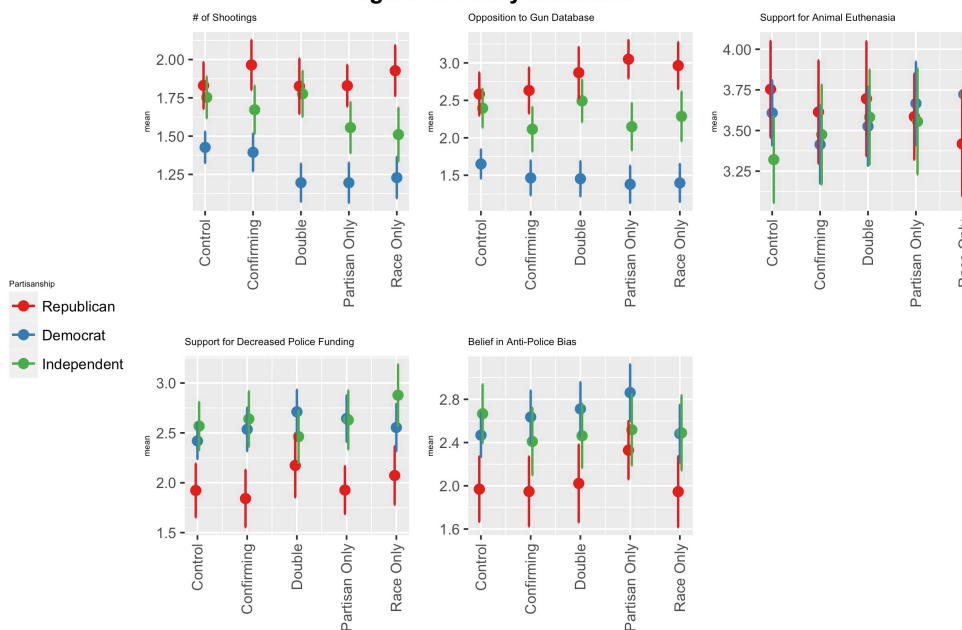
There are some subtle differences across the measures. There is a more clear-cut case of ideological polarization across partisan groups on gun control questions, with Democrats mainly indicating they believe gun control measures would reduce shootings and being less opposed to a federal database tracking gun sales than Republicans are. Independents, which comprise members of both the Libertarian party and the Green party, reside somewhere in the middle of the other two parties.

On the typically apolitical question of support for animal euthanasia, there is much less clear evidence of ideological polarization. All three groups of partisans appear close, clustered around the center point of responses. While there is movement in the means for partisan groups across treatment groups, there does not appear to be a clear pattern.

Finally, there is also some degree of ideological polarization on the measures of perceptions of policing. Generally, Democrats are more likely to disagree that "De-funding the Police" movements are motivated by anti-police bias and more likely to support decreased police funding than Republicans. Independents appear to track closely with

Democrats. Again, treatment conditions show movement across groups but fail to reach statistical significance.

American mass polarization is typically construed as hostility between groups rather than concrete policy disagreements. In these findings, ideological polarization does appear to exist, though the gaps are not particularly large. Further, racial cues do not meaningfully overcome partisan identities, leaving the degree of polarization stagnant.

Support is mixed in terms of what the results mean for the hypotheses. Hypothesis 1a appears to find some support. Indeed, no significant difference exists between the control and the confirming conditions' mean level of support for any policy. Hypothesis 2a is not supported; again, there is no significant difference in support for policy across the control and double conditions. Expectations suggested that levels of policy support would be lower in this condition, but there is virtually no difference. The current results also provide little clarity for RQ1. There is no difference detectable between the race-only or the partisan-only group, and neither is significantly different from the control group.

Together, there is little clarity emerging from these results. The apparent support hypothesis 1a finds is also misleading. While there was no difference between the confirming and control groups on mean levels of policy support, this is also the case in other groups. It is conceivable that the lack of clear difference is a statistical artifact. I discuss this possibility in a later chapter.

C. *Discussion*

The lack of apparent differences between group means across the treatment and control conditions does little to offer clarity in response to the hypotheses and questions this

chapter set out to address. Several possibilities for the results at hand emerge. These results may illustrate the difference between strong partisan and weak racial cues. It may also be the case that the assumptions of racial and partisan identities are rooted more in affect and thus have little apparent influence on policy and ideological polarization (Mason, 2018). Alternatively, the results may be driven primarily by statistical artifacts within the data. I will return to all of these possibilities in a later chapter.

The next chapter will explore group identity and affect more thoroughly by exploring hypotheses and questions related to racial and affective polarization.

V. Racial and Partisan Polarization

This chapter continues the analyses to address the hypotheses presented in a previous chapter. This chapter focuses on racial and political affective polarization and explores the effects of political disagreement on attitudes.

A. Theory and Hypotheses

Political polarization in the US is primarily affective among the general public (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Rather than reasoned policy disagreements, the root of political hostility is a dislike bordering on hatred for the "other side." (Abromowitz & Webster, 2018). A significant portion of this partisan animus is rooted in identities (Iyengar et al., 2012) but also plays out in misrepresentations of who the "other side" is (Ahler & Sood, 2018). When these misrepresentations are reinforced, there is likely little effect on attitudes, while when they are challenged, individuals may likely respond negatively as their worldview is challenged.

The hypotheses for affective political polarization are presented below.

H2a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in measures of affective political polarization compared to a control group

H2b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should show higher levels of affective political polarization compared to a control group.

RQ2: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more substantial effect on affective polarization than when only partisan identity is evident?

Political polarization is not the only arena in which assumptions about identity can exert influence. Racial attitudes are intrinsically linked to partisan identity (Tesler, 2012). Just as individuals can have hostile attitudes toward their political opponents, racial animus has recently increased after apparent periods of racial progress (Tesler, 2016). Perceptions of how politics affect different racial groups have been shown to influence support for policies (Gillens, 1991) and attitudes toward racial groups (Mendelberg, 2008).

The hypotheses surrounding racial polarization are presented below.

H3a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in measures of racial polarization compared to a control group

H3b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should show higher levels of racial polarization compared to a control group.

RQ3: Does witnessing political hostility where only racial identity is evident have a more

substantial effect on racial polarization than when only partisan identity is evident?

B. Results

I explore the previous hypotheses and research question using ANOVAs for differences in group means between treatment and control groups, also subset by partisanship. Figure 3 presents the results of two measures focused on racial attitudes. These results feature noisy estimates of group means, with no apparent patterns emerging. On the racial resentment scale, again, partisan conflict seems to overwhelm cross-pressured racial cues. One puzzling thing to note is the higher standardized scores for Democrats on this scale than Independents or Republicans.

Figure 3: Racial Measures
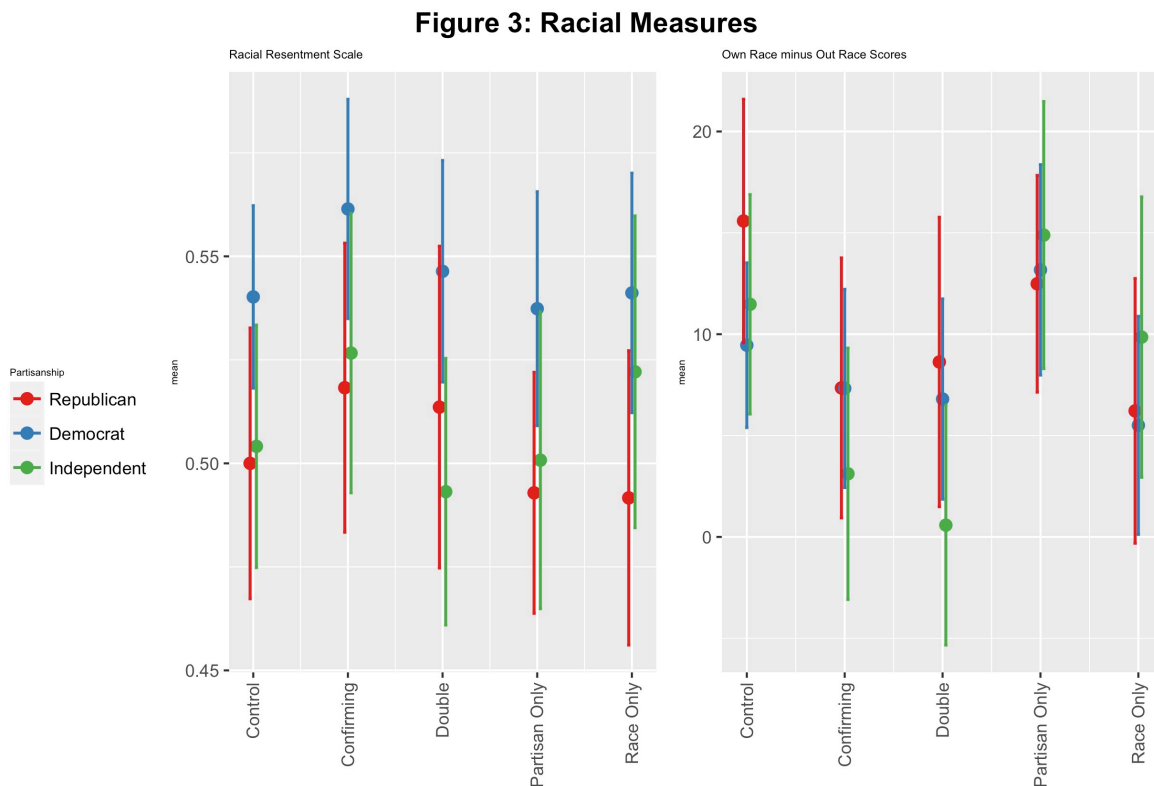
The difference in feeling thermometers measure shows a similar lack of difference between treatment groups and partisans. Generally, there is a consistent sense of in-group

affinity, with scores ranging from the single digits to mid-teens, indicating all groups prefer their race to the opposing race. Overall, the cross-pressure between racial and partisan identities, when put into conflict, has little direct influence on racial attitudes.

Again, there appears to be mixed support for the hypotheses being tested, but this is likely somewhat misleading. Hypothesis 2a finds support, as there is no difference between the mean level of racial resentment, nor is there a significant difference in the racial polarization measure in the control and confirming groups. As noted in the previous chapter on policy attitudes, the lack of difference between the control, confirming, and other treatment groups limits the analyses' clarity.

Hypothesis 2b, on the other hand, clearly finds a lack of support. There is no apparent difference between mean levels of racial resentment or the racial polarization scale between the control group and the double treatment group. Research question 2 also finds little clarity for the same reason. There is no noticeable statistical or meaningful difference between mean levels of racial resentment or racial polarization.

Figures 4 and 5 turn to the question of affective polarization. Figure 4 illustrates the results of the measures of social polarization, and Figure 5 focuses on the measures of presumed legitimacy. The general findings here echo those in previous sections. By all appearances, identity primed by partisan hostility overwhelms the influence of racial cues.

Figure 4: Social Polarization Measures
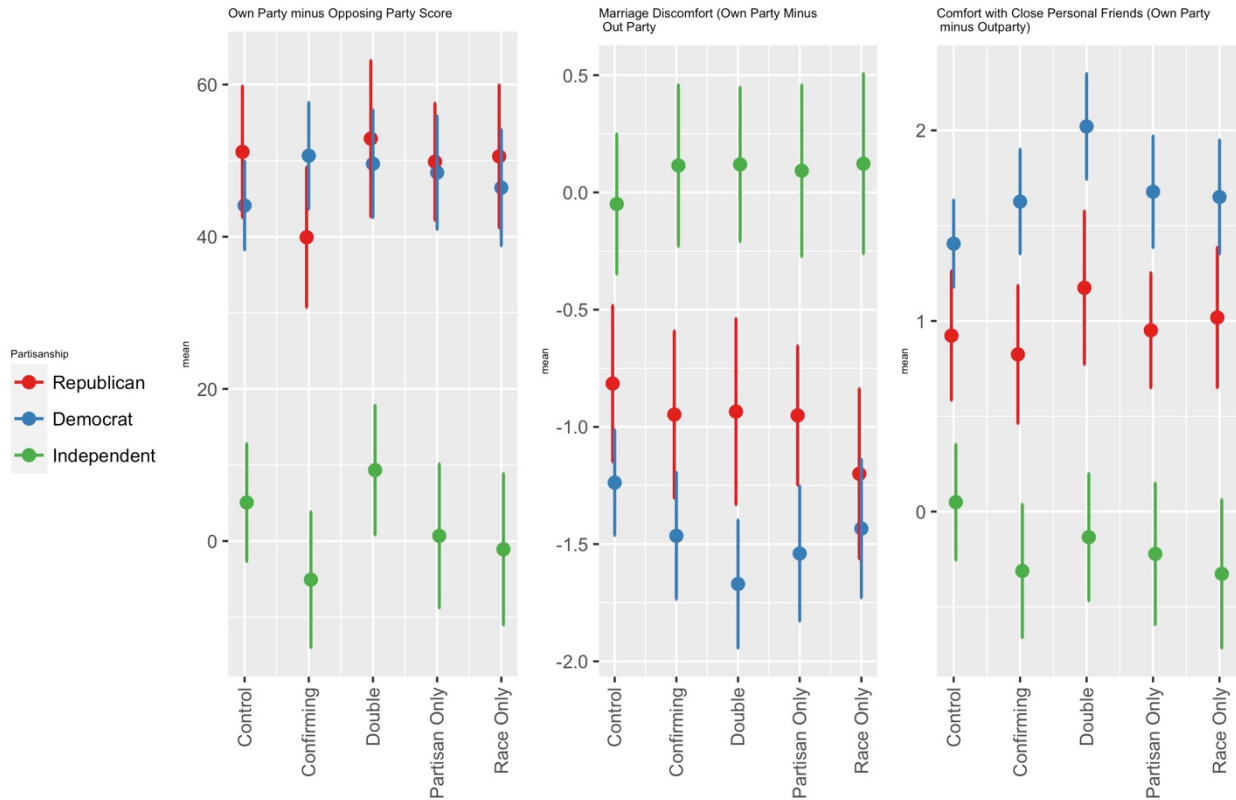
On the measures of social polarization, Democrats and Republicans are consistently more polarized than Independents. Republicans and Democrats show a roughly 50-point preference for their party as opposed to the opposite party, while the difference between the perception of the two parties is essentially zero for Independents.

Democrats appear to score slightly higher than Republicans on the other two measures, which are about comfort with close personal friends of the opposition party and comfort with their children marrying a member of the opposition party. Again, this means scores for Independents across all treatment groups hover around zero.

Overall, there is clear evidence of partisan polarization on measures of social polarization. However, there is no evidence of cross-racial pressures overwhelming partisan

identities.

Turning to Figure 5, the effects of racial cross-pressures are again outweighed by the primed partisan conflict of the treatment messages. The estimates show more variance, and the evidence of polarization on presumed legitimacy is less evident. Again, Democrats and Republicans show more significant levels of polarization than Independents, with scores for Independents hovering around zero. Democrats and Republicans tend to show higher levels of perception that their party has given more thought to their opinions and that a more significant share of Americans agree with their party's preferences. However, all three groups of partisans view little difference in the extremity between the two parties.

Figure 5: Legitimacy Polarization Measures
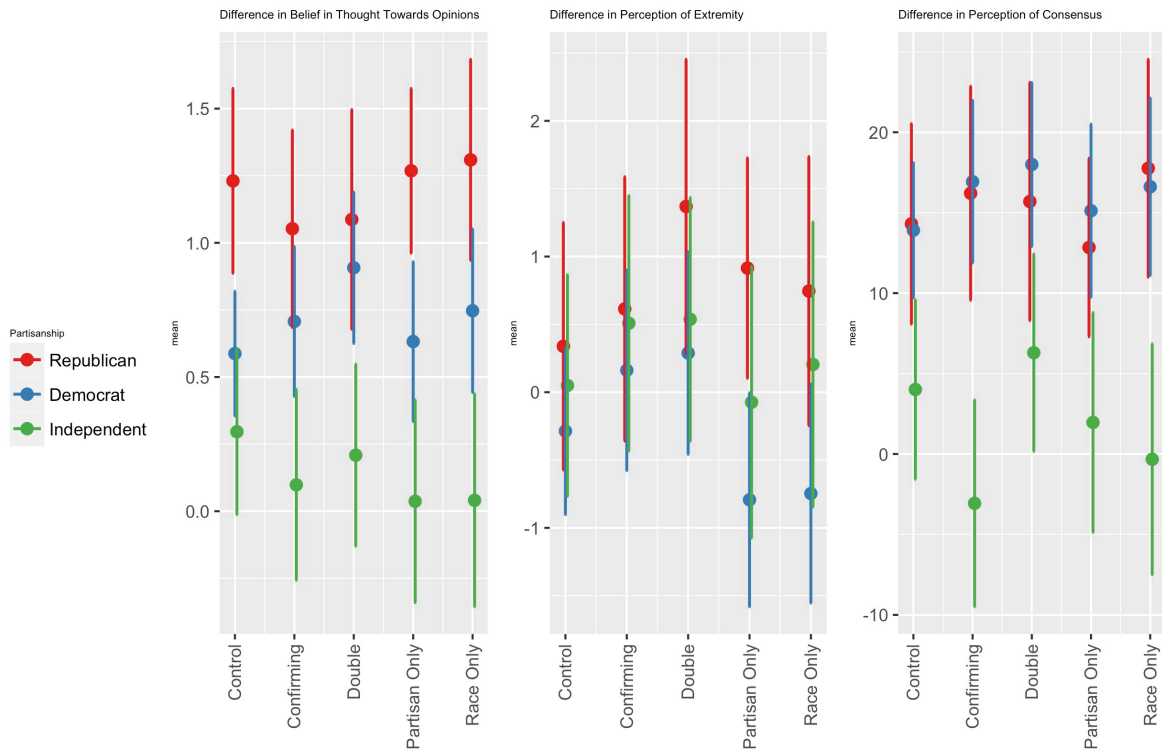
There is less obvious evidence for polarization on perceptions of legitimacy across all

partisan groups than for social polarization. Additionally, racial cross-pressures do not significantly overwhelm the influence of identity primed by partisan hostility.

In terms of the hypotheses being tested, the pattern here mimics that of previous analyses. There appears to be some support for Hypotheses 3a, but given the apparent lack of differentiation between the other groups, there is limited knowledge to take away from this. Hypothesis 3b finds no support, as respondents in the double treatment condition are virtually indistinguishable from the control group on multiple measures of affective polarization. Further, much like before, Research Question 3 finds little clarity, as the group means between the race and partisan-only conditions are indistinguishable from one another and from the control group.

C. Discussion

Again, we see a lack of apparent differences in measures of racial and affective political polarization between control and treatment groups. There are some minor subgroup differences by partisanship. However, the overall story from these results is a lack of influence by the treatment groups. Several possibilities could explain the lack of precise results. Again, we may be seeing a lack of movement because the treatment groups featured cues towards identity with imbalanced strength. It may also be that a ceiling is already in place for at least affective political polarization, and a single message is not influential enough to show meaningful movement. Finally, the lack of apparent treatment effects may result from the data itself. I will turn to these possibilities in a later chapter.

The next chapter will explore the final set of hypotheses relating to commitment to

norms of democracy.

IV. Democratic Norms

To begin the analyses that will help address the hypotheses presented in previous chapters, this chapter will analyze the effects of partisan hostility that challenges assumptions about partisan and racial identities on support for democratic norms.

A. *Theory and Hypotheses*

American democracy is in a state of near crisis, facing assaults from numerous directions. In one direction, political candidates at all levels have begun to challenge the results of elections that they lose. In another, states seek to strip the voting power of certain groups and redraw district lines to stifle partisan competition. The willingness to accept democratic outcomes, even if the outcome is not desired, is a fundamental tenet of the democratic process (Naverson, 2002). For democracy to thrive, individuals must be willing to accept that they will sometimes lose and that the means of the democratic process justify the ends. Increasingly, the Republican Party, and to a lesser extent the Democratic Party as well, is exhibiting behavior and rhetoric that calls into question their commitment to these norms.

The general public appears to be poised to welcome this rhetoric and use the institutions of democracy for undemocratic ends. Voters increasingly seem to act in ways that punish their opposing partisans or those with whom they don't share demographic identifiers (Mason, 2018). Indeed, at the roots of this anti-democratic sentiment appears to be ethnic antagonism, at least among Republicans (Bartels, 202). Suppose individuals are seemingly using their assessments of who the "other side" is to justify their undemocratic attitudes. In that case, the question emerges about how individuals react when these assumptions are

challenged.

The hypotheses and research questions this chapter will address are presented below. The core question at the heart of both hypotheses concerns how individuals update their attitudes toward norms of democracy when their preconceived notions of racial and partisan identities are challenged or confirmed, while the research question concerns which primed identities exert a more significant effect on attitudes toward democratic norms.

H4a: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that confirms their expectations of race and partisanship should show no difference in measures of commitment to democratic norms compared to a control group.

H4b: Respondents who witness partisan hostility that challenges their expectations of race and partisanship should show lower levels of commitment to democratic norms compared to a control group.

B. *Results*

Figure 6 examines the effects of racially coded treatments on support for several democratic norms. Again, generally, the findings indicate that partisan conflict overwhelms the influence of cross-pressured racial cues. Conflict across partisan lines appears to surpass the potential impact of racial cues and provide a stabilizing effect, limiting potential treatment effects.

Figure 6: Democratic Norms Measures
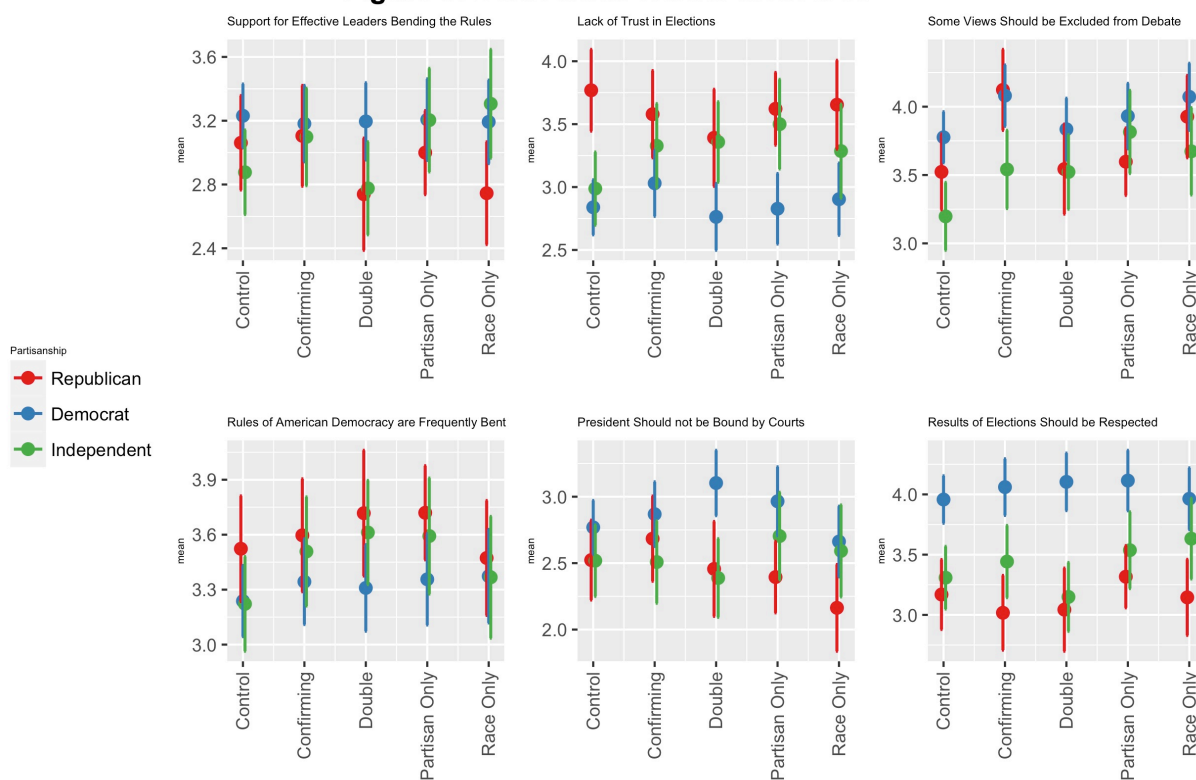
Two immediate patterns emerge from the findings. First, all but two measures, support for influential leaders occasionally bending the rules and the idea that the President should be allowed to ignore court decisions, have group means higher than the center point of three. Generally, all groups give some credence to the idea that elections can't be trusted, that some views should be excluded from debate, and the rules of American democracy are frequently broken. On the other hand, all groups of partisans conceded that the results of elections should generally be accepted. However, for Republicans, this is marginal, with means hovering around three for all treatment groups.

The second immediate pattern is that Democrats appear to generally be more supportive of institutional measures of support for Democratic norms, scoring as more supportive than either Republicans or Independents consistently on measures of trust in

elections, belief that the rules of American democracy are generally intact, and respect for election results. On measures that surround the influence of the executive, however, Democrats are generally more willing than other partisans to allow executive power to overwhelm other institutions. Given the timing of the survey, featuring Joe Biden as president at the time, this may reflect the changing commitment to executive power based on who holds power.

The pattern regarding the hypotheses is familiar, as it mirrors what we have seen in previous chapters. Hypothesis 4a appears to find support across nearly all measures and for almost all subgroups. The one notable difference is the measure for excluding some views from debate, and only among Republicans. Republicans in the confirming condition are more in favor, on average, of excluding views from democratic debate than Republicans in the control condition. This is contrary to what Hypothesis 4a expects. In this case, witnessing partisan hostility that conforms to common notions of the relationship between partisan and racial identities seems to make Republicans less supportive of inclusive debate. On all other measures of commitment to democratic norms, there is no difference between the control and the confirming conditions for any partisan group.

Hypothesis 4b finds no support across any of the measures. Are there meaningful differences between the control and the double treatment condition? Again, these groups are virtually indistinguishable in their mean levels of support for democratic norms. Research Question 4 finds limited clarity from these results as well. Both the partisan-only and race-only conditions show indistinguishable support for democratic norms compared to one another and the control group.

C. Discussion

In a pattern that should be all too familiar by now, these analyses provide little support for the hypotheses they were meant to test and little clarity for the research question. While one measure did show some difference between a treatment and control group among Republicans, the difference was not in the expected direction. Again, the possibilities for these findings, or lack thereof, are numerous. One possibility is the imbalanced cues to prime racial and partisan identity. Another may be a general hesitancy to voice disagreement with anti-democratic attitudes. Finally, again, the analyses may be hampered by statistical issues with the data.

The next chapter explores the overall patterns in the findings across this chapter and the previous two.

V. Discussion

The preceding analyses provide little support for any of the proposed hypotheses and offer little clarity on the research questions provided. Several possibilities for the current findings emerge. This chapter will address the possibilities in turn. The chapter will begin by examining the theoretical reasons that may underlie the findings, followed by a discussion of the experimental research design that explores some plausible reasons the design may lead to the current findings. Finally, the chapter will address the possibility of null treatment effects resulting from an ineffective treatment.

A. Theoretical Discussion

The results are broadly consistent across the measured concepts. The results indicate that the treatment groups in which the racial makeup of a partisan conflict is manipulated do

not significantly influence support for public policies, support for democratic norms, perception of racial groups, and partisan polarization measured in multiple ways. This is surprising, given research that has argued that racial animus is a significant driver of support for politically active groups, from the John Birch Society to the Tea Party and the election of Donald Trump. Considerable research has also indicated that the perceptions of the legitimacy of public policies are often influenced by the perceptions of deservingness of those whom the policy targets, often dictated by race. And yet, the results consistently show that respondents who experience racial and partisan cross-pressures defer to partisanship and do not appear to update their attitudes in response to differing racial make-up in partisan conflict. What does this mean for our understanding of racial and partisan identities?

One potential takeaway from the consistent results is that the dominance of partisanship in the United States has reached the level of a super-identity that can overwhelm other identities (Mason, 2018). As partisan sorting has increased along ideological and racial lines (Levendusky, 2009), the power of partisanship may be subsuming that of racial identities and racial hostility. In this case, the lack of movement because of racial cues in the treatment groups is the result of partisanship being the dominant consideration in political life.

In this case, the results seen in the previous chapter don't indicate that racial identity isn't important in American politics, just that in matters of partisan conflict and political hostility, they become secondary to partisan identities. The role of group norms and social pressures could help explain the importance of partisanship. The endurance of Democratic affiliation within the Black community, for example, can illustrate how, despite being tied closely together, one identity can become more central to political life (White & Laird,

2020). Ultimately, the possibility that partisanship has become a dominant super identity is plausible but requires further exploration than this study can currently provide.

A second potential explanation does not require one identity to be more central than the other. Instead, it simply reflects messaging effects from two notable identities. When the cues contradict one another, they can cancel out any of the impacts one has over the other (Chong & Druckman, 2007). In this case, the cross-pressures of racial identity and partisanship cancel one another out, giving the impression of no influence on attitudes from either identity prime.

While this argument makes sense for the cross-pressured conditions, conditions that feature commenters of the same race should not be subject to cross-pressured identities. Notably, however, all conditions have racial cues even if they are not cross-pressured. All conditions also feature partisan hostility. It is possible that even without a racialized element to partisan conflict, the two identities can exert differing pressures that minimize the noticeable impact of either. In this case, the lack of apparent treatment effects results from contradictory partisan cues on the aggregate.

A final possible explanation has less to do with the identities in conflict than the strength of the cues used to prime these identities. In these conditions, there are two cues: a partisan cue and a racial cue. The partisan cue comes across in repeated comments back and forth, illustrating a robust and hostile set of messages that likely trigger partisan identities. The racial cue is more subtle, with the only manipulation being the perceived identities of the commenters. No reference to the fictitious commenters' race was made aside from their profile pictures and use of racially coded names.

Given this, this may be the case of a strong cue overwhelming a weaker cue. In this

case, the strong cue of partisan conflict overwhelms the potential influence of the weaker racial cue. The blatant partisan hostility may be strong enough to shrink the impact of the racial cues based on the commenters' identities. The core assumption behind this reasoning is that there is a ceiling effect regarding the influence of partisan identities. The highly contentious nature of the past three Presidential election cycles and increasingly apparent partisan hostility ranging from arguing on social media to the January 6th insurrection at the US capitol gives some credence to the idea that affective polarization has come to a head. In this case, the lack of apparent differences between the treatment and control groups results from a strong partisan cue overwhelming a weak racial cue while also being limited in its effects due to the existing high degree of polarization. Research on cross-pressured identities (Klar, 2013) and competitive messaging environments (Chong & Druckman, 2007) lends credence to this possibility.

Ultimately, each of the three theoretical rationales provides ample plausibility for the results the preceding analyses provided. To disentangle the plausible effects of violating assumptions about identities, identity strength, and competitive messaging, future research should seek to isolate each concept in turn.

B. Design Discussion

While numerous theoretical underpinnings may explain the results of the previous analysis, it is also plausible that the design contains limitations that produce null results. Two notable possibilities are worth noting: the sample's characteristics and the experimental treatment's nature.

One possibility for the lack of treatment effects is a statistical one. The analyses

consisted of ANOVAs and presented group means with 95% confidence intervals. One

notable trend across all figures presented was the size of the confidence intervals. Intimately,

the estimates were not precise, with considerable noise in the data. Two notable possibilities

are worth elaborating on. The first is the possibility that the sample size was not large enough

or properly distributed among treatment groups to detect the effect size of the treatment

conditions. Particularly among Republicans, the size of respondents in each treatment group

never reaches triple digits. Power analysis indicates that for a small effect, which the

previous analyses suggest is likely, a sample size 1510 would be needed to detect statistical

effects at a power level of 80. See Table A9 in Appendix 2 for the results of the power

analysis. The current sample size falls significantly short of the required sample size.

Alternatively, the preceding analysis treated all partisan groups as uniform, with no

racial differences within the groups. It is plausible that, for example, Black Republicans and

White Republicans would differ in their response to the treatments. The significant limitation

of the current sample is the need for more respondents in each subgroup to conduct

meaningful, adequately powered analyses. Ultimately, future research should operate with an

oversample of Republicans, specifically Black Republicans, to help disentangle racial and

partisan identities and their influence on perceptions of partisan hostility.

A second possibility is concerned with the experimental design itself. The data used

to test the hypotheses in this research were derived from a survey experiment. Survey

experiments are designed as a hybrid of the traditional survey methodology and experimental

design, hoping that both advantages can combine to identify causal estimates of treatment

effects (Gaines et al., 2007). In principle, the flexibility of the survey methodology allows

researchers to ask questions that target attitudes and preferences. In contrast, the randomized experiment will enable them to isolate the causal effects of the treatments. In this case, the survey methodology underlies the questions on policy preferences, polarization, and commitment to democratic norms. At the same time, the experimental design was focused on exposure to partisan hostility with differing racial makeup.

When considering survey experiments specifically, it's helpful, as Sniderman (2018) suggests, to think of the treatment "not as an intervention or manipulation, but as a variation in information presented or highlighted for respondents (p. 260). In this conception, respondents are presented with new information or specific information is highlighted in their attention, and the effects of said information are measured. As a result, a critical weakness of survey experiments is what Sniderman refers to as modesty. Modesty takes multiple forms, but the most relevant are modesty of treatment and modesty of duration.

The modesty of treatment refers to the tendency for the treatment itself, in this case, the presentation of racial identity via profile pictures and racially coded names, to lack the intended effect of providing new information for respondents to react to. The treatment is not strong enough to prime values or conceptions of others to generate attitudinal effects. This is a critical weakness of the single-shot vignette experimental design (Sinderman, 2018). There is the risk of respondents not paying attention or failing to recognize the experimentally manipulated cues.

On their surface, the results offer plausibility that the treatments themselves were too modest to generate sufficient variation in the dependent variables. There is little difference across any treatment group compared to one another and the control group on nearly all dependent variables. The treatment effects, then, are essentially null. This seems surprising

given all we know about racial and partisan animus in modern American politics. While the current study finds no effect of witnessing partisan hostility that cross-pressures racial identity, it is worth noting that the treatment itself may not have had the intended effect. To test this possibility, the following section utilizes a question from the experiment to determine the plausibility of an ineffective treatment.

C. Memory Check

To test the potentiality that the treatments did not have their intended effect on respondents, we can turn to the data and utilize a manipulation check built into the survey.

As part of the survey, respondents were randomly assigned to a condition that manipulated the racial breakdown of a hostile partisan exchange. As part of the first part of the treatment, respondents saw an exchange between a Republican and a Democrat, with the racial identity of each one being manipulated within the condition. Respondents saw an exchange that featured a combination of fictitious users: Jeremiah Williams, a Black Republican; Elijah Jackson, a Black Democrat; John Miller, a White Republican; and Benjamin Anderson, a White Democrat. For example, the condition where respondents witnessed an exchange between a black conservative and a white liberal was made up of an exchange between Jeremiah Williams and Benjamin Anderson. This means all respondents in the treatment conditions saw some combination of two of these fictitious individuals.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked questions about two individuals selected randomly. They were first asked if they recalled seeing a post by the individual in question. Given that respondents were randomly assigned three times: once to a condition, once to a manipulation check for one fictitious commenter, and then a second manipulation

check for the second commenter, some respondents saw an exchange between two individuals who were not the subject of their manipulation check. Therefore, asking if the responders saw the fictitious individuals is essential.

For both manipulation checks, respondents were then asked if they recall the racial identity and party identification of the commenters they claimed to see. This serves as a low bar to clear to test the manipulation. The treatments were designed to prime individuals to think of others about their partisan and racial identities. If respondents cannot recall the identities of the individuals they witnessed in the treatments, then the likelihood of the treatments themselves having their intended effect would be very low.

Table 1 presents the results of the memory check, asking respondents if they recall seeing two out of four possible random commenters.

Table 1: *Percentage Correctly Identifying the Commentors Seen*		
	Check 1	Check 2
% Correct	82%	78%

In the first memory check, 82% of respondents could correctly identify whether or not they had seen the presented fictitious commenters in the treatment they were assigned to. This number drops to 78% for the second commenter. This indicates that most respondents correctly recalled the individuals who made up their treatment condition. However, a critical element of the treatment was primes about the racial and partisan identity of the fictitious commenters.

Table 2 presents the results of the follow-up memory check question, asking if respondents recall the race of the commenters they saw. Only individuals who correctly identified that they did see a particular comment are included. Respondents who incorrectly

identified a commenter were not exposed to a treatment group with a comment they were

assigned in the memory check or those who failed the initial memory check were excluded

from these percentages.

Table 2: *Percentage Correctly Identifying the Race of Commentors Seen*		
	Check 1	Check 2
% Correct	83%	88%

The numbers in Table 2 are even more striking. In each check, 83% and 88% of

respondents correctly recalled the race of the fictitious commenters they saw in the treatment

condition. The racial prime of the fictitious individuals was moderately effective, as most

individuals who correctly identified seeing these fictitious individuals could correctly recall

their race. However, as indicated in Table 3, which presents percentages for correctly

identifying a commenter's party identification, respondents' memories were inaccurate

across all identities primed in the treatment.

Table 3: *Percentage Correctly Identifying the Party of Commentors Seen*		
	Check 1	Check 2
% Correct	62%	54%

For the first check, only 62% of respondents could correctly identify the primed party

identity of the fictitious individuals they saw in their treatments. The number for the second

memory check drops even lower, with only slightly more than half of respondents able to

correctly identify the partisan identification of the second fictitious individual in their

treatment.

These three percentages indicate that respondents recalled the commenters' names in

their treatment to a reasonable degree and recalled the race of the respondents they correctly

identified as seeing but were much less sure about the partisanship of the same individuals. Ultimately, this would indicate that the racial prime had a more memorable and accessible effect than the partisan prime. Why might this be the case?

In the treatment conditions, partisanship was primed by two things: the content of the messages to the fictitious commenters' names were attached, and the content of the commenters' fictitious social media profiles. Both required respondents to take time to read the content. By contrast, the racial identities of the commenters were primes via their profile pictures and their names, specifically selected to be racially coded. In the case of racial identities, they were much more immediate and required little effort by the respondents to grasp. This visual element may explain why respondents could recall race at a much higher rate than partisanship.

Another possibility that may explain the difference in recall rates between race and partisanship is the centrality of the two identities to the respondent's day-to-day lives. Racial identity is fundamental to many Americans, especially racial minorities (White & Laird, 2020). We can instantly classify other individuals as similar or different to us based solely upon seeing them, hearing their names, or manner of speaking. There are identical signals for partisan identity, with red hats with the phrase "Make America Great Again" helping identify Trump supporters serving as an example. However, a conscious choice involves expressing one's partisan identity, which is not valid for racial identity. One cannot choose when to present one's racial identity in one's day-to-day life. Individuals have more practice quickly identifying another's race than they do identifying another's partisanship.

D. Conclusion

Several reasons exist that could explain the findings in the previous chapters. Theoretically, the nature of the presented cues could have canceled one another out or illustrated the dominance of partisanship as a super identity. On the other hand, the inability of most respondents to recall the correct partisan identity of those in their treatment indicates that race, not partisanship, was the significant prime in the design. Underlying all these considerations are the power analysis results that indicate a smaller sample than would be required to identify treatment effects. Ultimately, combining these factors is the most plausible reason for the null findings in the previous analysis. Future research should opt for a more apparent partisan prime, include more respondents in the sample, and consider the strength and obviousness of the cues presented in the treatment conditions.

VI. Conclusion

Candidate Joe Biden's poorly received comments about the nature of racial identity in political decisions drew attention but ultimately did little to influence the level of support he received. Similarly, the fake social media accounts created to create the illusion of greater Black support for former President Trump did little to draw a significant margin of Black voters to support him. The final breakdown of Black support in the 2020 Presidential election was 92%-8% in favor of Joe Biden, continuing the trend of Democratic loyalty among Black voters.

Despite these election results, both candidates were acting on a critical assumption about American politics that partisanship and racial identity are intrinsically linked. This

reality complicated the midterm race between Hershel Walker and Raphael Warnock and challenged Tim Scott's candidacy for the presidency in 2024.

The assumptions about the relationship between racial and partisan identities among the general public significantly impact their political attitudes. It is impossible to give a proper account of American political history without addressing the pernicious influence of race, and this history has far-reaching and profound systemic impacts that continue to result in racial inequality. Following the election of the first Black President of The United States, it seemed as though the racial progress being made was undercut, resulting in a backlash.

Occurring in analogy with, once again, rising racial hatred in the United States is increasing hostility based on partisanship and anti-democratic sentiment. The three are intrinsically linked, with no clear answer as to which trends are causing one another. This research attempted to place the realities of citizens' assumptions about racial and partisan identities central to racial and partisan animus and anti-democratic sentiment trends.

This research attempted to understand how individuals update their attitudes in response to witnessing hostility that either confirms or challenges commonly held assumptions about how racial and partisan identity co-occur. Experimentally manipulating participants' race in partisan conflict ultimately showed little effect on racial, partisan, and democratic attitudes. The previous analyses' results, or lack thereof, offer little answers to the proposed hypotheses. However, some takeaways can guide future research even with null and unexpected results.

First, while no statistical differences between treatment groups were present, it is plausible that minor, meaningful differences do exist. The current study was not sufficiently powered to detect these minor effects. This is likely related to the treatments themselves

being constructed as single-shot messages. Weak messages are likely to process weak effects, the type of which this study was insufficient to detect. This could be overcome in future work by constructing more potent, more direct treatments.

However, this will likely still need to contend with the fact that the assumptions about how race and partisanship co-occur are based on profound structural realities and long historical trends. While not definitive, the results presented here hint that these assumptions about the contours of political life in the United States are deep-rooted and stable. Minor exceptions to these assumptions do not encourage individuals to reevaluate their attitudes. Racial and partisan identities have become constrained to one another to the point where group norms can overcome individual ideological differences. Future research could address this by taking a broader approach to racial identities, moving beyond the Black-White racial dynamic.

The relationship between racial and partisan identities may appear to be simple. Still, the lack of findings from the previous analyses indicates that the way the two identities interact helps provide for group norms and social policing and offers templates for thinking about others they interact with, which are quite complex and intricate. These findings provide a first attempt to disentangle these processes. While the presented analyses did little to offer definitive answers, future research will benefit from the pitfalls this work illuminated.

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Appendix I

Table A1: *Treatment Condition Examples*		
Respondent Partisanship		
	Democrat	**Republican**
Respondent Race / **White**	**Partisan Only:** Both commentors are White **Race Only:** Both commentors are Black **Confirming:** The liberal commentor is White, the conservative commentor is Black **Double:** The liberal commentor is Black, the conservative commentor is White	**Partisan Only:** Both commentors are White **Race Only:** Both commentors are Black **Confirming:** The liberal commentor is Black, the conservative commentor is White **Double:** The liberal commentor is White, the conservative commentor is Black
Black	**Partisan Only:** Both commentors are Black **Race Only:** Both commentors are White **Confirming:** The liberal commentor is Black, the conservative commentor is White **Double:** The liberal commentor is White, the conservative commentor is Black	**Partisan Only:** Both commentors are Black **Race Only:** Both commentors are White **Confirming:** The liberal commentor is White, the conservative commentor is Black **Double:** The liberal commentor is Black, the conservative commentor is White

Figure A1: Example Treatment Tweet

AP **The Associated Press** ✔
@AP

The House has passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, a police reform bill that would ban chokeholds and eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement.

House Approves Police Reform Bill Named After George Floyd
The bill, which would ban chokeholds and eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement, now advances to the Senate.
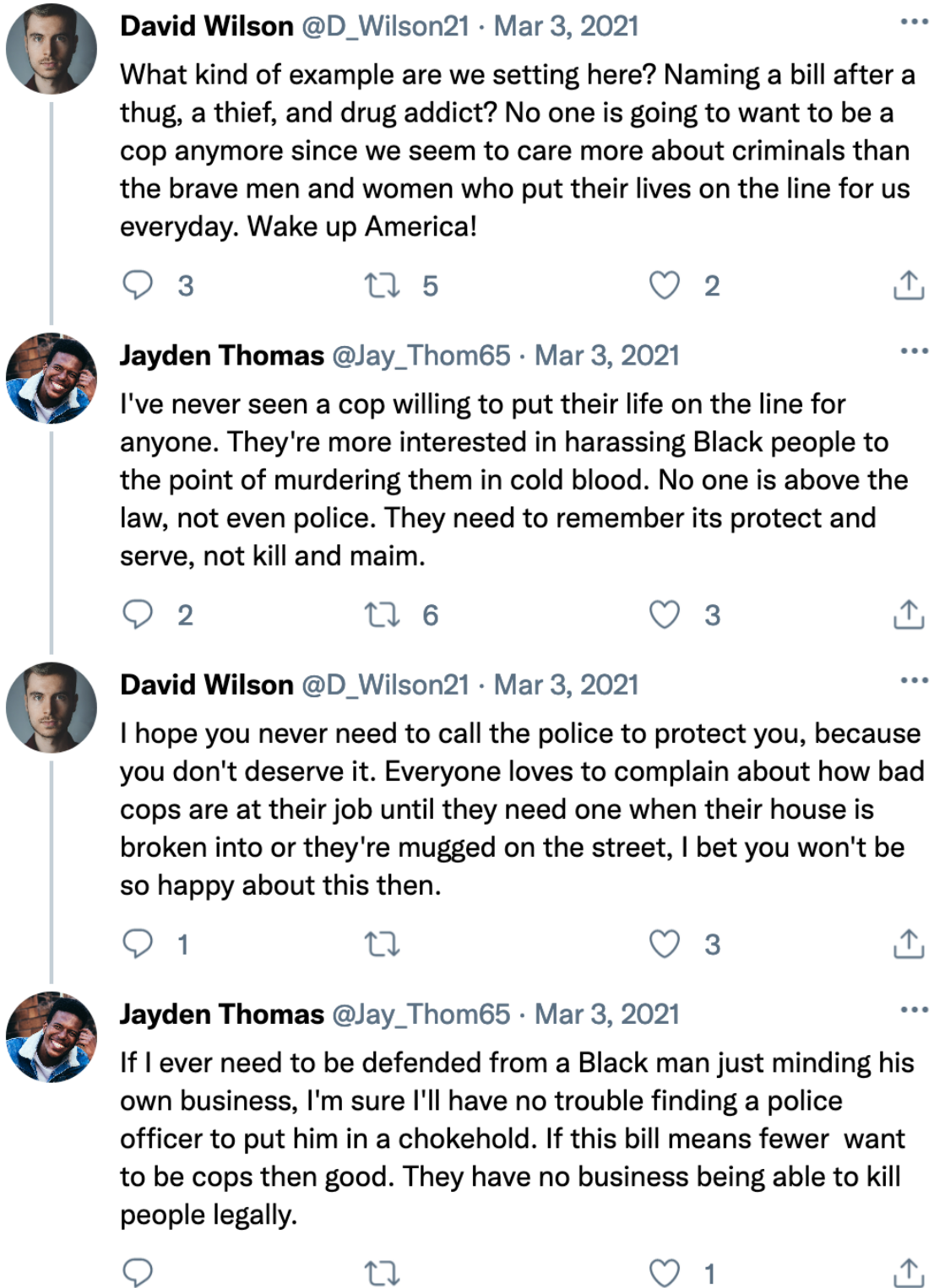
6:47 PM · Mar 3, 2021

2.3K Retweets   **988** Quote Tweets   **1.9K** Likes

Figure A2: Example Comment Reply Chain

David Wilson @D_Wilson21 · Mar 3, 2021

What kind of example are we setting here? Naming a bill after a thug, a thief, and drug addict? No one is going to want to be a cop anymore since we seem to care more about criminals than the brave men and women who put their lives on the line for us everyday. Wake up America!

💬 3   🔁 5   ♡ 2   ↑

Jayden Thomas @Jay_Thom65 · Mar 3, 2021

I've never seen a cop willing to put their life on the line for anyone. They're more interested in harassing Black people to the point of murdering them in cold blood. No one is above the law, not even police. They need to remember its protect and serve, not kill and maim.

💬 2   🔁 6   ♡ 3   ↑

David Wilson @D_Wilson21 · Mar 3, 2021

I hope you never need to call the police to protect you, because you don't deserve it. Everyone loves to complain about how bad cops are at their job until they need one when their house is broken into or they're mugged on the street, I bet you won't be so happy about this then.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 3   ↑

Jayden Thomas @Jay_Thom65 · Mar 3, 2021

If I ever need to be defended from a Black man just minding his own business, I'm sure I'll have no trouble finding a police officer to put him in a chokehold. If this bill means fewer want to be cops then good. They have no business being able to kill people legally.
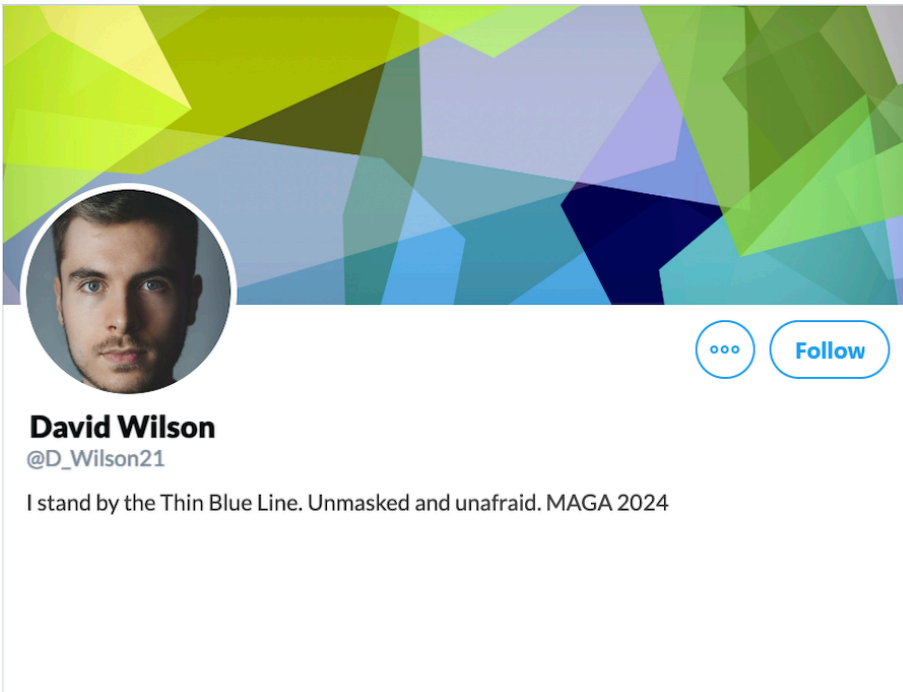
💬   🔁   ♡ 1   ↑

74

Figure A3: Example Fictitious Profiles

Jayden Thomas
@Jay_Thom65

Activist, Advocate, American. Breaking the structures of oppression through meaningful education. RT ≠ endorsement"

David Wilson
@D_Wilson21

I stand by the Thin Blue Line. Unmasked and unafraid. MAGA 2024

Table A2: *Policy Support Measures*	
Question Wording	Response Choices
Thinking about police departments in your area, do you think that spending on policing should be...	Increased a lot Increased a little Stay about the same Decreased a little Decreased a lot
Recent protests around "De-funding the Police" protests have been motivated by longstanding bias against the police.	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
Animal shelters should only be allowed to euthanize animals when they are too sick to be treated or too aggressive to be adopted.	Strongly agree Somewhat agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree
If it was harder for people to legally obtain guns in the United States, do you think there would be ...	Fewer Mass Shootings No Difference More Mass Shootings
Please indicate how much you would favor or oppose the following proposal: Creating a federal government database to	Strongly favor Somewhat favor Neither favor or oppose

| track all gun sales. | Somewhat oppose |
| | Strongly oppose |

Table A3: *Partisan Polarization Measures*	
Social Polarization Measures	
How comfortable are you having close personal friends that are Democrats (Republicans)?	Extremely uncomfortable
	Somewhat uncomfortable
	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
	Somewhat comfortable
	Extremely comfortable
	Scale: In-Party Score – Out-Party Score
How would you feel if you had a son or daughter who married a Democrat (Republican)?	Very happy
	Somewhat happy
	Neither happy nor unhappy
	Somewhat unhappy
	Very unhappy
	Scale: In-Party Score – Out-Party Score
On a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 being completely negative and 100 being completely positive, how would you rate your feelings towards Republicans (Democrats)?	0-100 for Republicans
	0-100 for Democrats
	Scale: In-Party Score – Out-Party Score

Legitimacy Polarization Measures	
How much thought do you think the average Democrat (Republican) Party supporter has given to their views on political issues?	None at all A little A moderate amount A lot A great deal
On a scale from not at all extreme (1) to very extreme (10), how would you rate the political beliefs of Republicans (Democrats)?	1 – 10 Scale for Republicans 1 – 10 Scale for Democrats Scale: In-Party Score – Out-Party Score
What percentage of Americans do you think are Democrats (Republicans), or support Democratic (Republican) ideas, even if they're afraid to admit it?	0-100 for Republicans 0-100 for Democrats Scale: In-Party Score – Out-Party Score

Table A4: *Racial Measures*	
Question Wording	Response Choices
On a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 being completely negative and 100 being completely positive, how would you rate your feelings towards White (Black) people in the U.S.?	0-100 for White People 0-100 for Black People Scale: In-Race Score – Out Race Score

Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks don't need special favors to do the same.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree 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.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
Government officials usually pay less attention to a request or complaint from a black person than from a white person	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree

	Somewhat agree
	Strongly agree
Most Blacks who receive money from welfare programs could get along without it if they tried	Strongly disagree
	Somewhat disagree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Somewhat agree
	Strongly agree

Table A5: *Support for Democratic Norms Measures*	
Question Wording	Response Choices
Effective leaders sometimes have to bend the rules in order to get things done.	Strongly disagree
	Somewhat disagree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Somewhat agree
	Strongly agree
It is hard to trust the results of elections because they don't accurately reflect the will of the people.	Strongly disagree
	Somewhat disagree
	Neither agree nor disagree
	Somewhat agree
	Strongly agree

Some political views are so reprehensible they don't deserve to be included in political debate.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
The rules of American democracy have been bent so often they are no longer meaningful.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
A president should not be bound by court decisions he or she regards as politicized.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree
All Americans should accept the results of the upcoming elections, regardless of the outcome.	Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree

Appendix II

Table A6: *Respondent Numbers by Race and Partisanship*			
	Respondent Race		
		Black	White
Respondent Partisanship	Democrat	44	261
	Republican	239	270
	Independent/Third Party	114	198

Table A7: *Respondent Numbers by Treatment Condition and Partisanship*						
		Treatment Condition				
		Control	Confirming	Double	Partisan Only	Race Only
Respondent Partisanship	Democrat	143	99	97	87	83
	Independent	81	61	67	54	49
	Republican	65	57	46	82	55

Table A8: *Partisan Stereotype Measures*	
Black Partisan Stereotype Measures	
What percentage of **Black people** in America would you say **are Democrats**, or vote consistently for Democratic politicians?	0-100 score
What percentage of **Black people** would you say voted for **Donald Trump** in the 2020 Presidential election?	0-100 score (Reverse coded)
Black Stereotype Scale	Average of above two measures, 0-100 scale
White Partisan Stereotype Measures	
What percentage of **White people** in America would you say **are Republicans**, or vote consistently for Republican politicians?	0-100 score
What percentage of **White people** would you say voted for **Joe Biden** in the 2020 Presidential election?	0-100 score (Reverse coded

White Stereotype Scale	Average of above two measures, 0-100 scale

Table A9: *Power Analysis Results*						
Multiple way ANOVA analysis						
n	ndf	ddf	f	ng	alpha	power
1510	8	1480	0.1	30	0.05	0.8