

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

RACIAL MODERATION AS PREFERENCE
OR CONSTRAINT? EXAMINING RACIAL
PRAGMATISM AMONG BLACK
AMERICANS

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In this dissertation, I offer a theory of racial pragmatism to explain how the broader social context influences the social and political behavior of Black Americans. I define racial pragmatism as a Black belief system where through double consciousness (DuBois 1903) and their use of the pragmatic method (Dewey 1929), adherents are aware of Americans' opposition to Black voters' desired social changes. This reality has led pragmatic Black Americans to conclude that as a group, Black Americans are hampered in their ability to articulate and enact a progressive and racialized political agenda that uniquely benefits members of their racial group. Behaving similarly to pragmatic Black elites such as David Dinkins and Barack Obama (Harris 2012; Marable and Clark 2009; Reft 2009), when striving for social progress, I argue that pragmatic Black voters are hesitant to embrace race conscious political strategies, policies, and candidates, not because they oppose them outright, but rather they view these race-conscious options as ineffective in the current social environment. To evaluate my theory, I created an 8-item survey measure of racial pragmatism. I find that racial pragmatism is a statistically reliable

measure and I found repeated support for my theory through a series of observational and experimental studies. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are less likely to vote for racially progressive Democrats, offer more moderate positions on racial policies such as reparations, and envision greater political backlash from white Americans when politicians speak out about racial issues that affect Black people. I also find that pragmatists are more reactive to threat when compared to co-racial group members who scored lower in racial pragmatism. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are more likely to compromise and abandon their liberal policy positions when responding to threat stimuli. Finally, I also found that my theory and measure of racial pragmatism has important social implications outside of politics. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are more likely to both support and engage in strategic deracialization efforts such as codeswitching to mute their racial identities and increase their chances of fair treatment in American society. This research provides insight into the complex actions that Black Americans employ in their daily lives to compensate for prejudice and strategically develop tactics for achieving uplift in a country that is hostile to their interests and rights. Through racial pragmatism, some Black Americans make conscious and strategic choices to deemphasize their racial identities and relegate racial issues in politics to decrease their chances of experiencing prejudice and backlash from non-Black Americans.

RACIAL MODERATION AS PREFERENCE OR CONSTRAINT?
EXAMINING RACIAL PRAGMATISM AMONG BLACK
AMERICANS

by

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Chapter 1: A Theory of Racial Pragmatism

Introduction

Black voters have long been characterized by their strong support of Democratic Party candidates and endorsement of liberal social policies designed to reduce inequality (White and Laird 2020; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Dawson 1994). Despite displaying strong levels of group cohesion when voting, heterogeneity among Black voters is greatly masked when focusing solely on exit polls and policy preferences. Although Black voters largely converge on Democratic party preference and their desire to achieve racial equality for their group, they differ on strategic grounds. Particularly, Black Americans diverge in their views about how the racial group should strategically fight for equality and inclusion within an American society that has historically been hostile to their group interests (Dawson 2001).

This variation in approach can be observed in the electoral strategies of Black voters in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries. The election illuminated an important divide between different camps of Black voters who opposed the Trump presidency. One wing of Black voters embraced a transformative overhaul of the political system, while others advocated for a more measured and pragmatic approach to making change. In interviews leading up to the election, Black Americans were concerned and feared for their safety, and their social and political position in the country if Donald Trump and Republicans maintained control of the executive branch (Collins 2020). Due to Trump's embrace of white supremacists,¹ anti-Black rhetoric,

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/30/politics/proud-boys-trump-debate-trnd/index.html>

the stark increase of hate crimes² in recent years, and ongoing protests over racial injustice, some Black Americans felt it was imperative to demand candidates and policies that articulated a progressive Black political agenda (Charles 2020). Other Black voters made it clear that their electoral choices were motivated by a singular goal arising from fear and practicality—defeating Trump and Republicans to prevent additional harm from afflicting the Black community, even if it meant constraining their preferences and spurning racially progressive policies and candidates in the process (Fawcett 2020).

This pragmatic behavior centered on electability to defeat Trump is borne out through polling ahead of and after the primary contests. On super Tuesday, 62 percent of Black voters living in southern states voted for Joe Biden, while 33 percent of Black voters living outside of the south selected Biden as the Democratic Presidential nominee (Stahl 2020). Among Black voters who expressed an intention to vote for Joe Biden, a June 2020 *Washington Post-Ipsos* poll found that 50 percent of registered Black Biden supporters said their vote was strategic, and primarily informed by their opposition to Donald Trump. Forty-nine percent of Black Biden voters said their support of Biden was sincere, and unrelated to Donald Trump's status as the Republican nominee (Clement, Balz, and Guskin 2020).

The 2020 Democratic primaries offer a strong example of Black voters appraising risk and acting pragmatically by moderating their substantive preferences on race to select a candidate who gave them the best chance at putting a Democrat in the White House. Instead of choosing a racially progressive candidate like Elizabeth

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54968498>

Warren³ who offered substantive representation through her embrace of racial appeals and willingness to advance racial policies including reparations (Thompson 2019), Black voters fought for the racial group by being defensive and selecting the moderate, Joe Biden, who many viewed as having the best chance of defeating Donald Trump and putting a halt to his inimical administration towards Black Americans. Nonetheless, this exercise of pragmatism, or Black voters appraising political constraints, considering practicality, and adjusting their political attitudes in response to these concerns predates this election. Due to their marginalized position in American society, I argue that Black Americans are often forced to rely on pragmatic decision-making strategies when deciding which policies, candidates, and tactical approaches to favor when pursuing racial equality in the United States.

Throughout American history, Black Americans have been forced to grapple with and navigate a country that espouses democratic ideals in theory, while relying on undemocratic means to constrain the social mobility of Black people (Glaude 2007; Baldwin 1963). This legacy of anti-Blackness and white supremacy greatly influences how Black Americans pursue their social justice and political efforts (Glaude 2007).

Since incorporating into the Democratic Party following the civil rights movement of the mid twentieth century, both Black voters and elected leaders have become more moderate on racial issues (White and Laird 2020; Tate 2010). For some Black politicians, this racial moderation is the strategic outcome of employing

³ Warren was not the only candidate to back reparations. Cory Booker introduced S.1083, which is the first reparations bill to be introduced in the Senate after reconstruction. However, Booker ended his campaign before the Iowa caucus.

deracialized campaign strategies whereby legislators deemphasize racial issues to neutralize racial animus from non-Black voters, win elections, and advance race neutral policies that appeal to a wider segment of the electorate (Hamilton 1977).

At the voter level, Tate (2010) contends that Black Americans have become more moderate because they are following the tone of an increasingly deracialized field of Black political leaders. To my knowledge however, outside of Harris' (2009) preliminary inquiry into pragmatism following Barack Obama's 2008 presidential win, scholars have yet to fully consider if like elites, whether Black voters actively employ pragmatic decision-making strategies that cause them to moderate their political opinions related to race. Are some Black voters hesitant to express racially liberal opinions and support a race conscious approach to politics because they believe the group is constrained by racism? Does this constraint lead some Black voters to prefer race-neutral policies and deracialized candidates who they view as less divisive and better positioned to secure incremental benefits for the racial group?

In this dissertation, I offer a theory of racial pragmatism to explain how the broader social context influences the political behavior of Black Americans. I define racial pragmatism⁴ as a Black belief system where through double consciousness and their use of the pragmatic method, adherents believe that as a group, Black Americans are constrained in their ability to articulate and enact a racialized political agenda that disparately benefits members of their racial group. Black Americans then rely on their perceptions of this group constraint to form a pragmatic ideology related to race. That is, they develop a worldview that helps them navigate a political environment that has

⁴ Pragmatism and Racial Pragmatism are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

historically been hostile to Black Americans' interests and rights. I expect that Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism—those who believe the group is constrained by race and favor political strategies that attempt to circumvent the polarizing effects of race—will express more racially moderate views when compared to those who are less pragmatic.

Racial pragmatism provides a belief system that some Black Americans rely on to achieve progress in a precarious racial environment. When striving for equality, pragmatic Black voters are hesitant to embrace racialized policies and candidates not because they oppose them outright, but rather they view race specific strategies as ineffective in a highly contentious racial environment. Behaving in a manner akin to pragmatic Black politicians such as David Dinkins and Barack Obama, I expect pragmatic Black voters to instead express moderate political opinions related to race, while embracing a political strategy centered on popularism and compromise to bring about change for their racial group (Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 2009).

Racial pragmatism is just one of several storied Black belief systems. Black Americans who do not follow racial pragmatism adhere to other historically Black political ideologies such as Black Nationalism or Black Marxism which embrace more radical and race-forward approaches to politics (Harris Laceywell 2004; Dawson 2001). Still, are there certain situations that can cause these same voters to moderate their racially progressive views and engage in racial pragmatism? As the 2020 Democratic primaries demonstrated, Black voters are willing to avoid candidates who agree with them on policy if they do not view them as electable in contests against racist Republicans (Sheffield 2019). This same adjustment and moderation when

responding to threat has also occurred at the policy level. Black voters compromise on their preference for majority-minority districts when faced with threat in the form of an increase in the number of Republicans elected to Congress (Tate 2003).

These findings fall in line with existing research on anxiety and decision making (Markus, MacKuen, and Newman 2011). When individuals encounter threatening and uncertain situations, people experience anxiety that affects their decision making and choices (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Lazarus 1991). To regulate this anxiety, people rely on the surveillance system that causes them to weaken their longstanding views and direct their focus towards contemporary considerations such as threat cues (Groenendyk 2016; Gadarian and Albertson 2014; Markus, MacKuen and Newman 2011; Matter 1990). These factors lead people to engage in risk averse behavior to avoid danger and protect themselves from threat (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005).

Given these findings, I expect that along with their pragmatic counterparts, idealistic Black Americans who are not pragmatic—those who initially hold more racially liberal views—will engage in pragmatism by moderating their substantive preferences on race after being appraised of threats to their group interests. I elaborate on what constitutes a threat to Black Americans' group interests at the policy and candidate levels in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

Pragmatism and Black Conservatism

Importantly, this argument excludes Black Americans who hold racially conservative attitudes and those who are principled in their opposition towards progressive social policies. Black conservatives and specifically Black conservatives

with low levels of group consciousness have been characterized as individuals who embrace free-market capitalism and Republican politicians (Philpot 2017; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). These partisans reject progressive racial policies because they do not believe that Black Americans have faced distinct racial oppression in the United States (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

This classification on race however only applies to a fraction of Black conservatives. Although white conservatives consistently rebuff racial policies on ideological grounds (Feldman and Huddy 2005), many Black conservatives and some Black Republicans are race conscious and perceive considerable levels of anti-Black racism throughout American society (Philpot 2017; Fields 2016). We see this in survey results from the 2020 American National Election Studies. Eighty percent of Black conservatives and conservative leaners said that Black Americans face either “a great deal,” or “a lot” of discrimination. Only 7 percent of Black conservatives said that Black people face “a little” discrimination, while less than 1 percent said that Black people face no discrimination at all. In terms of racial policy, 67 percent of Black conservatives offered liberal positions on the aid to Blacks scale, indicating that they believe it’s the government’s responsibility to subsidize Black Americans. Only 20 percent expressed conservative positions to oppose this racial policy.

Therefore, race-conscious Black Americans or those who believe that Black people have and continue to face discrimination in the United States can engage in racial pragmatism. Even among race-conscious Black conservatives, these individuals may embrace deracialized and accommodationist tactics on strategic grounds because they believe these efforts are prudent for achieving racial progress. Conversely,

racially conservative Black Americans, and particularly Black Republicans who deny a legacy of discrimination cannot engage in the pragmatism articulated throughout this dissertation. Due to their denial of ongoing discrimination and principled opposition towards racially liberal policies and candidates, racially conservative Black Americans simply have no room to weaken their nonexistent liberal attitudes on race and move towards the political center.

Contributions and Chapter Outline

This research is crucial in helping us understand how the electoral context influences the political choices of Black voters. Through my theory of racial pragmatism, I offer insight into how Black Americans use double-consciousness to determine which strategies they believe the group should embrace when pursuing racial equality. This dissertation will also help race, ethnicity, and politics scholars understand when Black voters will be more or less likely to favor racially progressive candidates in Democratic primaries, while also identifying the considerations that some Black partisans weigh when evaluating racial legislation.

Through this dissertation, I aspire to provide additional nuance to the study of Black politics. Scholarship on Black political behavior far too often paints Black voters as a monolith in American politics. This practice obscures important differences in opinion among disparate subgroups of Black voters (Harris-Lacewell 2003). Few studies have empirically interrogated heterogeneity among Black Americans and the complexity of Black political thought (Philpot 2017; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). This research builds upon the impressive work of the

scholars above—among others—to probe how different subgroups of Black partisans vary in their political attitudes and behavior.

In this chapter I will begin with a review of existing scholarship on Black public opinion and political behavior. Then, I will introduce my theory of racial pragmatism to explain how some Black Americans rely on the pragmatic method to make strategic political choices. Then, I will contrast racial pragmatism with existing Black ideological constructs such as disillusioned liberalism and Black conservatism to evaluate how pragmatism it fits in relation to other historically Black belief systems (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). Finally, I will provide instances of both Black voters and elites engaging in racial pragmatism in politics before concluding with a brief discussion on how Black Americans employ pragmatic strategies in their everyday lives to improve their status in American society.

Racial Group Interests and Black Political Behavior

Irrespective of socioeconomic class or geographic location, African Americans share a unique political identity developed from a communal history of social exclusion and economic subordination (Dawson 1994). Due to past and ongoing discrimination, estimations of racial group interests combined with a sense of common fate shape the voting behavior and policy attitudes of Black partisans. According to Dawson's (1994) Black utility heuristic, "As long as African Americans' life chances are powerfully shaped by race, it is efficient for individual African Americans to use their perceptions of the interests of African Americans as a group as a proxy for their own interests" (Dawson 1994, pg. 61). When making political decisions, scholars expect that Black voters will support candidates and

policies that are seen as advancing the interests of Black people as a group (Dawson 2001; Walton 1985).

Black Voters and The Democratic Party

The party that has most closely emerged as an advocate for Black causes has been the Democratic Party. Since the passage of monumental civil rights legislation in the 1960s, Black voters' support for the Democratic Party and their candidates has been strong and enduring (White and Laird 2020; Dawson 1994). This partisan homogeneity is reinforced through two primary mechanisms. First, Black voters are electorally captured within the Democratic Party (Frymer 2010). Democrats have historically been hesitant to appeal to Black voters due to electoral concerns and primarily, their fear of losing support from racially moderate and conservative whites who comprise the bulk of the national electorate (Frymer 2010). Despite having their group interests largely ignored by Democrats, Black voters remain loyal to the party because Republicans actively oppose policies and issues that Black voters support such as affirmative action (Frymer 2010).

Without the ability to credibly defect from the Democratic Party, Black voters are often forced to either concede on their issue preferences to help the party maintain electoral coalitions or withhold their votes altogether in efforts to pressure party leadership. Ultimately, electoral capture inhibits Black Americans from reaping the benefits of two-party competition (Frymer 2010). Black Americans' political power as a group is constrained as the two parties face little incentive to truly compete for Black votes.

Black Democratic partisanship is also bolstered through norms and social sanctions that regulate the behavior of group members (White and Laird 2020; White, Laird, and Allen 2014). Dating back to Reconstruction, Black Americans have used informal practices to sanction group members who are seen as associating with factions that are antagonistic to Black people as a group (Barkley Brown 1994). During Reconstruction, Black people who were perceived as supporting Confederate forces were expelled from Black churches, social societies, and denied lodging with other Black families (Barkley Brown 1994). These sanctions have been passed down over generations and continue to evolve to maintain their efficacy. Today, popular Black Republicans such as Ben Carson and Clarence Thomas have been labeled as “Uncle Tom’s” or “sellouts” for violating the group norm of Democratic partisanship (White, Laird, and Allen 2014).

Norms that preclude Republican partisanship are so strong that Black Americans report stronger Democratic partisanship when in the presence of other co-racial group members (White and Laird 2020). These findings indicate that Black Americans associate themselves with the Democratic Party not only for political gain, but also for the social capital that is imbued to this partisan label (White and Laird 2020). Affiliating with the Democratic Party allows Black Americans to signal their commitment to their racial group, and alignment with pro-Black social norms (White and Laird 2020).

Black voters’ loyalty to the Democratic Party is exemplified through presidential exit polls. Since 2000, Black voters have favored the Democratic presidential candidate over their Republican opponent by an average of 82 percentage

points (Roper Center 2022). Despite the voting homogeneity evidenced in this trend, exit polls mask important differences in opinion among Black voters.

Heterogeneity Among Black Americans

Competing visions of freedom and dispute over the necessary and appropriate strategies for achieving racial equality has caused discord within the Black community (Dawson 2001; Walters and Smith 1999). Throughout history, debates center on how Black Americans should strategically pursue liberation in a country where anti-Black racism is pervasive. Martin Luther King Jr repeatedly discusses this tension when critiquing protest and rhetorical strategies during the civil rights movement.

In *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, King (1967) articulated his views on nonviolence, while analyzing the rhetoric proposed by Black nationalist members of the movement. Black nationalists embraced “Black Power” as a slogan to counter negative stigma and foster a positive sense of group identity (Ture and Hamilton 1992). Despite agreeing with Black Power in principle, King feared that the slogan would harm the movement’s efficacy and hinder Black progress. Although he wanted group members to embrace a positive meaning of Blackness, he worried that the emotions associated with the phrase would counteract the movement’s goals. To King (1967), Black Power relied on separatism that was impossible because Blacks needed whites—who had political power—to act as allies in the fight for racial justice. King also feared that racist whites would react violently to the phrase, thus putting the lives of Black Americans in danger throughout the country (King 1967). King’s (1967) fears of white backlash were well founded. After

Black Americans made legislative and judicial gains on civil rights, southern Whites countermobilized by pressuring and contacting politicians to express their aversion to the reshaping of America's racial status quo (Lee 2002).

Throughout the book, King (1967) advocated for his ideology of non-violence and interracial coalition building in both moral and pragmatic terms. Like Black nationalists, King was disillusioned with the rate of social progress and angered over the violence exerted upon civil rights demonstrators (King 1967). While agreeing with Black nationalists on the issues confronting Black America, King still advocated for non-violence in pragmatic terms and offered guidance for racial group members engaged in the lengthy struggle for civil rights.

“One of the main questions that the Negro must confront in his pursuit of freedom is that of effectiveness. What is the most effective way to achieve the desired goal? If a method is not effective, no matter how much steam it releases, it is an expression of weakness, not of strength.” (King 1967, pg. 58).

More recently, pragmatism is observed in President Barack Obama's response to activists in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. During a town hall event, Obama implored young activists to be pragmatic, and work within the system to incrementally inspire change. To Obama, pragmatism is a duty for change-seekers, rather than an idealistic choice. Obama charged:

“You then have a responsibility to prepare an agenda that is achievable, that can institutionalize the changes you seek, and to engage the other side, and occasionally to take half a loaf that will advance the gains that you seek, understanding that there's more work to do, but this is what is achievable at this moment” (Shear and Stack 2016).

Disagreements over strategy between King and Black nationalists, and Obama and BLM activists highlight an important contrast between different Black political

ideologies. Although these individuals and groups expressed a commitment to improving the social and economic position of Black people, they differed over the steps required to reach liberation, and their outlook of what freedom looks like for Black people in America. This dispute serves as the main point of contention between members of different Black ideological camps.

Defining Ideology

Scholars have offered a range of definitions to interpret the ideological constructs of voters and measure how closely their attitudes cohere across various sociopolitical issues. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) define ideology as a closely linked but far-ranging structure of attitudes on political and social matters such as the role of government, and opinions towards religion and education. Converse (1964) synonymously refers to ideologies as belief systems that are “a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional dependence” (p. 3). Recently, scholars have expanded upon these definitions to operationalize ideology as a multidimensional construct that is characterized by a series of cross pressures or contradictory beliefs (Klar 2014; Treier and Hillygus 2009; Conover and Feldman 2004). Many voters hold competing viewpoints on social and economic issues (Kinder and Kalmoe 2017). For example, some Black conservatives oppose abortion on moral and religious grounds (Philpot 2017). While we would expect their conservatism to align across social issues, as religious conservatism increases, Black Americans become more progressive in their backing of social welfare programs (Philpot 2017). In practice, the liberal-

conservative typology fails to explain the beliefs of voters who hold these contrasting ideological positions (Treier and Hillygus 2009).

In seminal work on Black politics, Harris-Lacewell (2004) and Dawson (2001) define ideology in relation to Black Americans. Black political ideologies are multidimensional belief systems that help Black Americans communicate about and solve problems facing the Black community (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). According to Harris-Lacewell (2004), Black ideologies are best understood at the mass-public level as public discourse between ordinary voters. These ideologies serve 6 functions: interpreting truth, reducing complexity, linking individual experiences to group narratives, identifying friends and foes, defining what is desirable, and providing a range of possible strategies for achieving desired outcomes (Harris Lacewell 2004, p.17).

Dawson (2001) approaches Black ideologies from a similar perspective. He defines ideology as “a world view readily found in the population, including sets of ideas and values that cohere, that are used publicly to justify political stances, and that shape and are shaped by society” (p. 4). Black political ideologies assist group members in answering difficult questions related to American society and politics. They help Black people decide whether structural or individualistic factors primarily explain Black/white racial disparities, determine the extent to which they believe group members should seek government intervention or rely on individualism for uplift, and identify potential allies to share political coalitions with, among others (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

I offer a view of Black political ideologies that is drawn from both Harris-Lacewell (2004) and Dawson's (2001) theoretical constructs. For the sake of this research, I conceptualize Black political ideologies as prevalent and storied belief systems that emerge from Black Americans' history of marginalization in the United States. Taking shape at both the voter and elite levels, these ideologies underpin Black people's beliefs about American society and direct political and social behavior. Operationally, Black political ideologies enable group members to determine which strategies and political options—such as political tactics, policies, or candidates—to support when pursuing upward social and economic mobility in the United States. In the next section, I elaborate on the defining features that distinguish Black political ideologies from the eminent liberal-conservative typology.

Black Political Ideologies

Due to their distinct position in America's racial hierarchy, and the political socialization that emerges from this marginalized position, liberal-conservative ideological classifications inadequately capture the belief systems and political attitudes of Black Americans (Jefferson 2023; Philpot 2017; Harris-Lacewell 2004). Differing from the mainstream liberal-conservative typology, Dawson (2001) identifies six distinct Black political ideologies that challenge legitimized myths of American history and offer competing visions of freedom in the United States (Dawson 2001). All six ideologies share several characteristics that distinguish them from white ideologies. They specifically include Blackness as informing their belief system, embrace egalitarian principles as opposed to individualism, and are more likely to have a spiritual component (Dawson 2001).

Most important to this research, Black ideologies are informed by practical activity as opposed to abstract normative thinking (Dawson 2001). In other words, Black voters do not form their political preferences in a vacuum. They consider the outcomes they desire in American politics along with whether the proposed strategy or policy is feasible given constraints placed on the racial group. This reliance on practical activity indicates that at varying levels, Black voters form opinions pragmatically as opposed to idealistically when deciding which steps the group should take in pursuit of liberation.

Pragmatic thought is evident in King's (1967) response to Black nationalists. King, whose racial progressivism is well established in writings and speeches that expound on his call for the flattening of global racial hierarchies, and allusion to reparations for Black Americans as redress for slavery and discrimination (Dyson and Jagerman 2000), still expressed a deep sense of pragmatism when juxtaposing group uplift strategies. When fighting for equality, King's strand of political pragmatism is reflected in his support of non-violence on strategic grounds. Particularly, his belief that through non-violence and the active pressuring of government, Black Americans could maintain their moral bargaining position, attract solidarity from whites sympathetic to the cause, and mitigate the white backlash and retrenchment that would impede their ability to make substantive progress (King 1967)

Scholars have considered how pragmatism manifests in the behavior of Black elected leaders (Wright-Rigeur 2014; Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 2009; Walters and Smith 1999; Smith 1981). To date however, research has not considered whether Black voters themselves have developed a pragmatic ideology to strategically

navigate politics and the attitudes that sustain this belief system. In the next section, I offer a theory of racial pragmatism to explain how Black voters have created a pragmatic ideology that informs their political choices related to race.

Theory of Racial Pragmatism

We must consider how a history of American opposition to Black Americans' desired social changes combined with external concerns such as fear of representation from politicians who are averse to Black progress, influence the political choices of Black voters. As referenced earlier, Black voters are a captured group in American politics—faced between a Democratic Party that is timid in acting on their interests, and a Republican Party that actively opposes policies favored by Black partisans (Frymer 2010). Due to their minority status, Black voters lack the demographic size and access to power required to shape politics in their preferred direction, often causing them to compromise on their issue preferences to help Democrats win elections (Frymer 2010). This reality is most evident within the context of presidential elections. When discussing Black electoral strategies in these contests, Walters (1988) argues:

“The cost of social (permanent racial minority) status based upon an imperfect social contract for Blacks is that rarely has it been possible to participate in crucial decisions such as the selection of national leadership in a manner which reflects the “interests” of Blacks through what is called “sincere” or “straightforward” voting. Since even though Blacks constitute nearly 15% of the American population, they are largely reduced to “strategic voting” for candidates who may often not represent their interests...Indeed, the source of the profundity of such alienation may be understood by the fact that, because of their subordinate status, Blacks have often been part of a winning coalition in a presidential election, and even then, have not had their policy interests satisfied by subsequent presidential actions” (Walters 1988, page 4).

Walters' (1988) quote succinctly explains how Blacks Americans' subordinate group status limits their ability to make sincere political choices—absent of external constraint. The quote also raises additional questions when pondering Black political strategies against the backdrop of electoral capture. For a group whose interests are largely ignored in politics, how do Black Americans pursue group uplift strategies within a political system that continues to marginalize them? When electorally captured, how do Black voters stave off candidates who are hostile to their group interests? I argue that some Black voters rely on pragmatic decision-making strategies to answer these questions.

Pragmatic Behavior and the Pragmatic Method

To understand Black political behavior, I rely on philosophical and psychological research on pragmatic decision making. Within individuals, people have multiple ways to view themselves (Markus and Nurius 1986). These conceptions, and the subsequent behavior that follows from these interpretations varies in different contexts and circumstances (Higgins and Bargh 1987; Markus and Nurius 1986). Among these numerous possible selves, people can be pragmatic meaning that they are action oriented and guided by practical concerns. In other situations, people can be idealistic by prioritizing their principles and values above these practical considerations (Kivetz and Tyler 2007).

People who are pragmatic are less concerned with abstract ideas and emotional concerns (James 1907). Instead, pragmatists narrowly focus their attention on outcomes, constraints, and the actions or tools needed to achieve beneficial results (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). Some individuals are simply predisposed to being pragmatic

due to personality or environmental characteristics while contextual factors can induce pragmatism even among people who tend to be idealistic (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). For all individuals however, pragmatic behavior results from people using a deliberative process called the pragmatic method (Peirce 1878).

The pragmatic method is a tool that people rely on to balance competing values and resolve problematic situations (Dewey 1929; James 1907). It helps people form clear expectations about the future and develop strategies that enable them to secure desirable outcomes while simultaneously avoiding adverse consequences (Glaude 2008; James 1907). When employing the pragmatic method, people use knowledge gained from prior experiences to form expectations about the future by anticipating the positive and negative consequences that could result from their actions (James 1907). These forecasts ground future behavior and pragmatism helps people resolve internal conflicts and make decisions (Rogers and Bazerman 2008; James 1907).

From these accounts, experience is the bedrock of pragmatism (Dewey 1929; James 1907; Peirce 1878). Experiences provide people with the necessary information to forecast the future by allowing them to envision the fallout that could result from making certain decisions. According to pragmatic theorists, experiences are wide ranging and not restricted to personal actions or direct events (Dewey 1929). People can acquire these critical experiences in several ways such as learning by observation, study, or passed down knowledge (Dewey 1929). Ultimately, the pragmatic method dictates that people use the knowledge they gain from interacting with society to act as intelligently as possible in efforts to reduce uncertainty

surrounding the future and avoid undesirable outcomes (Dewey 1929). I argue that some Black voters rely on the pragmatic method to form their political outlooks related to race, and strategically navigate politics.

Racial Pragmatism

When applying the pragmatic method to Black Americans, I contend that through experience⁵, pragmatic Black ideologues are aware of the country's historic and continued resistance to Blacks Americans' desired social changes. Instead of evaluating racialized candidates and policies under a normative lens, they consider whether these options are truly attainable considering this opposition. Through their awareness of anti-Black racism and use of the pragmatic method, I argue that pragmatic Black voters believe that as a group, Black Americans are constrained in their ability to vocalize and successfully secure a racialized political agenda that disparately benefits Black people. These individuals have made the calculation that Black Americans are thwarted politically by racial prejudice and perceptions of this group constraint serve as the foundation for pragmatic political behavior.

Pragmatic Black voters express constrained political choices. Their understanding of America's racial status quo and the accompanying constraints that follow compel them to moderate their political choices related to race. I expect that pragmatic Black voters—those who believe the group is constrained by race and are less receptive towards race-forward political strategies—will express more racially moderate political opinions when compared to idealistic⁶ group members who are less

⁵ Again, I am referring to philosophical accounts of experience (Dewey 1929), which are not limited to personal events.

⁶ I refer to people low in racial pragmatism as racial idealists because idealism is the inverse of pragmatism. I want to be clear however that by calling them idealistic, this does not mean that people

pragmatic. When striving for equality, I anticipate that pragmatic Black voters will hesitate to support racialized policies such as reparations not because they oppose them outright, but rather they view these race specific strategies as ineffective due to the backlash they engender from white Americans.

To bring about change, pragmatic Black Americans embrace a moderate political strategy that values compromise and deviates from a core tenet of Black ideologies. While Dawson (2001) argues that Black ideologies share in communalism, pragmatism reflects a more individualistic approach (Harris 2009). When supporting tactics that deemphasize race in favor of political expediency, pragmatism inherently dictates that Black Americans would be better off by spending less time articulating group-oriented messages. Therefore, by rebuffing approaches that center race and the group's struggles in politics, pragmatists tacitly prioritize individualism over communalism. Finally, adopting similar values as pragmatic Black elites, pragmatic Black voters seek change through incremental reform and working within the system as opposed to more revolutionary or transformative methods (Marable and Clark 2009). Through these strategies, pragmatic Black Americans seek gradual social change that accumulates over time to improve Black Americans' social and economic wellbeing.

low in pragmatism are naïve or uninformed about the role racism plays in limiting Black Americans' political possibilities. Idealistic Black Americans are better understood as ideologues who follow a traditional style of Black politics by engaging in system challenging behaviors that push for transformative change to improve the lives of Black people in the United States.

Black Leaders, Double Consciousness, and the Origins of Racial Pragmatism

Black Americans' racial pragmatism emerges from two primary sources of philosophical experience⁷. First, some Black Americans derive their pragmatism and offer moderate racial policy opinions because of a top-down process spearheaded by centrist Black politicians (Tate 2010). Recent deracialized Black political leaders such as Barack Obama have and continue to act as powerful opinion leaders for the Black community (Tate 2010). When these politicians deliberately avoid race and rebuke criticism⁸ for employing deracialized strategies, they send a powerful signal to Black voters that centering race is either unimportant or an infeasible political strategy. Exposure to messages from these politicians can inform Black Americans of racial constraints in American politics, thus influencing their level of racial pragmatism.

Second, Black Americans' racial pragmatism emerges from an awareness or sensation of "double consciousness" first theorized by DuBois (1897). Groups who experience oppression have knowledge of both the dominant worldview and their own perspective (Swigonski 1994). In the United States, the dominant worldview has been crafted by white-Americans. Through their demographic size and access to power, white-Americans have constructed an American ethos derived from Anglo-protestant values (Huntington 1981).

⁷ These two forms are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing.

⁸ An example of this is found in an interview President Obama conducted with *Black Enterprise Magazine*. When pressed with criticism that he had not done enough for the Black community in 2012, Obama distanced himself from Black voters, charging, "I'm not the president of Black America. I'm the president of the United States of America" (Tau 2012).

When exercising double-consciousness, Black people view themselves from the perspective of a majority-white American society. This unique perspective has led many Black Americans to feel limited in their ability to talk about race or challenge their position in society. In a study on metastereotypes, Sigelman and Tuch (1997) find that a large majority of Black people expect most whites to dismiss their claims of racism as frivolous and fabricated. Seventy-four percent of Black Americans thought that “most” whites hold the perception that Black people are “always whining about racism” (Siegelman and Tuch 1997). I expect that these expressions of double consciousness are critical to understanding how Black people go about their pursuit of racial equality in the United States.

Double consciousness serves an important function for members of minority groups. To DuBois (1903), the development of multiple consciousnesses is vital to the survival and advancement of African Americans living in a nation where anti-Black prejudice is pervasive and dangerous. This dual awareness enables Black Americans to strive and develop strategies for achieving racial progress while simultaneously maintaining an acute awareness of the racial constraints superimposed on them by American society. In a sense, the information gleaned through double consciousness serves as an indicator of what is politically achievable for Black Americans in light of enduring anti-Black racism.

Pragmatism as a Buffer

Politically, racial pragmatism serves the buffering function of Black identities. Scholars have considered the psychological processes that Black Americans carry out as stigmatized minorities when engaging with individuals within and outside of their

racial group (Clark, Swim, and Cross 1996). This research points to five behaviors that some Black Americans perform to compensate for the discrimination they experience within the United States and develop strategies for overcoming the obstacles created by prejudice (Cross, Smith, and Payne 2002). Among the identified five functions⁹, of Black identity, “buffering” most closely resembles the process articulated in the theory of racial pragmatism.

The buffering function of Black identity provides group members with a way to psychologically protect themselves against racism and develop tactics for countering negative stigma (Cross and Strauss 1998). Buffering also helps Black people filter out what is and what is not racist in a certain situation so they can take advantage of opportunities that may be unscathed by bigotry (Cross and Strauss 1998). Performing the buffering function requires 5 conditions: 1) An awareness of the racist potential of a situation. 2) An understanding that they may be the object of stigma, and this judgment is independent of how they evaluate their self-worth. 3) A response repertoire, grounded in experience and practice that they can quickly rely on to meet the needs of the stigma situation. 4) A proclivity towards system as opposed to individual blame for the existence of stigma, and 5) A sense of spirituality to help Blacks maintain a balanced and hopeful orientation towards whites, even when faced with overt racism (Cross and Strauss 1998).

The steps involved in buffering mirror the process that pragmatic Black voters perform when forming their political opinions. Through double-consciousness and

⁹ While not listed here, the other four functions are: 1) Bonding, 2) Bridging, 3) Code-Switching, and 4) Individualism (Cross, Smith, and Payne 2002).

use of the pragmatic method, pragmatic Black ideologues believe that centralizing race as a political strategy will lead to opposition from whites, thus limiting the group's ability to successfully make change. While this racism from whites is illegitimate, pragmatic Black Americans have created a response repertoire centered around deracialization. Their hesitation in supporting racially progressive policies and candidates is not due to traditional conservatism, or the belief that Black Americans have not suffered unique racial oppression, but rather a calculated strategy for securing progress in a hostile political environment.

Although I theorize racial pragmatism as an ideological construct, or a belief system that Black people have formed to develop racial uplift stratagems in America, when viewing pragmatism under the lens of buffering, I expect that a person's level of racial pragmatism can vary based on societal conditions. In other words, certain environments may lead Black Americans to express varying levels of pragmatism over time.

We know that Black Americans' ideological positions are malleable in the sense that they update their beliefs and shift between different ideological camps over time (Dawson 2001). Due to pessimism and the inability to secure sufficient progress for the racial group when following a liberal ideology, disillusioned Black liberals pivoted to more revolutionary ideologies such as Black Marxism or feminism, while others embraced a more nationalistic perspective that stressed Black autonomy (Dawson 2001). This same disillusionment may also lead pragmatic Black Americans to shift towards more race-conscious Black ideologies. In other words, if pragmatic Black voters are unsatisfied with the rate of racial progress achieved from these

deracialized and incremental efforts over time, they may update their beliefs, offer less support for pragmatic political strategies, and adopt more race-conscious ideologies that directly challenge instead of accommodate the current racial hierarchy in the United States.

Blacks Americans' reliance on racial pragmatism may also fluctuate as a function of their views surrounding the acceptability of racial rhetoric within the political discourse at a given time. Politicians and news outlets are discussing issues concerning race and racism with greater frequency (Stout 2020). As racial discussion becomes more common among elites, Black voters may feel less constrained in their ability to talk about race, thus decreasing the need for and reliance on racial pragmatism.

On the other hand, much like the 2020 elections, contextual factors can increase pragmatic behavior and I suspect, strengthen pragmatic racial beliefs. When Black Americans are exposed to information that highlights outgroup threats and informs them of political constraints, Black Americans may behave more pragmatically by voting for electable and moderate Democrats instead of progressives in primary contests. While this is out of the scope of the current project, this same information may heighten pragmatic beliefs. Particularly among those who express low to moderate levels of pragmatism initially, these partisans may become stronger advocates of pragmatic political strategies after deliberating on racial constraints in politics.

Relation to Other Black Ideologies

Before offering examples of Black elites and voters acting pragmatically with respect to race, I would first like to analyze racial pragmatism in relation to existing Black political ideologies. As referenced earlier, I expect that Black Americans who adhere to racial pragmatism will offer less support for racial policies such as reparations and minority assistance when compared to those who are less pragmatic. While pragmatic Black voters may not favor racial policies at the same level as their less pragmatic counterparts, their centrism should not be mistaken for traditional conservative ideology on race.

Black racial conservatives reject racial policies that uniquely benefit Black Americans out of the belief that Black people have not suffered distinct oppression in the United States (Dawson 2001). They alternatively embrace an approach of self-help, while dismissing racial policies as detrimental for keeping Blacks reliant on government (Harris Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). This ideology diverges from racial pragmatism in several ways. The political opinions of Black racial conservatives are built upon a denial of discrimination. Comparatively racial pragmatists approach politics with the expectation that discrimination is inherent in politics, and further discrimination will occur if the group explicitly centers race in their political strategies. Furthermore, while Black racial conservatives rebuke racial policies outright, I expect pragmatic Black partisans to move towards the midpoint, meaning that they are generally neutral towards this type of legislation. In terms of representation, Black racial conservatives support Republicans due to their

conservative ideology¹⁰, while pragmatic Black Americans favor moderate Democrats.

Racial pragmatism is a contemporary Black political ideology that is situated on the ideological spectrum between Black conservatism, but closer in proximity to the belief systems of disillusioned-liberals (Dawson 2001), and liberal integrationists (Harris-Lacewell 2004). Disillusioned liberals view America as fundamentally racist and believe that Black people should be prepared for a lengthy and deliberate struggle in the fight for racial equality (Dawson 2001). Both liberal integrationists and disillusioned liberals place weight on growing the economic and political power of the Black community and prefer working through the federal government to find legislative solutions to racial disparities (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

Pragmatic Black voters approach politics with a similar perspective. They believe that racism is entrenched in society and view working within the system as the most beneficial way for Black people to achieve progress. Pragmatism departs from liberal integrationism and disillusioned liberalism in terms of racial policy support. While liberal integrationists and disillusioned liberals favor targeted racial policies to uplift Black people (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001), racial pragmatists are tepid in their backing of this type of legislation.

Pragmatism among Black Elites

Much of the existing work on political pragmatism has centered the strategies of Black elites (Wright-Rigeur 2014; Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 2009). In a

¹⁰ This effect is moderated by group consciousness. Black conservatives with high levels of group consciousness identify as Democrats, while conservatives who feel less connected to the group are more likely to identify with the Republican Party (Philpot 2017).

study on Black conservatives between 1936-1980, Wright-Rigeur (2014) identifies a form of political pragmatism practiced by Black Republicans. Black conservatives such as Edward Brooke joined the Republican Party not only because of their shared embrace of conservative economic principles, but also for pragmatic motivations to increase the political power of the racial group (Wright-Rigeur 2014).

Because the two-party system captures Black voters within the Democratic Party and few group members cast votes for Republican politicians, Republicans often have no incentive to appeal to or legislate on behalf of Black Americans (Frymer 2010). Due to their shared embrace of conservative principles and the pragmatic conviction that two-party competition is the most practical and effective way for Black Americans to garner political power, Black conservatives joined the Republican Party to increase electoral competition and force both parties to compete for Black votes (Wright-Rigeur 2014). By working within the Republican Party, Black conservatives sought to expand conservative ideology to include Black interests and prevent Democrats and Republicans alike from taking Black voters for granted (Wright-Rigeur 2014).

More commonly, Black Democrats have engaged in pragmatism through strategic deracialization (Hamilton 1977). How this pragmatism is expressed is somewhat gendered. When campaigning for office, some Black women adopt white beauty standards to be seen as more viable and electable among voters (Brown and Lemi 2021). Especially when seeking office in majority-white districts, some Black women deliberately choose not to wear natural hairstyles such as braids or afros that some Black and white voters alike deem as unprofessional and unkept (Brown and

Lemi 2021). By altering their self-presentation, Black women try to strategically deactivate racial stereotypes that impede their chances of electoral success.

In research more focused on Black male politicians, prominent Black leaders such as Barack Obama, David Dinkins, and Tom Bradley were able to win support from white voters by deemphasizing their racial identities (Marable and Clark 2009). On the campaign trail, these leaders walked a racial tightrope to protect their electoral coalitions. This strategy entailed signaling different things to Black and white constituents (Reft 2009). When appealing to Black voters, pragmatic Black elites acknowledged the importance of the civil rights movement to express their concern for the Black community (Reft 2009). When appealing to whites, these politicians undertook a strategy of racial distancing to detach themselves from their racial group and abate whites' concerns that they were too radical, or beholden to the concerns of the Black community (Dougan 2020; Reft 2009).

When in office, pragmatic Black leaders rejected radical changes to politics in favor of incremental reform, and interracial coalition building (Marable and Clark 2009). These leaders overwhelmingly pursued their political goals by using moderate methods of voting, litigation, and lobbying (Smith 1981). Black leaders were exceptionally pragmatic in their reticence towards protest and conviction that they must withhold their true policy attitudes to remain in office and protect their Black constituents (Smith 1981). Pragmatic Black politicians were reluctant to sanction militant protests due to their fear of triggering backlash and violence from whites (Smith 1981).

Pragmatism on policy was so severe among members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) that Smith (1976) regarded several members as “closet socialists.” These Black leaders supported broad redistributive policies to help the Black poor in private but avoided going public with their support because these policies were unlikely to pass due to the virulent opposition from white Americans across the electorate (Walters and Smith 1999; Smith 1981). In total, using their experience and knowledge of America’s racial status quo, Black politicians pragmatically deemphasized race, their identities, and militant political strategies to forestall backlash from whites and retain their seats in Congress.

Pragmatism Among Black Americans

While rarely mentioned explicitly in political science, pragmatic behavior has also been observed among Black voters. Harris (2012) alludes to racial pragmatism and strategic behavior when scrutinizing former President Barack Obama’s ascent in 2008. In spite of Obama’s embrace of respectability politics characterized by his chastising of culture within Black communities¹¹ and deracialized campaign style, Black voters overwhelmingly supported his candidacies in 2008 and 2012— with Obama winning 95 and 93 percent of the Black vote respectively.¹² To Black voters, Obama’s avoidance of race reflected a suboptimal but calculated strategy that he was forced to undertake to occupy the White House (Harris 2012). Conceptualized as a “wink and nod agreement,” Black voters believed that white Americans would not

¹¹ In a speech to a mostly Black audience shortly after winning the Democratic Party’s Presidential nomination, Obama criticized Blacks for a wide range of behaviors including being absent fathers and failing to be ambitious. He instructed the audience to not “just sit in the house watching SportsCenter,” and “Don’t get carried away with that eight-grade education. You’re supposed to graduate from eighth grade” (Obama 2008).

¹² Exit poll results provided by Roper Center

support a Black candidate who openly discussed race and prioritized Black issues at the national level. Black voters concluded that Obama toned down his racial rhetoric and even offered conservative messages to gain votes from non-Black voters (Harris 2012; Stephen-Dougan 2020).

Although Harris' (2012) "wink and nod agreement," focuses on how Black voters react to Black politicians specifically, it offers insight into their decision-making strategies. Their experiences in the United States led them to conclude that President Obama would be punished by white voters for appearing to show favoritism towards Black Americans. These voters were willing to sacrifice and moderate their policy preferences on race in exchange for descriptive representation and symbolic progress.

Pragmatism also appears in opinions towards public policy, like redistricting. Tate (2003) finds that Black Americans shift their preferences regarding redistricting when exposed to counterarguments that notify them of negative aftereffects. Forty-three percent of African Americans who initially favored majority-minority districts changed their position when informed that this choice would lead to more Republicans being elected to congress (Tate 2003). This research demonstrates that when Black Americans are notified of a political constraint, they are willing to pragmatically compromise on their initial preferences to decrease the likelihood of an unwelcome alternative. Many Black voters abandoned their desire for descriptive and substantive representation to prevent more Republicans from being elected to congress.

Beyond politics, we observe racial pragmatism or Black Americans considering racial constraints and adjusting their behavior to align with hegemonic norms to advance in society, in various forms. An extreme example is seen in group members' embrace of respectability politics. Reinforced by the moral teachings of the Black church, advocates of respectability politics believe that Black people can counter racism and negative stigma by simply behaving in a manner that elicits respect from middle-and upper class-whites (Higginbotham 1993).

Black Americans who engage in respectability politics police the behaviors of group members who they perceive as undesirable or deviant, while adopting norms that are accepted by the dominant group in society (Jefferson 2023; Higginbotham 1993). Pragmatism and respectability politics are closely related with different outcomes. Both integrate traditionally white American values into their belief systems with the hope of realizing upward social mobility in the United States. However, pragmatism and respectability politics depart in their emotional and moral underpinnings.

While the embrace of respectability politics is built upon morality, shame, anger, and negative stereotypes of Black people (Jefferson 2023), pragmatism represents a more hopeful and strategic approach. Through pragmatism, individuals believe they can overcome racial barriers in society and secure practical political outcomes by pursuing efforts through a deracialized strategy. This strategic approach departs from the authoritarianism exercised by adherents of respectability politics who back harmful and punitive policies to punish group members whose behavior they feel reflects poorly on the Black community (Jefferson 2023). Like other Black

ideologies however, pragmatists and those who follow respectability politics may update their attitudes and reliance on these belief systems as their experiences change in American society.

As an offshoot of respectability politics and like the deracialization practiced by Black politicians, Black Americans pragmatically engage in code-switching. Code-switching refers to a linguistic practice where people switch between languages or dialects based on their environment to manage impressions (Johnson, Mattan, Flores, Lauharatanahirun, and Falk 2021; McCluney, Robotham, Lee, Smith, and Durkee 2019). For Black Americans, code switching requires group members to adjust their speech, appearance, and behaviors to make non-Black people more comfortable and increase their chances of fair treatment in various sectors including but not limited to employment, education, service, and police interactions (McCluney et. al 2019).

With an awareness of the negative stereotypes imbued with Blackness, some Black Americans deemphasize their racial identities for social capital. Blacks who engage in code switching are seen as more professional by both Black and white Americans (McCluney, Durkee, Smith, Robotham and Lee 2021). Additionally, Black Americans who deemphasize their racial identities are more likely to be called back for interviews by prospective employers (Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, and Jun 2016).

Pragmatic behavior is an everyday survival mechanism for Black people in the United States. Some Black Americans deliberately minimize their racial identities and adopt white cultural norms to protect themselves from racism and improve their

chances of upward social mobility. Next, using original and adapted survey questions in Chapter 2, I introduce and validate a novel survey scale to measure the attitude construct of racial pragmatism.

Chapter 2: Measuring Racial Pragmatism

In *Chapter 1*, I outlined my theory of racial pragmatism. I argued that some Black Americans have embraced a racially pragmatic belief system that structures their political choices related to race. Due to their awareness of racial constraints in American society, pragmatic Black Americans believe that race-conscious political strategies are suboptimal in helping members of their racial group achieve equality. When striving for advancement in the United States, pragmatic Black Americans favor political approaches that deemphasize race and work within legislative systems to produce incremental reforms for their group. Because of these beliefs, I expect pragmatists to offer more moderate, but not conservative¹³ attitudes on racial policies that provide individualized benefits to Black Americans.

I designed 8 new survey measures to operationalize this racially pragmatic belief system. I find that racial pragmatism is a statistically reliable and consistent measure that powerfully predicts Black Americans' political attitudes. When controlling for demographic variance (e.g., gender, age, region, and income), general political predispositions, and linked fate, I find that pragmatists are less likely to favor reparations and support government aid to Black Americans when compared to individuals who score lower in racial pragmatism. I also find evidence that pragmatists are concerned about a racial backlash. As racial pragmatism increases,

¹³ By "moderate, but not conservative," when estimating the predicted racial policy attitudes of people who are high in racial pragmatism, after controlling for various other political predispositions, I expect that these partisans will offer views that place them near the midpoint meaning they neither favor nor oppose the legislation in question. When the midpoint is crossed, these conservative attitudes reflect opposition to racial policies.

Black Americans expect politicians to lose more votes from whites when these legislators use racial appeals to advocate for Black voters and their racialized interests. Despite this perceived backlash, pragmatists remain strategic in their desire to augment Black Americans' political power as a group. Pragmatists are more open towards establishing political coalitions with both whites, and other racial minorities to help Black Americans get ahead in politics. These findings highlight the complex attitudes and strategic behavior of pragmatic Black Americans.

Pragmatism After Reconstruction

Although Black Americans are united in their goal of realizing racial parity, group members offer conflicting definitions of equality, and different prescriptions for achieving these outcomes (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). We see this tension in public discourse between Black political leaders throughout history. At the turn of the twentieth century, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois offered opposing blueprints for improving the social and economic position of Black Americans. Both educators agreed that racism served as a violent barrier for Black people, but their strategies for overcoming racism were antithetical. Washington offered what appeared to be a conservative strategy for achieving racial progress. He argued that agitating whites through protest would fail to help Black people reach equality and instead, Black Americans should accept discrimination for the time being (Washington 1895). He implored group members to rely on themselves, gain economic independence from whites and through material prosperity, Black people could lift themselves up from their oppressed position (Washington 1895).

Although he initially praised Washington for his 1895 Atlanta Compromise speech, over time, DuBois grew to condemn Washington's political approach and accommodationist stances (Jagmohan 2021; DuBois 1903). Particularly, DuBois rebuked Washington's guidance for prioritizing wealth over rights, and for directing Black Americans to submit to racial oppression momentarily and comport themselves in a way that appeased racist whites (DuBois 1903). DuBois advocated for Black liberation through education and the acquisition of political and voting rights. He urged the educated "talented tenth" to serve as teachers and political representatives in the Black community (DuBois 1903). Through their knowledge and resources, these elites could elevate Black people in their communities.

When evaluating Washington's racial equality efforts and political rhetoric under the backdrop of The Great Nadir, it's possible that Washington has incorrectly been mislabeled as a conservative (Jagmohan 2021). Instead, Washington may have been one of the first pragmatic Black elites to use accommodation tactics and deception to advance equality (Jagmohan 2021; Harlan 1972; Meier 1988). When discussing political strategies and explicit racial appeals, Washington argued, "The condemnation of wrong should always have a very large and important place; the demands for rights withheld should have a large and important place; but a very large place in all of our discussion and in all of our efforts should be given to something that is constructive" (Washington 1904).

In speeches and personal writings, Washington intentionally misled whites to conceal his true beliefs and efforts behind the scenes to promote Black equality (Jagmohan 2021; Meier 1988). Borne out of his deep distrust of white Americans,

coupled with his fear of provoking reactionary racial violence from whites, Washington felt that Black people needed to be cautious and pragmatic to survive and vanquish white supremacy (Jagmohan 2021). In public statements, Washington dismissed the necessity of demanding political rights for African Americans (Washington 1895). Simultaneously however, Washington worked covertly in the courts to challenge disenfranchisement clauses through litigation. (Jagmohan 2021; Meier 1988). Washington was also strategic with his rhetoric as he only revealed his true racial attitudes privately. In correspondence with northern civil rights leaders, Washington unequivocally condemned segregation, lynching, disenfranchisement, and other forms of racial injustice (Jagmohan 2021; Washington 1911).

Nonetheless, in public settings, Washington advised Black Americans to be both practical and pragmatic to produce gradual change. He argued, “we need organizations, both national and local in character, in order that all the issues of race may be reached and emphasized.... what we can construct, what we can project, is what will bring us relief (Washington 1904). To produce long term change, Washington argued, “we have got to do our duty. In a great many cases you have got to wait patiently for results. If we keep on doing our duty, whether we see immediate results or not, the results will take care of themselves” (Washington 1904).

Washington was leery of embracing confrontive political strategies as Black Americans lived under the constant threat of Jim Crow violence in the post-reconstruction south (Jagmohan 2021). Instead of being confrontational, Washington suggested that Black Americans should create false impressions and deceive white Americans to get ahead (Jagmohan 2021). Since white Americans were steadfast in

their refusal to confer equal rights to African Americans, Washington believed that he and other Black leaders had to dupe whites into unintentionally supporting these efforts (Jagmohan 2021).

For example, in his Atlanta Compromise speech, Washington rhetorically advanced individualism to appeal to both Black and white Americans (Jagmohan 2021). He argued that if African Americans were granted a fair opportunity to work in the agricultural south, their labor could push America into a new era of economic progress (Washington 1895). Through this phrasing, Washington could advocate for Black people without explicitly activating racial threat among southern whites (Jagmohan 2021). Washington's cautiousness appears to be conservatism at face value, but his private writings and covert efforts behind the scenes suggest that he accommodated racist whites out of fear and pragmatism following reconstruction (Jagmohan 2021).

Revisiting and Measuring Black Political Ideologies

The case above is one of numerous examples of Black Americans yearning for progress but clashing over how to achieve it. These tactical disagreements in Black politics are best understood as conflicts between Black Americans who desire reform or revolution, and those that favor assimilation/accommodation or resistance strategies to achieve these goals. For example, Black Nationalists¹⁴ are situated along the revolution and resistance wings of Black politics. These individuals believe that America, and whites, are fundamentally too racist to relinquish their social and

¹⁴ Prominent Black Nationalists from the 20th century include Marcus Garvey, Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Malcolm X.

political power (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). Instead of seeking reform through legislation, Nationalists believe that Black Americans should achieve political autonomy and control politics and businesses within Black communities (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

Others, like liberal integrationists and radical egalitarians incorporate both reform and resistance approaches. Both ideologues look to government to enforce policies that protect their rights and outlaw identity-based discrimination (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001). Still, these partisans presume that the U.S. government will fail to fully address racial inequality unless organizations engage in direct action to challenge the status quo (Smith, Johnson, and Newby 2014). Therefore, working within the government is a helpful but insufficient tool in improving Black Americans' social position. These believers adopt insider-outsider political strategies that advance equality by working within traditional political channels such as voting or litigation, while simultaneously employing resistance strategies such as non-violent protest to achieve their desired reform goals (Smith, Johnson, and Newby 2014; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

Racial pragmatists fit squarely within the reform and accommodation/assimilation wing of Black politics. These individuals seek incremental reform by working through mainstream political channels. To achieve this outcome, they favor deracialized political tactics that accommodate racist and racially moderate whites who wield political power through their resources and demographic size. In the next section, I identify the main behaviors that typify

pragmatic Black elites before using this insight to construct the racial pragmatism scale.

Identifying Pragmatic Black Elites

Research that probes the campaigning and legislative strategies of pragmatic Black legislators points to 4 main behaviors. First, pragmatic Black politicians rely on double consciousness to inform their political strategies. These individuals considered how racism narrowed their political opportunities, ability to win elections, and chances of securing racially progressive political outcomes (Harris 2012; Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 1981). Second, because of these constraints, these leaders engaged in strategic deracialization to improve their chances of electoral and legislative victory. Because of racism in majority-white districts, pragmatic Black politicians strategically deemphasized their identities and racial issues to avert backlash from white Americans (Harris 2012; Wilson 1990; Hamilton 1977).

Third, pragmatic leaders relied on working within instead of reshaping existing legislative systems to produce reform. When in power, pragmatic Black politicians rebuked militant demonstrations and racialized policy proposals that had the potential to stimulate white backlash (Smith 1981). Especially among the post-racial class of Black politicians following the civil rights movement, pragmatic leaders like Barack Obama rejected proposals that offered radical change in favor of incremental reform efforts he viewed as more achievable (Marable and Clark 2009). Finally, pragmatic Black politicians embraced compromise as a practical necessity. We observe this through strategic deracialization. Based on the belief that race-specific policies such as affirmative action would repel whites, pragmatic politicians

compromised by embracing a race-neutral agenda that was less polarizing along racial lines (Wilson 1990; Smith 1981; Hamilton 1977). These 4 dimensions—double consciousness, deracialization, working within the system, and compromise—are the bedrocks of the racial pragmatism scale when measuring attitudes at both the voter and elite levels.

Measuring Racial Pragmatism

To test my theory of racial pragmatism, I fielded a survey through Qualtrics' online panel between April 3rd, and April 18th, 2023. I recruited 725 Black American adults with demographic matching on age and gender to U.S. Census statistics. Seventy-six percent of respondents identified as Democrats, or Democratic leaners. Thirteen percent expressed a preference for the Republican Party, while the remaining 12 percent of the sample identified as true independents with no partisan leanings. Perceptions of linked fate were strong across the sample—73 percent of respondents felt that what happens generally to Black people in this country will have an effect on their lives.

Before answering the pragmatism questions, respondents read an introduction modeled from the 1993-1994 National Black Politics Study¹⁵ (Dawson, Brown, and Jackson 1994). The purpose of this introduction is to guide responses and prime opinions that are central to Black belief systems. Primarily, I use this introduction to encourage respondents to start thinking about which tactical steps they feel that Black

¹⁵ Original introduction: "The next few questions deal with what blacks should do to improve their lot in America" (Dawson, Brown, and Jackson 1994).

Americans should prioritize, as a group, when working to achieve racial progress.

The text of the introduction is copied below.

“The next set of questions ask what Black Americans should do to improve their lot in America. For each of the following questions, we would like you to indicate how important you think these steps are for helping Black people get ahead in America.”

When responding to each question, respondents received a Likert (1932) scale with 5 response options. These options ranged from “extremely important,” which indicates strong support for the specific strategic approach, to “not at all important,” meaning that they believe the tactic is an undesirable strategy for achieving group uplift. To prevent question order effects from biasing responses to the pragmatism questions, I presented each of the 8-items separately on their own page, and in random order (Krosnick and Presser 2009).

Double Consciousness

I rely on two original survey questions to operationalize double consciousness. When holding a dual consciousness, Black Americans view themselves and their group from their own perspective, but also from the viewpoint of other groups in American society (DuBois 1903). DuBois argues: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (DuBois 1903, pg 9).

1. Consider

To measure the extent to which group members feel they should consider these external perspectives, I asked: “How important is it that Black people consider what other groups think about them when trying to get ahead in America.”

Table 2.1. Summary of “Consider” Measure

How important is it that Black people consider what other groups think about them when trying to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	143	19.72	19.72
2 Very important	146	20.14	39.86
3. Moderately important	165	22.76	62.62
4. Not very important	123	16.97	79.59
5. Not at all important	148	20.41	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Forty percent of Black Americans said that it’s either “extremely,” or “very” important for Black Americans to consider these external perspectives when striving for group uplift. Comparatively, 37 percent believe that considering these perspectives are “not very,” or “not at all important,” for advancing in America.

2. *Navigate*

When put in practice, double consciousness reminds Black Americans of the racial barriers they face when simply existing in America (DuBois 1903). This focus on survival requires Black Americans to adjust their behavior to endure and succeed in different racial contexts. I measure this process by asking: “How important is it that Black people learn to navigate two worlds: one white and one Black to get ahead in America?”

Table 2.2. Summary of “Navigate” Measure

How important is it that Black people learn to navigate two worlds, one white, a and one Black to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	221	30.52	30.52
2. Very important	205	28.31	58.84
3. Moderately important	168	23.20	82.04
4. Not very important	52	7.18	89.23
5. Not at all important	78	10.77	100.00
Total	724	100.00	

Fifty-nine percent of Black Americans felt that it's either “extremely,” or “very” important for Black Americans to learn how to operate in different racial contexts as a survival strategy. Comparatively, just 18 percent say learning how to navigate different racial environments is “not very,” or “not at all” important in helping Black Americans progress in America.

Deracialization

Arguably, the most defining attributes of pragmatic Black elites, and I suspect pragmatic Black voters, is their reticence towards making appeals to race and their unwillingness to promote racial policies in favor of deracialized and liberal class-based legislation (Tate 2010; Wilson 1990). This rhetorical avoidance of race has been characterized as strategic and induced by external pressure (Hamilton 1977). Using the pragmatic method, these politicians concluded that racial appeals that advocated for Black Americans would be met with hostility from many white voters (Hamilton 1977). On the campaign trail, pragmatists avoided explicit racial appeals to diminish perceptions of racial threat among whites (McCormick and Jones 1993).

3. *Talk Race*

This question considers whether Black voters themselves feel it is important to avoid racial issues. The question asks: “How important is it that Black Americans talk less about race to be heard by other groups.” Through this design, this measure probes whether respondents think that Black Americans should deemphasize race to avoid derision.

Table 2.3. Summary of “Talk Race” Measure

How important is it that Black people talk less about race to be heard by other groups?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	139	19.20	19.20
2. Very important	134	18.51	37.71
3. Moderately important	183	25.28	62.98
4. Not very important	129	17.82	80.80
5. Not at all important	139	19.20	100.00
Total	724	100.00	

Black Americans are conflicted in their views on whether the group should explicitly talk about race or not. Thirty-eight percent say avoiding race is either “extremely,” or “very” important, while 37 percent say this strategy is unimportant. The modal response is the midpoint—25 percent of Black Americans say that it’s moderately important for the group to relegate racial rhetoric.

4. *Individual*

By adopting deracialized campaign strategies and eschewing racial appeals, pragmatic Black politicians have determined that they can advance certain social issues and their standing in American politics by muting their racial/ethnic identities in favor of a universal and collective American identity. By doing this, pragmatists adopt an approach to politics that is less racially communal, where they abstain from

calling upon government to deliver race conscious solutions that ameliorate centuries of government sanctioned discrimination (Harris 2009).

I operationalize this shift away from race by modifying a question from Frederick Harris' 2008 CAAPS/ABC News Black Politics Survey¹⁶. I asked: "How important is it that Black people stop thinking of themselves as a group and think more of themselves as individuals to get ahead in America?" Respondents who were more supportive of individualism are coded as more pragmatic.

Table 2.4. Summary of "Individual" Measure

How important is it that Black people stop thinking of themselves as a group and think more of themselves as individuals to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	182	25.14	25.14
2. Very important	162	22.38	47.51
3. Moderately important	171	23.62	71.13
4. Not very important	108	14.92	86.05
5. Not at all important	101	13.95	100.00
Total	724	100.00	

The results from this measure confirm evidence of a growing trend away from the group and towards individualism in Black politics (Tate 2010; Harris 2009).

Forty-eight percent say it's important for Black Americans to think more of themselves as individuals and less of a group. Twenty-nine percent say individualism is unimportant, signifying a collectivistic worldview.

¹⁶ Original question reads: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Black Americans should stop thinking of themselves as a group and think more of themselves as individuals."

Working Within the System

Pragmatic Black elites are less supportive of protest, and particularly militant protest (Smith 1981). Recalling from Chapter 1, President Obama reprimanded Black Lives Matter activists for continued demonstrations and urged them to work with government to produce a practical and realistic agenda on police reform (Shear and Stack 2016). I operationalize this insider strategy by separating a question from the 1984 Black Politics Study (Jackson 1984) into two parts.

To measure support for protest vs working within the system, the original measure asked: “How much do you agree with the following statement: Black people would improve their position if they spent less time protesting and more time working within the system” (Jackson 1984). When considering this question among group members who adopt insider-outsider political strategies, working within the system and protesting is not a binary choice. These group members believe protest and working within the system should be used in tandem to achieve their desired political outcomes (Smith, Johnson, and Newby 2014). Still, literature on pragmatic elites indicates that pragmatists exclusively favor insider strategies (Marable and Clark 2009; Reft 2009). Therefore, I divide Jackson’s (1984) question into two parts with slight formatting changes to match the other pragmatism questions.

5. System

To measure support for working within the system, I asked: “How important is it that Black people spend more time working within the system to get ahead?” Respondents who placed more emphasis on working within the system were coded as more pragmatic.

Table 2.5. Summary of “System” Measure

How important is it that Black people spend more time working within the system to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	217	29.93	29.93
2. Very important	257	35.45	65.38
3. Moderately important	171	23.59	88.97
4. Not very important	47	6.48	95.45
5. Not at all important	33	4.55	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Black Americans strongly view working within the system as a viable strategy for helping the group advance in America. Sixty-five percent feel that Black Americans should spend more time working within the system, while only 11 percent deem this strategy as unimportant.

6. Protest

Conversely, to measure opposition towards protest, I asked: “How important is it that Black people spend more time protesting to get ahead in America?” This question is reverse coded as respondents who emphasized protest are classified as less pragmatic.

Table 2.6. Summary of “Protest” Measure

How important is it that Black people spend more time protesting to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	150	20.72	20.72
2. Very important	155	21.41	42.13
3. Moderately important	209	28.87	70.99
4. Not very important	116	16.02	87.02
5. Not at all important	94	12.98	100.00
Total	724	100.00	

When compared to insider strategies that prioritize working within the system, Black Americans expressed more disapproval towards the outsider strategy of protest. Twenty-nine percent say protest is not very or not at all important for helping Black Americans get ahead in America. Still, 42 percent believe that Black people should spend more time protesting when working towards group advancement.

Compromise

The final pillar of pragmatism is a willingness to compromise to produce positive and achievable social outcomes. I measure compromise through two direct questions.

7. Compromise

To measure a general support for compromise, I asked respondents “How important is it that Black people compromise to get ahead in America.” Respondents who placed more weight on compromise were coded as more pragmatic.

Table 2.7. Summary of “Compromise” Measure

How important is it that Black people compromise to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	143	19.72	19.72
2. Very important	157	21.66	41.38
3. Moderately important	227	31.31	72.69
4. Not very important	88	12.14	84.83
5. Not at all important	110	15.17	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Forty-one percent of respondents endorsed compromise by saying that it’s “extremely”, or “very” important. Thirty-one percent said compromise is moderately important. Nonetheless, some group members feel that Black Americans should be

idealistic and stand firm on their principles and values with 27 percent rejecting compromises to varying degrees.

8. Pragmatic

Finally, I directly measure pragmatism by asking: “How important is it that Black people are pragmatic when trying to get ahead in America.” This variable is coded in the positive direction, demonstrating greater pragmatism.

Table 2.8. Summary of “Pragmatic” Measure

How important is it that Black people are pragmatic when trying to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely important	174	24.00	24.00
2. Very important	239	32.97	56.97
3. Moderately important	238	32.83	89.79
4. Not very important	51	7.03	96.83
5. Not at all important	23	3.17	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

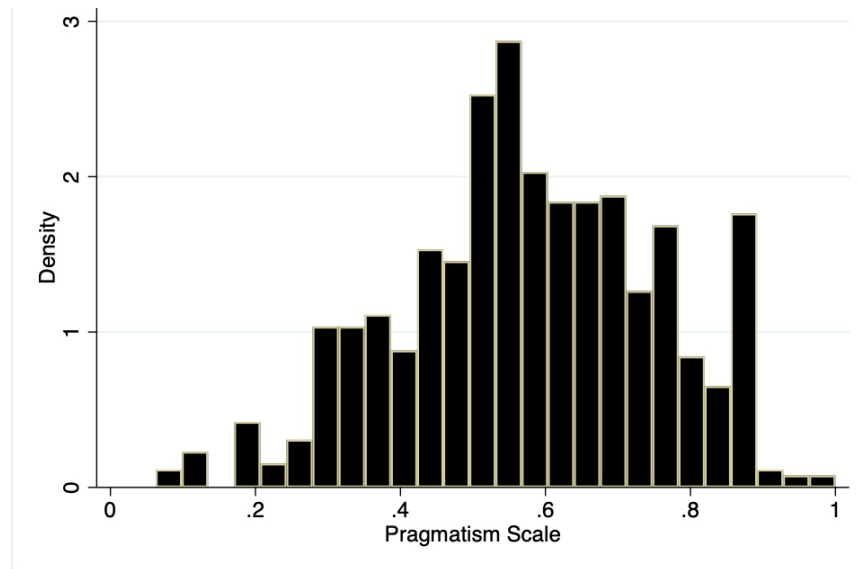
Falling in line with my theory, Black Americans strongly espouse pragmatism. Fifty-seven percent view pragmatism as an important tool for Black people while just 10 percent reject the utility practical behavior.

Pragmatism Scale

To construct the scale, responses on all 8 variables were summed and divided by 8 to compute individual average racial pragmatism scores. The scale ranges from 0 to 1 where 0=not pragmatic at all, and 1=strongly pragmatic. The 8-racial pragmatism measures are highly correlated, and the scale has a Cronbach’s (1951) alpha of .80. This coefficient indicates that racial pragmatism is a reliable measure that can be used

to make statistical inferences (Takavol and Dennick 2011). I present the distribution of the racial pragmatism scale below in *Figure 2.1*.

Figure 2.1 Histogram of Racial Pragmatism Scale



The mean of the racial pragmatism scale is .57 with a standard deviation of .18 units. Strikingly, *Figure 2.1* shows that racial pragmatism is not a fringe belief system. Instead, the distribution is slightly left-skewed meaning that Black Americans are more likely to adopt instead of rebuff racial pragmatism. Ultimately, *Figure 2.1* shows that racial pragmatism is a commonly held belief system that many Black partisans depend on. After confirming the structure and reliability of the racial pragmatism scale, I use the following hypotheses to test my theory and evaluate the political behavior of pragmatic Black ideologues.

Hypotheses

Pragmatic people consider possible constraints in decision settings and prioritize practical considerations such as feasibility to guide their behavior (Kivetz and Tyler 2007; James 1907). On the other hand, idealistic people center their

principles and normative values above these practical concerns (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). I anticipate that racially pragmatic Black Americans express moderate racial attitudes because they're aware of political constraints such as racial backlash that candidates receive when taking explicit and progressive stances on race. In other words, pragmatists consider the consequences associated with different actions, and the feasibility of political tactics when forming their political attitudes. I presume that Black Americans' pragmatic views on race are influenced in part by their general orientation towards pragmatism. Therefore, on average and holding all else equal, I expect that respondents who score higher in racial pragmatism will describe themselves as more pragmatic and less idealistic when describing their general personality.

H1: As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans will generally describe themselves as more pragmatic and less idealistic.

I also expect differences along gender in the embrace of racial pragmatism. While I do not want to essentialize all Black women as following a Black feminist ideology, Black feminists hold more collectivistic worldviews that arise from their experiences with double marginalization (Hill-Collins 2022; Harris-Lacewell 2004; Cohen 1999). Whereas Black men may embrace individualism and strategic deracialization to secure social advantages, Black women are hampered from reaping similar rewards because of misogynoir or the combined prejudice that Black women face as a consequence of their marginalized racial and gender identities (Bailey 2021; Crenshaw 1990). When working towards social progress, Black feminists embrace communalism and strive for institutional change to eliminate systems that perpetuate

racial, gender, sexual, and class-based oppression (Combahee River Collective 1977). This stands in stark contrast to the temperate, and accommodationist tactics embraced by racial pragmatists. Due to Black women's stronger inclination towards collectivism over individualism, I expect Black women to score lower in racial pragmatism than Black men.

H2: Black women will score lower on the racial pragmatism scale than Black men.

According to my theory of racial pragmatism, I contend that pragmatic Black voters express more moderate political views than those who are less pragmatic. I expect this relationship to extend to ideological self-identification. I anticipate that pragmatic Black Americans will be less likely to self-identify as liberal when compared to their less pragmatic counterparts.

H3: Black Americans who score higher on the pragmatism scale will place themselves closer to the midpoint of the ideological spectrum when compared to those who are less pragmatic.

As outlined previously, pragmatic Black elites deliberately shunned racial appeals because they feared that these messages would elicit racial backlash from racist and racially moderate non-Black voters (Harris 2012; Hamilton 1977; Smith 1981). When engaging in pragmatism, these politicians considered the potential consequences associated with accentuating race in their political campaigns. According to my theory of racial pragmatism, I argue that when using the pragmatic method, pragmatic Black voters envision these same pitfalls. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans will expect politicians to lose more support from white voters when making explicit and progressive statements on race.

H4: When compared to those who are less pragmatic, Black Americans who score higher in racial pragmatism will envision higher levels of backlash from whites when considering politicians who advocate for Black issues.

After accounting for other important predictors of racial policy support such as ideology, partisanship, and linked fate, I expect that Black Americans who believe the group is more constrained by race will be less supportive of race-specific strategies in the fight for equality because they view them as ineffectual in the short-term. Therefore, I expect that Black Americans who score higher in racial pragmatism will be less supportive of racial policies such as reparations and minority assistance.

H5: Black Americans who score higher on the racial pragmatism scale will be less likely to support racial policies that aid Black Americans when compared to those who are less pragmatic.

A recurring tension in Black politics centers around the strategic benefits of forming political coalitions with individuals outside of the Black community (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Ture and Hamilton 1992). Race conscious Black Nationalists such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X did not reject multiracial coalitions outright, but they were leery of forming partnerships with non-Black Americans, and particularly, white Americans (Ture and Hamilton 1992). Multiracial coalitions are suboptimal to nationalists for several reasons. By joining cross-racial coalitions, Black Americans run the risk of having their goals co-opted by deracialized class movements, leading to marginal reforms that are inadequate in eliminating or rectifying anti-Black racism. (Ture and Hamilton 1992). In a stronger critique, some nationalists believe that the political and economic interests of white and Black Americans are inherently in

conflict, making it impossible to achieve social justice in these multiracial alliances (Dawson 2001; Ture and Hamilton 1992).

Comparatively, pragmatic Black leaders pursued multiracial political coalitions by adopting accommodationist tactics (Marable and Clark 2009). To fortify their multiracial voting coalitions and increase their vote share among non-Black voters, pragmatic Black leaders strategically distanced themselves from Black voters and their racialized interests (Stephens-Dougan 2020; Harris 2012; Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 1981). Because Black voters remain a minority in American politics and society broadly, pragmatic Black leaders pursued political coalitions with whites who had stronger political power (King 1967). Therefore, I expect that like pragmatic Black elites, pragmatic Black Americans will express a greater willingness to pursue political coalitions with both whites, and other racial minorities to advance in politics.

H6: Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism will be more receptive towards pursuing multiracial political coalitions to help the group advance in politics.

Results

Racial and Trait Pragmatism

Before analyzing the political implications of racial pragmatism, I would like to confirm construct validity to ensure that the scale truly measures the attitudes of pragmatic Black Americans. To measure a general orientation towards pragmatism vs idealism, I rely on a trait measure from psychologists (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). I asked respondents:

“On a 7-point scale where 1 means that you consider yourself as an idealistic person who places principles and values above practical concerns, and 7 means that you’re a pragmatic person who is action oriented and primarily guided by practical concerns, where would you place yourself on this scale.”

The modal response was the midpoint as 29 percent of respondents characterized themselves as equally idealistic and pragmatic. Thirty-five percent of Black Americans selected responses above the midpoint to describe themselves as pragmatic.

Using ordinary least squares regression with controls for demographic factors, in *Table 2.9*, I analyze *H1* where I expect a positive relationship between trait and racial pragmatism. Due to the directional nature of the hypothesis, I find support for *H1* when using a one-tailed test. On average and holding all else equal, respondents who scored higher in racial pragmatism described themselves as more pragmatic in terms of their personality ($p=.06$). A shift across the range of the pragmatism scale is associated with a 12-percentage point increase in trait pragmatism. This finding provides evidence of construct validity for the racial pragmatism measure. People who embrace racial pragmatism as a belief system generally regard themselves as more pragmatic and less idealistic.

Table 2.9. The Effect of Racial Pragmatism on Levels of Trait Pragmatism¹⁷

Pragmatism	0.12*
	(0.063)
Linked Fate	0.0077
	(0.025)
Ideology	-0.085**
	(0.041)
Education	0.034

¹⁷ For ease of interpretation, all variables included in this and subsequent analyses—except for age—are rescaled between 0 and 1 and coded in the positive direction.

Partisanship is the 7-point Party-ID measure rescaled between 0 (strong Republican) and 1 (strong Democrat).

Ideology is the 7-point ideology measure rescaled between 0 (strongly Conservative) and 1 (strongly Liberal).

Linked fate is binary 0 (no) and 1 (yes).

	(0.056)
Partisanship	-0.074*
	(0.040)
Female	0.0064
	(0.023)
South	-0.017
	(0.022)
Income	0.061
	(0.044)
Age	0.00037
	(0.00072)
Constant	0.46***
	(0.072)
Observations	722
R-squared	0.025

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Note: Dependent variable is the 7-point idealism-pragmatism scale.

0=very idealistic, 1=very pragmatic.

Determinants of Racial Pragmatism

Beyond personality factors, I also consider how different subgroups of Black Americans vary in their acceptance of racial pragmatism. Who is most likely to express racially pragmatic views and engage in the behavior that typifies this belief system? In *Table 2.10*, using racial pragmatism as the dependent variable, I predict pragmatic adherence across different sociodemographic, and political characteristics.

Table 2.10. Determinants of Racial Pragmatism

	(1)	(2)
Linked Fate	-0.014 (0.015)	-0.015 (0.015)
Ideology	-0.10*** (0.023)	-0.11*** (0.024)
Education	-0.089*** (0.032)	-0.087*** (0.032)
Female	-0.031** (0.013)	-0.031** (0.013)
Partisanship		0.011 (0.023)
South	0.0021 (0.013)	0.0017 (0.013)
Income	-0.026 (0.026)	-0.026 (0.026)
Age	-0.0013*** (0.00040)	-0.0014*** (0.00042)
Interest in Politics	0.11*** (0.024)	0.11*** (0.024)
Constant	0.72*** (0.032)	0.71*** (0.033)
Observations	723	722
R-squared	0.101	0.101

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Dependent variable is the racial pragmatism scale.

When looking at *Table 2.10*, I find support for *H2*. On average, women score 3-points lower on the racial pragmatism scale when compared to men (p=.02). Falling in line with research on Black feminist thought, it appears that this difference is due to men scoring higher on the deracialization dimension of racial pragmatism. When compared to Black women, Black men are 6-percentage points more likely to embrace individualism, and 9-percentage points more likely to say Black people

should talk less about race¹⁸. Both mean differences are statistically significant at the .05 level and these findings highlights the collectivistic political orientations of Black women (Hill Collins 2022).

In addition to men, younger Black Americans, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and individuals who are more interested in politics express higher levels of racial pragmatism. Importantly, I also find that linked fate is not a predictor of racial pragmatism. People who feel that their fates are tied to the larger Black community express similar levels of pragmatism as group members who do not express a sense of linked fate. Therefore, despite favoring and practicing strategic deracialization, people who cling to pragmatism are no less linked to the broader Black community when compared to group members who are less pragmatic.

Ideology

To examine *H3* and whether increases in racial pragmatism are associated with ideological moderation, I ran an ordinary least squares regression. In *Table 2.11*, the dependent variable is the 7-point ideology measure with higher values representing stronger liberal attachments.

Table 2.11. The Effect of Racial Pragmatism on Ideological Self-Identification

Pragmatism	-0.23*** (0.059)	-0.23*** (0.058)
Linked Fate	0.053** (0.023)	0.040* (0.023)
Female	0.0043 (0.021)	-0.0053 (0.021)
Age	0.0017*** (0.00064)	0.00062 (0.00066)

¹⁸ These measures are “Individual,” and “Talk Race” in Table 2.3, and 2.4.

Education	0.038 (0.052)	0.058 (0.052)
Partisanship		0.19*** (0.036)
South	0.015 (0.021)	0.013 (0.020)
Income	-0.023 (0.042)	-0.025 (0.041)
Constant	0.54*** (0.063)	0.45*** (0.065)
Observations	723	722
R-squared	0.046	0.082

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Dependent variable is 7-point Ideology measure rescaled where 0=strongly conservative, and 1=strongly liberal

I find consistent support for *H3* in columns one and two of *Table 2.11* Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism report more moderate ideological positions. When predicting ideology scores using the regression model specified in column two of *Table 2.11*, I find that a shift from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean of pragmatism captures an 8-percentage¹⁹ point decline in liberalism. Idealistic Black Americans who scored one standard deviation below the mean of pragmatism have a predicted ideology score of .59, which falls between moderate and slightly liberal. Respondents at the mean of pragmatism were slightly less liberal, with predicted ideology scores of .55. Finally, pragmatic Black Americans—those who scored one standard deviation above the mean of pragmatism have a predicted ideology score of .51, meaning that they identify as moderates. The 8-percentage point difference in self-reported ideology

¹⁹ Figure presented in Appendix.

between racial idealists and pragmatists, as well as the 4-point difference between pragmatists and those who expressed moderate levels of pragmatism are both statistically significant ($p < .01$).

The results so far provide evidence that racial pragmatism is a reliable measure that helps us understand the ideological self-identification of Black voters. It is important to note that the findings on ideology and partisanship demonstrate that racial pragmatism is not a proxy for Republican partisanship or ideological conservatism. As evidenced in *Table 2.10*, the partisan identification of Black voters has no bearing on their pragmatic racial beliefs. In other words, Republicans and political Independents express similar levels of racial pragmatism as their Democratic counterparts. I also find that racial pragmatism is associated with ideological moderation, but not conservatism. Black Americans who expressed high levels of racial pragmatism²⁰ remained above the midpoint on the ideology measure.

Perceptions of Political Backlash

When appraising the political landscape on race, pragmatic Black elites pondered available political opportunities, identified electoral constraints, and anticipated the potential outcomes that could emerge from utilizing different campaign strategies (Harris 2009; Smith 1981). Because of anti-Black racism throughout the electorate, pragmatic Black elites feared that they would trigger racial threat and backlash from whites when openly discussing Black issues on the campaign trail (Harris 2009; Marable and Clark 2009; Smith 1981).

²⁰ By high in racial pragmatism, I mean individuals who scored one standard deviation above the mean of the racial pragmatism scale.

I use an original survey question to measure perceptions of political backlash. I asked: “To what extent, if any, do politicians lose support from white voters when speaking out about racial issues that affect Black people.” Black Americans are deeply cognizant of political backlash. Twenty-two percent say that politicians lose “a great deal,” and 55 percent say politicians lose “a fair amount” of support when explicitly discussing Black issues. Twenty-two percent say that politicians lose “not much” support, while just 2 percent of Black respondents believe that politicians are free from racial polarization and lose no support at all when discussing race.

Table 2.12. Racial Pragmatism and Perceptions of Electoral Backlash

Pragmatism	0.22*** (0.055)
Linked Fate	0.10*** (0.022)
Ideology	0.024 (0.035)
Education	-0.056 (0.049)
Partisanship	0.0078 (0.035)
Female	0.0032 (0.020)
South	0.0031 (0.019)
Income	0.046 (0.039)
Age	-0.00019 (0.00063)
Constant	0.48*** (0.063)
Observations	722
R-squared	0.057

Standard errors in parentheses

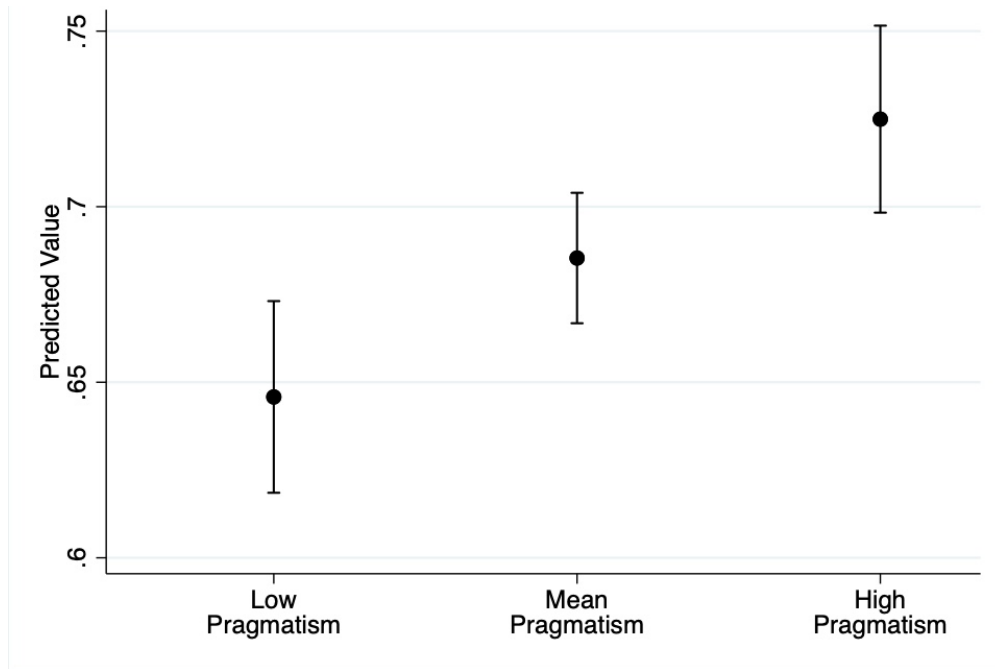
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Dependent variable is: “To what extent, if any, do politicians lose support from White voters when speaking out about racial

issues that affect Black people. 1=a great deal, .66= a fair amount, .33=not much, and 0=not at all.

To examine *H3*, and whether pragmatists envision more prominent levels of electoral backlash, I ran an ordinary least squares regression in *Table 2.12* I find support for *H3*. As racial pragmatism increases, respondents believe that politicians lose more support from white voters when speaking out about racial issues that affect Black people. In addition to pragmatists, respondents who expressed a sense of linked fate perceived 10-percentage points more backlash than those disconnected to the racial group. I show estimated levels of backlash using the regression equation from *Table 2.12* below in *Figure 2.2*

Figure 2.2 Perceptions of Electoral Backlash Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



Respondents who expressed low and moderate levels of racial pragmatism had predicted backlash scores of .65 and .68, meaning that they believe politicians lose “a

fair amount” of support from white voters when explicitly discussing race. Racial pragmatists—those who expressed high levels of pragmatism—have a predicted backlash score of .72. These findings indicate that Black Americans are keenly aware of racial polarization in American politics. Black voters generally expect politicians to face significant backlash from white voters when employing race-conscious political strategies. Still, pragmatists are most skeptical of white voters’ political behavior on race as they are most likely to expect whites to abandon legislators that champion Black causes.

Reparations

Black Americans strongly support racial policies designed to curtail discrimination against group members and close economic disparities based on race (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Dawson 1994). I look at two racial policies in this chapter—reparations, and government aid to Black Americans. With politicians placing a renewed focus on racial issues through campaign appeals (Stout 2020), this recent attention has helped vault racial policies such as reparations onto the political agenda. At the local, state, and national levels, politicians have debated reparations for African Americans as redress for slavery and centuries of government sanctioned discrimination. In 2019, the House Judiciary Committee invited experts to discuss the feasibility of reparations. In 2021, the same committee voted in favor of establishing a commission to study and develop reparations proposals for African Americans (Behrmann 2021).

Seventy percent of individuals in the sample favored reparations in the form of cash payments to Black Americans who are descendants of slaves. Very few

people opposed this policy. Nineteen percent neither favored nor opposed reparations, while 10 percent of group members rejected reparations outright. To examine *H5* and whether pragmatists are less likely to support racial policies including reparations, I ran an ordered probit model²¹

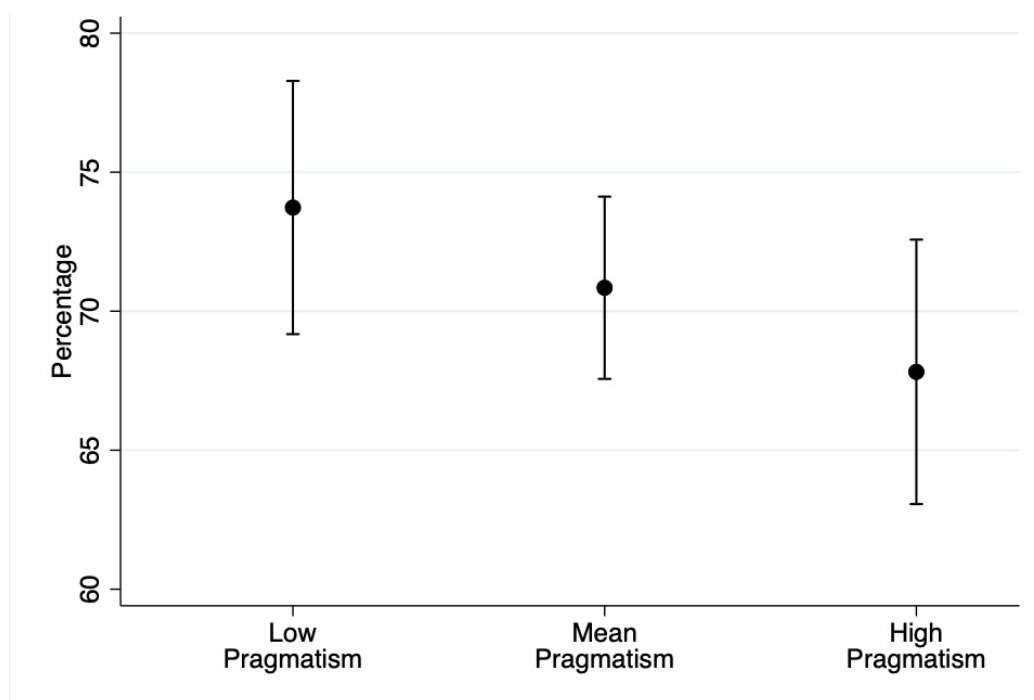
Black Americans who recognize a sense of linked fate are more likely to favor progressive and race-conscious social policies (Dawson 1994). I find additional evidence of this relationship when considering support for a reparations policy. Black Americans who expressed a sense of linked fate were more likely to favor reparations when compared to individuals who felt less connected to their racial group ($p < .001$). When predicting the likelihood of favoring reparations with all control variables held at their observed values (Hanmer and Kalkan 2013), I find that having a sense of linked fate is associated with a 15-percentage point increase in the likelihood of favoring reparations. Black people who do not see their fates as tied to the larger Black community had a 60 percent chance of favoring reparations. Comparatively, group members who envision a common fate offered robust support with a 75 percent chance of favoring reparations.

When looking at regression coefficients I find preliminary support for *H5* using a one-tailed test. Even after controlling for political predispositions and linked fate, as respondents express higher levels of racial pragmatism, they become less supportive of reparations ($p = .082$). Using this ordered probit model, I present the predicted probability of favoring reparations at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism in *Figure 2.3*.

²¹ Model results are presented in the Chapter 2 appendix.

Racial idealists, or those who score low in racial pragmatism offered the most liberal attitudes. These individuals had a 74 percent chance of favoring reparations, while respondents at the mean of pragmatism had a 71 percent chance. Pragmatic Black Americans—those who express high levels of pragmatism—offered more moderate, but not conservative attitudes. Pragmatic partisans had a 68 percent chance of favoring reparations, demonstrating that they still hold slightly liberal attitudes on this racial policy. The 5-percentage point difference between individuals low and high in racial pragmatism is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Figure 2.3 Probability of Favoring Reparations at Different Levels of Pragmatism (95% CI)



Minority Assistance

To better understand the relationship between pragmatism and support for racial policies, I also examined attitudes on the minority assistance scale. The standard minority assistance scale is a 7-point measure with response options on polar

ends. On one end, respondents may say that Black Americans should help themselves with no help from government—this is recoded as 0. At the opposing end, individuals may report that government should help Black Americans which is recoded as 1. Participants can also choose to place themselves at 5 other points between these two options.

Respondents in the sample had an average score of .66 on the minority assistance scale meaning that generally, Black Americans believe that the government should step in to help members of their racial group. In *Table 2.13*, I estimated the effect of racial pragmatism on scores on the minority assistance scale using ordinary least squares regression.

Table 2.13. Racial Pragmatism and Positions on Government Aid to Black Americans

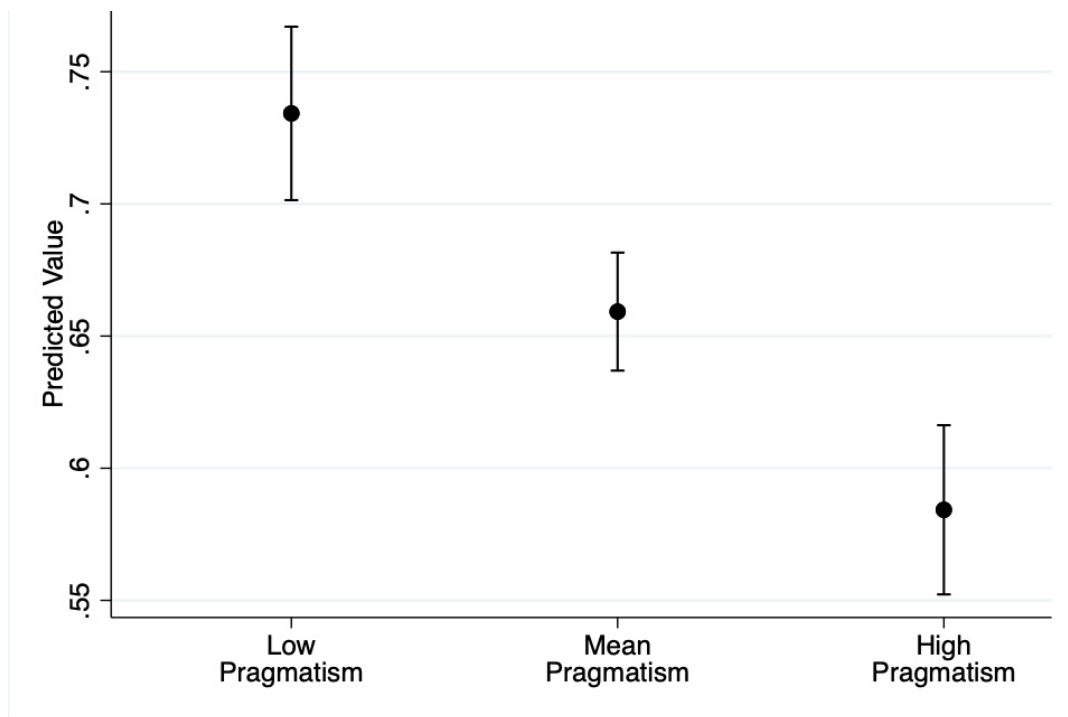
Pragmatism	-0.42*** (0.066)
Linked Fate	0.079*** (0.026)
Ideology	0.21*** (0.043)
Education	0.068 (0.059)
Partisanship	0.049 (0.042)
Female	0.019 (0.024)
South	-0.0090 (0.023)
Income	-0.053 (0.047)
Age	0.00061 (0.00075)
Constant	0.64*** (0.076)
Observations	722

R-squared 0.134

Standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10
 Dependent variable is 7-point “Government Aid to Blacks” measure
 rescaled between 0=Black Americans should help themselves, and
 1=Government should help Black Americans

In *Table 2.13*, I find additional support for *H5*. Black Americans who scored higher in racial pragmatism are less supportive of government prioritizing and distributing resources to uplift Black Americans. Substantively, the effect of racial pragmatism is prominent. A shift across the range of the racial pragmatism scale is associated with a 42-percentage point decline in support for government assistance to Black Americans. For a more tangible change, I display predicted values on the minority assistance scale at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism in *Figure 2.4*.

Figure 2.4 Predicted Aid to Blacks Score at Different Levels of Pragmatism (95% CI)



Black Americans who are low in racial pragmatism offered firm support for government aid. Respondents who reported opinions that scored one standard deviation below the mean of pragmatism had a predicted score of .73 on the minority assistance scale. As racial pragmatism increases, I observe weaker support for this form of racial policy. At the mean of racial pragmatism, respondents have a predicted score of .66 which still demonstrates generous support for racially progressive legislation. Those who were high in racial pragmatism scored closer to the midpoint, with a predicted score of .58 on the minority assistance scale.

As Black Americans express more pragmatic opinions on race, their support for reparations and a general policy targeted towards Black Americans decreases. Although they are less likely to support racial policies, pragmatic Black Americans do not reject or oppose racially progressive legislation. On both racial policies, Black Americans who scored high in racial pragmatism remained above or near the midpoint, meaning that they offer moderate or slightly liberal attitudes towards legislation designed to help their co-racial group members.

Coalition Building

Finally, I look at attitudes towards coalition building. Pragmatic behavior for Black elites is borne out of their desire to cultivate wide and multiracial political coalitions to secure power and advance Black interests through deracialized efforts (Harris 2012; Marable and Clark 2009; Hamilton 1977). To these pragmatic elites, multiracial coalitions serve two primary purposes. For activists like King (1967), multiracial coalitions enable Black Americans to work with politically connected and demographically dominant whites to vault civil rights. For politicians like Barack

Obama, Tom Bradley, David Dinkins, and Wilson Goode, these multiracial coalitions served electoral goals. These politicians reached beyond race to court whites and other racial and ethnic minorities to increase their vote share and bolster their chances of electoral victory (Harris 2012; Marable and Clark 2009; Reft 2009). I evaluate opinions towards coalition building to assess how frequently Black Americans feel the group should look towards members of other racial and ethnic groups as political allies.

In two separate questions, I asked: “In your view, how often should Black Americans pursue and share in political coalitions with [*White Americans/Latinos, Asian Americans, and other disadvantaged groups*] to get ahead in politics. Respondents received 5 response options ranging from “Always” (1), to “Never” (0). With the question ending, these items measure whether respondents view these alliances as tactically beneficial in helping the group rise in politics.

Respondents favored alliances with disadvantaged minorities over those with white Americans with mean scores of .69, and .65 respectively—these estimates indicate that on average, Black Americans feel they should pursue coalitions somewhat often. Using a paired T-test, I find that this 4-point difference is statistically significant at ($p < .01$).

Table 2.14. Racial Pragmatism and Support for Developing Multiracial Political Coalitions

	(1) White Americans	(2) Latinos, Asian Americans, and other disadvantaged groups
Pragmatism	0.47*** (0.056)	0.30*** (0.058)
Linked Fate	0.011	0.011

	(0.022)	(0.023)
Ideology	0.093***	0.083**
	(0.036)	(0.037)
Education	0.033	0.00039
	(0.050)	(0.051)
Partisanship	0.044	0.058
	(0.035)	(0.036)
Female	-0.0037	-0.0063
	(0.020)	(0.021)
South	-0.030	-0.046**
	(0.019)	(0.020)
Income	0.084**	0.076*
	(0.039)	(0.040)
Age	0.00078	0.0013**
	(0.00064)	(0.00066)
Constant	0.21***	0.34***
	(0.064)	(0.066)
Observations	722	722
R-squared	0.105	0.064

Standard errors in parentheses

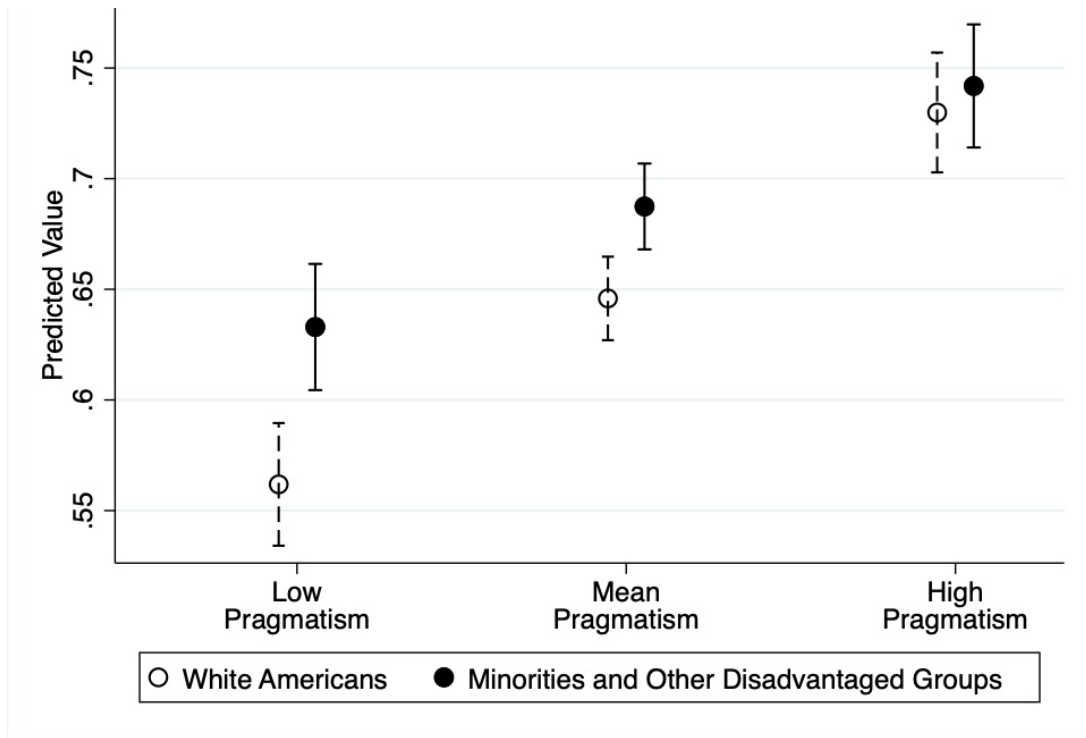
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

Dependent variables in both models are support for establishing political coalitions. Response options range from: 1=Always, .75=Often, .5=Sometimes, .25=Rarely, and 0=Never.

To evaluate *H6* and whether pragmatists favor cross-racial political coalitions, I ran separate ordinary least squares regression models that varied the alliance group in *Table 2.13*. I find support for *H6*—pragmatists are more supportive of establishing political coalitions with both whites and other disadvantaged racial minorities. The effects across pragmatism are immense. Holding all else equal, a shift across the full racial pragmatism scale is associated with a 47 percentage point increase in support for joining alliances with whites, and a 30-percentage point increase in favoring partnerships with other racial minorities. In *Figure 2.5*, I present predicted support for

coalition building at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism.

Figure 2.5 Support for Interracial Coalition Building Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



Beyond the positive relationship between racial pragmatism and the embrace of multiracial political coalitions, a key finding stands out. Individuals who express low and moderate levels of racial pragmatism differentiate between who they view as a desirable ally. These partisans favored partnerships with minorities over whites by 7, and 4-points respectively. Racial pragmatists however believe that group members should establish these partnerships with comparable frequency. In other words, pragmatists view political pacts with whites and other disadvantaged minorities as equally beneficial. These results suggest that pragmatists value popularism. Through their beliefs, pragmatists hope to cast a wide net that entices voters from other groups to join their social change efforts.

Discussion

In this Chapter, I introduced 8 survey measures that I designed to capture a novel belief system, racial pragmatism. Built upon 4-dimensions—deracialization, working within the system, compromise, and double-consciousness—I find that racial pragmatism is a strong and statistically reliable measure that uncovers heterogeneity in Black public opinion and political attitudes. Pragmatism is not a marginal or unpopular belief system—61 percent of Black Americans reported opinions that scored above the midpoint of racial pragmatism, showing that pragmatism is a widespread ideology.

Although I expected middle- and upper-class Black Americans to express higher levels of racial pragmatism—similar to respectability politics—racial pragmatists tend to be men, younger, those with lower levels of educational attainment, and greater interest in politics. These findings on age and education suggest that as Black Americans gain more knowledge and greater sociopolitical socialization, they become less receptive towards a deracialized style of politics. Additionally, the findings across income indicate class-based differences in pragmatism that I presume are related to social and resource status. Black Americans with lower incomes occupy a more hazardous position in American society. This precarity may cause them to pay greater attention to how they and other Black Americans are perceived by whites while forming their sociopolitical attitudes.

Across several analyses, I found recurring support for my theory of racial pragmatism. As racial pragmatism increases among Black Americans, group members report more moderate ideological opinions and offer less support for racial policies including reparations and government aid to Black Americans. Although

pragmatists are less liberal in their political orientation and racial policy stances, they should not be mistaken for embracing conservative ideology and practicing conservative behavior. Pragmatists still identify as political moderates and offer slightly liberal attitudes towards racial legislation.

Racial pragmatists are highly strategic. Relying on double-consciousness and their experiences in American society, pragmatists apprehend racial polarization and envision substantial electoral backlash from whites when politicians speak out about racial issues. Even though pragmatists are skeptical of white voters' racial attitudes, they still view cross racial coalitions as viable for helping Black Americans get ahead in politics. These individuals believe that Black American should seek political allies and establish interracial partnerships to fortify the group's political power.

Next, in Chapter 3, I take a deeper dive into the policy attitudes of pragmatic Black Americans. Using policy framing experiments, I evaluate whether political threats motivate racial pragmatism, causing Black Americans to weaken their support of different racial policies. Additionally, I consider the reverse and whether pragmatism can be undermined through different frames that encourage support for the same racial policies.

Chapter 3: Strategic Behavior: Policy Framing and Threat as Catalysts for Pragmatic Political Compromise

The results presented in *Chapter 2* provide partial evidence for my theory of racial pragmatism. Black Americans who express stronger levels of racial pragmatism report more moderate, but not conservative, positions on racial policies including reparations and the level of government aid they feel should be provided to members of their shared racial group. I also find evidence of strategic behavior among pragmatic Black Americans. Although pragmatists envision stronger backlash from whites when politicians take explicit stances on race, pragmatists still view multiracial coalitions with whites and other racial and ethnic minorities as advantageous for growing Black Americans' political power as a group.

While these results demonstrate that pragmatists are more moderate on race, this analysis has yet to examine whether pragmatic Black Americans' policy attitudes are truly strategic. It remains unclear whether pragmatic Black Americans are more likely to favor social policies when framed around class instead of race, or whether pragmatists express moderate attitudes because they're engaging in pragmatic compromise to forestall political threats.

In this chapter, I address these questions by evaluating Black Americans' willingness to compromise on policy. Specifically, I examine how race-neutral vs race-conscious policy frames influence Black Americans' level of social policy support. Additionally, I consider whether Black Americans who score higher in racial pragmatism are more likely than idealistic group members to compromise and offer

less support for racialized legislation when appraised of the backlash associated with these polarizing racial policies. I expect that due to their support for a deracialized approach to politics and belief that Black people ought to compromise to help the group get ahead in politics, pragmatic Black Americans will favor deracialized over race-conscious legislation, and pragmatists will be more likely to compromise and moderate their policy attitudes in the short term when responding to outgroup threats.

Through a series of policy framing studies, I find that pragmatic Black Americans favor race neutral legislation and strategically revise their policy attitudes when responding to threat. Black Americans who score higher on the racial pragmatism scale offer less support for affirmative action when framed around race instead of class. In *Study 2*, I find that at the group level, Black Americans are more supportive of police reform and shifting police funds to social services when the policy is framed as “reform,” instead of using the polarizing frame, “Defund the police.” In *Study 3*, I find that as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are more likely to strategically update and moderate their attitudes towards filibuster reform when responding to threat. Finally, in *Study 4*, I find that when exposed to threat framing, pragmatic Black Americans are less supportive of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) prioritizing H.R. 40 (reparations) in the current congressional session. These findings reveal that pragmatic Black Americans are strategic actors who both consider and respond to outgroup threats when forming their policy attitudes.

White Backlash and Black Compromise

Due to their minority status and the durability of anti-Black racism in American society, Black Americans have struggled to hold the United States to its egalitarian ideals and achieve restorative justice through the implementation of liberal race-conscious policies. Progress towards racial equality has ebbed and flowed across periods of reactionary racial backlash (Patterson, Santiago, and Silverman 2021). Dating back to reconstruction, white Americans have used legal means and at times, violence and terrorism to curtail the upward social and economic mobility of Black Americans (Gates 2020; Haney Lopez 1996; Aoki 1995). Based on the belief that racial policies provide minorities with unearned advantages, white Americans have historically mobilized against liberal legislation to curtail what they believe is reverse discrimination (Hughey 2014). This counter-mobilization against social progress is known as “backlash politics” (Mansbridge and Shames 2008).

Backlash politics occur when members of dominant groups resist alterations to existing power structures and social hierarchies to maintain their privileged position (Mansbridge and Shames 2008). When focusing on Black Americans, backlash politics are evident following landmark civil rights decisions that affirmed the rights of Black citizens in the mid twentieth century (Hughey 2014). In the short term, the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision served as a catalyst for racial backsliding in the south (Lee 2002; Klarman 1994). A wave of racist politicians rose to prominence for their ardent opposition to desegregation shortly after the Supreme Court’s decision and pushed politics to the right on racial issues while serving in office (Feldman and Sullivan 2004; Klarman 1994).

As I write this, reactionary backlash endures as a potent political force following a turbulent 2020 that featured nationwide protests over the murder of George Floyd and record Black turnout that helped Democrats secure unified control of the federal government (Clement and Santamariña 2021). Since then, Republicans in state legislatures have passed laws that punish protestors (Quinton 2021). They have also instituted anti-critical race theory legislation that restricts educators' ability to teach students about past and present racial inequality (Meckler and Natanson 2022). In terms of voting, in 2021 alone, Republicans in 19 states enacted 34 laws that made it harder to vote (Timm 2021). These laws systematically increase barriers to voting by allowing election officials to arbitrarily remove disproportionately minority citizens from voter rolls (Morris 2019), reduce the number of polling locations in predominately Black communities (Fowler 2020), and introduce burdensome voter identification requirements that unevenly penalize Black Americans (Gross 2018).

Reactionary backlash and racism from whites deters Black Americans from pursuing and receiving their desired policy outcomes on race (Frymer 2010; Smith 1981). Resultingly, scholars argue that progress on liberal racial policies can only be achieved under favorable episodic conditions that are unstable in the long term (Bell 2004; Frymer 2010). Black Americans can secure legislation that advances racial equality when their interests converge with those of whites in policy-making positions (Bell 2004). In other words, headway on racial legislation is realized only when members of the white power structure find an incentive to act on the desires of their Black constituents (Bell 2004). Still, even when Black and white interests

converge to produce progressive race-conscious outcomes, these policies endure so long as they do not threaten the dominant social status of upper- and middle-class whites (Bell 2004). When political elites begin to fear that racial equality efforts are too effective and have the potential to restructure America's racial hierarchy, elites divest from these policies, thus concluding another cycle of reactionary backlash (Bell 2004).

For example, we see Bell's (2004) concept of racial fortuity when considering the implementation and backlash against affirmative action policies. As white women and racial and ethnic minorities saw more educational and employment opportunities through the implementation of identity conscious affirmative action policies, white and Asian Americans who faced rejection labeled these practices as discriminatory and biased against members of socially advantaged groups (Bell 2004). Through several lawsuits, plaintiffs alleged that underqualified minorities were illegally afforded opportunities that deprived deserving white and Asian Americans of a fair chance (Bell 2004). Over decades, courts diluted the strength of affirmative action (Bell 2004) and in 2023, The U.S. Supreme Court restricted how universities can consider race in university admissions (Dirks 2023). This example demonstrates that even when cross racial interests converge to produce progressive race and gender conscious outcomes, racial threat and backlash from members of socially dominant groups limits the duration and impact of these policies.

This lack of enduring interest convergence combined with backlash from powerful white voters has compelled Black Americans to compromise on their racial interests, often involuntarily (Bell 2004). Due to social constraints, Black Americans

have conceded on their rights and desires in the short term to safeguard themselves from racism and resolve political conflicts between opposing factions of whites (Bell 2004). We see this politically through electoral capture (Frymer 2010). As Republicans oppose racial policies on ideological grounds and Democrats resist the same legislation to prioritize the wants of white voters, Black Americans are often forced to compromise if they wish to participate in politics. When unable to select candidates who truly appeal to their racial interests, Black Americans compromise through strategic voting (Walters 1988).

When these racial compromises occur, Black Americans have to appease racist and racially moderate whites who demographically dominate the national electorate. Nonetheless, when working towards racial equality, Black Americans must still decide when to actively engage in compromise, and when to resist concessions that impede the group's progress towards equity (Joshi 2022). In the next section, I highlight an example to describe how civil rights leaders approached compromise while weighing both pragmatic and idealistic concerns.

Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party and the 1964 Democratic National Convention

Following the Freedom Summer of 1964 where civil rights organizations united to register African Americans voters across Mississippi, Black Mississippians created a parallel party—The Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party (MDFP)—to challenge the state's existing Democratic Party (Ture and Hamilton 1992). Mississippi's segregated and all-white Democratic Party played a significant role in disenfranchising Black voters across the state. Mississippi Democrats passed a

resolution that condemned the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and openly advocated for de jure segregation (Ture and Hamilton 1992).

As the state's Democratic Party, Mississippi Democrats refused to hold open conventions to select party nominees. When Black partisans attempted to integrate these gatherings, they were intentionally misled about the time and locations of party meetings to prevent them from participating in important party decisions (Ture and Hamilton 1992). Even when they attended, Black voters were blocked from holding true political power. In certain counties, Black Mississippians were restricted from voting in party meetings and unable to nominate delegates from the floor (Ture and Hamilton 1992). In other counties, Black partisans were suppressed as Mississippi Democrats illegally required them to present receipts from poll tax payments before entering party meetings (Ture and Hamilton 1992).

The MDFP was founded to challenge these racist policies and enhance the political power of Black voters in the state (Ture and Hamilton 1992; Nordhaus 1983). Members of the newly formed party pledged to support the national Democratic Party platform—which white Mississippi Democrats rejected—and they offered to sign an oath of loyalty to the national Democratic Party (Ture and Hamilton 1992). Most importantly, the MDFP sought to integrate and participate in the 1964 Democratic National Convention. MDFP leaders lobbied the Democratic National Committee (DNC) recognize them as Mississippi's true Democratic Party and afford them the rights and privileges associated with this status (Ture and Hamilton 1992).

The MDFP achieved initial success as 9 state delegations passed resolutions to support their official recognition (Ture and Hamilton 1992). These resolutions were concentrated among northern states who had converging interests. Northern delegations stood to benefit from the MDFP because with power, the MDFP could replace segregationists with seniority who held powerful committee positions in Congress (Ture and Hamilton 1992). The DNC however was reluctant to acknowledge the MDFP due to their fears of triggering white backlash (Joshi 2022; Ture and Hamilton 1992).

National party leaders including the Democratic presidential and vice-presidential nominees, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, were fearful that by recognizing the MDFP, Democrats would lose significant support from southern white voters that would cause them to lose the presidential election and halt any recent momentum gained towards racial equality (Ture and Hamilton 1992). To avoid this outcome and pacify southern whites, the DNC Credentials Committee offered a compromise to the MDFP that required them to capitulate on their principles. The proposed compromise offered two at large seats to the MDFP instead of allowing them to replace the segregationist Mississippi Democrats (Joshi 2022; Ture and Hamilton 1992; Nordhaus 1983). This compromise permitted the MDFP to attend the conference but prevented them from voting in convention proceedings (Ture and Hamilton 1992).

This compromise, like others in the fight for racial equality, required Black Americans to decide whether to accept concessions that offered short term peace, but failed to provide the justice that they demanded. By accepting the compromise, in the

short term, the MDFP could maintain harmony within the Democratic Party by deferring to southern whites. This compromise would help the Johnson/Humphrey ticket win election and MDFP members could work with their administration on racial equality efforts after the election (Ture and Hamilton 1992). In the long term however, acquiescing to this compromise would force the MDFP to cede power back to white segregationists and join white Mississippi Democrats who were actively disenfranchising them.

Black civil rights leaders mulled the pros and cons of the proposed compromise. MDFP leaders, Fannie Lou Hamer, Bob Moses and members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), among others, were steadfast in their opposition to the settlement. They decried the DNC's proposal as "worse than nothing" for causing Black voters to sacrifice political power for hollow symbolism (Ture and Hamilton 1992). More pragmatic leaders like Martin Luther King Jr and Bayard Rustin expressed conflicted attitudes (Joshi 2022). King said: "Being a Negro leader, I want you to take this, but if I were a Mississippi Negro, I would vote against it" (Joshi 2022). Ultimately, the MDFP rejected the proposed compromise for failing to truly address the issue at hand—the racism and discrimination practiced by white Mississippi Democrats. Nonetheless, this example is illustrative in explaining how Black Americans approach pragmatism and compromise on race in two primary ways.

First, this example demonstrates how Black Americans vary in their tolerance of political compromises on race. Hamer, Moses, and SNCC members were more idealistic and stood firm on their principles. Leaders like King and Rustin were more

willing to compromise due to their pragmatism. King and Rustin felt that that Black Americans had to consider the political and social climate when determining how to strategically pursue racial equality (Rustin 1976; King 1967). Rustin argued that Black Americans must be confrontational or compromising depending on the situation (Rustin 1976). To these pragmatic leaders, compromise is necessary as Black Americans lack the political power to change politics on their own. Pragmatic compromise should not be viewed as selling out on one's principles, but rather a way of developing new political tactics that can be effective in a given social period (Rustin 1976).

Second, this example helps us predict when we should expect Black Americans to accept or reject certain political compromises. For Black leaders during the civil rights movement, compromise was only beneficial when it contributed to the group's overall goal of racial equality (Joshi 2022). Compromises that failed to advance this goal were rejected. Despite his pragmatism, Rustin (1965) remained strategic in the concessions he accepted. He argued "But the difference between expediency and morality in politics is the difference between selling out a principle and making smaller concessions to win larger ones" (Rustin 1965, pg. 64).

Pragmatic Black leaders advanced equality by accepting compromises that abated white backlash in the short term and offered benefits that could incrementally improve Black Americans' social position in the long term (Joshi 2022; Rustin 1976; King 1959). Concessions that undercut these efforts were summarily rejected. (Joshi 2022). Therefore, when considering policy compromises among pragmatic Black Americans, we should expect pragmatic partisans to moderate their attitudes and

compromise in the short term only when they feel that these concessions do not deter long-term racial equality efforts. Before introducing the policy framing studies to test Black Americans' propensity to compromise on racial policy, in the next section, I offer a brief review of psychological literature on decision making to identify crucial factors that encourage pragmatic behavior.

Construal Level Theory

People shift between being pragmatic²²—action oriented and guided by practical concerns—or idealistic by prioritizing their principles and values in different settings (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). Psychologists have endeavored to understand the situational factors that activate pragmatic and idealistic selves, and the impact that these self-conceptions have on decision making (Danziger, Montal, and Barkan 2012; Ledgerwood, Trope, and Chaiken 2010; Rogers and Bazerman 2008; Kivetz and Tyler 2007). When examining these questions, researchers rely on construal level theory (Trope and Liberman 2003; Trope and Liberman 1998).

Construal level theory (CLT) proposes that changes in temporal distance or varying the time perspective influences how people interpret events and behave in decision settings (Trope and Liberman 2003). When interpreting events in the distant future, people form high level construals that are more abstract (Trope and Liberman 2003). When evaluating events in the near future, people form low level construals that contain more concrete information about the event such as their feelings or expectations surrounding the episode (Trope and Liberman 2003).

²² Researchers synonymously refer to the pragmatic self as the “should” self and the idealistic self as the “want” self (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, and Wade-Benzoni 1998).

Kivetz and Tyler (2007) evaluate how these construals and the time perspective influence support for instrumental (pragmatic) or identity based (idealistic) benefits. Instrumental benefits are tangible resources that can be leveraged to achieve other positive outcomes, thus reflecting pragmatism (Deci and Ryan 1985). Identity based benefits support the expression of a person's values and true self (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). In their study, Kivetz and Tyler (2007) manipulated the time perspective and construal level by asking students to think and write about themselves in the near or distant future. Then, to measure behavior, students were asked to rank 4 objectives that they would like their student union to prioritize. Two of the aims were identity based such as "make sure students are treated with respect and dignity," while the other 2 were instrumental including "negotiate better housing subsidies for students" (Kivetz and Tyler 2007).

After ranking the instrumental and identity-based benefits, Kivetz and Tyler (2007) find that people in the distant future condition place a stronger emphasis on identity based or idealistic rewards, while people in the proximate future condition prioritize instrumental or pragmatic benefits (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). From these findings, Kivetz and Tyler (2007) conclude that a near future time perspective activates a pragmatic self that is more realistic and aware of potential constraints, leading to a stronger preference of instrumental rewards (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). Conversely, a longer time perspective activates a person's true idealistic self, causing them to favor identity-based rewards that represent their values (Kivetz and Tyler 2007).

In a similar study, Rogers and Bazerman (2008) evaluate pragmatic behavior on public policy. They argue that a tension between the “should” (pragmatic) and “want” (idealistic) selves arises when people face a mismatch between their short- and long-term interests (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). When faced with a discrete choice, Rogers and Bazerman (2008) argue and find that people make decisions that serve the should (pragmatic) self in the short term, while they are more likely to choose want (idealistic) options in the long term. Through a series of policy studies, Rogers and Bazerman (2008) find that when exposed to positive and negative consequences associated with public policies, people are more likely to support certain bills when they are scheduled to be implemented in the distant as opposed to the near future. This is known as the “future lock in effect” as people are more likely to act on their true preferences in the long term (Rogers and Bazerman 2008).

Taken together, the findings from Kivetz and Tyler (2007) and Bazerman and Rogers (2008) signal that people will be more likely to engage in pragmatism over idealism in the short term. However, these studies also suggest that pragmatism can be weakened by having people adopt a future-oriented time perspective that causes them to think about a policy more abstractly.

Data and Procedures

To examine the factors that motivate Black Americans to compromise and moderate their political attitudes in response to social constraints, I utilize survey data and a series of policy framing experiments on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 Black Americans through YouGov. Data was collected between June-16th-June 26th, 2023. A weight for Black respondents was estimated by the survey firm using

propensity score matching, age, gender, and education. I apply this weight on the observational analysis in *Study 1*, but not on the subsequent policy framing experiments where I randomly assigned participants to different experimental conditions. In the survey pre-test, respondents answered the 8 racial pragmatism questions before exposure to any racial policy questions. The pragmatism measures continue to correlate strongly with a Cronbach's alpha of .77, and a weighted mean of .53²³.

Study 1: Affirmative Action

In *Study 1*, I use observational survey data to measure racialized framing effects on affirmative action to determine whether pragmatic Black Americans prefer race-conscious, or ostensibly race-neutral legislation. Affirmative action refers to policies that address social inequities by providing advantages to specific groups who have suffered from exclusion. These policies attempt to remedy social harms and close intergroup disparities by giving preference to women and minorities in areas such as employment and education. Affirmative action is a timely and salient policy to test this relationship. Data collection for this survey concluded just 3 days before The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against affirmative action in university admissions by restricting how schools can consider a student's race when making admissions decisions.

Affirmative action provides a perfect policy to test strategic deracialization on policy. The core argument advanced by proponents of strategic deracialization is that policies that explicitly target minorities will be met with hostility and resistance from

²³ For reference, Cronbach's Alpha=.80, and Mean=.57, in the Qualtrics data from Chapter 2.

whites, making it harder for the Democratic Party to win elections and make policy gains. (Orey and Ricks 2017; Wilson 1990; Hamilton 1977). In efforts to keep moderate whites in the Democratic coalition, scholars such as Hamilton (1977) and Wilson (1990) urged the Democratic Party to focus less on race and more on universal issues that had broader appeal. In total, strategic deracialization dictates that political actors should attempt to sidestep the polarizing effects of race by distancing themselves from racial politics and making appeals to class instead of race (Stout 2020; Hamilton 1977). For affirmative action, this means pushing for legislation to help “poor” Americans, instead of pursuing race-conscious policies that address the unique racism exerted upon Black Americans (Wilson 1990).

Hypotheses

Due to pragmatic Black Americans’ moderate racial policy attitudes, anticipation of racial backlash, and preference for a deracialized political style, I expect pragmatic Black Americans to offer less support for affirmative action when policy recipients are framed exclusively as Black Americans.

H1: As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans will offer less support for race-based affirmative action.

However, I expect pragmatists to be strategic. Much like their elite counterparts, I expect that pragmatists engage in strategic deracialization by avoiding race in favor of class framed issues. This choice helps the group but avoids potential racial backlash from whites.

H2: As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans will offer more support for class-based affirmative action.

Finally, emerging from the previous two hypotheses, I expect that individuals who express high levels of racial pragmatism will favor class-based over racially framed affirmative action.

H3: Black Americans who score high in racial pragmatism will favor class-framed over race-framed affirmative action.

Design

Presented first²⁴ to all respondents, I measure support for race-based affirmative action by asking all respondents: “How much do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs that give preference to Black Americans in areas such as hiring and promotions?” Sixty-six percent of Black Americans favored race-based affirmative action. In a follow up question, I asked, “Say such programs were based on income and not race. How much do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs that give preference to poor people in areas such as hiring and promotions, regardless of race?” Sixty-eight percent of respondents favored class based affirmative action.

Results

Black Americans are egalitarian in their public policy attitudes towards affirmative action. When running a paired T-test, I find no mean difference in support of affirmative action across frames ($p=.51$). Therefore, at the group level, Black Americans offer similar levels of support for affirmative action when policy recipients are framed as “Black Americans,” vs “Poor Americans”.

²⁴ These items were displayed in a fixed order with race appearing before class to match Frederick Harris' (2008) Black Politics Study.

Table 3.1. Support for Affirmative Action Based on Racialized Framing

VARIABLES	(1) Racial Affirmative Action	(2) Class Affirmative Action	(3) Difference in Support (Class- Race)
Pragmatism	-0.089* (0.051)	0.11** (0.057)	0.20*** (0.058)
Linked Fate	0.12*** (0.022)	0.085*** (0.021)	-0.032* (0.019)
Ideology	0.11*** (0.035)	0.11*** (0.035)	0.0036 (0.033)
Education	-0.068** (0.031)	-0.10*** (0.033)	-0.036 (0.032)
Partisanship	0.21*** (0.035)	0.12*** (0.035)	-0.084*** (0.031)
Female	0.031* (0.017)	0.025 (0.018)	-0.0062 (0.018)
South	-0.034* (0.017)	-0.011 (0.018)	0.022 (0.018)
Income	-0.00081 (0.026)	-0.061** (0.027)	-0.060** (0.026)
Age	-0.0016*** (0.00054)	-0.0020*** (0.00056)	-0.00043 (0.00054)
Constant	0.58*** (0.054)	0.62*** (0.056)	0.032 (0.060)
Observations	858	858	858
R-squared	0.154	0.097	0.057

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

In *Table 3.1*, I ran a linear regression to examine how pragmatism scores influence support for race-and class based affirmative action. In Column 1, I assess attitudes towards race based affirmative action and I find support for *H1* using a one-tailed test. On average and holding all else equal, a shift across the range of the racial pragmatism scale is associated with a 9-percentage point decline in support for race-based affirmative action (p=.08).

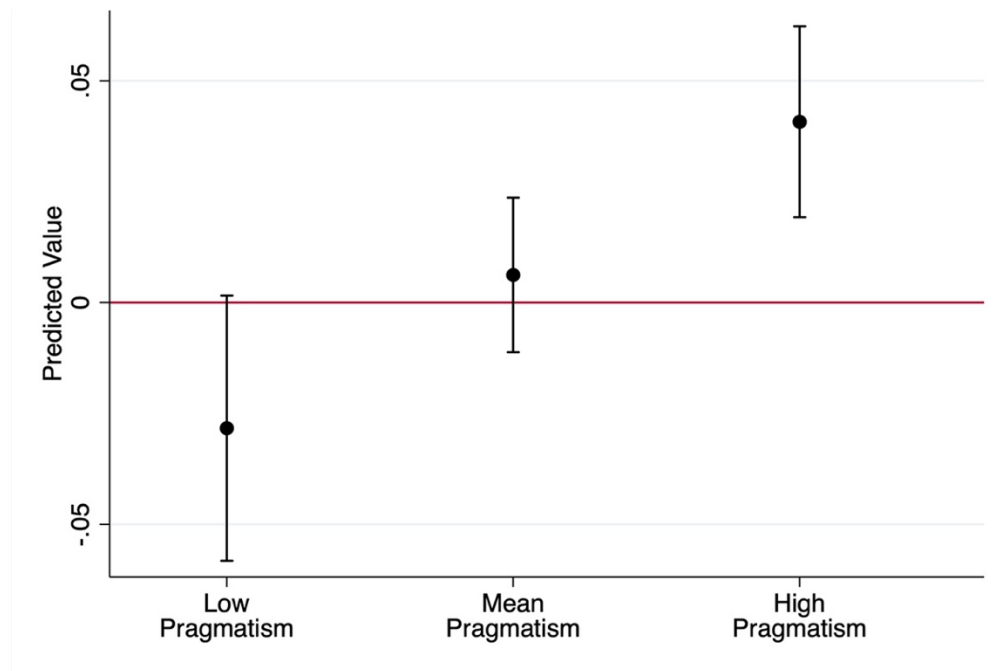
In Column 2, I appraise attitudes towards class based affirmative action. When comparing models 1, and 2, I find that income has no effect on support for race-based affirmative action. However, income significantly predicts support for class-based affirmative action—individuals with higher family incomes are less supportive of affirmative action that serves poorer Americans. This result speaks to the power of racialized group interests in homogenizing the racial policy attitudes of Black partisans, irrespective of their class standing (Dawson 1994). While affluent Black partisans support race-based affirmative action that explicitly serves Black Americans' group interests, class frames make it harder for Black Americans to identify their racial group interests and rely on the Black utility heuristic (White 2007). Without an explicit racial cue, affluent Black partisans potentially may not consider how even class based affirmative action can help poorer Black Americans. The absence of this racial cue may motivate more wealthy group members to act in their own economic self-interest, resulting in less support for class based affirmative action.

In terms of racial pragmatism, I find support for *H2* and my forecast of a positive relationship between racial pragmatism and support for deracialized affirmative action. Black Americans who expressed the highest levels of racial pragmatism are 11-percentage points more supportive of class-framed affirmative action when compared to idealistic group members who express no pragmatism at all. To examine *H3*, and whether pragmatists favor class over race-conscious affirmative action, I subtracted the difference in affirmative action support between class and race frames (class – race). This measure ranges from -1 (complete preference for

racialized affirmative action), to 1 (complete preference for class based affirmative action). Overall, 59 percent of respondents offered equal support for race, and class-based affirmative action. Nineteen percent offered scores below 0 indicating a preference for race based affirmative action while the remaining 22 percent expressed a stronger preference for class framed affirmative action.

In Column 3 of *Table 3.1*, I find that holding all else equal, the most pragmatic Black Americans prefer class over race framed affirmative action by 20-percentage points. While this finding is encouraging, this information alone is insufficient to evaluate *H3* and whether individuals who express high levels of racial pragmatism favor programs that distribute benefits based on class standing, over those that provide racialized advantages. Using the regression model in Column 3 of *Table 3.1*, in *Figure 3.1*, I predict the difference in class vs racially framed affirmative action support at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism.

Figure 3.1 Difference in Class vs. Race Based Affirmative Action (95% CI)



In *Figure 3.1*, I find that idealistic Black Americans, those who scored one standard deviation below the mean of racial pragmatism were 3-percentage points more supportive of race, over class centered affirmative action ($p=.063$). I also find support for *H3*. Pragmatic Black Americans, those who score one standard deviation above the mean of racial pragmatism, favor class-framed affirmative action by 4-percentage points. This predicted estimate is statistically different from 0 and I find evidence that pragmatic Black Americans favor race neutral over race conscious legislation in the context of affirmative action.

Study 2: Police Reform vs Defund the Police

In Study 2, I use a policy framing experiment to test Black Americans' support for police reform using implicit racial frames. At the group level, Black Americans overwhelmingly believe that reforms are needed to ensure racial equity in policing. A 2022 AP-NORC poll finds that 87 percent of Black Americans say that

more needs to be done to ensure that Black Americans receive equal treatment from police (Morrison and Fingerhut 2022). Nonetheless, like many examples presented throughout this dissertation, group members disagreed on how Democrats should rhetorically advocate for police reform.

On the progressive wing, activists, and Black members of Congress including Ilhan Omar and Cori Bush advocated for police reform using the phrase: “Defund the Police” (McCammond 2022; Duster 2020). This policy seeks to divest money from police budgets and allocate resources towards social services to address the root causes of crime (Ray 2020). Among the pragmatic faction, more senior leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) opposed “Defund the Police” on strategic grounds. For example, Jim Clyburn justified his opposition towards “Defund the Police,” using similar pragmatic arguments expressed by King (1967) when advocating against “Black Power.”

Despite supporting police reform efforts, Clyburn worried that promoting the phrase would provide cover to Donald Trump, help Republicans win on election day, and impede police reform efforts (Duster 2020). Clyburn argued, “Stop sloganeering. Sloganeering kills people. Sloganeering destroys movements. Stop sloganeering and let’s go about the business of representing people and building hopes and aspirations for people (McCammond 2020). Clyburn was not exceptional in his stance. Publicly and privately, other Democratic Party leaders also pressured Cori Bush to change her rhetoric to help the party avert backlash (McCamond 2022).

Design

To examine support for police reform based on how the policy is framed, I randomly assigned half of the sample to the “Defund the Police” condition, and the other half to the “Police Reform” condition. In the “Defund the Police” condition, I asked respondents: “How much do you support or oppose the following: The Defund the Police movement?” In the parallel condition, I asked respondents how much they supported the aims of the defund the police movement, without including the phrase. I asked respondents: “How much do you support or oppose the following: Diverting some of the police department’s budget to fund community policing and social services? On both questions, respondents received 4 response options ranging from “strongly support,” to “strongly oppose.”

Hypotheses

Due to the polarizing nature of the policy, I expect Black Americans generally to offer less support for police reform when framed as “Defund the Police,” when compared to “Police Reform.”

H4: At the group-level, Black Americans will offer less support for police reform when framed as “defund” instead of “police reform.”

Still, I expect differences in support for “Defund the police” across racial pragmatism. Due to their anticipation of racial backlash, I expect a negative relationship between pragmatism and support for police reform exclusively in the “Defund” condition.

H5: Pragmatic Black Americans will offer less support for police reform in the “Defund” condition. Racial pragmatism scores will have no effect on support in the less polarizing “Reform” condition.

Results

First, in *Table 3.2*, I present the mean differences in police reform support across conditions. I find support for *H4*, Black Americans are 23-percentage points less supportive of police reform when using the phrase: “Defund the police,” when compared to the baseline police reform condition that outlines a plan to shift police funds towards social services. Despite these policies being functionally equivalent, Black Americans endorse police reform more forcefully when the polarizing “defund” framing is removed.

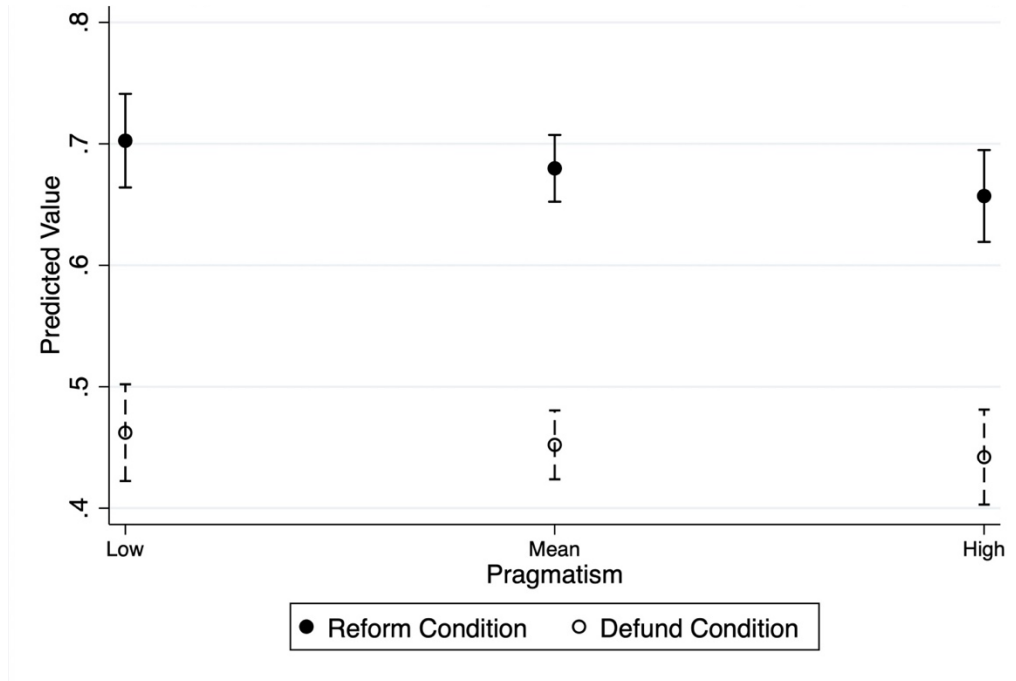
Table 3.2. Mean Police Reform Support Across Conditions

<u>Condition</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Lower 95% CI</u>	<u>Upper 95% CI</u>
Defund the Police (n=485)	0.45	0.65	0.71
Police Reform (n=515)	0.68	0.42	0.48

Next, I turn to *H5* to understand how pragmatism influences attitudes towards reform. I predict policy support both across conditions and levels of racial pragmatism by interacting the continuous 8-item racial pragmatism scale with the treatment indicator. I display the results from this interaction at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism in *Figure 3.2*, I do not find support for *H5*. Racial pragmatism has no effect on support for police reform in the “Defund” condition ($p=.513$). Contrary to expectations, I find that racial pragmatism is negatively correlated with support for police reform in the “reform” condition. Individuals who expressed high levels of racial pragmatism are 4-percentage points less supportive of shifting funds from the police budget to fund

community policing and social services. This 4-point difference is statistically significant at the .1 level ($p=.092$).

Figure 3.2 Support for Police Reform By Condition and Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



Although the predicted value of .66 for pragmatists falls right at the recoded value for “somewhat support,” it’s possible that pragmatists, like many Black Americans, hold conflicted attitudes towards policing and police reform. While Black Americans universally support reforming the police, discord remains on what these reforms should look like, and it is unclear whether pragmatists support alternative reform measures.

Although only significant in the “reform” condition, the point estimates on both policies suggest a negative relationship between pragmatism and support for police reform measures that strip resources from law enforcement. After much negotiation, in 2022, House Democrats passed a bill to boost police funding

(Sotomayor and Caldwell 2022). It's possible that like Democratic elites, pragmatists endorse other reform efforts such as those that *increase* police funding, *increase* training requirements for officers, and remove qualified immunity to improve public safety. However, I am unable to probe this relationship with the current data.

Study 3: Filibuster Reform

In Study 3, I utilize a quasi-experiment on filibuster reform to examine opinion change among Black Americans. Modeled after Tate's (2003) racial redistricting study, I evaluate the extent to which Black Americans are willing to change and moderate their opinions towards filibuster reform when exposed to a threatening counterargument. Used increasingly in recent years (Jacobi and Vandam 2013), the filibuster has been used to stall bills, especially in periods of divided government (Lee 2016). In the U.S. Senate, Senators can hold the floor and filibuster legislation indefinitely until a supermajority of 60 Senators votes to invoke cloture, end debate, and call for a final vote on the bill.

In many cases, the filibuster has been used to stymie Black progress and civil rights (Fredrickson 2020). Throughout the 20th century, southern Dixiecrats used the filibuster to obstruct the passage of anti-lynching bills, prevent laws that forbade poll taxes, and block legislation that banned discrimination in employment, housing, and voting (Frederickson 2020). To date, the longest filibuster occurred on the 1964 Civil Rights Bill as southern segregationists delayed the bill for 74 days (Fredrickson 2020). Because of this history, filibuster reform can serve as a racialized policy with clear outcomes that serve Black Americans' racial group interests.

Design

For this quasi-experiment, I restrict my analysis to the 504 respondents who were randomly assigned to the filibuster study. In the main question, I asked respondents whether they support lowering the number of votes needed to defeat filibusters with a reference to voting rights legislation to implicitly activate racialized thinking. Then, *only* among individuals who initially favored filibuster reform, I exposed respondents to a threatening counterargument to see if this information would motivate opinion change. This design represents a quasi-experimental study with non-random assignment where participants are placed into the threat condition based on their pre-existing attitudes. Since Black Americans overwhelmingly prefer and vote for Democrats, I signal a partisan threat by implicating how the reform could have a backfire effect in helping Republican politicians.

Table 3.3. Overview of Filibuster Quasi-Experiment

Base Condition (N=504)	Counterargument (N=352)
Some people have suggested eliminating the filibuster procedure in the United States Senate so that legislation can pass with a simple majority of votes; for example, 51 votes out of 100. The filibuster has been used to stall Voting Rights legislation among other bills. Do you favor or oppose eliminating the filibuster? (70% favor, 30% oppose)	<i>IF FAVOR is selected</i> Would your position change if eliminating the filibuster makes it easier for Republicans to pass legislation that Democrats oppose if they regain control of the Senate? (52% change opinion, 48% maintain opinion)

Hypotheses

According to my theory of racial pragmatism, I argue that pragmatists engage in accommodation and deracialized tactics to strategically advance Black Americans'

political power as a group. Since the base condition implicitly references how reforming the filibuster can grow Black Americans political power—by making it easier to pass Voting Rights legislation—I expect that pragmatism has no effect on initial filibuster reform support.

H6: Racial pragmatism will have no effect on Black Americans' initial preferences for filibuster reform.

However, due to their racial pragmatism which features a willingness to compromise and an inclination to make choices that adjust for situational constraints, I expect that pragmatists will be more likely to compromise when told that this reform can unintentionally increase Republicans' political power.

H7: Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism will be more likely to change their opinion in response to the counterargument, when compared to group members who score lower in racial pragmatism.

Results

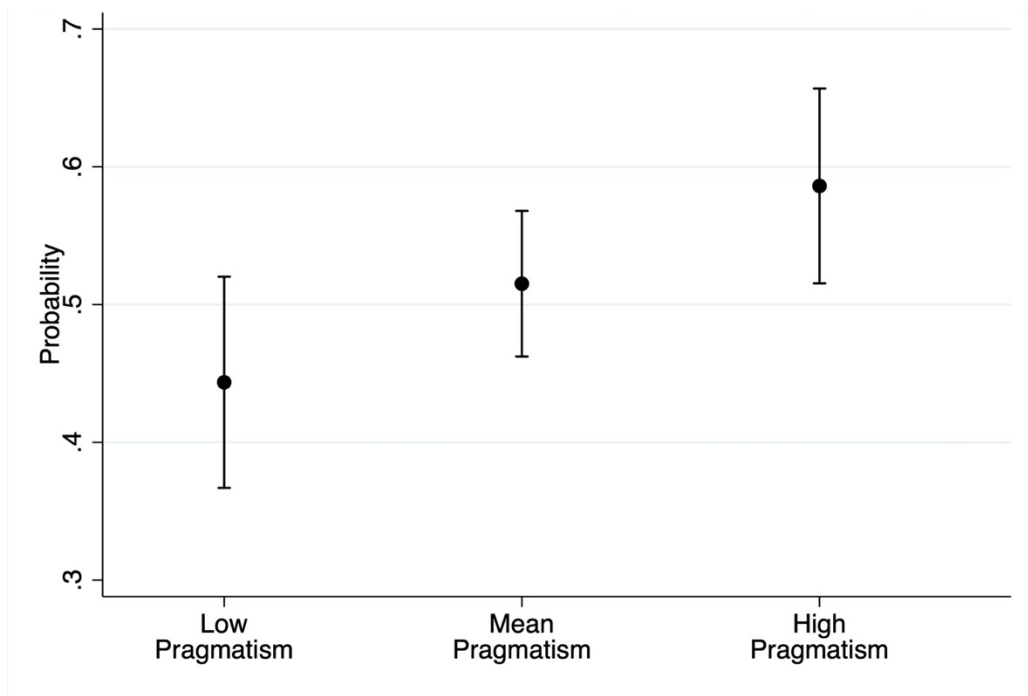
In the baseline condition, without any threat information, I find that 70 percent of Black Americans support lowering the number of votes required to defeat the filibuster. Since this quasi-experiment does not have a true control condition, I control for pragmatism in a bivariate logit model, instead of interacting the scale with a treatment indicator. I find that pragmatism has no effect on initial filibuster reform support ($p=.95$), offering support for *H6*.

In terms of opinion change, at the group level, Black Americans were exceptionally conflicted. Fifty-two percent of respondents engaged in pragmatism by moderating and changing their opinion in response to the threatening

counterargument. Forty-eight percent maintained their initial support and continued to support filibuster reform after being informed that if this change occurs, Republicans will be able to pass legislation that Democrats oppose if they regain control of the Senate.

Next, I evaluate $H7^{25}$, and whether increases in racial pragmatism are associated with a higher likelihood of opinion change. In *Figure 3.3*, using a bivariate logistic regression, I predict the probability of opinion change at the mean, and one standard deviation above and below the mean of racial pragmatism.

Figure 3.3 Likelihood of Filibuster Opinion Change Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



Pragmatic respondents who expressed attitudes that scored one standard deviation above the mean of the racial pragmatism scale had a 59 percent chance of

²⁵ Because there's a selection process behind whether respondents are exposed to the counterargument or not, I ran the models with and without controls. The inclusion of these control variables has a minimal effect on the results but I include both models, with and without controls, in the appendix.

updating their opinion in response to the counterargument. This predicted estimate is 7-percentage points higher than the predicted value for respondents at the mean of pragmatism, and 15 percentage points higher than racial idealists who scored one standard deviation below the mean of pragmatism. These differences between individuals with high vs low and high vs moderate levels of pragmatism are both statistically significant at the .05 level. Therefore, I find support for *H7*. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are more likely to strategically update and moderate their political attitudes when responding to outgroup partisan threats.

Study 4: H.R. 40 (Reparations)

Building upon *Study 3* where I find that pragmatic Black Americans compromise in the short term when faced with threat, in this final study, I consider whether pragmatism can be weakened by varying the construal level at which respondents evaluate the policy. H.R. 40, also known as The Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, was first introduced by Democrat, John Conyers in 1989 (King 2021). The bill seeks to enable Congress to work with experts to understand how centuries of slavery, and discriminatory policies have combined to create lasting social disparities between Black and other Americans.

H.R. 40 is an idealistic policy that embodies the tension between instrumental (pragmatic) and identity based (idealistic) rewards. The policy should be attractive to idealists as it appeals to the values of race-conscious Black Americans through the policy's goal of compensating group members for the lasting effects of slavery. In addition to this instrumental reward, the policy also provides identity-based benefits

for idealists by requiring the United States government to apologize for its role in enslaving and subjugating African Americans.

Conversely, the policy should be less attractive to pragmatists because the probability of receiving instrumental benefits is low. H.R. 40 has been introduced in each Congress since 1989. Nonetheless, opposition towards the bill has prevented H.R. 40 from ever reaching the House floor for a full vote. Recently, in 2023, Senator Cory Booker introduced an analogous version of the bill in the U.S. Senate, and in 2021, Representative Sheila Jackson Lee helped push the bill out of committee in the House before eventually dying (Booker 2023; King 2021). Due to its low likelihood of passage, pragmatists should theoretically eschew H.R. 40 to save their support for other policies that have a higher probability of being implemented.

Design

This study was fielded on half of the sample, where I randomly divided this subset of 505 respondents into 3 experimental conditions. This study is designed after Rogers and Bazerman's (2008) public policy studies to manipulate the construal level/time perspective. Diverging from my previous studies where I ask about policy support, this experiment differs by asking about strategic attitudes. In this study, I ask respondents how much they believe the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) should prioritize the bill in the current or a future congressional session depending on the condition.

In the baseline condition, I provide an overview of H.R. 40 before asking respondents how much they support the CBC prioritizing the bill in the current congressional session. In the current congress (threat) condition, I provide this same

information about the bill before presenting positive long term, and negative short-term consequences associated with the policy to vary the construal level (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). For the positive consequences, I explain that prioritizing the policy can help improve Black Americans social and economic position in the long term. In this same condition, I also include information about short-term consequences by referencing how backlash may obstruct the passage of this bill. By including positive and negative information, I construct a hard test that forces respondents to weigh both positive long-term, and negative short-term tradeoffs that reflect idealistic and pragmatic concerns. To measure attitudes, I ask respondents how much they support prioritizing the policy in the current congressional session to activate the low-level construals that induce pragmatic behavior (Kivetz and Tyler 2007).

Finally, in the “future congress” condition, respondents receive the same positive and negative consequences included in the “current congress condition.” Then, I attempt to weaken pragmatism by asking respondents how much they support emphasizing the policy in a “future congressional session.” By varying the time perspective, I attempt to decrease pragmatic concerns about feasibility and backlash to encourage idealistic choices that center the long-term benefits of the policy.

Hypotheses

As I find in *Study 3*, many Black Americans adjust their political attitudes and moderate their opinions when informed of threats to their racial group interests. Because of this, I expect that when exposed to threat framing in the current congress condition, Black Americans will express less support for H.R. 40 when compared to the baseline condition that does not include this hazardous framing.

H8: Black Americans will offer more support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in the baseline condition of no information, when compared to the current congress condition that introduces threat framing.

As Kivetz and Tyler (2007) and Rogers and Bazerman (2008) find, a distal time perspective activates the idealistic self that is more willing to act on intrinsic principles and values. We know that politically, acting on principles for Black voters means supporting candidates and policies that appeal to their racial group interests (Dawson 1994). Therefore, I expect when compared to the current Congress condition that introduces threat, at the group level, Black Americans will be more supportive of championing HR 40 in the distant future where short-term consequences are no longer a primary concern.

H9: Black Americans will offer more support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in a future congressional session when compared to prioritizing the policy in the current congressional (threat) session.

The future lock in effect should only occur when people perceive a disconnect between their short- and long-term interests (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). Since the baseline condition does not induce threat, Black Americans at the group level should not perceive a tension between supporting H.R. 40 now versus in the future.

Resultingly, I expect that when compared to the baseline condition, Black Americans in the future congress condition will offer the same level of support for emphasizing H.R. 40.

H10: Black Americans will offer similar levels of support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in a future congressional session when compared to the baseline condition.

Table 3.4. Overview of H.R. 40 Experimental Conditions

Baseline	Current Congress	Future Congress
<p>Some argue that members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) should make passing H.R. 40 a legislative priority in the current congressional session. H.R. 40 is a bill that establishes a commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans. How much do you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in the current Congressional session?</p>	<p>Some argue that members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) should make passing H.R. 40 a legislative priority in the current congressional session. H.R. 40 is a bill that establishes a commission to study and develop reparations proposals for African Americans. If CBC members prioritize H.R. 40 it could have the following consequences:</p> <p><i>[Positive]</i> In the long-term, by prioritizing H.R. 40, CBC members can bring attention to America’s racial history. This bill will allow politicians to work with experts to understand the lasting effects of slavery and develop proposals that can improve the social and economic position of African Americans.</p> <p><i>{Negative}</i> In the short-term, some fear that H.R. 40 will generate backlash from non-Black voters, making it harder to pass many progressive policies. Conservatives have pledged to oppose policies that advantage minorities and “end wokeness” by enacting legislation that harms social justice causes.</p> <p>How much do you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in the current Congressional session?</p>	<p>Some argue that members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) should make passing H.R. 40 a legislative priority in a future congressional session. H.R. 40 is a bill that establishes a commission to study and develop reparations proposals for African Americans. If CBC members prioritize H.R. 40 it could have the following consequences.</p> <p><i>[Positive]</i> In the long-term, by prioritizing H.R. 40, CBC members can bring attention to America’s racial history. This bill will allow politicians to work with experts to understand the lasting effects of slavery and develop proposals that can improve the social and economic position of African Americans.</p> <p><i>{Negative}</i> In the short-term, some fear that H.R. 40 will generate backlash from non-Black voters, making it harder to pass many progressive policies. Conservatives have pledged to oppose policies that advantage minorities and “end wokeness” by enacting legislation that harms social justice causes.</p> <p>How much do you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in a future Congressional session?</p>

I also expect differences in support for H.R. 40 across pragmatism. Because pragmatists offer less support for reparations generally, I expect racial pragmatism to negatively correlate with support for H.R. 40 in the baseline condition.

H11: Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism will offer less support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in the baseline condition when compared to group members who score lower in racial pragmatism.

Pragmatists are more likely to consider constraints in decision settings and place a larger emphasis on feasibility to guide their short-term choices (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). Therefore, as pragmatists are more reactive to threat, I expect that Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism will offer less support for advancing H.R. 40 in the current congress condition that identifies these near future restrictions. However, these threats can be weakened by having pragmatists evaluate the policy from a more distal time perspective (Rogers and Bazerman 2008).

H12: Black Americans who express higher levels of racial pragmatism will offer less support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in the current congress (threat) condition when compared to group members who score lower in racial pragmatism in this same condition.

H13: Racial pragmatism will have no effect on support for prioritizing H.R. 40 in the distant future condition.

Results

To begin, I appraise mean differences in support across experimental conditions in *Figure 3.4*. When looking at *Figure 3.4*, I do not find support for *H8*, *H9*, or *H10*. In the baseline and threat (current congress) conditions, I find that

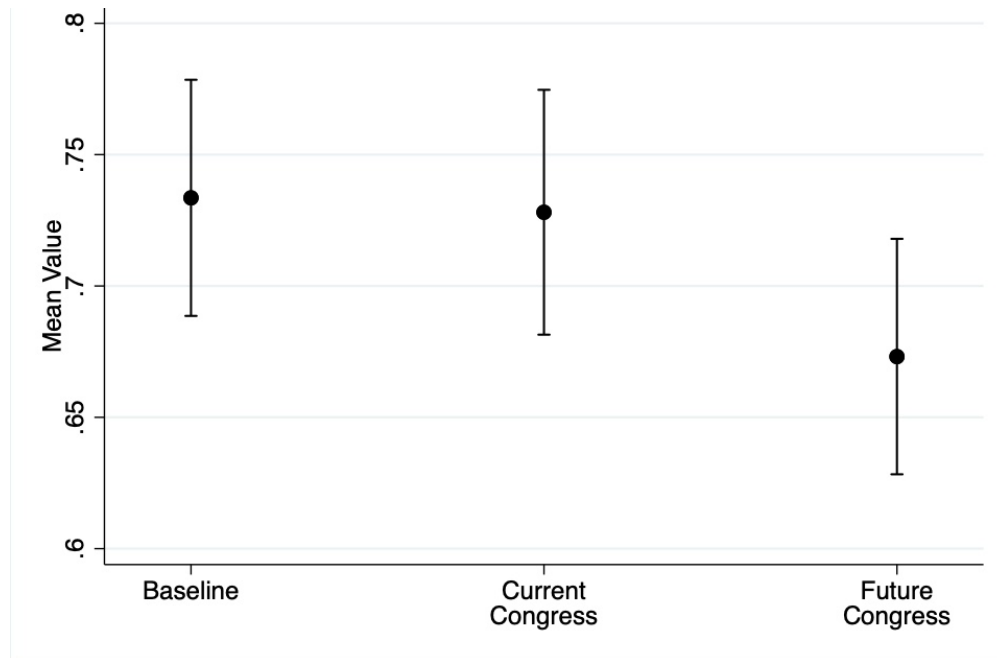
respondents have a mean value of .73, indicating strong support for advancing H.R. 40 in the current congressional session. With no variation between these mean values, I do not find support for *H8* where I expected the threat information to depress policy support relative to the baseline. When providing positive and negative consequences that could emerge from racial policies in tandem, these cues have no effect on Black Americans' short term policy support.

I also do not find evidence of *H9* or the future lock in effect (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). Instead, when compared to the baseline condition, I find a backfire effect as respondents are 5-percentage points less supportive of establishing a commission to study and develop reparation proposals in a future congressional session ($p=.096$). Additionally, I do not find support for my null hypothesis in *H10*, where I predicted comparable levels of policy support in the baseline and future congress conditions. When compared to the baseline condition, respondents are 5-percentage points less supportive of prioritizing HR 40 in a future congressional session ($p=.062$). Although this finding runs counter to my expectations, I presume that this result is due to self-interest motivations.

When using the Black utility heuristic to make political choices, Black Americans are more likely to consider the group's interests over their own (White and Laird 2020; Dawson 1994). However, when offering less support in a distant future scenario, my results suggest that the Black utility heuristic (Dawson 1994) is more salient for political behavior in the present as opposed to the future. When asked today, Black Americans may be less likely to support racial policies that go into

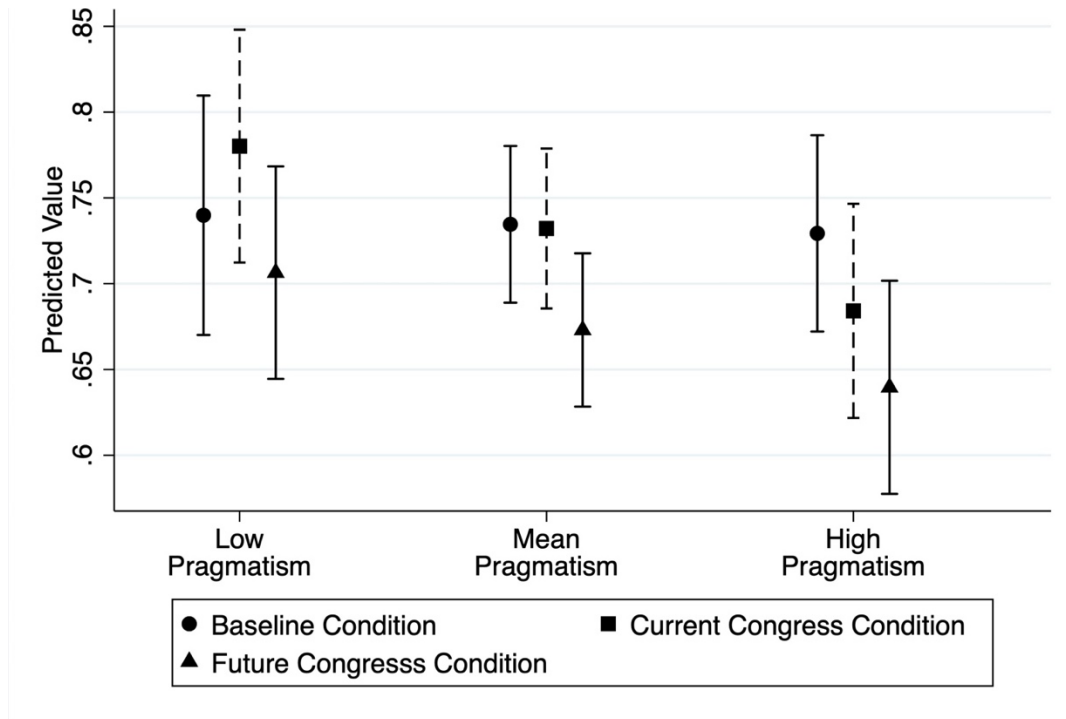
effect in the distant future if they do not personally stand to benefit from the policy's immediate implementation.

Figure 3.4 Mean H.R. 40 Support Across Conditions (95% CI)



Next, I assess how pragmatism maps onto policy support by interacting the continuous 8-item racial pragmatism scale with the treatment indicator. I present the results from this interaction across conditions in *Figure 3.5*

Figure 3.5 Predicted Support for H.R. 40 By Condition and Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



Despite offering less policy support for reparations generally, I find that increases in racial pragmatism have no effect on whether Black Americans think the CBC should prioritize H.R. 40 in the baseline condition. I find that individuals, low, moderate, and high in racial pragmatism have a predicted estimate of .73, which indicates solid support for accentuating this policy. Therefore, I find no support for *H11* and my expectation of a negative relationship between pragmatism and policy support in the baseline condition.

I do find support for *H12*. Respondents who express higher levels of racial pragmatism are less supportive of championing H.R. 40 in the current congress condition that introduces threat framing. When informed of positive long-term, and negative short-term consequences associated with racialized legislation, pragmatists place more weight on the negative costs, thus depressing their support for the policy

in the short term. For example, racial idealists have a predicted value of .78 in the current congress condition, indicating robust support for H.R. 40. Comparatively, individuals at the mean of pragmatism have a predicted value of .73, while individuals high in pragmatism have a predicted value of .68. This 10-point difference between individuals low vs high in pragmatism in the current congress condition is statistically significant at the .05 level ($p=.039$).

In terms of the future lock in effect, I do not find support for *H13*. While I predicted that racial pragmatism would have no effect on policy support in the future congress condition that encourages idealistic choices, I instead find that racial pragmatism is negatively correlated with strategic support for H.R. 40 in this condition. Among individuals who expressed high levels of racial pragmatism, I discover a 9-percent point decrease in H.R. 40 support when comparing baseline and future congress conditions. This 9-point difference is statistically significant at the .05 level ($p=.037$).

Discussion

In this chapter, I sought to understand how threat, deracialized, and time sensitive frames influence the public policy attitudes of Black Americans. I find that while Black Americans at the group level equally favor class and racially framed affirmative action, pragmatists distinguish between these policies and prefer affirmative action that serves poor instead of Black Americans. I also find that independent of their racial pragmatism, Black Americans prefer police reform when the policy does not reference the phrase: “Defund the Police.”

In terms of threat, I find mixed results. In *Study 3*, I find that half of Black Americans who initially favored filibuster reform moderate and change their opinions when exposed to a threatening counterargument. However, in *Study 4*, I find that when exposed to positive and negative framing in tandem, these messages have no effect on depressing Black Americans' support of H.R. 40 at the group level. Nonetheless, on both policies—filibuster reform and H.R. 40—I find that pragmatists are most likely to weaken their support of racialized policies when appraised of negative aftereffects associated with the legislation.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find evidence of the future lock in effect among pragmatists and Black Americans generally. While I hoped to liberalize Black Americans' policy attitudes by shifting the time horizon, in their study, Rogers and Bazerman (2008) find that the future lock in effect only occurs on policies where individuals felt they *should* support the policy more than they *want* to. While I am unable to examine this with current data, it's possible that the future lock in effect will simply not occur on racial policies for Black partisans for two reasons.

First, Black Americans support racial policies that serve their group interests (Dawson 1994). It's likely that Black Americans will always *want* to support racial policies more than they feel like they *should* out of obligation. Especially among pragmatists, I argue that these individuals want to support racial policies like reparations, but their pragmatism and fear of backlash prevents them from fully endorsing them. If group members *want* to support racial policies more than they feel that they *should*, then the future lock in effect is not possible for Black partisans on racial policy.

Second, Rogers and Bazerman (2008) secure the future lock in effect in a distant future condition that tells respondents that the policy will be implemented in 4 years. This design is flawed for racial policies as the backlash that impedes progress on racialized legislation has endured over decades. When pointing to the “future” on racial policy, this timepoint should theoretically reference a future period at which this racial hostility no longer exists. Although imperfect, an example could be when the U.S. projects to be a majority-minority society. However, Black Americans may still not opt in in the future if they do not stand to personally benefit from the delayed implementation of the policy. In other words, when asked today, Black Americans may not support prioritizing H.R. 40 in a future congressional session that is decades from now if they are unable to take advantage of the policy benefits.

Chapter 4: Electability Frames, Group Threat, and Pragmatic Voting in Democratic Primary Elections

Riding the wave of the Tea Party movement in June 2014, Chris McDaniel, an outspoken state Senator and former talk radio show host challenged six-time incumbent and fellow Republican, Thad Cochran for his seat to represent Mississippi in the U.S. Senate. In the initial Republican primary, McDaniel narrowly defeated Cochran by less than a percentage point. However, since neither candidate won a clear majority, McDaniel and Cochran were forced to compete in a run-off election to determine who would appear on the general election ballot (Nicks 2014).

The runoff contest was mired by controversy and featured two Republicans who stood in stark contrast to each other. McDaniel presented himself as a far-right follower of the Tea-Party movement. He vowed to cut government spending and torpedo then President Obama's most important legislative goal, the Affordable Care Act (Sullivan 2014). McDaniel's campaign was also typified by his history of racism. He came under fire for previously speaking at a neo-confederate conference, and for comments on his radio show where he implied that he would move to Mexico if the federal government paid reparations to Black Americans who are descendants of slaves (Weiserman 2014; Murphy 2013).

The incumbent, Cochran, ran as a racial moderate who appealed to Black voters in spite of his Republican partisanship. Cochran and his supporters highlighted his history of patronage including his record of securing funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) throughout the state, and his backing of

federal programs such as SNAP, which many Mississippians relied on (Henderson 2014). Most importantly Cochran and his ancillaries emphasized McDaniel's history of racist rhetoric and ties to the Tea Party to mobilize Black voters against his campaign (Henderson 2014).

Mississippi holds open primaries meaning that voters are not required to declare their party affiliation to vote in primary contests. Citizens in the state maintain the opportunity to vote in either party's primary, as long as they did not cast a ballot in the opposing party's primary election. These rules made Black voters an important constituency in a Republican election. Black voters overwhelmingly support candidates running as members of the Democratic Party (White and Laird 2020). However, Mississippi has not had a Democrat serve in the U.S. Senate since 1989, leaving Black Mississippians' interests largely unrepresented in the chamber. Due to their inability to elect candidates from their preferred party, and Mississippi's open primary rules, Black leaders and organizations coalesced around Cochran to help ward off McDaniel's insurgent and racist campaign.

Leading up to the runoff, leaflets were distributed in Black communities that reminded voters of McDaniel's history of racist comments, his opposition to the creation of a civil rights museum, and allegations that the Tea Party planned to prevent Blacks from voting in the primary. (CBS News Desk 2014²⁶). Black clergymen started a political PAC called "All Citizens for Mississippi," where they ran radio advertisements to implore Black Mississippians to vote for Cochran as the

²⁶ No author listed: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/gop-remains-divided-after-thad-cochran-victory-n144636>

last point of resistance between McDaniel and a Tea Party intent on eliminating government services (Helderman and Bump 2014).

Cochran's appeals worked and Black voters narrowly propelled him to a runoff win and a seventh term in Congress with Cochran defeating McDaniel by just 6,693 votes (Helderman and Bump 2014). Analyses of voting data following the contest underscore the power of Black voters in this outcome. The average Black precinct saw a 505 percent increase in turnout between the initial primary and runoff contest (Hood and McKee 2017). This uptick in turnout accounted for the entirety of Cochran's margin of victory (Hood and McKee 2017; Cohn and Willis 2014).

Although crossover voting or Black voters abandoning Democrats in favor of Republican candidates is beyond the scope of this project, the Cochran-McDaniel contest provides a glimpse into the decision-making strategies of Black voters in primary contests. When faced with a threat to their group interests in the form of McDaniel's far right and racist campaign, Black voters reacted pragmatically to ensure his demise. With a clear and strategic understanding of Mississippi politics, Black voters concluded that whoever won the Republican runoff was likely to defeat their Democratic opponent in the general contest. To prevent the undesirable politician—Chris McDaniel—from reaching office, Black voters rallied behind the more electable Cochran to defeat McDaniel and the Tea Party.

As referenced in *Chapter 1*, we see a similar pragmatic process among Black voters in the 2020 Democratic primaries. Threatened by Donald Trump's racist presidency, Black voters spurned candidates such as Cory Booker and Kamala Harris

who offered both descriptive and substantive representation on race to favor the moderate and electable Democrat, Joe Biden.

In this chapter, I examine Black Americans' vote choice and candidate selection strategies in Democratic primary contests. Using a survey experiment, I investigate whether Black voters' support for racially progressive candidates—those who appeal to Blacks Americans' group interests—fluctuates based on the electoral environment. Specifically, I examine how positive and negative electability frames affect the likelihood of Black voters favoring progressive Democrats over their more racially moderate co-partisans in an intra-party contest. The power of positive electability signals is seen in Black voters' embrace of Barack Obama following his Iowa Caucus victory in 2008 (Wallsten and Fausset 2008).

Although Barack Obama ran a deracialized campaign, his racial identity influenced assessments of his public policy stances (Tesler 2012). Due to his Blackness, both Black voters, and particularly white Republicans, overestimated Obama's racial progressivism and willingness to legislate on behalf of Black Americans (Harris 2012; Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Franko 2010). In the months preceding the Iowa Caucus, Black voters were reluctant to embrace Obama because of their greater familiarity with the establishment candidate—Hillary Clinton—and their fear that lingering anti-Black racism would prevent the country from electing a Black president (Harris 2012; Whitesides 2007).

According to CNN polling, in October 2007, Barack Obama trailed Hillary Clinton by 24 points among Black Democrats (Steinhauser 2008). However, after winning primaries in the overwhelmingly white states of Iowa and New Hampshire,

Obama's vote share grew dramatically. By January 2008, Obama flipped the polls and held a 28-percentage point lead over Hillary Clinton among Black Democrats (Steinhauser 2008). With these victories, Obama demonstrated his ability to win support from white voters, thus improving perceptions of his electability (Wallsten and Faussett 2008). These positive electoral signals encouraged Black voters to act in their true interests and ultimately reduce their pragmatism. Black voters expressed a stronger willingness to vote for Obama after they were convinced of his electability (Wallsten and Faussett 2008).

Finally, I examine whether electability matters more or less in different electoral contexts. Similar to the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, I contrast this positive and negative electoral framing across threat conditions to determine whether electability has a greater effect on vote choice when these Democrats are competing against racist or moderate Republicans.

I anticipate that electability signals will have a stronger influence on vote choice when Black voters are faced with threat. I expect that when at risk of representation from a known and racist Republican, Black voters will respond pragmatically by favoring the Democrat who has the best chance of defeating their Republican opponent in the general election. Conversely, when threat is not activated, Black voters will rely less on electability and favor racially progressive Democrats who appeal to their group interests.

To begin, I will provide a review of literature concerning Black voting behavior, racial appeals, and the effect of electability on vote choice. Then, I will

revisit the theoretical expectations from my theory of racial pragmatism outlined in *Chapter 1* before discussing the testable hypotheses and results from this study.

Racial Group Interests and Black Vote Choice

Due to past and present discrimination, views of Black racial group interests combined with a sense of common fate shape the voting behavior and policy opinions of Black partisans (Dawson 1994). When making political choices, scholars expect that Black voters will support candidates and policies that are seen as elevating the interests of their racial group as a whole (Dawson 1994). However, recent scholarship finds evidence to the contrary when interrogating the relationship between vote choice and candidates who offer liberal racial appeals. Some studies find that Black voters prefer deracialized politicians who avoid racial issues when campaigning for office (Stephens 2013; Mcilwain and Caliendo 2011; Tate 2010).

Racial Appeals and Candidate Support

Black politicians can activate racial thinking and alter the preferences of Black voters by using explicit racial appeals to pinpoint Black people's racial group interests (White 2007). Black Americans offer the greatest support for welfare policies when politicians explicitly invoke race to detail how the proposed legislation will disproportionately impact African Americans as a racial group (White 2007). Politicians can use racial appeals to liberalize Black Americans' policy views but this racial progressivism has not consistently translated into support for candidates who articulate these messages. Although African Americans remain progressive in their backing of racial policy, they have become more supportive of racially moderate candidates at the national level (Tate 2010). Instead of backing politicians who take

liberal stances on racial issues, Black Americans are now more likely to vote for candidates who eschew racial rhetoric altogether or take moderate positions on racial matters (Mcilwain and Caliendo 2011; Stephens-Dougan 2013).

In an experiment on racial priming, Stephens (2013) finds that regardless of the race of the politician, Black Americans are more likely to support deracialized candidates who avoid racial issues. Candidates who used liberal racial appeals to critique government for failing to address racial disparities in education were viewed unfavorably by Black voters. Across experimental conditions, Stephens (2013) finds that only white politicians who explicitly chastised African Americans for failing to achieve in school were more unpopular than the racially liberal hopefuls. Sixty-six percent of Black respondents indicated that they were likely to vote for the Black deracialized politician who made no references to race, while only 34 percent said they would vote for the same Black politician who offered the racially liberal message (Stephens 2013).

In another study on racial appeals, Mcilwain and Caliendo (2011) find that Black voters prefer deracialized politicians by 4 percentage points when compared to Black candidates who make racial appeals to emphasize their authentic connection to the Black community. Mcilwain and Caliendo (2011) attribute their findings to Black voters accepting the post-racial norm of colorblindness, while Stephens (2013) hypothesizes that Black people may be embracing individualism— leading them to reject candidates who make race-based appeals. These explanations fall short considering Black Americans' racial attitudes. In 2019, an Associated Press-NORC poll found that 77 percent of African Americans felt Black people were discriminated

against in hiring decisions, while 74 percent favored reparations as redress for slavery and racial discrimination.

It is more likely that Stephens (2013) understates Black support of racially liberal politicians due to her experimental design. In the racially liberal conditions, the politician expressed a negative racially liberal appeal. The politician said:

“Government is responsible for your children failing to achieve in school. It’s because of government neglect that your kid doesn’t pick up a book or finish his or her homework. I’m tired of the government blaming Black students for problems when it’s government’s fault that Black students have fallen behind. Stop blaming the victim” (Stephens 2013)!

A primary reason politicians use liberal racial appeals is to signal their accountability to Black voters. Black political accountability occurs when politicians demonstrate that they will champion issues such as discrimination which are particularly relevant for Black voters (Walters 2007). While the appeal above is technically explicit since it references Black Americans, and negative due to its criticism of government, it fails to promote a sense of political accountability. In other words, the appeal Stephens (2013) uses does not convey that the politician will legislate on behalf of Black voters if voted into office. Instead, the invocation of Black victimhood and criticism of culture in Black communities by alleging that Black children are uninterested in learning could have been received as pandering and insulting to respondents. Without a call to action or indication that they would work in office to close racial disparities in education, the treatment Stephens (2013) uses understates Black voters’ support for racially liberal politicians.

In an analysis of exit poll data and news stories covering Black candidates’ statements on race in gubernatorial and senate elections, Stout (2015) finds that Black

candidates receive more support from Black voters when making positive racial appeals to signal their commitment to the racial group. On the other hand, Stout (2015) also finds that Black voters are unsupportive of Black candidates who use negative racial appeals that denigrate outside groups or political actors. Black voters were 40 percent less likely to vote for Black candidates when they used racially divisive rhetoric in campaign appeals (Stout 2015).

When explaining his findings, Stout (2015) contends that Black voters may be less likely to support candidates who offer negative racial appeals because Black voters think their strong stances on race make them less electable. Although this argument is persuasive, Stout's (2015) findings may be driven by his coding scheme. Stout (2015) aggregates various negative racial appeals without separating the target of the message. As a result, it is unclear what types of negative racial appeals Black voters are rejecting and why. Put simply, Stout's (2015) findings may demonstrate that Black candidates face an electoral penalty from Black voters when using negative racial appeals to criticize Black leaders for failing to endorse their campaigns.

For example, Stout's (2015) negative racial appeal coding scheme captures statements from Black candidates who used racial appeals to question the blackness of political adversaries. Among them, Democrat and South Carolina gubernatorial hopeful, Theo Mitchell called Black leaders who did not endorse him, "Uncle Toms," and charged that "these are the people we must expose" (Stout 2015). While these pleas are intended to court Black support, they are fundamentally different from other negative appeals that denounce racial prejudice and discrimination.

Electability and Candidate Support

Beyond racial appeals, scholars have relied on observational and experimental studies to measure how a candidate's electability, or their chances of winning general election contests influences their standing among voters (Bateson 2020; Rickerhauser and Aldrich 2007; Abramowitz 1989). Using exit poll data from the 1988 presidential primaries, Abramowitz (1989) finds that white Democrats and Republicans are more likely to vote for candidates who are viewed as more electable. This effect is driven by views of the candidate's viability or standing in the primary contest. Candidates who were viewed as most likely to win their party's primary were also seen as the most electable politician for their party in the general contest (Abramowitz 1989).

Using a survey experiment, Rickerhauser and Aldrich (2007) find that when positive electability information is introduced, voters feel warmer towards candidates on feeling thermometers. Negative electoral framing had no influence on affect towards candidates (Rickerhauser and Aldrich 2007). Nevertheless, not all candidates are afforded the chance to reap the benefits of electability. Americans view white male politicians as more electable than their equally qualified Black male, and Black and white female counterparts (Bateson 2020). This causes voters to engage in strategic discrimination whereby they hesitate to support candidates from marginalized groups out of fears that others will react negatively to their campaigns (Bateson 2020). Overall, this research suggests that candidates gain an electoral benefit from being viewed as electable (Bateson 2020; Simas 2017; Rickerhauser and Aldrich 2007; Abramowitz 1989).

Electability, Negative Racial Appeals, and Understanding Black Vote Choice

Still, our understanding of racial appeals, electability frames, and subsequent political behavior is quite limited, especially when focusing on Black voters. I offer four main empirical questions that emerge from this research. First, methodological choices in current research on racial appeals has provided a limited understanding of how Black Americans respond to negative racial appeals that center on group marginalization (Stout 2015; Stephens 2013). It is unknown whether candidates gain an electoral advantage among Black voters for using negative racial appeals to rebuke systemic racism in American society. Second, studies on electability rely on nationally representative samples of U.S. adults or student samples from predominantly white institutions, resulting in few observations from Black Americans (Bateson 2020; Rickenhauser and Aldrich 2007). Other work removed Black Americans from their sample population entirely (Abramowitz 1989). Therefore, we understand how electability influences the political behavior of white Americans, but we do not know whether electoral framing has a similar effect on the choices of Black voters.

Third, studies that probe the effect of racial appeals and electability on vote choice have studied the effects of these framing messages independently. This approach oversimplifies the complexity of many electoral contests. We know that voters infer a candidate's electability based on their identity and the rhetoric they employ when campaigning (Bateson 2020; Harris 2012). Since the relationship between racial appeals and electability is inherently interactive, we must measure whether controversial candidates or those who articulate explicit racial messages can

combat strategic discrimination (Bateson 2020) by conveying their positive electoral chances.

Finally, research has not examined whether electability matters disparately in different electoral scenarios. In the context of this study, the question that follows is: How do Black voters stave off candidates who are hostile to their group interests? Research has yet to examine whether Black voters or partisans generally are more reliant on electability as a voting heuristic when they perceive a credible and threatening candidate from the opposing party. Politicians and news outlets discuss racial issues more frequently than they did in the past (Stout 2020). Additionally, election forecasting and horse-race news coverage that tells voters who's ahead and behind in electoral races has increased in recent election cycles (Westwood, Messing, and Lelkes 2020). As both factors gain increasing salience in political communications, research is needed to investigate how these messages interact to influence vote choice. In the next section, I review my theory of racial pragmatism to explain how Black voters choose among Democrats in primary elections.

Racial Pragmatism in Primary Elections

In an op-ed for the Los Angeles Times during the 2020 Democratic presidential primary elections, columnist Erin Aubry Kaplan offered the following assessment.

Black folk are *too* certain. We vote pragmatically. We vote not for the candidate who will do us the most good but for the one who will do us the least damage. We choose politicians who won't create solutions for our many legitimate crises but who will put the brakes on the worst offenses that already exist... We don't vote ideology because we usually can't: United States history has been so hostile to black interests and racial equality that there usually aren't mainstream candidates who truly represent the way we think,

what we believe. Politically, black people have to be on the defensive — voting for what someone isn't, not for what he or she is (Kaplan 2020).

The quote above illustrates an important tradeoff that Black voters face while voting in primary elections. When evaluating racial group interests under a normative lens, one would expect that more often than not, Black Americans will support candidates who use racial appeals to show their commitment to representing Black voters and their interests. Nonetheless, these decisions are not made in a vacuum and context plays an important role.

For decades, Black voters have operated as members of a captured political group—forced to make political decisions under varying levels of threat. Historically, Black voters have lacked the necessary power to force Democratic Party leaders to take their interests seriously, while simultaneously facing outward hostility from the Republican Party (Frymer 2010). Resultingly, Black voters must decide how to maximize the racial group's political power while also working to mitigate threats posed by Republican partisans.

Still today, Black voters face great hostility from racially conservative Republicans. At a time where Republicans have used party control of state legislatures to limit the voting rights and political power of Black Americans through restrictive voter identification laws²⁷, the purging of voter rolls²⁸, closing of polling locations in predominately Black communities,²⁹ and racist rhetoric that essentializes

²⁷ <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/23/659784277/republican-voter-suppression-efforts-are-targeting-minorities-journalist-says>

²⁸ <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/politics/elections/judge-denis-lawsuit-to-have-200000-people-restored-to-georgia-voter-rolls/85-5143e746-adf6-454e-82f8-58bd1074b0f5>

²⁹ <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/17/924527679/why-do-nonwhite-georgia-voters-have-to-wait-in-line-for-hours-too-few-polling-pl>

Black Americans as criminals,³⁰ the risks faced by Black voters are immense. Instead of supporting Democrats who appeal to their group interests, I expect that in certain situations, Black voters will exercise racial pragmatism and favor moderate Democrats who are more electable as a form of protection against threat. I offer the following hypotheses to test my theory of racial pragmatism in Democratic primary elections.

Hypotheses

As referenced through Dawson's (1994) Black utility heuristic, Black voters support candidates who are seen as representing the interests of Black Americans broadly. Therefore, when Black voters are unaware of which Democrat is more electable, and have no information about the Republican's racial attitudes, Black voters will be more likely to vote for racially progressive Democrats who signal their accountability to Black voters.

H1: At the baseline of no threat and no electability information, Black voters will prefer progressive Democrats who offer racial appeals to critique racism in American society over their moderate co-partisan.

Nonetheless, I expect intragroup differences in candidate support that are driven by racial pragmatism. In *Chapter 1*, I identify pragmatic Black voters as group members who feel that Black Americans are constrained in their ability to vocalize and successfully secure a racialized political agenda that disparately benefits Black people. Based on the belief that Black Americans are thwarted politically by racial prejudice, pragmatic Black voters favor political strategies and politicians that

³⁰ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/15/racist-appeals-heat-up-final-weeks-before-midterms/>

deemphasize racial issues. Due to this racial moderation, in the baseline condition where respondents are unaware of the progressive candidate's electability, and the threat posed by their Republican opponent, I hypothesize that when compared to their less pragmatic counterparts, pragmatic Black voters will offer more support for moderate Democrats.

H2: At the baseline of no threat and no electability information, as racial pragmatism increases, Black voters will offer more support for moderate Democrats.

Returning to the racial group level, I expect that Black voters' support for progressive Democrats is conditional on their electability and the threat posed by their Republican opponent. In primary elections, partisans are more likely to vote strategically for candidates in their party who do not share their similar ideological views as the politician's electability increases (Simas 2017). For Black voters, I anticipate that this pragmatic behavior is magnified when under threat. Decision making is altered when risk and the probabilities of receiving certain outcomes are identified. In situations involving risk, decisions are made with respect to prospects and gambles (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). When faced with situations where risky choices may lead to gains, individuals tend towards risk aversion and prefer outcomes that have a lower expected utility, but higher probability of materializing (Kahneman and Tversky 1979).

When applied to political contests for Black Americans, the probability of political success is identified through their desired candidate's electability, while risk is activated when in danger of representation from a racist Republican politician. To avoid wasting their vote on a progressive politician who has little chance of winning

the general election, I expect that when under threat, Black voters will offer less support for unelectable progressive candidates as a form of risk aversion. To overcome this pragmatic behavior, similar to Bateson's (2020) work on strategic discrimination, progressive candidates must emphasize their electability. Once Black Americans are convinced that the progressive candidate can defeat their threatening Republican opponent, they have no incentive to rely on pragmatism and vote pragmatically. I hypothesize that when under threat, Black Americans will be more likely to vote for racially progressive candidates when framed as electable instead of unelectable.

H3: When under threat—faced with the prospect of representation from racist Republicans—Black Americans will offer more support for progressive Democrats as their electability increases.

To further tease out the considerations that motivate vote choice in these elections, I focus on negative voting. Negative voting occurs when individuals cast a ballot for a politician not because they necessarily support them and their policy goals, but rather they oppose that candidate's opponent (Fiorina and Shepsle 1989). As outlined in *H3*, I presume that when under threat, Black voters will place more emphasis on electability in Democratic primaries to ensure that the party nominates the candidate who is best equipped to defeat threatening Republicans. When asked what motivated their voting decision, I predict that when under threat, Black Americans will be more likely to say they formed their vote in opposition of Republican politicians.

H4: Black Americans will be more likely to cast a negative vote when under threat as opposed to when threat is not activated.

Research Design

To test my hypotheses, I fielded a survey experiment through Qualtrics' online panel between May 28th and June 5th, 2022. I recruited 853 Black American adults with demographic matching on age and gender to U.S. Census statistics. As expected, the vast majority of respondents identified as Democrats or Democratic leaners (73 percent). Only 10 percent of respondents identified as Republican partisans or leaners.

Experimental Manipulation

The study was conducted using a 3x2³¹ experimental design where I varied both the electability of a contrived racially progressive Democrat, and the threat posed by their prospective Republican opponent in the general election. The study coincided with real-time primary contests ahead of the 2022 midterm elections to boost the external validity of the study. The experimental stimulus³² was a news story covering a Democratic primary contest featuring two Democrats vying for the party's nomination to compete against the eventual Republican opponent, "Todd Evans." The treatments resembled CBS News articles complete with formatting and advertisements to make the news stories and information included appear as authentic as possible. In all 6 conditions, the first Democrat was framed as a racial progressive, while the other Democrat was portrayed as a moderate.

³¹ Roughly 143 respondents in each condition.

³² All six experimental conditions are located in the Chapter 4 appendix.

The racially progressive candidate articulated a racial appeal modeled after statements made by U.S. Senator Cory Booker in 2019. In a Congressional hearing to investigate the prospect of reparations as redress for slavery and discrimination, Booker argued that Black Americans have been oppressed economically for generations because of discriminatory economic policies. The racially progressive candidate articulated Senator Booker's message before signaling their commitment to addressing the deleterious effects of inequality by saying, "we need to address the persistence of racism in our country head on." The moderate Democrat took a deracialized approach by avoiding racial issues and using universal language to appeal to Americans broadly. The story explicitly stated that this temperate candidate has "campaigning as a moderate, focusing less on polarizing issues and more on universal economic policies to help find common ground and deliver results to Americans."

I manipulated the electability of the progressive Democrat only. Respondents received no direct information about the moderate Democrat's electoral chances. When framing the progressive as unelectable in 2/6 conditions, the story noted that the progressive would hurt Democrats' chances to win the congressional seat due to their inability to rally support from Democrats and Independents within the district. To reinforce their lack of electability, I stated that polls projected that the progressive would lose in the general election when competing against the Republican opponent. When electable in 2/6 conditions, the story mentioned the progressive's solid support among voters before referencing their strong polling results in a horse-race preview of

the general election. In the final 2/6 conditions, respondents received no information about the progressive candidate’s electability to serve as the baseline.

Table 4.1. Summary of Research Design and Group Level Hypotheses for Democratic Candidates

	Unelectable Progressive		No Electability Information		Electable Progressive	
	Progressive	Moderate	Progressive	Moderate	Progressive	Moderate
No Republican Threat	+	-	+	-	+	-
Republican Threat	-	+	+	-	+	-

Note: In this research design, I only manipulate the electability of the progressive Democrat. In all conditions, respondents receive no information about the moderate Democrat's electoral chances.

Plus, signs "+" denote the candidate that I expect to receive more support in a given condition. The minus sign "-" indicates that I expect the candidate to receive less support than their co-partisan in that condition.

Finally, I manipulated threat by varying the information presented about the Republican nominee. In half of the conditions, the Republican was framed as “non-threatening” by specifying that this politician had “pledged to work across the aisle with Democrats in Congress.” I provide this information to stress that this Republican valued bipartisanship in attempts to signal their status as a racial and political moderate. In the other 3/6 conditions, the Republican was framed as a threat by painting them as racist.

Modeled after the recent appearances and speeches of U.S. House members, Paul Gosar and Marjorie Taylor Greene, at the America First Political Action Conference, a conference organized by white nationalists and neo-Nazi’s, the story indicated that the Republican nominee appeared at a similar event. To show their hostility to Black voters in particular, the story indicated that the Republican had used racial slurs against Black people in the past. This information is also taken from real-

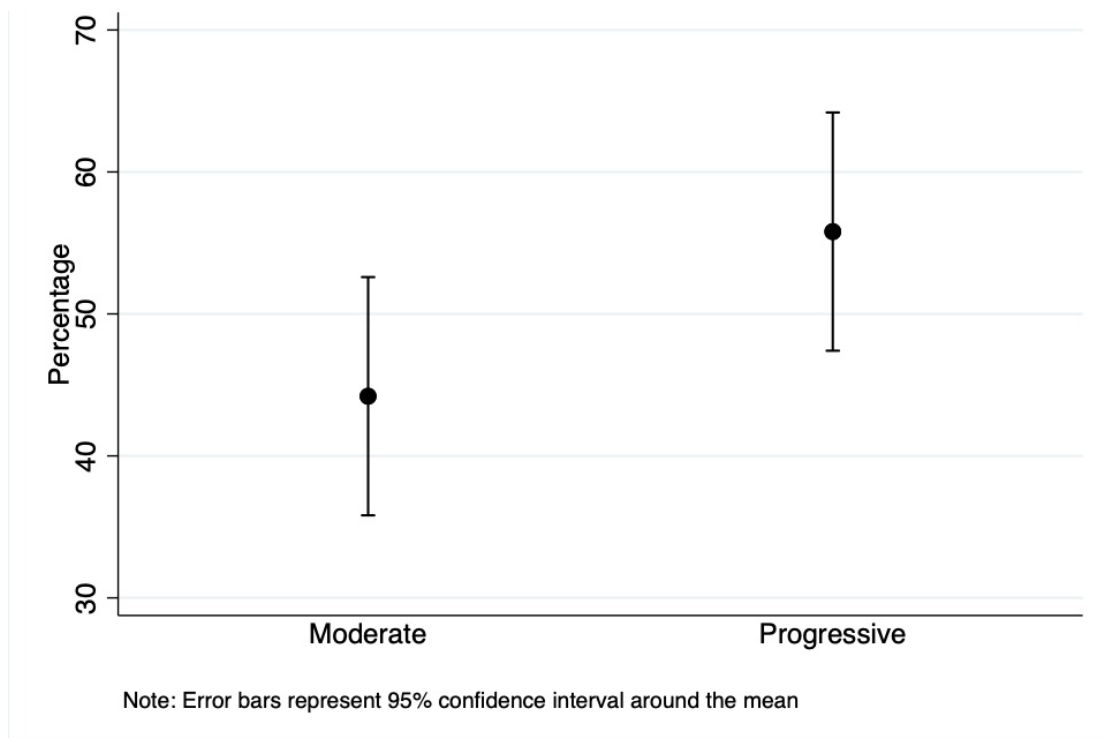
world examples of Republicans using racial epithets against Black people (Wong 2021; Moreno 2020).

Results

Vote Choice in Baseline Condition

When measuring vote choice, I asked respondents to choose between the two Democrats in the news story to force a discrete choice. To analyze *HI* and whether Black voters are more likely to vote for progressive Democrats instead of their moderate co-partisans, in *Figure 4.1*, I present the mean support for the progressive and moderate Democrat in this baseline condition of no threat and no electability.

Figure 4.1 Mean Support for Democratic Candidates in Baseline Condition (95% CI)



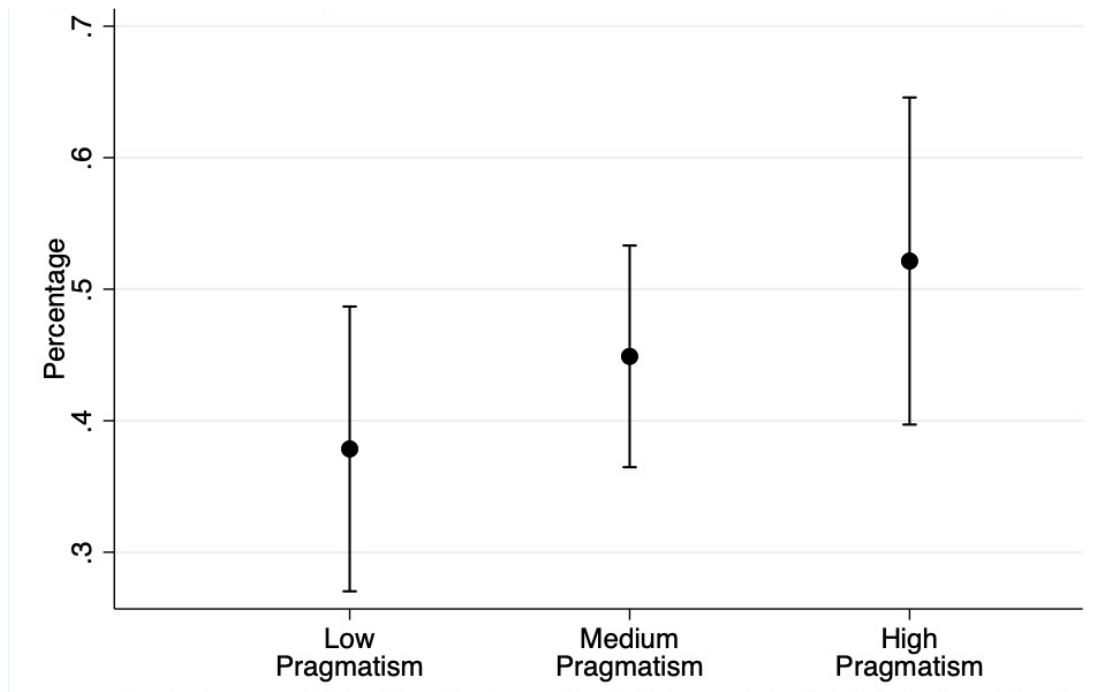
When looking at *Figure 4.1*, I find visual support for *H1*. When Black Americans have no information about the electoral context outside of the candidate's racial attitudes or lack thereof, Black voters are more likely to vote for politicians who use negative racial appeals to advocate for Black Americans. Fifty-six percent of respondents indicated a vote for the racial progressive while 44 percent opted for the moderate. When running a one-tailed t-test, I find that this 12-percentage point difference in support between progressive and moderate Democrats is marginally significant ($p=.087$),

Racial Pragmatism and Vote Choice

In *Chapter 2*, I find that as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans report more moderate positions on racial policies including reparations. Now, I assess whether this moderation extends to voting behavior and whether pragmatists offer elevated levels of support to moderate Democrats who run deracialized campaigns that avoid referencing race.

Respondents expressed pronounced levels of racial pragmatism. The mean of racial pragmatism is .62 with a standard deviation of .18 points among this sample. To evaluate the relationship between pragmatism and support for moderate Democrats, I interacted the treatment indicator with the continuous racial pragmatism scale. Similar to the previous chapters, I identify respondents as low in pragmatism if they scored one standard deviation below the mean of the racial pragmatism scale. Respondents at the mean of the racial pragmatism scale are classified as having medium pragmatism, while participants who scored one standard deviation above the mean of racial pragmatism are labeled as high in pragmatism.

Figure 4.2 Predicted Support for Moderate Democrat at Different Levels of Pragmatism (95% CI)



In *Figure 4.2*, I present the predicted values from this interaction in the baseline condition where respondents received no information about the progressive politician’s electability, or the threat posed by their Republican opponent. This analysis suggests that as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are increasingly likely to vote for moderate Democrats who use universal rhetoric and forego racial appeals. As expected, respondents who scored low in racial pragmatism were strongly liberal on race. These individuals who reject concessions on race had just a 38 percent chance of favoring the moderate Democrat over their progressive opponent who appealed to Black voters.

Respondents who expressed medium levels of pragmatism were more likely to vote for the moderate. Forty-five percent of individuals who expressed moderate

levels of pragmatism favored the moderate Democrat. Finally, respondents who expressed the highest levels of pragmatism were most likely to back the moderate. Fifty-two percent of racially pragmatic Black Americans opted for the moderate Democrat, while 48 percent favored their progressive co-partisan.

When comparing these predicted estimates, I find that the 7-point difference between individuals with moderate and high levels of pragmatism is marginally significant ($p=.092$). Additionally, the 7-point difference between individuals who expressed medium vs low levels of pragmatism, and the 14-percentage point difference between respondents who reported high vs low levels of pragmatism are both statistically significant when using one-tailed tests ($p=.092$, and $p=.088$ respectively).

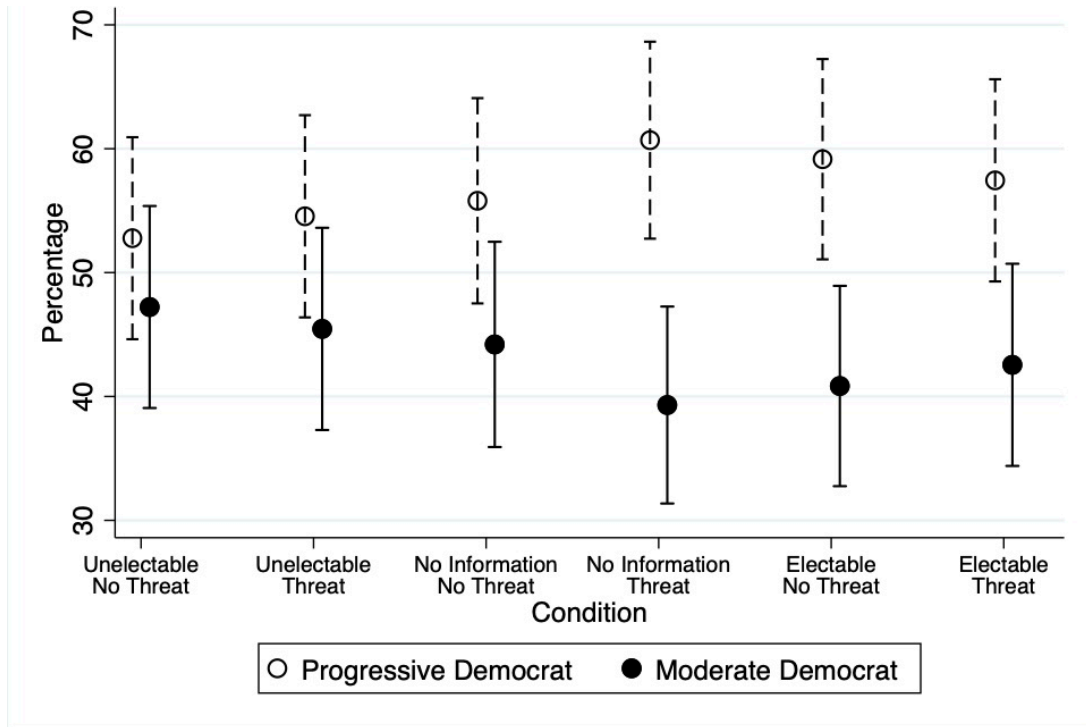
I find support for *H2* and my expectation that pragmatic Black Americans offer elevated levels of support for moderate Democrats who avoid racial issues. Although pragmatism is positively correlated with support for moderate Democrats, the predicted values indicate that pragmatists do not oppose progressive Democrats. Instead, people with medium and high levels of pragmatism were equally likely to vote for both the progressive and moderate Democrat depicted in the news stories.

Voting Preferences Across Conditions

Next, I turn to *H3*, where I presume that when under threat, Black Americans will be more likely to vote for racially progressive Democrats when framed as electable, when compared to a situation in which the candidate is unlikely to win the general election contest. In *Figure 4.3*, I find that in the electable threat condition, 57 percent of respondents favored the progressive candidate. Comparatively, in the

unelectable threat condition, 55 percent of respondents favored the progressive Democrat. This 2-percentage point difference is not statistically significant ($p=.622$), and I find no support for *H3*. When under threat, Black voters are equally likely to vote for racially progressive Democrats, irrespective of their electability.

Figure 4.3 *Vote Support for Democratic Primary Candidates Across Conditions (95% CI)*



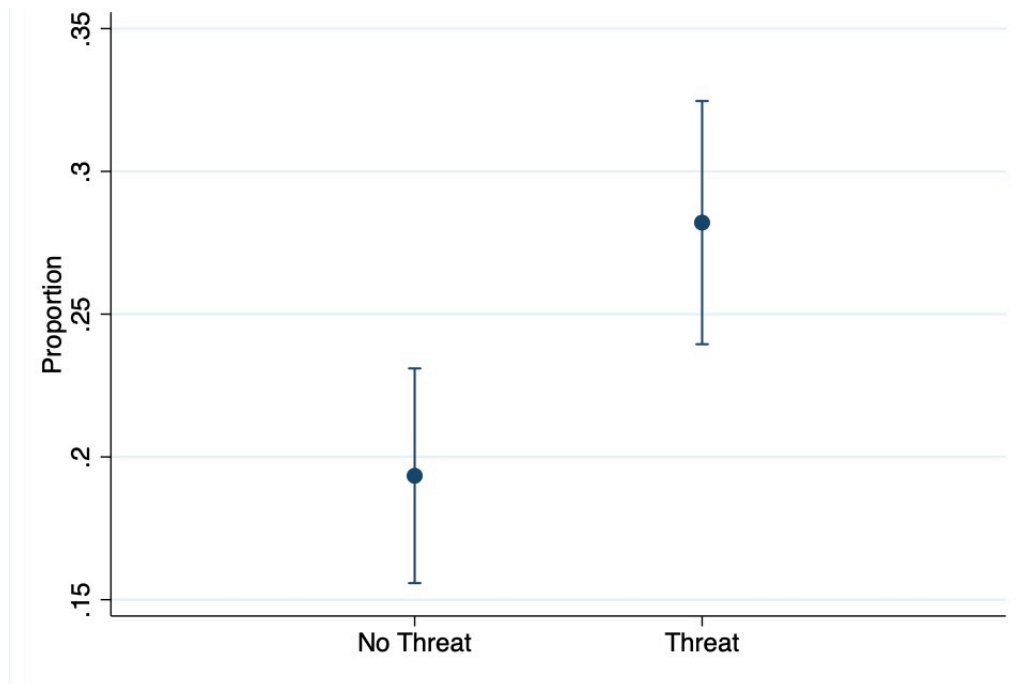
Negative Voting and Voter Motivations

Displayed in the appendix, I find that Black Americans feel colder towards and view Republicans as more hostile to their racial group when they have an established history of racism. Because of the racial hostility of the Republican politician as evidenced in this finding, I presumed that when under threat, Black Americans will be more likely to say they casted a negative vote in opposition to the Republican candidate. To investigate this, after respondents selected their preferred candidate, I asked: “What was most important in your view when deciding who to

support in this Democratic primary. Thirty-six percent said they casted a sincere vote for the candidate who agreed with them on important issues. Another 35 percent of respondents said their vote was primarily influenced by their desire to select the candidate who could do most to unite the country. Finally, 24 percent of respondents indicated that they voted negatively to select the candidate who had the best chance of defeating their Republican opponent in the general election. I focus on this near quarter of respondents whose vote was informed by negative concerns.

In *Figure 4.4*, I present the results of a bivariate logistic regression where I predict the likelihood of a negative vote across threat conditions. I find support for *H4*. When under threat, Black voters are more likely to prioritize electability to select the candidate who they view is best equipped to defeat their Republican opponent.

Figure 4.4 Likelihood of Negative Vote Across Threat Conditions (95% CI)



When exposed to a racially moderate Republican, Black Americans had just a 19 percent chance of voting negatively. Comparatively, Black Americans were nearly

50 percent more likely to vote negatively when under threat. When endangered with the prospect of representation from a Republican who is inimical towards their group interests, 28 percent of Black respondents said they voted for the candidate who was best suited to defeat this Republican in the general election. This 9-percentage point difference is statistically significant ($p=.003$).

Discussion

In this chapter, I hypothesized that when Black Americans are threatened with the prospect of representation from a racist Republican partisan, they would prioritize electability and favor moderate Democrats in primaries to give themselves the best chance to defeat this undesirable representative. I find that although Black Americans view racist Republicans as more injurious towards members of their racial group and are more likely to vote negatively to defeat these partisans, this threat did not cause Black voters to adjust their preferences and opt for moderate Democrats.

The null findings on vote choice may be driven by my inability to capture the emotions, dynamics, and consequences of real-world elections in the context of an experimental study. Pragmatic behavior centered on electability was evident among Black voters in the 2020 Presidential primaries. Polling from *The Hill/Harris-X* found that 66 percent of registered Black Democrats said it was more important to choose the candidate that had the best chance of defeating Donald Trump while only 34 percent said it was more important to choose the candidate who agreed with them on their top policy issue (Sheffield 2019).

In this study, only 24 percent of respondents said their vote primarily formed in opposition to the Republican candidate in the story. Although the articles did

induce threat, it is possible that since survey respondents knew that they were not at real risk of being represented by the racist Republican, they simply felt no pressure to alter their behavior. Without having to face a tangible consequence for not prioritizing electability, respondents rallied around their preferred candidate—progressive Democrats—regardless of their electability.

Despite this limitation, this study offers several contributions to the larger race and ethnic politics literature. First, diverging from previous studies that find that Black voters are unsupportive of candidates who offer negative and explicit racial appeals (Stout 2015; Stephens 2013), I find that Black voters are more likely to vote for progressive candidates who use these messages to condemn racism in American society. Additionally, this study demonstrates that Black voters differentiate between Republicans based on their racial attitudes. When Republicans have an established history of racism, Black Americans view them as more antagonistic to their racial group and are more likely to vote negatively to ensure their downfall in general elections.

Chapter 5: Pragmatism Outside of Politics and the Limits of Racial Pragmatism

Chapter Overview

In this dissertation, I proposed and tested a theory of racial pragmatism to evaluate public opinion and political behavior among Black Americans. In *Chapter 1*, I argued that similar to Black elites, a subset of Black Americans at the mass-public level have developed a racially pragmatic belief system that guides their political choices with respect to race. Through their experiences in the United States and use of the pragmatic method, I argue that pragmatic Black Americans suspect a racial backlash when race-conscious political strategies are used to advocate for social progress. To minimize this backlash, when striving for group advancement, pragmatic Black Americans favor political approaches that attempt to depolarize race and emphasize working within existing legislative institutions to produce gradual reform.

To evaluate my theory of racial pragmatism, in *Chapter 2*, I introduced a novel 8-item measure of racial pragmatism that operates on 4-dimensions: double consciousness, strategic deracialization, working within the system, and compromise. With a Cronbach's Alpha of .80, racial pragmatism is a reliable measure that helps us understand the political attitudes of Black Americans. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans expected greater political backlash from whites, report more moderate ideological opinions, and offer less support for racial policies including reparations and government aid to Black Americans. Despite perceiving greater backlash from whites, pragmatists are more open towards establishing cross-racial

coalitions with both whites and other racial minorities to help Black people get ahead in politics.

In *Chapter 3*, I evaluated whether threat framing induces racial pragmatism, causing Black Americans to moderate their liberal preferences on race. I found that when exposed to threatening counterarguments, pragmatic Black Americans are more likely to compromise and adjust their political attitudes when making decisions in the near future. Additionally, I find that as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans express a stronger preference for class-based instead of racialized affirmative action.

Using a 3x2 experiment in *Chapter 4*, I considered the electoral implications of racial pragmatism. In this experiment, I manipulated the electability of a racially progressive Democrat (unelectable vs electable vs no electability information) and the racial rhetoric of their contrived Republican opponent (racist vs not racist). I find that in the baseline condition of no electability information and no threat, as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans express a stronger preference for moderate Democrats who avoid racial issues. Nonetheless, pragmatists are equally likely to vote for moderate and racially progressive Democrats.

At the group level, I also find that Black Americans differentiate between Republicans based on their racial rhetoric and use different voting strategies to overcome threat. Black Americans feel colder towards Republican candidates on a feeling thermometer and view them as more hostile towards their group when these politicians use negative and explicit racial appeals to criticize the culture in Black communities. To overcome these hostile Republicans, Black voters are more likely to

say they casted a negative vote by prioritizing electability to select the candidate who they viewed as best equipped to defeat the racist Republican.

Pragmatism Outside of Politics

Before critiquing the belief system of racial pragmatism and concluding this dissertation, I want to conduct a few final analyses to evaluate pragmatic behavior and strategic deracialization outside of politics. This analysis is important for two primary reasons. First, in the preceding chapters, I have yet to look at perceptions of discrimination to verify that pragmatists' moderate attitudes on race are not due to conservatism or the belief that Black Americans face little discrimination at the group level (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001).

Second, if racial pragmatism and the racial moderation that follows is truly strategic instead of principled behavior, I would expect that in their daily lives, Black pragmatists at the mass-public level will utilize the same strategic deracialization tactics that pragmatic Black politicians adopt when attempting to advance in American politics. To examine these unexplored relationships, I revisit data from the Qualtrics survey used in *Chapter 2*. The sample pool includes 725 Black American adults with demographic matching on age and gender to U.S. Census statistics.

Perceptions of Discrimination

I rely on two survey questions to evaluate the extent to which Black people feel they encounter racial discrimination in the United States. In Column 1 of *Table 5.1*, I examine perceptions of group-level discrimination by asking: How much discrimination is there today in the United States against Black people? Seventy-one percent of Black Americans say there's "a great deal," or "a lot of discrimination."

Twenty-four percent say there's "a moderate amount," while 5 percent believe there's "a little" discrimination against Black Americans. Just 0.4 percent of respondents say that Black people face no discrimination at all, underscoring the need to update existing classifications of Black conservatives on race.

When looking at Column 1 of *Table 5.1*, I find additional evidence that pragmatism is distinct from Black conservatism. There is no relationship between racial pragmatism and the level of discrimination that Black Americans perceive against their racial group ($p=.628$). Therefore, the counterfactual is highly unlikely. It does not appear that pragmatists' apathy towards racial policies is borne from the ideological belief that Black Americans face little to no racial discrimination in the United States.

Using the regression model in Column 1 of *Table 5.1*, I find that respondents who express low levels of pragmatism have a predicted score of .78, while individuals high in pragmatism report a predicted value of .77. These estimates fall between perceiving "a great deal," and "a lot of discrimination." This finding offers additional evidence that racial pragmatism is distinct from Black conservatism. Despite scoring high in racial pragmatism, Black Americans still perceive high levels of racial discrimination against their ingroup.

Table 5.1. Racial Pragmatism and Perceptions of Racial Discrimination at the Group and Individual Level

VARIABLES	(1) Group Level Discrimination	(2) Personal Experiences with Racial Discrimination
Pragmatism	-0.024 (0.049)	1.50*** (0.44)
Linked Fate	0.087*** (0.019)	1.32*** (0.18)
Female	0.051*** (0.018)	-0.0070 (0.15)
Age	0.0015*** (0.00056)	-0.024*** (0.0049)
Education	-0.058 (0.043)	0.59 (0.38)
Partisanship	0.057* (0.031)	0.30 (0.27)
Ideology	0.038 (0.032)	0.23 (0.28)
South	0.028 (0.017)	-0.10 (0.15)
Income	-0.017 (0.034)	-0.36 (0.30)
/cut1		-0.32 (0.49)
/cut2		2.33*** (0.50)
Constant	0.59*** (0.056)	
Observations	721	722
R-squared	0.074	

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Results specified in column 1 are from linear regression. Results specified in column 2 are from ordered logit model due to the response options.

In Column 2 of *Table 5.1*, I measure personal experiences with discrimination by asking: “Thinking about your own experience, have you personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race? Twenty-seven percent of respondents say they’ve been discriminated against regularly, 52 percent experience discrimination from time to time, while 21 percent have never personally faced racial discrimination. I find that as racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans report experiencing racial discrimination more frequently in their personal lives.

Because ordered logit coefficients are difficult to interpret, I predicted the probability of a respondent saying they regularly experience racial discrimination using the regression model specified in Column 2 of *Table 5.1*. I find that respondents who score low in racial pragmatism have a 22 percent likelihood of saying they’re regularly discriminated against. Comparatively, individuals at the mean of pragmatism have a 26 percent chance, while respondents high in racial pragmatism have a 31 percent chance. The 9-point difference between individuals low vs high in pragmatism, and the 5-point difference between individuals with moderate vs high levels of racial pragmatism are both statistically significant at the .05 level.

Strategic Deracialization and Valuing White Perceptions

Now that we know that pragmatists perceive considerable levels of bias against their racial group, and face discrimination more often in their personal lives, I want to know whether they engage in the same strategic deracialization tactics that they expect politicians to perform. To measure reliance on code-switching, I asked respondents: “How often do you change your speech and dialect (also known as

“codeswitching”) to get ahead in America?” Just 15 percent said they code switch “often” or always,” while 30 percent “sometimes “code switch to procure social advantages. Fifty-four percent code switch “rarely” or “never.”

In Column 1 of *Table 5.2* I find that when controlling for personal experiences with discrimination, linked fate, and other sociodemographic factors, pragmatists are more likely to code-switch to compensate for prejudice and ascend in America. Individuals who expressed high levels of racial pragmatism have a predicted score of .36, which falls between code-switching “sometimes,” or “rarely.” This estimate is 6 percentage points larger than the predicted value for racial idealists and 3- percentage points higher than the predicted value for individuals who expressed moderate levels of racial pragmatism. Both differences between respondents who expressed high vs low and high vs moderate levels of pragmatism are statistically significant at the .05 level.

To measure how much value Black Americans place on white perceptions—the manifestation of double consciousness—I asked: “When making decisions about how to present yourself in majority-white settings, how much, if at all, do you consider how white people may perceive you? Thirty-six percent of Black Americans say they consider whites’ perceptions “a great deal,” or “lot.” Thirty percent consider these external perspectives “a moderate amount,” 13 percent care “a little,” while 20 percent do not reflect on how their self-presentation will be scrutinized by whites.

Table 5.2. Racial Pragmatism and the Reliance on Code-Switching and Double Consciousness

	(1) Personal Codeswitching Frequency	(2) Value on White-Perceptions When Determining How to Self-Present
Pragmatism	0.18*** (0.060)	0.44*** (0.068)
Linked Fate	0.039 (0.024)	0.10*** (0.028)
Personal Experiences with Discrimination	0.16*** (0.032)	0.17*** (0.036)
Ideology	0.099** (0.038)	0.0088 (0.044)
Education	0.12** (0.053)	-0.19*** (0.060)
Partisanship	0.096** (0.037)	0.12*** (0.042)
Female	-0.019 (0.021)	-0.032 (0.024)
South	-0.014 (0.021)	-0.015 (0.024)
Income	0.0018 (0.042)	-0.066 (0.048)
age	-0.0061*** (0.00069)	-0.00066 (0.00078)
Constant	0.22*** (0.069)	0.20** (0.079)
Observations	722	722
R-squared	0.198	0.174

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Again, I find a strong relationship between racial pragmatism and the degree to which Black Americans adjust their self-presentation in the presence of whites. The effects across pragmatism are vast—a shift across the range of racial pragmatism is associated with a 44-percentage point increase in Black Americans willingness to

exercise double consciousness and ponder how their behavior will be judged by whites.

Taken together, these results suggest that pragmatists may be more aware of the triggers that induce racialized political backlash because they personally suffer from interpersonal racism more frequently. These personal encounters with racial discrimination can serve as the “experience” required for pragmatic behavior (Dewey 1929; James 1907). In other words, pragmatists can envision political backlash because they’ve experienced racism and discrimination in their personal lives. This knowledge helps them develop a pragmatic response repertoire centered around strategic deracialization to navigate their social and political reality. When attempting to compensate for prejudice and forestall discrimination, pragmatists adopt white norms by code-switching and considering their behavior and self-presentation will be received by whites.

Normative Support for Strategic Deracialization

Next, I analyze pragmatists’ attitudes on the value of strategic deracialization. This analysis considers whether pragmatists view different forms of strategic deracialization as tactically beneficial in helping Black people ascend in American society.

Similar to the code-switching question above, I measure normative support for code-switching by asking respondents: “How important is it that Black Americans change their speech and dialect (also known as “codeswitching”) to get ahead in America?” Respondents are more likely support code-switching in theory than they are to actively employ this deracialization strategy. Thirty-seven percent of Black

Americans say code-switching is “extremely” or “very important” in helping Black Americans get ahead in America. Thirty-three percent say code-switching is “moderately important,” while 30 percent say code-switching is “not very” or “not at all” important.

To measure support for a form of strategic deracialization primarily exercised by Black women campaigning for office (Brown and Lemi 2021), I asked: “How important is it that Black people keep certain hairstyles (ex. Chemically straightened) over others (ex. Natural hair or dreadlocks) to get ahead in majority-white settings?” Thirty-six percent say hair deracialization is “very” or “extremely” important. Alternatively, 39 percent say it’s “not very” or “not at all” for Black people to avoid natural hair or dreadlocks when attempting to get ahead in majority-white settings.

In Column 1 of *Table 5.3*, I estimate support for code-switching. In Column 2, I evaluate preferences towards hair deracialization. Even after controlling for perceptions of group level discrimination, I find that racial pragmatism strongly correlates with support for strategic deracialization. Across the range of the racial pragmatism scale, respondents are 62 percentage points more likely to say that it’s important for Black people to code switch to get ahead in America, and they’re 70 percentage points more likely to endorse hair deracialization as an important tool to rise in majority-white settings.

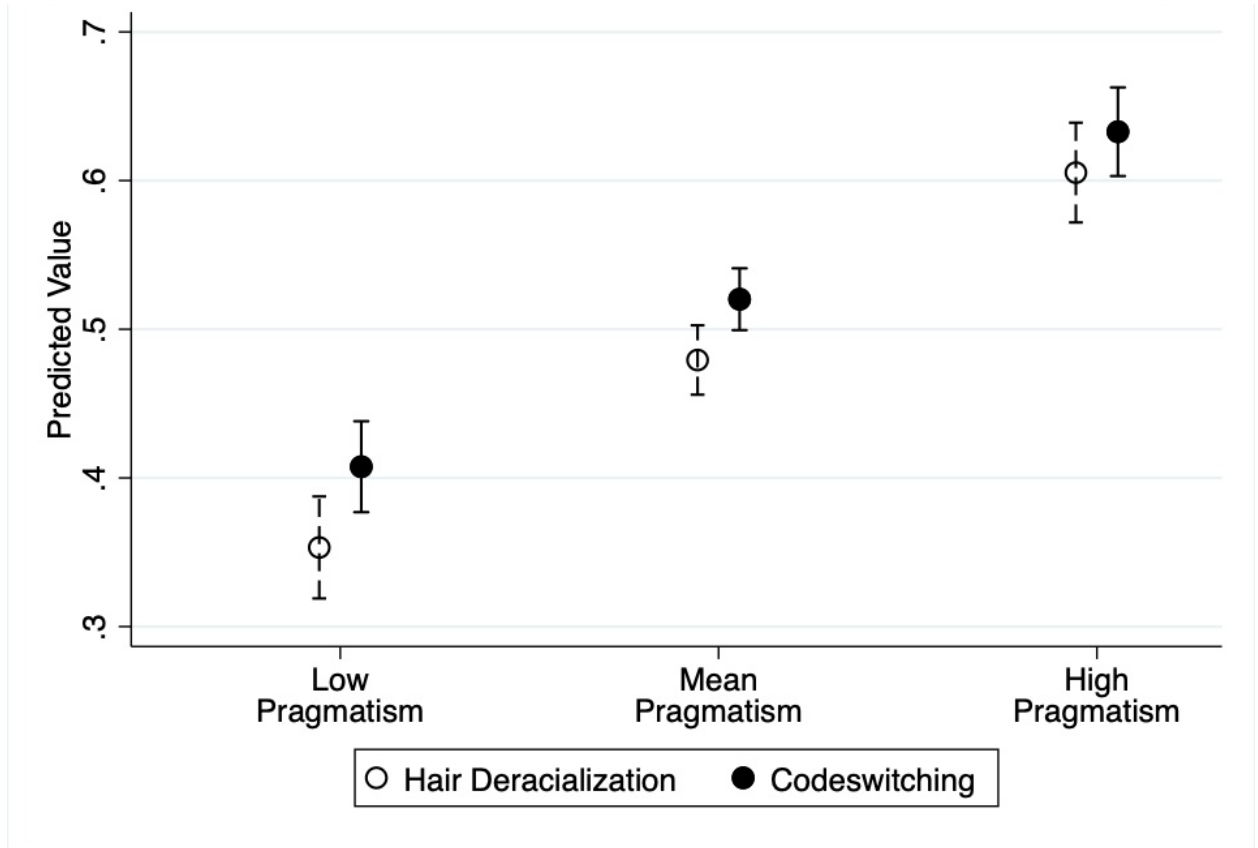
Table 5.3. Support for Code-Switching and Hair Deracialization

	(1) Support for Code- Switching	(2) Support for Hair Deracialization
Pragmatism	0.62*** (0.062)	0.70*** (0.070)
Linked Fate	0.10*** (0.025)	0.064** (0.028)
Perceptions of Anti- Black Discrimination	0.11** (0.047)	0.089* (0.053)
Ideology	0.010 (0.040)	-0.025 (0.045)
Education	-0.034 (0.055)	-0.15** (0.061)
Partisanship	0.085** (0.039)	0.065 (0.044)
Female	-0.0039 (0.022)	-0.063** (0.025)
South	-0.0093 (0.021)	-0.00054 (0.024)
Income	-0.0085 (0.043)	-0.00093 (0.049)
Age	-0.0037*** (0.00070)	-0.0029*** (0.00079)
Constant	0.14* (0.076)	0.19** (0.085)
Observations	721	721
R-squared	0.207	0.206

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Figure 5.1 Normative Support for Forms of Strategic Deracialization At Different Levels of Pragmatism (95% CI)



When looking at predicted values in *Figure 5.1*, I find that a shift from one standard deviation below, to one standard deviation above the mean of racial pragmatism captures a 25-percentage point increase in normative support for wearing chemically straightened hairstyles over dreadlocks, and a 23-percentage point increase in the embrace of code-switching.

Collectively, these findings paint a fuller picture of who racial pragmatists are. These are individuals who suffer from discrimination and engage in accommodation by adopting white norms and deemphasizing their racial identities. Much like their elite counterparts, pragmatists pay close attention to how their behavior will be received by whites when trying to navigate majority-white settings. These findings

reveal that pragmatism is both strategic *and* principled. While pragmatists strategically moderate their self-presentation to increase their chances of getting ahead, they still normatively back these strategies as effective tools for helping Black people climb the social ladder in America.

It's important to note that across all studies, the majority of Black Americans express prominent levels of racial pragmatism. In the results presented above, 61% of Black Americans scored above the midpoint of the racial pragmatism measure. This embrace of racial pragmatism by a majority of Black Americans provides insight into the complex and strategic actions they incessantly perform when trying to survive and better themselves in America. In the following sections, I expand on what racial pragmatism means for Black Americans and identify the limitations of relying on racial pragmatism and accommodationist tactics.

Racial Pragmatism as a Coping Strategy vs Belief System

Racial pragmatism serves several purposes for Black Americans. For some, pragmatism offers a survival mechanism or coping strategy to help compensate for prejudice. Scholars have produced volumes of evidence that demonstrates how discrimination negatively impacts Black Americans' wellbeing. Individuals who experience more frequent racial discrimination are more likely to suffer from emotional distress, generalized anxiety, and depression (Kessler, Mickelson, and Williams 1999). Racism also restricts Black Americans' opportunities for professional and personal advancement. In a study on employment discrimination, Pager (2003) finds that Black applicants without a criminal record are less likely to be

called back for employment opportunities than white Americans with a criminal record.

As a problem-focused coping strategy, racial pragmatism helps Black Americans engage in planful problem solving at the individual level. The 8-actions measured in the pragmatism scale provide group members with an outline of best practices to follow when attempting to forestall interpersonal racism. The benefits of this coping strategy are seen in the results presented at the start and in the appendix of this chapter. As pragmatism increases, Black Americans express that they experience racial discrimination more often in their personal lives. In spite of these personal experiences with discrimination, pragmatists remain upbeat. As racial pragmatism increases, Black Americans are more optimistic³³ in their belief that group members will receive reparations and achieve racial equality in their lifetimes. In this sense, pragmatism provides hope. By engaging in deracialized tactics, pragmatists believe that they can achieve success in America and avoid prejudiced encounters.

For others, racial pragmatism is simply a belief system or ideology that consistently guides their worldview. Politically, pragmatism helps individuals identify racial backlash and determine which candidates, social policies, and political tactics to favor. Outside of politics, pragmatism helps group members decide how to best present themselves when positioned in majority-white settings. Like respectability politics, pragmatism tells group members the “best ways” of gaining entrée into white society (Jefferson 2023; Higginbotham 1993).

³³ Results presented in Appendix *Table A5.9*

Despite serving these important roles, racial pragmatism is a flawed belief system that relies on behaviors that uphold our unjust racial hierarchy rather than challenge it. This is a common critique that Black politics scholars levy upon the modern class of post-racial, and pragmatic Black politicians who assumed office following the civil rights movement (Spence 2015; Harris 2012; Tate 2010; Gillespie 2010; Cohen 1999; Walters and Smith 1999; Smith 1996). Under the justification of “practicality,” pragmatists deracialize to secure individual benefits that come at the expense of group. In following sections, I discuss the limitations of racial pragmatism.

Accommodation Tactics and Racial Justice

Pragmatists utilize tactics that accommodate the status quo. When doing this, pragmatists fail to consistently engage in system challenging behaviors that are required to achieve racial justice (Walters and Smith 1999). In every example of pragmatism articulated throughout this dissertation, the burden of compromise is always placed on the group whose rights and political power are endangered—Black Americans. We see this in Bell’s (2004) concept of racial fortuity. Black Americans are always expected to compromise and involuntarily sacrifice their rights to settle conflicts between opposing factions of white Americans (Bell 2004). White Americans who hold racist and racially moderate views are not pressured to compromise in these scenarios, leading to a status-quo bias.

For example, the results presented at the start of this chapter demonstrate that pragmatists are keenly aware that racial discrimination constrains their life chances and limits their ability to engage in authentic self-expression. Instead of outwardly

fighting for inclusivity and fair treatment, pragmatists compromise by altering their self-presentation in majority-white settings. These individuals acquiesce to dominant white norms by code-switching and wearing their hair in “socially acceptable” styles. In these conflicts, white Americans can maintain their biased views without question or consequence while Black Americans are compelled to adjust their behavior to increase their chances of receiving the fair treatment they innately deserve. The status quo of anti-Blackness is maintained as Black Americans bear the responsibility for reducing racism instead of prejudiced aggressors.

Politically, pursuing advancement through accommodation means that pragmatists are unwilling to consistently advocate for progressive racial causes. Black Americans lag behind whites in terms of wealth, educational attainment, and occupational prestige among many other metrics (Darity and Mullen 2022). Rather than advancing legislation—such as reparations—that can directly improve Black Americans’ life chances, pragmatists abstain from these policies because they know that white Americans will reject them. Pragmatists cede ground on racial issues by resigning themselves to their pragmatism and their expectation that white opposition cannot be overcome through confrontation. Pragmatists fail to challenge anti-Black sentiments across the electorate, and this impedes the group’s ability to achieve restorative justice.

In terms of electoral politics, Black politicians and voters make compromises on race to maintain harmony within the Democratic Party (Frymer 2010). These compromises however keep Black Americans dependent on the Democratic Party and white voters, thus weakening the group’s political leverage (Walters 1988). For Black

voters, dependent leverage is an outcome where group members continue to vote for Democrats no matter how little they deliver for their Black constituents (Walters 1988). In some cases, Black voters compromise by supporting electable and moderate Democrats to help defeat racist Republicans (Fawcett 2020). Although this can help Black Americans avoid the negative socioeconomic consequences associated with Republican presidencies (Hajnal and Horowitz (2014), this compromise doesn't necessarily move Black Americans towards racial justice in the long-term.

Black Americans pragmatically accept the lesser of two evils at the ballot box (Kaplan 2020; Groenendyk 2012). When these deracialized and moderate Democrats win because voters pragmatically favored them because of their electability, important idealistic concerns such as their accountability to Black voters becomes secondary. Over time, as Black partisans express a greater willingness to vote for deracialized politicians, their interests will only become more neglected within legislative systems. In other words, if Democrats can continue to win Black support without appealing to or delivering results to this constituency, Black voters will continue to be relegated in American politics.

Embracing Individualism and Endless Compromise

Pragmatism is an outcome of Black Americans' political socialization. Black voters are socialized within both the Black and white communities through exposure to media and dominant narratives (Walton 1985). A consequence of this socialization is that the external values of white Americans are superimposed onto Black belief systems. For example, during the 1984 presidential campaign, white elites opposed Jesse Jackson's candidacy (Walton 1985). Instead of plainly stating their opposition,

these elites tried to justify their stance by arguing that Jackson's lack of electability would prevent him from being able to help his Black supporters (Walton 1985). Responding to these concerns, pragmatic Black elites such as Julian Bond and Richard Arlington used slogans such as "He can't win" to depress Black turnout in the Democratic presidential primary (Walton 1985).

This situation shows that Black Americans take political cues from white voters and white elites. According to Walton (1985), political socialization is a three-step process for Black Americans. First, Black Americans receive political socialization from the white community who is trying to sway Black voters into embracing their positions (Walton 1985). Second, Black Americans then either circumvent or redefine these political outlooks—presented by whites—to match the needs of the Black community. Finally, the result of redefinition leads to two potential outcomes. In some cases, Black Americans roundly reject this attempted socialization from whites, adopting more militant and progressive political orientations that meet the needs of the Black community (Walton 1985). In other cases, Black Americans are converted from this socialization, causing them to accept and adopt dominant narratives that are largely shaped by whites (Walton 1985).

Using Walton's (1985) theory of Black political socialization, it becomes clear that pragmatists, and conservatives, are converts who have integrated aspects of this white socialization process in their own belief systems. Historically in politics, Black Americans stand out due to their communalism and willingness to place group goals over the individual. (Harris-Lacewell 2004; Dawson 2001; Walton 1985). Now, across all studies, I find that respondents were more likely to say that it's either

“extremely,” or “very” important for Black Americans to stop thinking of themselves as a group and think more of themselves as individuals, than they were to say that individualism is “not very” or “not at all important.” This finding signals that Black Americans are accepting dominant norms in American society causing them to embrace individualism and the allusion of meritocracy.

Despite still expressing high levels of linked fate, this shift towards individualism and away from the Black collective harms Black people’s ability to realize racial justice for all members of the group. By embracing individualism, pragmatists adopt harmful norms with the hope of securing social advantages that may or may not occur. Although some group members engage in strategic deracialization to increase their chances of fair treatment, there’s no guarantee that this strategy will help them, or any other Black person, consistently get ahead in America.

Prejudice is difficult to overcome through individual actions because prejudiced attitudes are inherently irrational and reinforced by faulty and untrue generalizations (Allport 1954). In this sense, trying to overcome prejudice through individualism is a trap for Black pragmatists. There is no amount of hard work, determination, or deracialization that can convince prejudiced Americans that Black people are deserving of equal power and rights. Individualism cannot solve systemic problems for Black people as a group—institutional racism can only be toppled by challenging, reimagining, and transforming our social systems and institutions. This outcome can only be achieved through sustained and collective effort.

Pragmatism and The Self

Finally, this is less of a critique of racial pragmatism but more of a consequence that can result from an overreliance on pragmatic decision-making strategies. As indicated previously, people have numerous selves meaning that they can be idealistic or pragmatic in different contexts (Kivetz and Tyler 2007). Pragmatists are concerned about the present and make decisions that provide practical benefits in the short term (Rogers and Bazerman 2008). However, by always focusing on the short term and the narrow list of practical outcomes, people may fail to make decisions that serve the idealistic self. This causes people to make choices that do not reflect their true attitudes or beliefs (Kivetz and Tyler 2007).

By over relying on pragmatism, people may lose their ability to be both principled and idealistic. For racial pragmatists, the strategic deracialization that starts as a survival mechanism to compensate for prejudice may progress into a full-fledged worldview that fails to consider situational constraints. Put simply, if Black Americans repeatedly deracialize under the guise of practicality, these actions will become routine if pragmatists fail to consider whether these behaviors are necessary or advantageous. Over time, people may remain pragmatic or become stronger pragmatists not because of mounting racism in American society, but rather they have failed to update their behavior and beliefs in response to changing social conditions.

Benefits of Racial Pragmatism

While I do not expect the critiques above to be perceived as me advocating for racial pragmatism and the relegation of race in sociopolitical strategies, I also want to be clear that I am not rejecting the utility of racial pragmatism. These issues are complex and there is no one best strategy for overcoming racism. Any critique of

racial pragmatism requires an analysis of the social context that Black Americans have and continue to operate in. Pragmatic actions that depolarize race and deter long term justice help Black Americans survive in the short term.

There are very real situations that compel Black Americans to engage in racial pragmatism and deemphasize race. Deracialization can improve perceptions of professionalism and increase employment opportunities (McCluney et. al. 2021; Kang et. al 2016). Politically, compromises on race can help Black Americans mitigate risk and create gradual change. By focusing on what's achievable now, group members can support electable Democrats to defeat Republicans whose politics harm racial and ethnic minorities. Although progressive politicians fall more in line with the racial attitudes of Black voters, moderate Democrats can still legislate on behalf of the Black community by pursuing incremental reforms that lay the foundation for social change. For example, we see this after the 2020 election. Despite being somewhat moderate relative to other Democratic aspirants such as Cory Booker or Elizabeth Warren, the Biden-Harris administration produced powerful wins for Black voters. Through policy decisions, the Biden-Harris administration helped reduce Black child poverty by more than 12 percent, increased Black enrollment in HealthCare.Gov by 49 percent, and achieved the lowest Black unemployment rate on record (White House 2023).

Pragmatism will always be an important tool for Black Americans. However, in most cases, pragmatism requires Black Americans to sacrifice their principles and parts of their identities to placate individuals who hold prejudiced views. Because of this, Black Americans must be intentional about when they rely on racial pragmatism

and engage in strategic deracialization. Group members should constantly reevaluate situations to determine whether pragmatic behavior is advantageous and be cognizant of how pragmatic decisions manifest over time. In total, Black Americans must consistently reappraise the utility of pragmatic behavior for racial pragmatism to be helpful in the long run. If this reevaluation does not happen, what starts as strategic behavior to compensate for prejudice can turn into a full-blown embrace of respectability politics where individuals internalize anti-Blackness and shape their behaviors around gaining acceptance from whites.

Future Research

There are several research areas to expand our understanding of racial pragmatism both among Black Americans, and other racial and ethnic groups. As indicated in *Chapter 3*, I've conducted these studies on racial pragmatism during a period of reactionary racial backlash induced by racial threat. With the cyclical relationship between Black progress followed by white backlash, researchers should field the pragmatism measures at different time points. This analysis will help us understand how pragmatism fluctuates at the group level in response to changing social conditions.

By taking this approach, we can evaluate several important questions such as: Will Black Americans express lower levels of racial pragmatism over time as politicians from both parties talk more explicitly about race? Do Black Americans express higher levels of racial pragmatism when surveyed close to important state or national elections? Is pragmatism higher or lower when racist Republicans and/or progressive Democrats are on the ballot? Is there a pre-or post-election difference in

the levels of racial pragmatism expressed by Black Americans? Assessing racial pragmatism at different time points can help us answer these questions and understand how social conditions influence pragmatism scores. Demographic shifts and cohort replacement may help antiquate racial pragmatism as a political strategy for Black Americans. Census projections estimate that the United States will become a majority-minority country by 2045 (Frey 2018). As the political power of minority voters increases, pragmatism may become less influential to Black voters' political decision-making.

In addition to measuring pragmatism over time at the group level, researchers should conduct a panel study to evaluate how pragmatism scores change within individuals over time. My findings indicate that men, and younger Black Americans report elevated levels of racial pragmatism. This finding suggests that pragmatic racial beliefs weaken across the life course. By conducting a panel study and measuring pragmatism at multiple points in time—along with other key variables—scholars can evaluate how different focusing events increase or diminish perceptions of racial pragmatism. Through this panel study, scholars can directly measure the factors that cause Black Americans to shift between different ideological camps over time (Dawson 2001).

Attitudes Towards Black Organizations

Future research should consider how pragmatists rate different Black organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Urban League, The Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM), the Nation of Islam (NOI), and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), among others. In

a study on anger and willingness to donate to Black or universal organizations, Banks, White, and McKenzie (2018) find that anger motivates Black Americans to donate less to universal organizations such as the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), and more to Black focused organizations such as the NAACP.

With their focus on working within mainstream political channels, I would expect pragmatists to offer different levels of support for Black organizations based on their level of political incorporation. Much like President Obama lecturing BLM activists for protesting and not meeting with politicians to compromise (Shear and Stack 2016), I expect pragmatists to offer less support for insurgent political organizations, while favoring more established associations. Therefore, I would presume that pragmatists rate the NAACP, The Urban League, and the CBC more favorably on a feeling thermometer, and view these organizations as more effective in helping Black Americans achieve equality when compared to BLM or the NOI, which tend to be more militant. Modeled after the Banks et. al (2018) study, researchers can appraise political behavior by analyzing how willing pragmatic Black Americans are to donate to different race-specific, or race-neutral organizations.

Political Candidates

In *Chapter 4*, I examined Black Americans' propensity to vote for racially progressive vs deracialized Democrats. Future research should look at a broader range of Democratic candidates with a wider variety of political strategies. For example, while deracialized and moderate Democrats either avoid race or offer lukewarm stances on racial issues, post-racial candidates take it a step further by asserting that

society should move beyond racial divisions, (Wamble and Laird 2020). In some cases, post-racial candidates offer more extreme messages by arguing that the problem of race is now settled after decades of recent conflict in the United States (Wamble and Laird 2020).

In an experiment, Wamble and Laird (2018) find that white Americans rate Black and white candidates more favorably on feeling thermometers when expressing post-racial appeals. These campaign messages can serve as moderate racial appeals as they do not activate racial resentment among whites, much like universal appeals (Wamble and Laird 2020). Future research should consider how Black Americans respond to these types of candidates.

Post-racial candidates present an interesting conundrum for pragmatic Black Americans. Although pragmatists support legislators that deemphasize race, post-racial candidates can test the bounds of deracialization to see how far pragmatic Black voters are willing to go. While I expect pragmatists to favor post-racial politicians who argue that we should look beyond race and rise above racial discord, pragmatists are still acutely aware that the U.S. is not a post-racial society. Therefore, I presume that pragmatists will only favor candidates who advocate for a post-racial society, while rejecting those who argue that we currently live in a colorblind society where racism is no longer present.

In addition to racial rhetoric, Black politicians and voters are pragmatic in the sense that they inhibit their anger to not activate negative racial stereotypes among white voters (Banks and White forthcoming; Phoenix 2019). With an understanding that displays of Black anger are perceived as illegitimate and summarily met with

consequences, Black Americans are aware of a racial double standard in terms of who can express anger or not, and to what level (Phoenix 2019).

In my first iteration of the racial pragmatism measures back in November 2020, I appraised this racial double-standard on anger. I found that as racial pragmatism increased, Black Americans said that Black candidates should confront political rivals who anger them less frequently. Interestingly however, racial pragmatism had no effect on the degree of conflict afforded to white politicians. Although the measures have shifted dramatically, I would expect this same relationship with racial pragmatism being exclusively applied to angry Black politicians. Future research should consider whether pragmatic Black Americans are less likely to vote for angry Black politicians because of their confrontive political orientations. Additionally, scholars can look at the factors that motivate candidate support. This same study can consider whether pragmatic Black Americans view angry Black politicians as less electable in light of this racial double standard on anger.

Extending the Pragmatism Measures to Other Groups

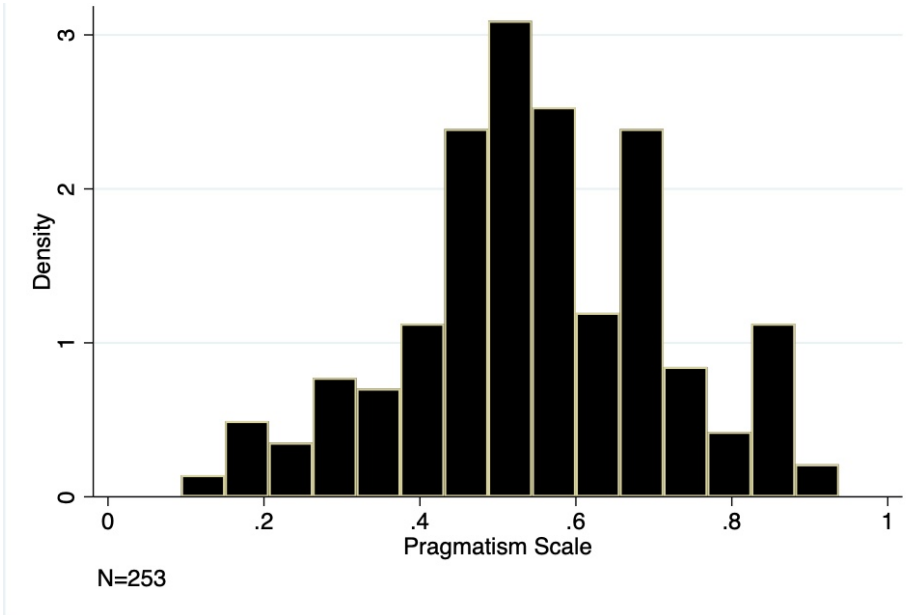
Finally, race-and ethnic politics and gender and sexuality scholars can adapt the pragmatism measures to analyze their effect on the political attitudes of marginalized Americans such as Latinos, Asian Americans, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. While African Americans express the highest levels of group consciousness and linked fate to foster a communal political identity, Latinos and Asian Americans still report a strong sense of group identity and perceive considerable levels of discrimination against their groups (Sanchez and Vargas 2016).

Researchers can adapt these measures at the ethnic group level given the variation in Latino and Asian American's willingness to adopt pan-ethnic identities (Masouka 2006; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2003). This research will help us understand how marginalized voters respond to racial prejudice and navigate a hostile political environment.

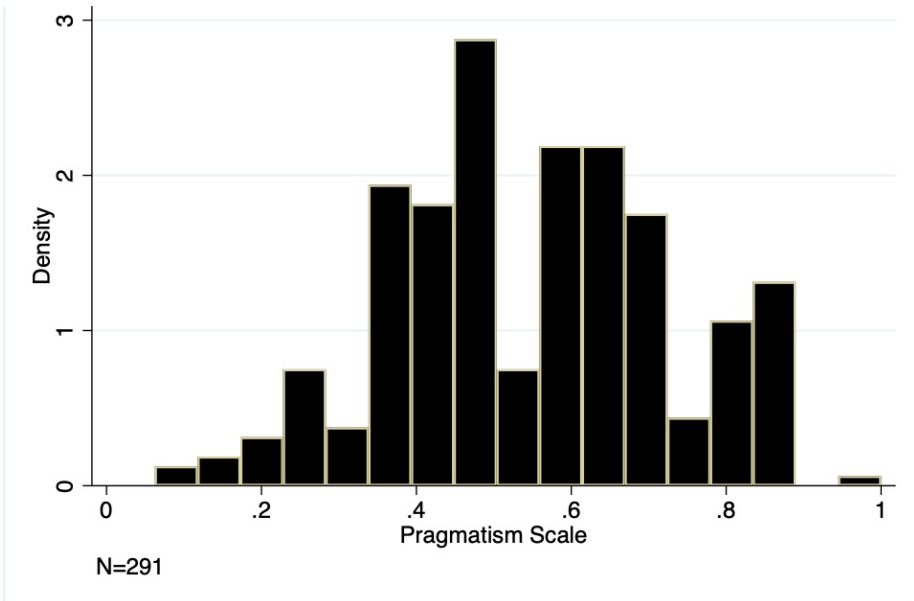
Appendices

Chapter 2 Appendix and Supplementary Results

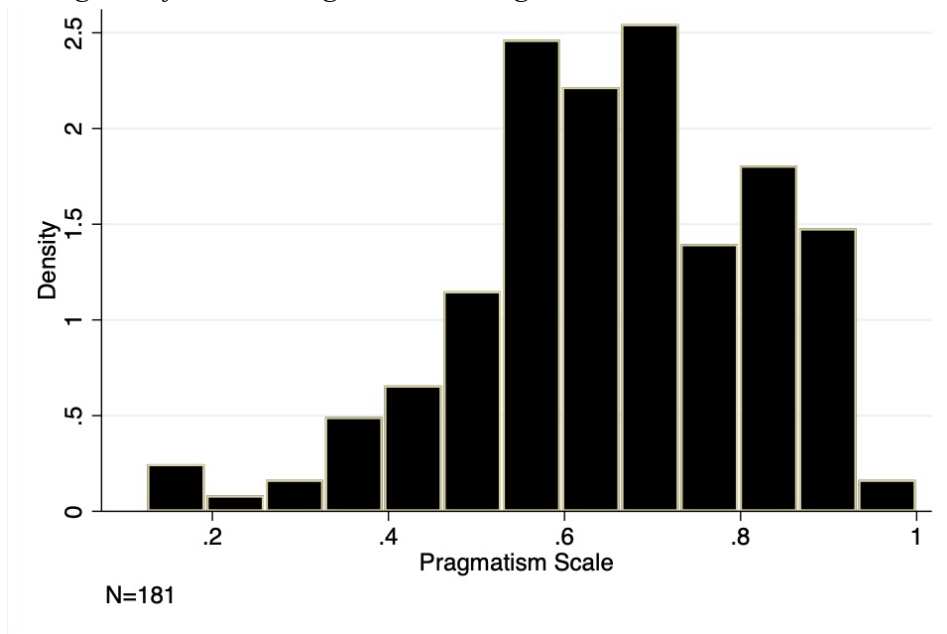
Histogram of Racial Pragmatism Among Ideological Moderates



Histogram of Racial Pragmatism Among Liberals



Histogram of Racial Pragmatism Among Conservatives



Racial Pragmatism and Support for Cash Reparations

Pragmatism	-0.49*
	(0.28)
Linked Fate	0.42***
	(0.11)
Ideology	0.17
	(0.18)
Education	-0.053
	(0.25)
Partisanship	0.19
	(0.17)
Female	0.012
	(0.10)
South	0.046
	(0.096)
Income	-0.0060
	(0.19)
age	-0.00022
	(0.0032)
/cut1	-1.06***
	(0.32)
/cut2	-0.30
	(0.31)
Observations	722

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

Results from ordered probit model. Dependent variable is reparations support where 1=oppose, 2=neither favor nor oppose, and 3=favor

Dependent Variables

Trait Pragmatism

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
On a 7-point scale where 1 means that you consider yourself as an idealistic person who places principles and values above practical concerns, and 7 means that you're a pragmatic person who is action oriented and primarily guided by practical concerns. Where would you place yourself on this scale?			
1. Very Idealistic	92	12.69	12.69
2. 2.	66	9.10	21.79
3. 3.	104	14.34	36.14
4. 4.	212	29.24	65.38
5. 5.	121	16.69	82.07
6. 6.	50	6.90	88.97
7. Very Pragmatic	80	11.03	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Racial Backlash

	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
To what extent, if any, do politicians lose support from white voters when speaking out about racial issues that affect Black people?			
1. A great deal	217	29.93	29.93
2. A fair amount	372	51.31	81.24
3. Not much	107	14.76	96.00
4. Not at all	29	4.00	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Reparations

Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose the government making cash payments to Black Americans who are descendants of slaves?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Favor	511	70.48	70.48
2. Oppose	73	10.07	80.55
3. Neither favor nor oppose	141	19.45	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Government Aid to Black Americans

Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of Black Americans. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help Black Americans because they should help themselves. Where would you place yourself on this scale?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Government should help Black Americans	255	35.17	35.17
2. 2	66	9.10	44.28
3. 3	99	13.66	57.93
4. 4	144	19.86	77.79
5. 5	63	8.69	86.48
6. 6	36	4.97	91.45
7. Black Americans should help themselves	62	8.55	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Coalition Building with Whites

In your view, how often should Black Americans pursue and share in political coalitions with White Americans to get ahead in politics?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Always	172	23.72	23.72
2. Often	211	29.10	52.83
3. Sometimes	249	34.34	87.17
4. Rarely	55	7.59	94.76
5. Never	38	5.24	100.00

Total	725	100.00
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Coalition Building with other Disadvantaged Minorities

In your view, how often should Black Americans pursue and share in political coalitions with Latinos, Asian Americans, and other disadvantaged groups to get ahead in politics?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Always	210	28.97	28.97
2. Often	239	32.97	61.93
3. Sometimes	201	27.72	89.66
4. Rarely	35	4.83	94.48
5. Never	40	5.52	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Chapter 3 Appendix and Supplementary Results

Racial Affirmative Action

How much do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs that give preference to Black Americans in areas such as hiring and promotions?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly favor	369	36.90	36.90
2. Somewhat favor	290	29.00	65.90
3. Neither favor nor oppose	266	26.60	92.50
4. Somewhat oppose	40	4.00	96.50
5. Strongly oppose	35	3.50	100.00
Total	1000	100.00	

Class Affirmative Action

Say such programs were based on income and not race. How much do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs that give preference to poor people in areas such as hiring and promotions, regardless of race?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly favor	352	35.20	35.20
2. Somewhat favor	332	33.20	68.40
3. Neither favor nor oppose	237	23.70	92.10
4. Somewhat oppose	41	4.10	96.20
5. Strongly oppose	38	3.80	100.00
Total	1000	100.00	

Reform Condition

How much do you support or oppose the following Diverting some of the police department's budget to fund community policing and social services?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly support	173	33.59	33.59
2. Somewhat support	237	46.02	79.61
3. Somewhat oppose	62	12.04	91.65
4. Strongly oppose	43	8.35	100.00
Total	515	100.00	

Defund Condition

How much do you support or oppose the following? The “defund the police” movement	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly support	75	15.46	15.46
2. Somewhat support	148	30.52	45.98
3. Somewhat oppose	141	29.07	75.05
4. Strongly oppose	121	24.95	100.00
Total	485	100.00	

Filibuster Condition

Some people have suggested eliminating the filibuster procedure in the United States Senate so that legislation can pass with a simple majority of votes; for example, 51 votes out of 100. The filibuster has been used to stall Voting Rights legislation among other bills. Do you favor or oppose eliminating the filibuster?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Favor	354	70.24	70.24
2. Oppose	150	29.76	100.00
Total	504	100.00	

Opinion Change

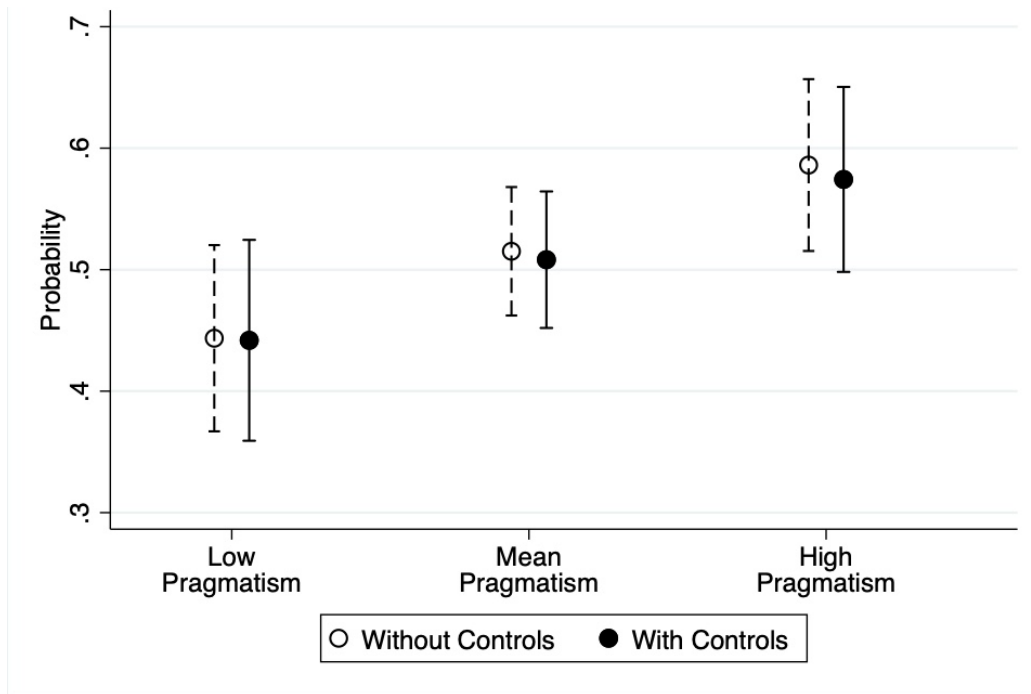
IF FAVOR is selected Would your position change if eliminating the filibuster makes it easier for Republicans to pass legislation that Democrats oppose if they regain control of the Senate?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Yes	183	51.99	51.99
2. No	169	48.01	100.00
Total	352	100.00	

Determinants of Opinion Change in Filibuster Study

	(1)	(2)
Pragmatism	1.69*** (0.64)	1.61** (0.72)
Partisanship		0.47 (0.44)
Ideology		-0.35 (0.49)
Education		0.099 (0.45)
Age		-0.0090 (0.0073)
Female		0.099 (0.24)
Income		-0.20 (0.37)
Linked Fate		0.061 (0.28)
South		-0.55** (0.24)
Constant	-0.84** (0.36)	-0.32 (0.72)
Observations	352	304

Standard errors in parentheses. Results from Logistic regression where 1=opinion change, 0=no opinion change
 *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Likelihood of Filibuster Opinion Change Across Pragmatism (95% CI)



HR40 Baseline Condition

How much do you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in the current Congressional session?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly support	77	44.77	44.77
2. Somewhat support	66	38.37	83.14
3. Somewhat oppose	17	9.88	93.02
4. Strongly oppose	12	6.98	100.00
Total	172	100.00	

HR40 Current Congress Condition (Threat)

How much do you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in the current Congressional session?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly support	66	41.25	41.25
2. Somewhat support	70	43.75	85.00
3. Somewhat oppose	13	8.12	93.12
4. Strongly oppose	11	6.88	100.00
Total	160	100.00	

HR40 Future Congress

How much would you support or oppose prioritizing H.R. 40 in a future Congressional session?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Strongly support	62	35.84	35.84
2. Somewhat support	71	41.04	76.88
3. Somewhat oppose	23	13.29	90.17
4. Strongly oppose	17	9.83	100.00
Total	173	100.00	

Chapter 4 Appendix and Supplementary Results

A. Experimental Treatments

1. Unelectable No Threat



Scott Carter (D)



David Miller (D)

U.S. Congressional candidates Scott Carter and David Miller hit the campaign trail ahead of their showdown in the upcoming Democratic Congressional Primary election.

In a speech released by his campaign, Carter said, “We have had policies fueled by racism that have oppressed Black Americans economically for generations.”

Carter focused his remarks on racial justice throughout the address. He went on to say, “Many of our bedrock domestic policies that ushered millions of Americans into the middle class have systematically excluded Blacks. We need to address the persistence of racism in our country head on.”

Carter, who considers himself a progressive is one of two candidates running in the Democratic Primary for the chance to compete in November’s general election. His primary opponent, fellow Democrat, David Miller has campaigned as a moderate, focusing less on polarizing issues and more on universal economic policies to help “find common ground and deliver results to Americans.”

The winner will face off against Republican Todd Evans for the right to serve in U.S. Congress. Evans (R) has gone against party leadership on several occasions and pledges to work across the aisle with Democrats in Congress.

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Democrats are concerned that if Scott Carter (D) wins next week’s primary, he will hurt the party’s chances to pick up a valuable seat in Congress.

Carter has struggled to rally support from Independents and many in the Democratic base within his district. Polls show that he is widely expected to lose to the Republican, Evans, if they face off in November’s midterm elections.

We will update this story as the race unfolds.

2. Unelectable Threat



Scott Carter (D)



David Miller (D)

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Evans (R) has defended his actions and says he has no plans of dropping out of the race.

Democrats are concerned that if Scott Carter (D) wins next week’s primary, he will hurt the party’s chances to pick up a valuable seat in Congress.

Carter has struggled to rally support from Independents and many in the Democratic base within his district. Polls show that he is widely expected to lose to the Republican, Evans, if they face off in November’s midterm elections.

We will update this story as the race unfolds.

3. No Information No Threat



Scott Carter (D)



David Miller (D)

U.S. Congressional candidates Scott Carter and David Miller hit the campaign trail ahead of their showdown in the upcoming Democratic Congressional Primary election.

In a speech released by his campaign, Carter said, “We have had policies fueled by racism that have oppressed Black Americans economically for generations.”

Carter focused his remarks on racial justice throughout the address. He went on to say, “Many of our bedrock domestic policies that ushered millions of Americans into the middle class have systematically excluded Blacks. We need to address the persistence of racism in our country head on.”

Carter, who considers himself a progressive is one of two candidates running in the Democratic Primary for the chance to compete in November’s general election. His primary opponent, fellow Democrat, David Miller has campaigned as a moderate, focusing less on polarizing issues and more on universal economic policies to help “find common ground and deliver results to Americans.”

The winner will face off against Republican Todd Evans for the right to serve in U.S. Congress. Evans (R) has gone against party leadership on several occasions and pledges to work across the aisle with Democrats in Congress.

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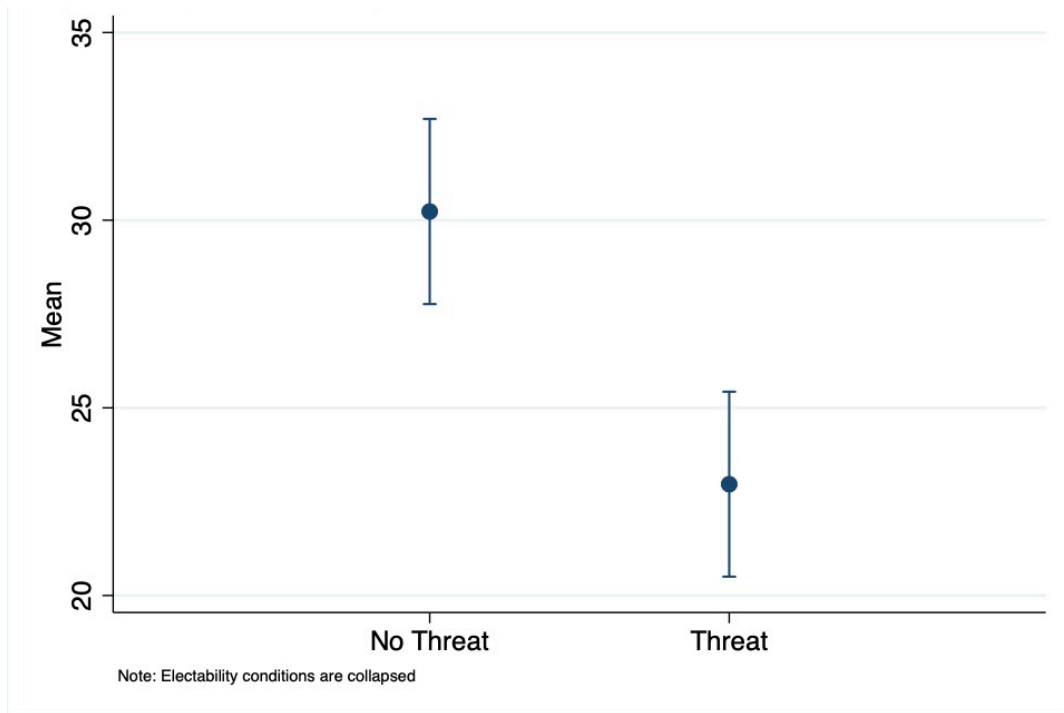
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Threat and Reactions to Republican Candidates

Although the threat information did not cause Black Americans to alter their support of the progressive politician, I still assessed whether the treatments were effective in inducing threat. First, I asked candidates to rate the candidate on a feeling thermometer where a score of 0 means that they felt cold or unfavorable towards the candidate, and 100 means that they felt warm or favorable towards the politician. I collapse the electability conditions to compare threat vs non-threat conditions. I report the mean feeling thermometer scores of the Republican candidate from this analysis in the figure below.

Republican Feeling Thermometer Scores Across Threat Conditions (95% CI)

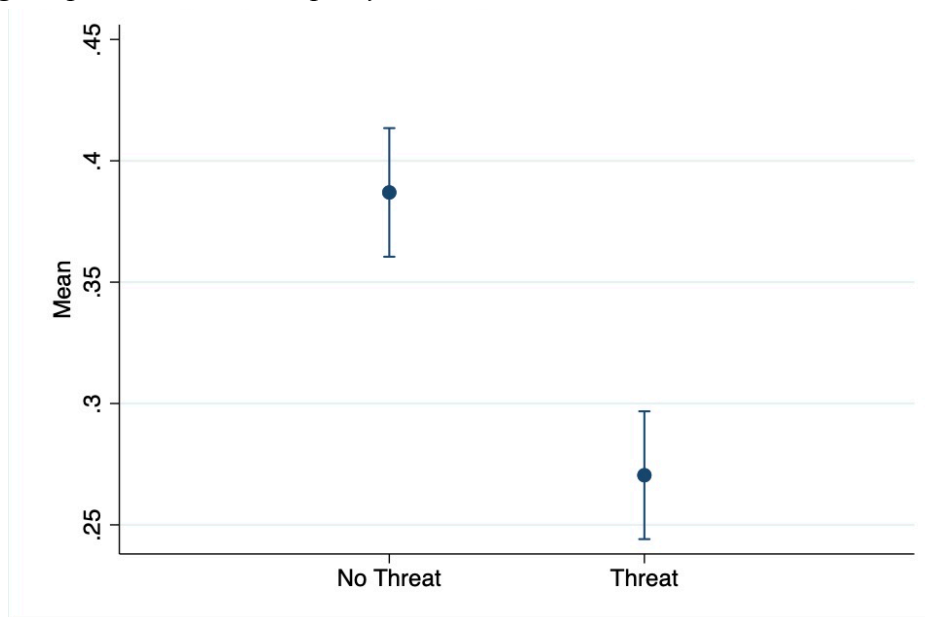


Black Americans felt relatively cold towards the Republican candidate in all conditions. When framed as a racial moderate who valued bipartisanship, on average, Black Americans gave the Republican a feeling thermometer score of 30. When outed

as a racist, Blacks felt 7-points colder towards this candidate with a feeling thermometer score of just 23 points. This 7-point difference is statistically significant, showing that Black Americans feel more negatively towards Republicans who demonstrate a history of racism.

To further understand how Black voters evaluated the Republican candidates, I asked respondents to rate the Republican on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 means the candidate is hostile towards Black people, and 7 means the candidate cares about Black people. I then rescaled this measure between 0 and 1. I present mean values across threat conditions on this measure in the figure below.

Average Republican Black Empathy Scores Across Threat Conditions



I find a similar result above. Both the moderate and racist Republicans' mean scores fell below the midpoint indicating that regardless of their racial rhetoric, Blacks view Republican politicians as hostile to Black Americans. Still, Blacks differentiate between Republicans based on their racial rhetoric. When framed as a

moderate, Black Americans gave the Republican an average Black empathy score of .39, meaning that they are somewhat hostile to Blacks. After information that details their history of racist rhetoric, Blacks view the Republican as much more antagonistic with an average score of .27. This 12-point difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. Taken together, the feeling thermometer and Black empathy scores demonstrate that Black Americans do not have a fixed view of Republicans. Black Americans report a great deal of antipathy for racially conservative Republicans, while offering muted but still negative assessments of moderate conservatives.

Chapter 5 Appendix and Supplementary Results

Perceptions of Group Level Discrimination

How much discrimination is there today in the United States against Black Americans?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. A great deal	312	43.09	43.09
.75. A lot	205	28.31	71.41
.5. A moderate amount	171	23.62	95.03
.25. A little	33	4.56	99.59
0. None at all	3	0.41	100.00
Total	724	100.00	

Personal Experiences with Discrimination

Thinking about your own experience, have you personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly because of your race?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
3. Yes, regularly	193	26.62	26.62
2. Yes, from time to time	380	52.41	79.03
1. No	152	20.97	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Personal Codeswitching Frequency

How often do you change your speech and dialect (also known as "code-switching") to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
0. Never	263	36.28	36.28
.25 Rarely	131	18.07	54.34
.5 Sometimes	215	29.66	84.00
.75 Often	76	10.48	94.48
1. Always	40	5.52	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Valuing White Perceptions

When making decisions about how to present yourself in majority-White settings,	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
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1. A great deal	134	18.48	18.48
2. A lot	128	17.66	36.14
3. A moderate amount	219	30.21	66.34
4. A little	97	13.38	79.72
5. Not at all	147	20.28	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Importance of Codeswitching

How important is it that Black Americans change their speech and dialect (also known as “codeswitching”) to get ahead in America?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely Important	117	16.14	16.14
.75 Very Important	154	21.24	37.38
.5 Moderately important	242	33.38	70.76
.25 Not very important	99	13.66	84.41
0. Not at all important	113	15.59	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Importance of Hair Deracialization

How important is it that Black Americans keep certain hairstyles (ex. Chemically	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely Important	139	19.17	19.17
.75 Very Important	120	16.55	35.72
.5 Moderately important	186	25.66	61.38
.25 Not very important	108	14.90	76.28
0. Not at all important	172	23.72	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Views Towards the Likelihood of Receiving Reparations

How likely is it that Black Americans will receive reparations from the U.S. government in your lifetime?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
1. Extremely likely	79	10.90	10.90
.75 Very likely	108	14.90	25.79
5. Somewhat likely	151	20.83	46.62
25. A little likely	110	15.17	61.79
0. Not at all likely	277	38.21	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Views Towards the Likelihood of Black people Achieving Racial Equality

Would you say that equality for Black people in the U.S. is.....	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
.8 Extremely likely	73	10.07	10.07
.6 Very likely	100	13.79	23.86
.4. Somewhat likely	225	31.03	54.90
.2. A little likely	161	22.21	77.10
0. Not at all likely	137	18.90	96.00
1. Black people are already equal	29	4.00	100.00
Total	725	100.00	

Racial Pragmatism and Views Towards the Likelihood of Black Americans Achieving Equality and Receiving Reparations

	(1) Likelihood of Receiving Reparations in Your Lifetime	(2) Likelihood of Black Americans Achieving Racial Equality
Pragmatism	0.65*** (0.066)	0.46*** (0.054)
Linked Fate	0.048* (0.026)	-0.029 (0.022)
Perceptions of Group Level Discrimination	0.023 (0.050)	-0.19*** (0.041)
Ideology	-0.072* (0.042)	-0.045 (0.035)
Education	-0.058 (0.058)	-0.013 (0.048)
Partisanship	0.045 (0.041)	0.00098 (0.034)
Female	0.031 (0.024)	-0.023 (0.020)
South	0.0084 (0.023)	0.011 (0.019)
Income	-0.11** (0.046)	-0.092** (0.038)
Age	-0.0066*** (0.00075)	-0.0016** (0.00062)
Constant	0.32*** (0.081)	0.43*** (0.067)
Observations	721	721
R-squared	0.265	0.178

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

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