

Clarifying the “People Like Me”:
Racial Efficacy & its Effects on Political Behavior

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Abstract

We propose a novel measure of racial group efficacy and test its capacity to predict behavior among Black, White, Asian American and Latina/o American populations. In analyses of data from the 2016 Collaborative Multi-racial Post-election Survey (CMPS), we find that across all four groups, our measures are more consistent and robust predictors of political participation than the conventional internal and external efficacy measures. We find significant distinctions between White and minority respondents—both in terms of levels of reported racial efficacy and the antecedents of those reports. Finally, we find notable distinctions across racial groups in the types of political activity for which racial efficacy is more or less influential. We discuss the implications of our findings, and the pathway they provide toward more precise operationalization of the way in which individuals’ perceptions of their political agency are shaped by their salient racial group ties.

Introduction

The current political landscape bears witness to a wide-ranging array of political actions undertaken by people working in concert to advance shared aims. From massive demonstrations across the nation protesting state sanctioned violence against Black communities, to marches on state capitols to demand the reopening of the economy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. From intensive local canvassing efforts to register prospective voters and propel intermittent voters to the polls, to social media campaigns marshaling support for canceling student loan debt. People's decisions to engage in or abstain from these actions are informed in no small part by their perception of the capacity of these actions to achieve the desired results.

This sense of confidence that one's actions will bring about sufficient responsiveness from government actors is conceptualized as political efficacy. Efficacy is typically measured via items asking people to gauge the political influence of "people like me." Yet the make-up of the participants in many of the actions that define the contemporary era of politics are sorted into groups that mirror the long entrenched racial fault lines in U.S. politics. When young Black people weigh whether to attend a local Black Lives Matter protest, when a Trump supporter considers whether to march outside of a secretary of state's office to challenge the election result, are their conceptions of *people like me* comprised of other people in their age group? Their occupation status? Their neighborhood? Or does their race determine their most salient reference group?

We propose that an individual's sense of the political efficacy of her racial group is strongly influential of her decision to act. Accordingly, we introduce three novel measures of collective efficacy designed to tap directly into people's perceptions of how much influence their racial group exerts over politics. We compare the predictive power of our racial efficacy

measures for participation relative to the conventional measures of internal and external efficacy. Our findings indicate that racial efficacy is a strong and dynamic influencer of whether and how people choose to participate in politics—for both the marginalized racial groups of Black, Latina/o and Asian Americans and the dominant racial group of White Americans. By pinpointing a particular set of *people like me*, we gain better purchase into how introspective racial attitudes shape political behavior.

Classic conceptualizations of political efficacy

Efficacy is broadly defined as the belief that one's actions are capable of bringing about desired change (Verba and Almond, 1963; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960; Campbell, Gurin and Miller, 1954). The concept is typically conceptualized and operationalized as containing two components—internal and external (Campbell and Converse, 1972; Verba and Nie, 1972). Internal efficacy refers to one's perception that she is individually capable of navigating the complexities of politics to act effectively. External efficacy, on the other hand, refers to one's perceptions that government will be satisfactorily responsive to her input. Efficacy is meaningful to our understanding of the democratic process. As Wolak (2018) notes, lower senses of efficacy among the public can lead to lower participation and weakened trust in the legitimacy of government. This in turn can contribute to the destabilizing of political systems.

Much of the first slate of efficacy studies suggested that it is a static phenomenon. Differences in levels of efficacy across individuals have been traced to different socializing experiences, differences in socioeconomic status, demographics such as race & gender, and even personality type (Abramson, 1972; Campbell et al, 1960; Condon and Holleque, 2013). Studies exploring whether efficacy levels are tied to contextual factors, such as whether an individual

voted for the eventual election winner, or whether her partisanship aligns with the incumbent regime, provide mixed results (see Wolak, 2018 for review).

Despite this mixed record, it is reasonable to think of efficacy as a dynamic concept that can ebb and flow in response to changes in one's political environment. For instance, Wolak (2018) finds state-level variations in expressed efficacy. People residing in states offering more opportunities to provide input through routes such as ballot initiatives express more internal efficacy. People who share partisanship with the majority party in the state legislature express higher levels of external efficacy. These findings indicate that individuals' dynamic perceptions of the relevant actors and institutions within their political environment shape their impressions of their capacity to achieve their desired ends within it.

The role of race in shaping efficacy

Extant work indicates that people's dynamic perceptions of their potential influence over political outcomes are meaningfully informed by their racial experiences. People of color tend to exhibit lower political efficacy relative to their White counterparts (Cohen, 2010; Tate, 1991). This disparity likely reflects a litany of factors that characterize people of color's navigation of politics, such as being underrepresented in politics and perceiving less responsiveness from elected officials (Butler and Broockman, 2011; Hajnal, 2009), receiving less recruitment for mobilization from political parties (Hajnal and Lee, 2011; Wong, 2008), and having interactions with political and legal institutions that convey their lack of agency over politics (Weaver, Prowse and Piston, 2019).

Conversely, people of color have responded to indicators that their racial group has greater political incorporation with higher expressed levels of political efficacy. For instance, Pantoja and Segura (2003) find that Latina/o Americans exhibit higher efficacy when they have

descriptively representative state legislators. Similarly, Bobo and Gilliam's (1990) empowerment thesis posits that African Americans exhibit higher efficacy when residing in cities with Black mayors. They argue specifically that the presence of these Black elites signals "likely policy responsiveness to black concerns" (p. 382). We find a broad similarity here to the contention made by Wolak (2018, p. 767), that "people feel more efficacious when they have more political voice, when they are descriptively represented in politics, and when their interests are reflected in the outcomes of government." We find it important to acknowledge the salience of race in shaping people's impressions of the influence of their political voice and their level of representation in government. And we propose measures that capture perceptions of racial political influence more directly than conventional efficacy measures.

Applying the conceptualization of collective efficacy

Extant social psychology work on the role of collective efficacy in shaping collective action informs our understanding of how racial efficacy measures can shape political engagement of White and non-White people alike. This literature views collective action as driven in part by actors' belief in the capacity of the members of the collective—however defined—to achieve their shared aims. This perception is in turn shaped by contextual forces, such as which regime holds power, the actions and resources at the group's collective disposal, and the perceived power of the group (Lee, 2010). Accordingly, collective efficacy is generally defined as "the perception of whether a collective actor to which an individual belongs is capable of achieving desired outcomes" (Lee, 2010, p. 393).

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) posits that perceptions of cognitive efficacy flow from interpretive judgments of experiences, observations & prior knowledge. We view in this understanding of collective efficacy a critical role played by one's identity and experiences

around race. Interactions with the carceral state (Walker, 2014; 2020; Weaver, Prowse and Piston 2019), experiences with discrimination (Lien, 1994; Masuoka, 2006), and narratives internalized about the racial disparities within the political system (Dawson, 2003; Harris-Lacewell, 2004) can all fuel people of color's political mistrust and skepticism regarding the responsiveness of political actors to their group's input (Howell and Fagan, 1988; Nunnally, 2012; Wilkes, 2015). And as previously noted, indicators of a racial group's effective incorporation within politics, such as increased presence of shared race office holders, or perceptions that the racial playing field are evening (Leslie et al, 2020) can augment people's perceptions of the collective political efficacy of their racial group.

We see great utility in the employment of measures that tap specifically into people's dynamic impressions of the collective capacity of their racial group to affect political change. Accordingly, we adapted a conventional set of efficacy measures to more precisely pinpoint people's perceptions of their racial group efficacy. The section below details how our measures draw upon and depart from measures of efficacy used in other studies of political behavior.

Operationalizing racial group efficacy

The "people like me" measures of internal and external efficacy from the American National Election Study are widely used in empirical studies (see Table 1). These measures ask respondents to assess how capably they can understand politics, how much say they have government's handling of important issues, and whether public officials care about their preferences and input. Many studies have adapted the "people like me" efficacy measures. Bobo and Glliam's (1990) aforementioned empowerment study modifies the questions to measure respondents' senses of efficacy in the particular context of local politics. Similarly, Wolak (2018) focuses the questions on respondents' perceptions of efficacy within their state

government.

These alternate sets of measures provide more specificity by asking respondents to consider their respective capacities to affect change at particular levels of government. Yet they maintain the somewhat nebulous conceptual frame of “people like me.” Given the extant evidence that race is a highly salient and politically relevant identity among both people of color (predominantly African Americans—see Chong and Rogers, 2005; Dawson, 1994) and increasingly for White Americans (Jardina, 2019; Sides, Tesler and Vavreck, 2018), one might presume that the “people like me” language prompts people to consider their racial group. This is far from a certainty, however, as question placement and temporal and political contexts can make any number of imagined collectives salient as respondents consider *people like me*, including family members, neighbors, co-workers, shared religious adherents, co-partisans etc. The first goal of our proposed measures, then, is to directly and explicitly gauge respondents’ senses of their efficacy as members of a racial group.

Departing more starkly from this style, Leslie et al (2020) use as a proxy for African Americans’ senses of racial group efficacy a battery of questions assessing their perceptions of faith in governmental and legal institutions, as well as their beliefs about the state of race relations in the U.S. The authors contend that Black people’s overarching beliefs about the racial fairness of sociopolitical institutions inform their impressions about the utility of taking up political action. We take a broadly similar approach, believing that across race, individual perceptions of the capacity of their racial group to engender responsiveness from the system should exhibit a discernible impact on their decisions to participate in politics.

Returning to the social psychology literature, Lee (2010) posits that senses of collective efficacy are shaped by perceptions of both the group’s civic competence and the

representativeness of political actors. These ideas portend collective efficacy measures that are integrative of the conventional internal and external efficacy measures, while focused on a specific social identity group. Thus, our proposed racial efficacy measures are intended to capture individuals' acute perceptions of their collective capacity to affect political change, given their senses of the responsiveness of the political system to their racial group's input. To do so we shifted beyond the "people like me" conceptualization to focus on racial groups specifically, while maintaining a specific focus on political actors and outcomes, rather than a general focus on racial fairness more broadly. Table 1 displays our three proposed measures of racial efficacy and illustrates how they depart from the efficacy measures we highlighted here.

Table 1: Comparing operationalizations of efficacy

ANES	<p>"Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on."</p> <p>"Public officials don't care much what people like me think."</p> <p>"People like me don't have any say about what the government does." [AGREE/DISAGREE]</p>
Location specific	<p><i>Wolak 2018</i></p> <p>"Most elected officials in my state government care what people like me think."</p> <p>"My state government is responsive to what the people in my state want."</p> <p>"I feel my voice is heard in state government decisions that affect me." [AGREE/DISAGREE]</p> <p><i>Bobo and Gilliam 1990</i></p> <p>"How much influence do you think people like you can have over local government decisions—a lot, a moderate amount, a little, or none?"</p> <p>"If you had a complaint about a local government activity and took that complaint to a member of the local government council, would you expect him or her to pay a lot of attention to what you say, some attention, very little attention, or none at all?"</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Faith in institutions and society</p>	<p><i>Leslie et al 2020</i></p> <p>“The passage of laws that require you to acquire all of the underlying documents and show a valid photo ID in order to vote are directly aimed at weakening the voting power of the African American community.” [AGREE/DISAGREE]</p> <p>“Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of the police? Is that a very or somewhat favorable/unfavorable opinion?”</p> <p>“Some people say that the criminal justice system is generally fair to all people without regard to race, while others say that there is systemic racism in the criminal justice system such that African Americans, Latinos and other people of color are often treated unfairly. Which is closer to your opinion?”</p> <p>“Over the last 8 years, would you say that race relations have improved a lot, improved a little, stayed the same gotten a little worse, gotten a lot worse?”</p> <p>“We’d like to know how you would rate relations between various groups in the United States these days. Would you say relations between blacks and whites are very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Our racial group efficacy battery</p>	<p>How often would you say public officials work hard to help [R’s reported racial group]?</p> <p>How often would you say [R’s reported racial group] have a say in how government handles important issues?</p> <p>How often would you say [R’s reported racial group] elected to office can make changes for people in your racial group? [All the time / Most of the time / About half of the time / Rarely / Never]</p>

Our first two measures simply modify the language of the ANES measures. Consistent with aforementioned scholarship highlighting the importance of descriptive representation on people of color’s perceptions of political efficacy (i.e. Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Leslie et al, 2020; Pantoja and Segura, 2003), we also include a measure of people’s perceptions of the capacity of shared-race elected officials to advance the interests of the group. In total, these measures should allow us to ascertain the extent to which people believe their racial group’s

demands are effectively adjudicated in the political system, and additionally whether descriptively representative individuals indeed constitute a cue of likely policy responsiveness to their collective concerns. Because these measures tap directly into people's highly salient racial considerations, we anticipate they will be strongly predictive of decisions to take up political action—more so than the more generally conceptualized conventional ANES efficacy measures.

Note from Table 1 that our racial efficacy measures eschew the agree-disagree response options in favor of a frequency response category. This decision was made for two reasons. First, to eliminate the risk of acquiescence bias. And second, to facilitate interpretation of the variations in responses. We believe the difference between a response of *all the time* and *most of the time* is more clearly delineated than the difference between *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree*. Further, asking people to report how frequently their racial group engenders responsiveness from government solicits responses that should be less tethered to the particular racial and political contexts in which the questions are asked.

Hypotheses

We believe our racial efficacy measures allow us to gain better purchase on the way that people's perceptions of their racial group inform their senses of political influence. Accordingly, we test a set of hypotheses relating to people's expressed racial efficacy across racial groups, as well as the predictive power of racial efficacy for participation. First, we expect that people of color will report levels of racial efficacy that are lower than the conventional efficacy they report (H1). Due to their generally lower senses of racial identity, we remain agnostic as to whether White respondents will report racial efficacy levels that depart from their conventional efficacy reports.

Additionally, we expect that due to their perceptions that government outcomes are not racially equitable, reported racial efficacy will be lower among people of color than among White people (H2). Finally, we expect that because our measures are attuned to how people of color's impressions of how racial biases constrain their political influence, our measures of racial efficacy will be more predictive of people of color's political participation than the conventional efficacy measures (H3). Again, we are agnostic as to whether these measures will also be more predictive of White people's political behavior.

Data

We utilize the 2016 Collaborative Multi-Racial Post-Election Survey (CMPS, Barreto et al. 2017) to test our hypotheses. The CMPS is widely used in scholarship examining distinct trends in opinion and behavior across racial and ethnic groups (i.e. Berry, Ebner, and Cornelius, 2019; Chan and Phoenix, 2020; Gutierrez, Ocampo, Barreto and Segura, 2019; Marsh and Ramirez, 2019; Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn 2019; Phoenix and Arora, 2018). The survey contains a total of 10,145 respondents, including 3102 African Americans, 3006 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), 3003 Latina/o Americans, and 1034 Whites. The surveys were conducted completely online and were self-administered between December 3, 2016 to February 15, 2017. The instrument was made available in various languages including Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Spanish, and English. More information about the CMPS 2016 is available [here](#) (also see: Barreto, Frasure-Yokley, Vargas and Wong, 2018).

Measurement

We contributed the three novel measurements of racial efficacy displayed in Table 1 to the CMPS. The questions contained five response options: All the time, Most of the time, About

half of the time, Rarely, and Never. We scaled the questions into one measure of racial efficacy ranging between 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest). The scale has high internal reliability for both the entire survey sample (Cronbach's Alpha =0.79) and the four specific racial groups— African Americans ($\alpha=0.77$), Latina/os ($\alpha=0.77$), Asian Americans ($\alpha=0.80$), and Whites (0.79).

The CMPS includes a standard measure of internal efficacy, which asks whether respondents agree or disagree with the following statement: “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.” Additionally, a standard measure of external efficacy is included, asking about respondents' agreement with the statement: “Public officials don't care much (about) what people like me think.”

Correlations between the conventional and racial efficacy measures assuage concerns about multicollinearity between the two constructs. Internal and racial efficacy are weakly negatively correlated for people of color. No relationship exists among Whites. External and racial efficacy are moderately positively correlated, particularly among African Americans ($r=0.25$). A full correlation matrix across the four groups for racial, internal, and external efficacy is reported in the appendix (Table A). Overall, racial efficacy has discriminant validity and is empirically distinct from internal and external efficacy.

We employ multiple operationalizations of political participation. First, we create a nine-item participation index inclusive of whether individuals voted in the 2016 Presidential election, donated to a political or social organization, volunteered for a campaign, attended a local meeting or townhall, worked with others within their communities to address a political or social issue, contacted an elected official, attended a protest or rally, signed a petition, or boycotted a product for political reasons.

In addition to assessing the relationship between racial efficacy and this broad participation index, we examine racial efficacy's association with election-related activity (voting, donating, and campaigning), with communal and governmental activities (attending community meetings, participating in community-related action, contacting elected officials); and finally, with unconventional activities (petitions, protests, boycotts). All indices of behavior are scaled to range from 0 to 1. We run standard OLS regressions for all participation models.

In addition to racial efficacy, our models include traditional indicators of socioeconomic status (household income and education), demographics (place of birth, age, and gender), political orientations (partisanship, strength of partisan identification, and trust and interest in politics), how often respondents attended religious services, and their perceptions of the state of the economy.

Results

Determinants of Racial Efficacy Across Race

Before testing our hypotheses, we present in Table 2 the results from OLS regressions modeling the predictors of racial efficacy across groups. Notable distinctions emerge in the antecedents of racial efficacy for White and non-White respondents. White respondents are the only group for which greater educational attainment, stronger senses of linked fate and identification with the Democratic Party are strongly and positively associated with higher levels of racial efficacy. In contrast, linked fate exhibits no statistically discernible relationship with racial efficacy among people of color. Greater educational attainment is associated with lower racial efficacy for Black and AAPI respondents. And Democratic partisan affiliation is associated with lower racial efficacy for Black and Latina/o respondents.

Table 2: Predictors of Racial Efficacy Across Race

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	White	Black	Latina/o	Asian
Income	0.002 (0.025)	-0.050*** (0.014)	0.001 (0.014)	-0.044*** (0.014)
Education	0.069** (0.035)	-0.062*** (0.019)	-0.009 (0.018)	-0.068*** (0.020)
Age	-0.183*** (0.042)	-0.024 (0.025)	-0.090*** (0.028)	0.033 (0.027)
Female	-0.007 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.008)	0.002 (0.008)	-0.018** (0.008)
Democrat	0.061*** (0.017)	-0.028** (0.014)	-0.030*** (0.010)	0.008 (0.010)
Partisan Strength	0.006 (0.022)	0.038** (0.018)	0.040*** (0.014)	0.017 (0.014)
Interest in Politics	0.062** (0.028)	0.094*** (0.014)	0.076*** (0.014)	0.054*** (0.015)
Trust in Politics	0.220*** (0.035)	0.260*** (0.015)	0.201*** (0.016)	0.253*** (0.019)
Church Attendance	-0.024 (0.020)	0.038*** (0.011)	0.026** (0.011)	0.060*** (0.011)
Economic Evaluations	-0.024 (0.023)	-0.043*** (0.012)	-0.067*** (0.012)	-0.048*** (0.014)
Not Born in US	-0.049 (0.036)	0.007 (0.014)	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.011 (0.008)
Linked Fate	0.079*** (0.019)	-0.005 (0.009)	0.007 (0.010)	0.013 (0.011)
Internal Efficacy	-0.027 (0.025)	-0.097*** (0.012)	-0.112*** (0.014)	-0.110*** (0.015)
External Efficacy	0.124*** (0.028)	0.148*** (0.015)	0.107*** (0.015)	0.147*** (0.017)
Constant	0.419*** (0.039)	0.327*** (0.021)	0.400*** (0.021)	0.321*** (0.024)

Observations	768	2,194	2,270	2,118
R ²	0.207	0.287	0.197	0.223
Adjusted R ²	0.192	0.282	0.192	0.217
Residual Std. Error	0.186 (df = 753)	0.167 (df = 2179)	0.173 (df = 2255)	0.177 (df = 2103)
F Statistic	14.021*** (df = 14; 753)	62.599*** (df = 14; 2179)	39.444*** (df = 14; 2255)	43.004*** (df = 14; 2103)

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Despite the expectation that racial in-group solidarity among Whites reflects a perception that the group is socio-politically aggrieved (Jardina, 2019), we see such solidarity facilitating acknowledgment of the group's relatively favored status in politics. Among people of color, greater educational attainment can facilitate understanding of the racial group's diminished prospects for securing responsiveness through one of two routes. The educational environment can provide people of color with useful frameworks to critically discern structural racial inequities in the political system. Alternately, education could serve here as a proxy for people of color's incorporation into privileged professional or social spaces, which make them acutely aware of the racial biases embedded within elite political spaces (Dawson, 1994; Feagin, 1991).

The linkage between Democratic affiliation and diminished racial efficacy among Black and Latina/o respondents is perhaps most striking. This pattern may reflect these group's general sense of disillusionment with their preferred party's ability to maintain hold of electoral power, or to effectively wield that power to benefit minority constituents. Or this finding can reflect the particular context in which the survey was taken. In the immediate aftermath of Trump's unanticipated election victory, Black and Latina/o Americans may have felt particularly despondent that their preferred party could not defeat a candidate whose campaign was steeped so deeply in racist and xenophobic rhetoric.

Whereas White respondents' reports of internal efficacy are unrelated to their reported racial efficacy, internal and racial efficacy are negatively related for all non-White groups. There is an apparent dissonance exhibited by people of color, who simultaneously feel personally equipped to participate in politics and skeptical of their racial group's political agency. This indicates that racial minorities' impressions of politics and their place within it are informed by both group-centric and individualistic lenses. Evocative of Dubois' concept of double consciousness, the tension inherent in racial minorities' navigation of politics as both Americans and an othered group gives us confidence that our racial efficacy measures will illuminate their political behavior more vividly than conventional measures alone.

Finally, we note that attendance of religious services is associated with greater racial efficacy for all non-White groups, yet it bears no effect among Whites. What are the ties that bind together these diverse religious experiences to bolster people of color's confidence in the political influence of their racial group? This is ripe for future exploration. Indeed, many racially distinct patterns are present in these models that while beyond the scope of our present study can guide future research on the antecedents of racial efficacy.

Table 3: Mean Levels of Three Types of Efficacy, Across Race

	White	Black	Latina/o	AAPI
Internal Efficacy	0.46	0.48*	0.45	0.40***
External Efficacy	0.39	0.35***	0.38*	0.41
Racial Efficacy	0.55	0.41***	0.45***	0.40***

Note: Denotations represent t-test difference in mean efficacy between Whites and each non-White group. *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01.

Table 3 displays the mean reports of each type of efficacy across racial group. Looking across the first row, we see inconsistent patterns across reported internal efficacy. Relative to Whites, African Americans report more efficacy, Latina/o Americans report no difference, and

Asian Americans report significantly less. Turning to the second row, both Black and Latina/o Americans report significantly less external efficacy than Whites, while Asian Americans are not distinguishably different. Yet as the final row makes clear, all three racial minority groups report substantially lower levels of racial efficacy relative to Whites. This initial set of trends supports hypothesis 2. People of color report substantially less racial efficacy than their White counterparts. There is little support, however, for hypothesis 1. For both Black and Latina/o Americans mean reported external efficacy is lower than racial efficacy. Further, Latina/o respondents report equivalent levels of internal and racial efficacy. Finally, levels of internal, external and racial efficacy are virtually indistinguishable among Asian Americans. It appears the relationships between conventional and racial efficacy are less straightforward than we anticipated.

We now examine the association between racial efficacy and political participation. Table 4 displays the results of OLS regressions using the 9-item political action scale as the dependent variable.

Table 4: OLS Models regressing racial efficacy on full political participation index

	<i>Dependent variable: Political Participation (9-Item Scale)</i>			
	White	Black	Latina/o	AAPI
Racial Efficacy	0.094** (0.039)	0.122*** (0.025)	0.111*** (0.023)	0.065*** (0.023)
Internal Efficacy	0.059** (0.027)	0.016 (0.015)	0.047*** (0.015)	0.049*** (0.016)
External Efficacy	-0.073** (0.030)	-0.090*** (0.018)	-0.055*** (0.017)	-0.032* (0.018)
Linked Fate	0.075*** (0.020)	0.076*** (0.011)	0.096*** (0.011)	0.074*** (0.011)
Income	0.079*** (0.027)	0.103*** (0.017)	0.087*** (0.016)	0.050*** (0.015)

Education	0.204 ^{***} (0.037)	0.108 ^{***} (0.023)	0.133 ^{***} (0.020)	0.033 (0.021)
Age	0.060 (0.046)	0.062 ^{**} (0.030)	0.068 ^{**} (0.031)	0.135 ^{***} (0.028)
Female	-0.008 (0.015)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.011 (0.009)	-0.022 ^{***} (0.009)
Democrat	0.048 ^{**} (0.019)	-0.023 (0.016)	0.013 (0.011)	0.002 (0.010)
Partisan Strength	0.021 (0.024)	0.044 ^{**} (0.020)	0.023 (0.015)	0.062 ^{***} (0.014)
Political Interest	0.231 ^{***} (0.030)	0.207 ^{***} (0.016)	0.223 ^{***} (0.016)	0.232 ^{***} (0.016)
Trust in Politics	-0.023 (0.038)	0.004 (0.019)	-0.022 (0.018)	-0.034 [*] (0.020)
Attend Church	0.012 (0.021)	0.059 ^{***} (0.013)	0.043 ^{***} (0.012)	0.003 (0.012)
Economy Eval	-0.053 ^{**} (0.025)	-0.054 ^{***} (0.014)	0.004 (0.014)	0.008 (0.014)
Not Born in US	0.031 (0.038)	-0.095 ^{***} (0.017)	-0.067 ^{***} (0.009)	-0.056 ^{***} (0.008)
Constant	-0.168 ^{***} (0.045)	-0.087 ^{***} (0.025)	-0.148 ^{***} (0.025)	-0.104 ^{***} (0.026)
Observations	768	2,194	2,270	2,118
R ²	0.345	0.267	0.291	0.241
Adjusted R ²	0.332	0.262	0.286	0.235
Residual Std. Error	0.197 (df = 752)	0.196 (df = 2178)	0.190 (df = 2254)	0.184 (df = 2102)
F Statistic	26.368 ^{***} (df = 15; 752)	52.900 ^{***} (df = 15; 2178)	61.560 ^{***} (df = 15; 2254)	44.463 ^{***} (df = 15; 2102)

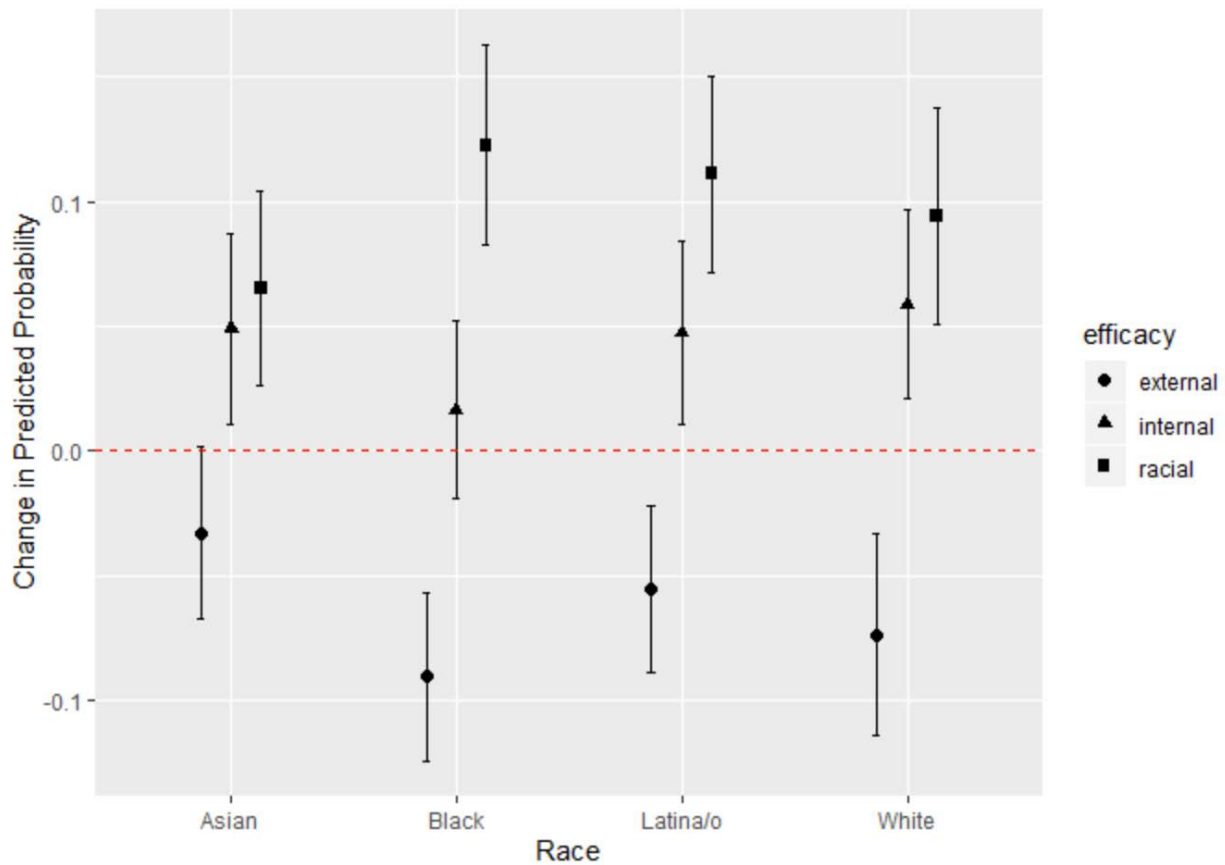
Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Two patterns stand out when comparing the magnitude effects of each type of efficacy. First, our racial efficacy measure is strongly and positively associated with the participation index for all racial groups. Second, for all groups the magnitude of the effects on racial efficacy

are larger than the respective magnitudes for the conventional efficacy measures. Notably, for all four groups, greater reported external efficacy corresponds with significantly *lower* levels of participation. This trend is possibly an indicator that the external efficacy measure is capturing here respondents' general satisfaction with government, which may preclude them from feeling compelled to take up much political action. This initial set of results supports our third hypothesis. Indeed, the racial efficacy variables appear to effectively predict behavior among both non-White and White respondents.

To better compare the substantial effects of each type of efficacy on participation, we present in Figure 1 the change in predicted probability of participation as respondents move from the lowest to highest level of efficacy, with all control variables set at their means.

Figure 1: Predicted Change in Probability of Political Participation (9-Item Index)



Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of political participation on a 9-point scale, comparing respondents with the highest by the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Across all racial groups, our measure of racial efficacy exhibits the largest substantial impact on propensity to take up political participation, compared to the conventional efficacy measures. The effect is largest among Black and Latina/o Americans, for whom moving from least to most racially efficacious corresponds with increases of about twelve and eleven percentage points on the scale, respectively. This is the equivalent of participating in one additional political activity. Following closely behind are White respondents, whose movement from least to most racially efficacious is associated with a nearly ten percent shift in the participation scale. Racial efficacy produces the most modest effects among Asian Americans, an increase of about six percent of the scale.

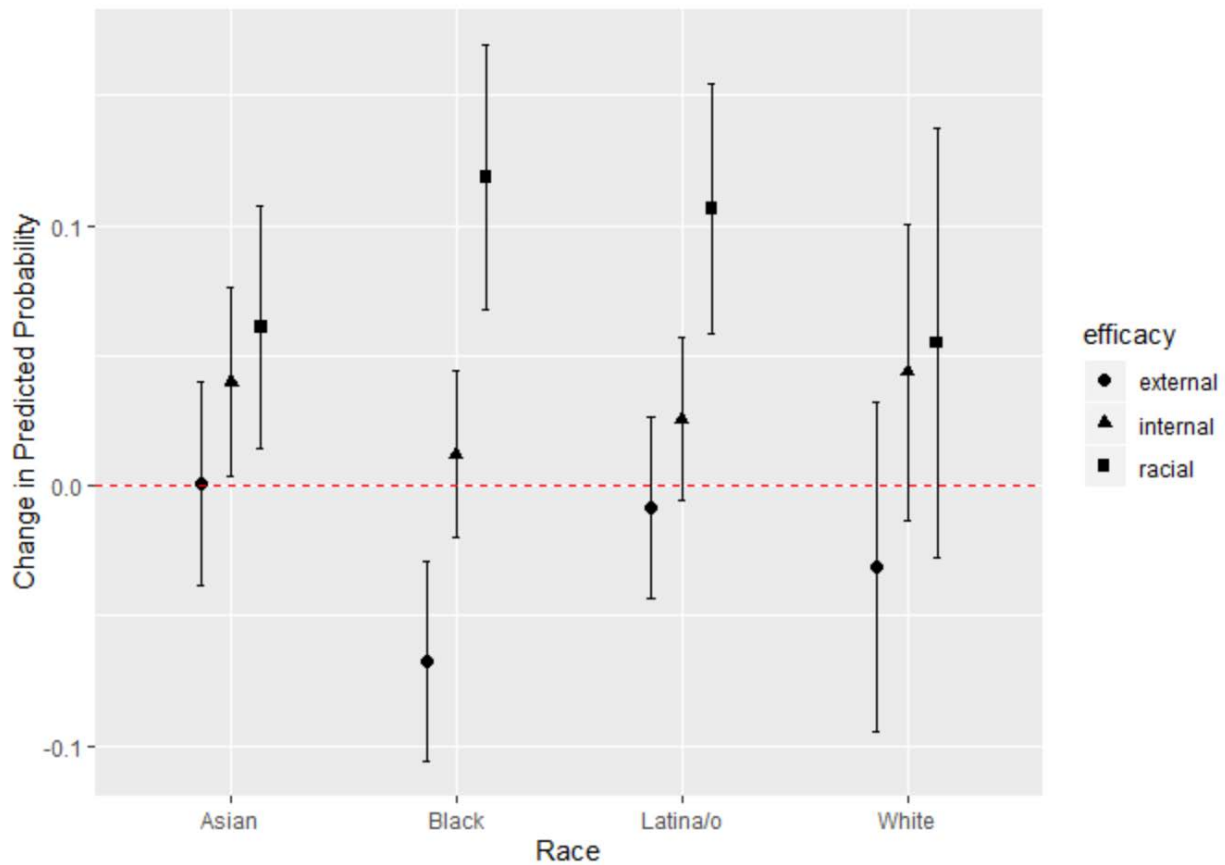
As evidenced by the overlapping confidence intervals, the substantive effects of racial efficacy on participation are comparable to those of internal efficacy for White, Latina/o American and AAPI respondents. African Americans are distinct in that racial efficacy is far more predictive of political behavior than internal efficacy, which produces an effect indistinguishable from zero at the 0.05 alpha level. Comparing the robust effects of racial efficacy on participation for Black respondents with its relatively modest effects for AAPI respondents indicates that racial efficacy informs political engagement to a greater extent for groups with more stable and salient sense of racial identity (Junn and Masuoka, 2008; Lien, Conway and Wong, 2003).

We now focus on the effects of racial efficacy on particular dimensions of political behavior, looking first at electoral activity. Recall that this measure is an index of voting in the 2016 election, donating to a campaign, and volunteering for a campaign. Figure 2 displays the

predicted change in probability of taking part in these actions as respondents from the lowest to highest categories of each efficacy measure. The full OLS regression model results are presented in Table B in the appendix.

Similar to the results for the full participation index, racial efficacy exerts the largest substantial effect on electoral activity. Once again, this effect is most pronounced among Black and Latina/o respondents, with racial efficacy producing near equivalent effects to that of the full participation model for these groups.

Figure 2: Predicted Change in Probability of Election-Related Activity (3-Item Index)



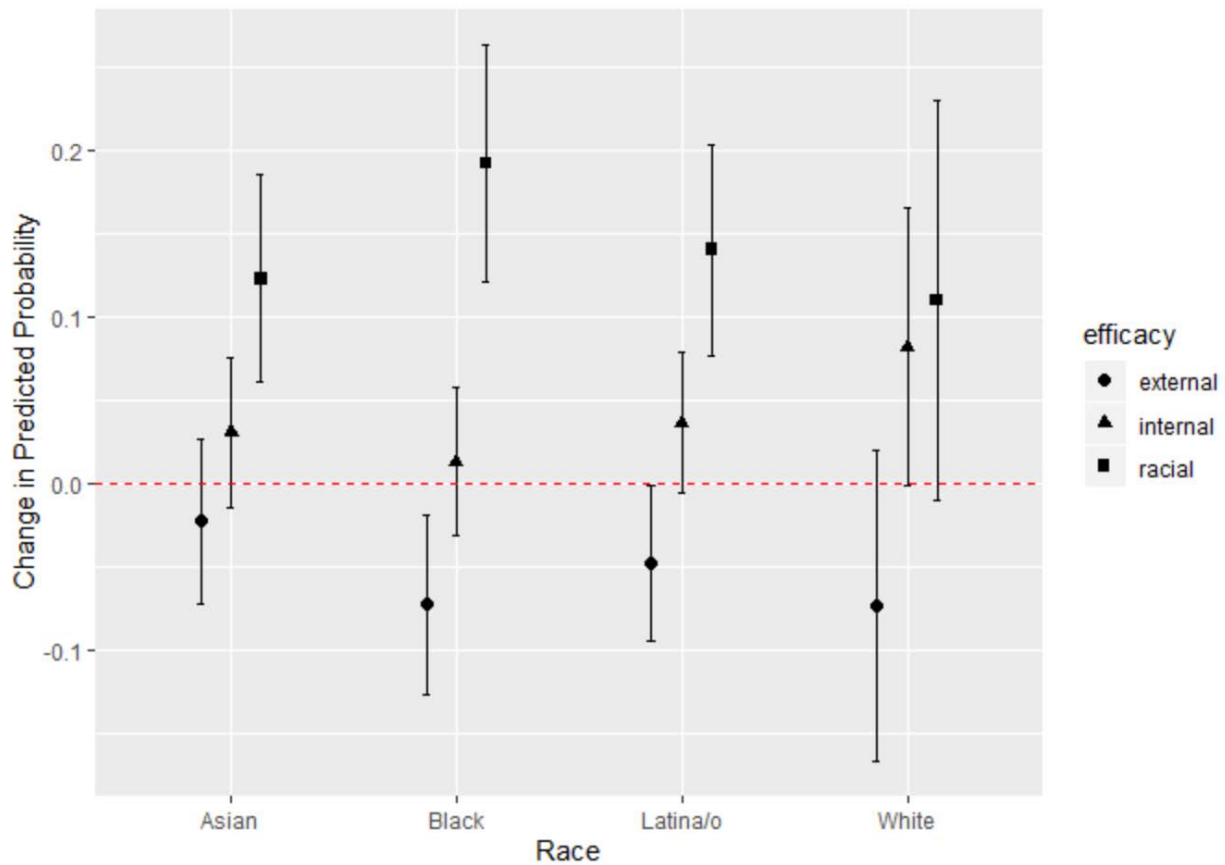
Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of electoral political participation on a 3-point scale, comparing respondents with the highest by the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Once again racial efficacy exhibits modest positive effects electoral activity for Asian American respondents. White respondents are unique in that neither the conventional nor racial

measures of efficacy produce statistically discernible effects on electoral activity. It appears that people of color’s participation in electoral politics is informed by their perceptions of their racial group influence over politics to a greater degree than Whites.

Figure 3 displays the effects of the respective efficacy measures on participation in our index of governmental and communal actions (working with others to address a local issue, attending a local meeting or town hall, and contacting government officials). The divide between White and non-White respondents is most apparent in this action domain.

Figure 3: Predicted Change in Probability of Community-Related Activity (3-Item Index)



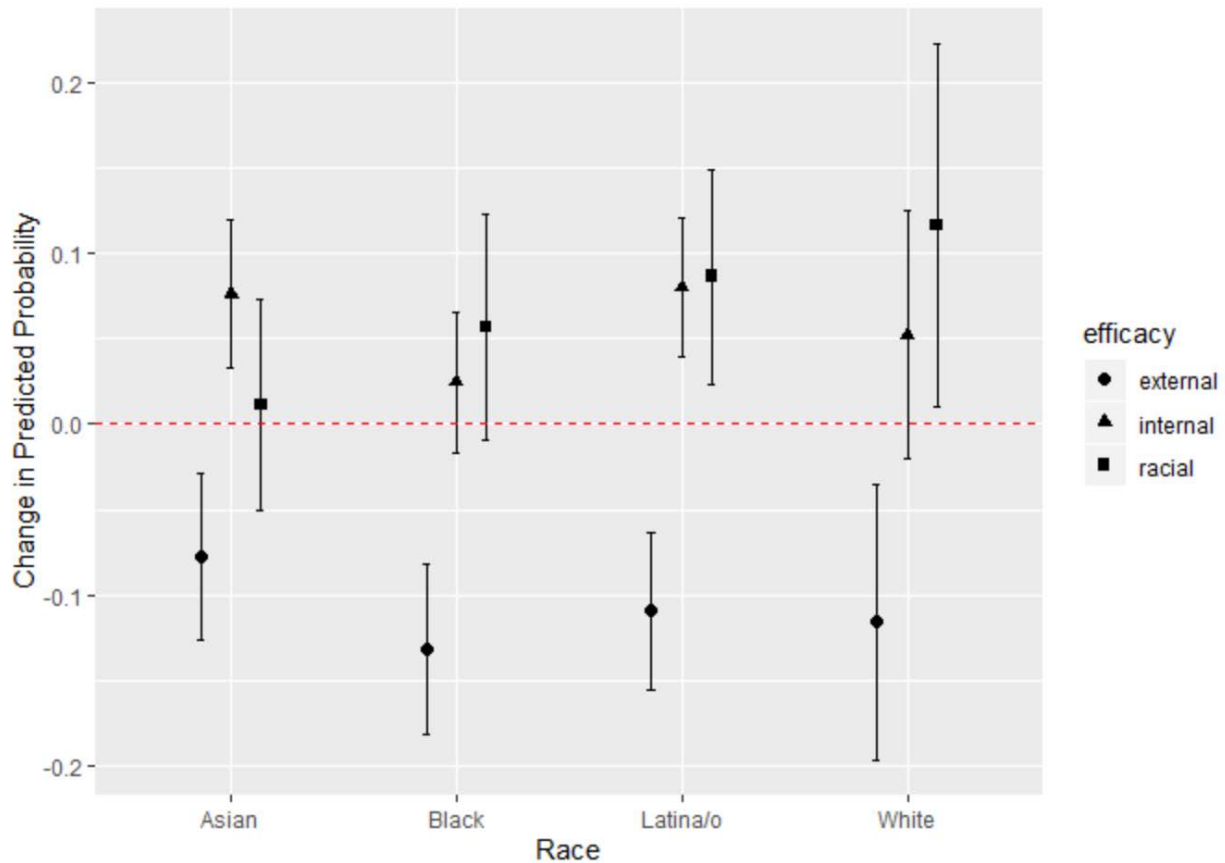
Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of communal, government-related political participation on a 3-point scale, comparing respondents with the highest by the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Neither the conventional nor racial efficacy measures exert statistically meaningful effects on White participation in these activities. Among people of color, however, racial

efficacy is strongly related to communal and governmental participation. Moving from least to most racially efficacious is associated with increases of about 14 and 13 percentage points on the participation scale for Latina/o and Asian American respondents, respectively. The effect of racial efficacy is most pronounced among African Americans, for whom movement from least to most efficacious is associated with an increase of nearly 20 percent on the scale. These trends indicate that people of color’s participation in localized collective action, as well as their engagement of elected officials, is shaped to a significant degree by their impressions of their racial group’s capacity to extract political responsiveness.

Finally, Figure 4 displays the relationships between efficacy and predicted probability of participating in unconventional actions (petitioning, protesting, and boycotting).

Figure 4: Predicted Change in Probability of Unconventional Political Participation (3-Item Index)



Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of communal, government-related political participation on a 3-point scale, comparing respondents with the highest by the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

We observe countervailing trends in this domain of system-challenging actions. In contrast to the strong effect of racial efficacy on Black participation in conventional political actions, our measure bears a weaker empirical association with Black participation in unconventional activity. Racial efficacy similarly bears no effect on Asian American participation in these actions. Movement from least to most efficacious is associated with an increase of about 9 percent of the scale for Latina/o Americans. In a notable departure from past trends, racial efficacy exerts the strongest impact on White participation in unconventional activities. Movement from least to most efficacious is associated with an increase of nearly 12 percent of the scale for White respondents.

The patterns unearthed in this domain make the value of disaggregating the distinct types of participation clear. In a contrast from other forms of political engagement, senses of racial group efficacy appear to matter less for people of color than Whites in the domain of protests, petitions and boycotts. This finding suggests that if people of color are confident in their racial group's capacity to influence politics, they will eschew system-challenging strategies in favor of more conventional actions. White Americans, on the other hand, appear to be bolstered by their confidence in their racial group's political influence to increase their involvement in system challenging actions. We elaborate on the practical implications of these divergent trends in the next section.

To summarize the findings, we found little support for Hypothesis 1. People of color did not report levels of racial efficacy that were uniformly lower than their reported internal or external efficacy. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, however, Black, Latina/o and AAPI respondents

all reported significantly lower levels of racial efficacy than their White counterparts. Finally, consistent with Hypothesis 3, racial efficacy was more often than not a stronger predictor of people of color's participation than both internal and external efficacy. Racial efficacy was also a strong predictor of White participation in many forms of action. Variations in the types of actions for which racial efficacy was more or less predictive lend insights into the precise ways that perceptions of the political influence of one's racial group inform decisions about the types of ways to engage in politics.

Discussion and Conclusion

Explorations of our novel measure of racial group efficacy illuminate how both dominant and marginalized racial groups derive understanding of their collective capacity to make change from their interactions with civic, political and social institutions. Religious institutions appear to produce unique effects for congregants of color, cultivating their confidence that their racial group can be influential within politics. This highlights an additional avenue through which churches can mobilize racial minorities toward electoral and governmental actions, in addition to developing their civic skills, lowering costs of participation and facilitating intragroup solidarity (Calhoun-Brown, 1996; McClerking and McDaniel, 2005).

In contrast, higher educational attainment facilitates racial minorities' skepticism about the political influence of their group, while augmenting White people's racial efficacy. While education is typically thought to promote greater political activeness (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995), it may be the case that for people of color, sites of higher education engender critical racialized ideologies that inhibit a collective sense of political efficacy. How higher educated people of color resolve the tension between possession of an abundant slate of skills and resources that translate to political behavior and their deep

skepticism about their political agency as a racial group can determine whether and in which domains they are actively engaged in politics. This tension may be especially evident within the behavior patterns of young African Americans, who exhibit strong resignation about the scope of racial progress, and have shown strides in participation in activist yet not electoral politics (Cohen, 2010; Williams and Clement, 2016).

Associations with the political parties also inform distinct impressions of racial group efficacy across Whites and non-Whites. Of particular interest is how dynamic or static these relationships are. Do Black and Latina/o American self-identified Democrats—particularly those who were critical to the election outcomes in states such as Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Pennsylvania—feel differently about their collective racial influence in the aftermath of 2020 election relative to the 2016 race? Our findings necessitate the question of how the much-discussed intensive efforts to mobilize Black voters in Georgia’s presidential and Senate runoff elections affected Black residents’ impressions of their collective racial influence. Does increased partisan contact augment racial efficacy, or is it contact specifically from Black people—or at least those representing Black led organizations—that is necessary to facilitate racial group efficacy? Indeed, Georgia and other states that witnessed surges in minority turnout offer fertile ground for exploring what specific interventions or contextual shifts altered people of color’s senses of racial efficacy, potentially animating their electoral behavior.

We see practical relevance not only in our exploration of the antecedents of racial group efficacy but also in the associations between this form of efficacy and behavior. Notably, the divergent role of racial efficacy in shaping White and non-White participation in system-challenging actions offers a useful frame for reflecting on the summer of unrest in 2020. That African Americans who exhibited higher racial efficacy would be more active in all forms of

participation *except* the domain of protests and boycotts suggests that protest is the refuge of those who feel their group does not have adequate voice within conventional political channels. We view this trend as broadly resonant with Martin Luther King's proclamation of insurgent activity as "the language of the unheard." Accordingly, the massive summer 2020 protests in defense of Black lives appear to reflect a sentiment shared widely by Black activists and their allies that electoral or governmental forms of action are insufficient to extract responsiveness from recalcitrant political actors.

In contrast, White respondents' perceptions of racial efficacy were *most* influential of their participation in system-challenging actions. Again, we view this trend as particularly resonant with recent events. The majority-White protests conducted throughout the spring and summer of 2020 in opposition to mask mandates, as well as demonstrations to demand the re-opening of gyms and other public businesses, appeared to have been fueled by a distinct undercurrent of entitlement. These protestors' unwillingness to accept disruptions to their daily routines for public health goals goes reflects an engrained modal expectation of comfort and full sociopolitical mobility, an entitlement to which people of color generally do not feel accustomed. The January 2021 siege on the capitol reflects this entitlement taken to extreme levels. How was the perpetration of this insurrection by White participants informed by their senses of racial group efficacy? That is, how did their impressions that their racial group typically gets its say in politics fuel this response in an instance in which they did not get their way?

The contrasting effects of racial efficacy on the behavior of White and non-White people suggests that while our concept is predictive of behavior for both groups, it likely taps into varying attitudinal dimensions across these groups. We highlight here areas for further exploration into how interactions with religious, civic and partisan institutions shape efficacy,

and how and why it translates to distinct patterns of participation across groups. We also acknowledge limitations of this initial foray. As a one-time cross-sectional study, we can do little more than speculate about how stable or dynamic racial efficacy levels are across contexts. We also barely scratch the surface in exploring how racial efficacy differs across cross-cutting identities such as gender, age and region. Further insights can be gleaned from future work employing a diverse set of study designs. For instance, experimental work can attempt to prime racial efficacy and examine its subsequent impact on behavior. In-depth interviews can determine how people's racial efficacy is shaped by their experiences in educational settings, in their religious institutions, and their interactions with partisan groups or racial indigenous institutions.

For the many questions raised by our exploration, we hope to have made clear what our measures of racial efficacy can contribute to scholarly and practical understanding of race and political behavior. Our racial efficacy measures illuminate a critical means through which viewing politics through a group-centric lens shapes behavior among members of both marginalized and dominant social groups. By offering a frame of reference more precise than "people like me," we better trace the contours of the political engagement of various racial groups. And we can better understand the dynamic ebbs and flows of behavior on vivid display in these fraught times.

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APPENDIX

Table A: Correlation Between Internal, External, and Racial Efficacy Across Racial Groups

	White	African American	Latina/o American	Asian American
Internal and External	0.19	0.13	0.19	0.12
Racial and Internal	0.03	-0.14	-0.16	-0.15
External and Racial	0.2	0.25	0.13	0.2

Note: Values are bivariate correlations ranging from -1 to 1 between two types of efficacy. Feelings of linked fate are only positively related to racial efficacy for Whites and have no relationship to racial efficacy across Asian Americans, African Americans, or Latinxs.

Table B: Efficacy on Election-Related Political Activity

	<i>Dependent variable: Election-Related Political Participation</i>			
	White	Black	Latina/o	Asian
Racial Efficacy	0.055 (0.042)	0.118*** (0.027)	0.106*** (0.025)	0.061** (0.025)
Internal Efficacy	0.043 (0.029)	0.012 (0.016)	0.025 (0.017)	0.040** (0.018)
External Efficacy	-0.031 (0.032)	-0.067*** (0.019)	-0.008 (0.018)	0.001 (0.020)
Linked Fate	0.034 (0.022)	0.027** (0.012)	0.038*** (0.012)	0.029** (0.012)
Income	0.152*** (0.029)	0.145*** (0.018)	0.138*** (0.017)	0.103*** (0.016)
Education	0.201*** (0.040)	0.139*** (0.024)	0.213*** (0.022)	0.053** (0.024)
Age	0.261*** (0.049)	0.366*** (0.032)	0.277*** (0.034)	0.460*** (0.031)
Female	-0.011 (0.017)	0.010 (0.010)	-0.026*** (0.010)	-0.036*** (0.010)
Democrat	0.037* (0.020)	0.003 (0.017)	0.032*** (0.012)	0.004 (0.012)
Partisan Strength	0.067***	0.083***	0.054***	0.091***

	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Interest in Politics	0.252 ^{***}	0.191 ^{***}	0.191 ^{***}	0.195 ^{***}
	(0.032)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Trust in Politics	0.008	0.009	-0.002	-0.080 ^{***}
	(0.041)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.022)
Church Attendance	-0.004	0.039 ^{***}	0.046 ^{***}	0.006
	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Economic Evaluations	-0.051 [*]	-0.046 ^{***}	-0.018	-0.0003
	(0.026)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Not Born in US	0.025	-0.137 ^{***}	-0.112 ^{***}	-0.090 ^{***}
	(0.041)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Constant	-0.249 ^{***}	-0.220 ^{***}	-0.217 ^{***}	-0.186 ^{***}
	(0.048)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.029)
Observations	768	2,194	2,270	2,118
R ²	0.394	0.349	0.352	0.319
Adjusted R ²	0.382	0.344	0.347	0.314
Residual Std. Error	0.212 (df = 752)	0.209 (df = 2178)	0.207 (df = 2254)	0.205 (df = 2102)
F Statistic	32.661 ^{***} (df = 15; 752)	77.713 ^{***} (df = 15; 2178)	81.484 ^{***} (df = 15; 2254)	65.695 ^{***} (df = 15; 2102)

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table C: Efficacy on Communal Government-Related Action

	<i>Dependent variable: Community/Government-Related Political Participation</i>			
	White	Black	Latina/o	Asian
Racial Efficacy	0.111 [*]	0.192 ^{***}	0.141 ^{***}	0.123 ^{***}
	(0.060)	(0.037)	(0.034)	(0.033)
Internal Efficacy	0.082 ^{**}	0.013	0.037	0.032
	(0.041)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.023)
External Efficacy	-0.073	-0.072 ^{***}	-0.047 [*]	-0.021
	(0.046)	(0.027)	(0.024)	(0.026)
Linked Fate	0.092 ^{***}	0.081 ^{***}	0.110 ^{***}	0.076 ^{***}

	(0.031)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Income	0.077*	0.057**	0.053**	0.023
	(0.041)	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.021)
Education	0.193***	0.082**	0.039	0.020
	(0.057)	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Age	0.049	-0.023	0.027	-0.019
	(0.070)	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.041)
Female	-0.036	-0.033**	-0.031**	-0.038***
	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Democrat	0.034	-0.057**	-0.009	-0.020
	(0.029)	(0.024)	(0.016)	(0.015)
Partisan Strength	-0.011	0.014	-0.004	0.027
	(0.036)	(0.031)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Interest in Politics	0.166***	0.207***	0.201***	0.242***
	(0.046)	(0.024)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Trust in Politics	-0.044	-0.016	0.006	0.031
	(0.059)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.029)
Church Attendance	0.091***	0.134***	0.083***	0.019
	(0.033)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Economic Evaluations	-0.076**	-0.058***	0.022	-0.004
	(0.038)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Not Born in US	0.042	-0.058**	-0.017	-0.029**
	(0.059)	(0.025)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Constant	-0.149**	-0.052	-0.124***	-0.077**
	(0.069)	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Observations	768	2,194	2,270	2,118
R ²	0.171	0.142	0.120	0.116
Adjusted R ²	0.155	0.136	0.114	0.110
Residual Std. Error	0.304 (df = 752)	0.292 (df = 2178)	0.280 (df = 2254)	0.267 (df = 2102)
F Statistic	10.367*** (df = 15; 752)	24.031*** (df = 15; 2178)	20.543*** (df = 15; 2254)	18.429*** (df = 15; 2102)

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table D: Efficacy on Unconventional Political Participation

	<i>Dependent variable: Unconventional Political Participation</i>			
	White	Black	Latina/o	Asian
Racial Efficacy	0.117** (0.053)	0.056* (0.035)	0.086*** (0.033)	0.011 (0.032)
Internal Efficacy	0.051 (0.036)	0.024 (0.020)	0.079*** (0.022)	0.076*** (0.023)
External Efficacy	-0.116*** (0.041)	-0.132*** (0.025)	-0.109*** (0.024)	-0.077*** (0.025)
Linked Fate	0.100*** (0.028)	0.119*** (0.015)	0.141*** (0.015)	0.117*** (0.016)
Income	0.009 (0.037)	0.107*** (0.023)	0.070*** (0.023)	0.022 (0.021)
Education	0.217*** (0.051)	0.102*** (0.031)	0.147*** (0.029)	0.026 (0.030)
Age	-0.131** (0.062)	-0.157*** (0.041)	-0.100** (0.044)	-0.037 (0.040)
Female	0.024 (0.021)	0.017 (0.013)	0.022* (0.013)	0.006 (0.012)
Democrat	0.072*** (0.025)	-0.015 (0.022)	0.015 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)
Partisan Strength	0.008 (0.032)	0.035 (0.028)	0.019 (0.021)	0.069*** (0.020)
Interest in Politics	0.276*** (0.041)	0.224*** (0.022)	0.276*** (0.022)	0.259*** (0.023)
Trust in Politics	-0.031 (0.052)	0.019 (0.027)	-0.068*** (0.026)	-0.054* (0.028)
Church Attendance	-0.050* (0.029)	0.005 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.017)	-0.016 (0.017)
Economic Evaluations	-0.031 (0.034)	-0.060*** (0.019)	0.007 (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)
Not Born in US	0.028 (0.052)	-0.089*** (0.023)	-0.073*** (0.013)	-0.048*** (0.012)

Constant	-0.106 [*] (0.061)	0.012 (0.035)	-0.101 ^{***} (0.035)	-0.050 (0.037)
Observations	768	2,194	2,270	2,118
R ²	0.223	0.157	0.208	0.155
Adjusted R ²	0.208	0.152	0.203	0.149
Residual Std. Error	0.270 (df = 752)	0.270 (df = 2178)	0.270 (df = 2254)	0.261 (df = 2102)
F Statistic	14.390 ^{***} (df = 15; 752)	27.122 ^{***} (df = 15; 2178)	39.488 ^{***} (df = 15; 2254)	25.769 ^{***} (df = 15; 2102)

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses; *p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01