Clarifying the "People Like Me": Racial Efficacy and Political Behavior

Davin L. Phoenix and Nathan K. Chan

Political efficacy, or a sense of confidence that "people like me" can understand politics and receive responsiveness from government, is central to the study of political behavior. However, the reference group that respondents view as "people like me" is not always immediately clear. This limits our ability to infer how efficacy informs political participation. We propose a specific concept and operationalization of racial group efficacy, and we distinguish this concept from racial identity, group consciousness, and conventional efficacy measures. Analyses of data from the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey reveal that for white, Black, Asian, and Latina/o Americans, racial efficacy is a more consistent and robust predictor of political participation than standard internal and external efficacy measures. Further, we show that racial efficacy exhibits associations with conventional and unconventional forms of participation that distinguish whites from people of color. We conclude by discussing how people's racial efficacy informs their engagement in politics, from voting to protests.

The political landscape bears witness to various groups working collectively to advance shared aims. From demonstrations protesting anti-Black violence, to demonstrations demanding the return of in-person schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, from canvassing efforts to register voters, to social media campaigns calling for canceling student loan debt, people's decisions to take these actions are informed in no small part by their perceived capacity to achieve desired results.

This sense of confidence that one's actions bring about sufficient responsiveness from government is conceptualized as political efficacy. Efficacy is typically measured via items asking people to gauge the political influence of "people like me." Yet the participants in actions that define the contemporary era are often sorted into groups that mirror long-entrenched racial fault lines in U.S. politics. When people weigh whether to attend a Black Lives Matter protest or whether to march outside the Secretary of State's office to challenge the election result, are their conceptions of *people like me* composed of other people in their age group? Their occupation? Their neighborhood? Or is race their most salient reference group?

We propose that in an era in which perceptions of political actors, policy platforms, and issue domains are all colored by racial attitudes, one's sense of the political efficacy of her racial group influences her decision to act. Accordingly, we introduce a three-indexed measure of collective efficacy designed to measure people's perceptions of the influence their racial group exerts over politics. We define this concept of racial efficacy as an individual's belief that her racial in-group possesses sufficient influence over government outcomes.

We compare the predictive power of our racial efficacy measures on participation relative to conventional measures of internal and external political efficacy. Our findings indicate that racial efficacy is more strongly associated with how white, Black, Latina/o, and Asian Americans choose to participate in politics. By pinpointing a salient social identity group within *people like me*, we offer a new pathway from racial identity and perceptions of the racial order to political behavior.

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Conceptualizing Political Efficacy

Efficacy is defined as the belief that one's actions are capable of bringing about desired change (Verba and Almond 1963; Campbell et al. 1960; Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954). The concept has two dimensions—internal and external (Campbell and Converse 1972; Verba and Nie 1972). Internal efficacy refers to one's perception that she is capable of navigating the complexities of politics to act effectively. External efficacy refers to one's perception that government will be satisfactorily responsive to her input. The first slate of studies suggested that efficacy is a static phenomenon. Variations in individual efficacy were traced to differences in socializing experiences, socioeconomic status, race, gender, and even personality type (Abramson 1972; Campbell et al. 1960; Condon and Holleque 2013).

Efficacy is also a dynamic concept that can ebb and flow in response to changes in one's political environment. For instance, Wolak (2018) finds that people residing in states offering more opportunities to shape policy outcomes, such as ballot initiatives, express more internal efficacy. Additionally, people who share partisanship with the majority party in the state legislature express more external efficacy.

On the other hand, past work indicates that external efficacy is not as responsive to changing political contexts. This raises questions about how effectively conventional external efficacy measures gauge perceived political responsiveness (see Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991). Chamberlain (2013) finds that differences in external efficacy across varying local political cultures have dissipated over the past forty years, indicating a homogenizing of efficacy in response to the nationalization of politics. As people derive their cues of the political system's responsiveness from national trends rather than local contexts, the racial polarization of politics—including the alignment of racial and partisan ties and the racialization of previously race-neutral policy domains (Mason 2018; Tesler 2016)—means that racial cues should shape people's perceived political influence.

Another study by Chamberlain (2012) finds that mass expressions of external efficacy are not empirically associated with various evaluations of government performance, including presidential and congressional approval ratings and trust in government. If external efficacy is not responsive to such changes in sentiment, what is it tapping into more precisely? In the absence of a clear connection to one's political context, the conventional external efficacy measure may simply gauge one's current satisfaction with politics. Davis and Hitt (2017) corroborate this notion, finding that external efficacy levels exhibit short-term boosts for people who voted for the winning candidate in the election, while declining among people who voted for the losing candidate.

If external efficacy is a proxy for satisfaction, it would not necessarily translate to increased political activity. In contrast, a measure of racial efficacy may better tap into people's calculus of their political power. We view our racial efficacy measures as bridging individuals' senses of racial identity with perceptions of their political context. For instance, the election of a candidate perceived as favorable to a group's interests, or legal changes that inhibit enfranchisement for one's racial group, should increase the salience of one's racial identity and consciousness on their navigation of the political environment. Such developments should also alter one's assessment of their racial in-group's political influence at a given moment in time. That assessment should meaningfully inform changes in the volume and scope of political engagement from one context to the next—changes that standard measures of group identity or consciousness may not capture.

Thus, while our racial efficacy measures tap into standard elements of efficacy, racial identity, and consciousness, we believe they provide distinct value in discerning how people across the color line participate in varying political contexts. Our measures should be broadly valuable to scholars seeking more precise understanding of political participation among a racially diverse populace.

From Collective Efficacy to Racial Efficacy

Extant work in social psychology reveals how collective efficacy shapes political action. Collective action is driven in part by actors' perceptions of factors such as the responsiveness of the current regime to their group's demands, and the collective resources at their group's disposal (Lee 2010). Accordingly, collective efficacy is defined as "the perception of whether a collective actor to which an individual belongs is capable of achieving desired outcomes" (Lee 2010, 393).

Social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986) posits that perceptions of cognitive efficacy flow from interpretive judgments of experiences, observations, and prior knowledge. For both whites and people of color, experiences with and knowledge cultivated about politics are tied to racial identity. From social spaces that engender shared racial in-group beliefs about politics (Harris-Lacewell 2004; White and Laird 2021) to political figures that depict one's racial group as declining in political status (Mutz 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019), individuals across the racial hierarchy receive messages that make their racial identity salient in their consideration of their political agency.

The Role of Race Shaping Efficacy

Past work indicates that people's racial experiences shape perceptions of their political influence. People of color tend to exhibit lower political efficacy relative to whites (Cohen 2010; Tate 1991). This disparity reflects a litany of factors such as being underrepresented in politics and perceiving less responsiveness from elected officials (Butler

and Broockman 2011; Hajnal 2009), receiving less contact from parties (Hajnal and Lee 2011; Wong 2008), and disempowering interactions with political and legal institutions (Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019). These experiences can fuel political mistrust and skepticism (Howell and Fagan 1988; Nunnally 2012; Wilkes 2015).

Conversely, people of color have responded to cues of greater political incorporation with greater efficacy. Bobo and Gilliam's (1990) empowerment thesis posits that African Americans exhibit higher efficacy when residing in cities with Black mayors, arguing their presence signals "likely policy responsiveness to Black concerns" (p. 382). Additionally, perceptions that the racial playing field is evening can augment Black people's perceptions of their collective efficacy (Barreto et al. 2018a). Similarly, Pantoja and Segura (2003) find that Latina/o Americans exhibit higher efficacy when they have descriptively representative state legislators. We see resonance here with Wolak's (2018, 767) assertion that "people feel more efficacious when they have more political voice, when they are descriptively represented in politics, and when their interests are reflected in the outcomes of government."

Perceiving that a co-ethnic elected official will advance the interests of the racial in-group implies both strong linked fate and a belief that collective action is needed to improve the status of the group—a pillar of group consciousness (Miller et al. 1981). Yet this does not suggest that the boosts to efficacy arising from descriptive representation or optimistic feelings about race relations arise from increases in linked fate or group consciousness. Instead, we argue that efficacy is the pathway linking racial identity or consciousness to increased action in the specified political context. Accordingly, we do not view racial efficacy as simply an alternative operationalization of racial group ties. Rather, our concept can serve as a bridge connecting individuals' racial identity and consciousness to decisions over how to act politically across contexts perceived to be more or less favorable to the interests of their racial in-group.

Racial attitudes have taken on increasingly greater prominence in contemporary politics since the Obama era (see Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019; Tesler 2012, 2016). This gives us confidence that our racial efficacy measures tap into meaningful attitudes for groups in various positions along the racial hierarchy. Racial views should be particularly influential for African Americans' perceptions of government responsiveness. Centuries of oppression and marginalization, from enslavement to Jim Crow segregation to the contemporary era of "color blind" racism, have cultivated strong senses of racial in-group solidarity and group consciousness among Black individuals (Dawson 1994; Chong and Rogers 2005). Narratives emerging from Black social, civic, and religious spaces further enforce the notion that race is a central element in the lives of Black people (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Dawson 2001; White, Laird, and Allen 2014).

Dawson's (1994) Black utility heuristic demonstrates how African Americans use their perceptions of the group's collective interests as a proxy for their own when making political decisions. Similarly, we argue that Black people's perceptions of their collective influence in politics inform their perception of their own influence. Racial efficacy, therefore, should inform Black political behavior beyond conventional measures of efficacy and racial intragroup ties.

While Latina/o and Asian Americans have not consistently expressed levels of pan-ethnic linked fate on par with African Americans, they have exhibited increasingly stronger senses of in-group solidarity in recent years (Barreto and Segura 2014). This pan-ethnic attachment is buoyed among Latina/os by perceptions that their racial group faces racial discrimination (Masuoka 2006; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Sanchez, Masuoka, and Abrams 2019; Zepeda-Millan 2017). Meanwhile, Asian Americans tend to exhibit lower levels of pan-ethnic in-group identity and solidarity relative to other racial minority groups. This is due to factors such as the high proportion of those born outside the U.S. and lower rates of social and residential exclusion from whites. However, both firsthand experiences with discrimination and perceptions that the group is routinely othered in society promote greater racial group consciousness (Lien et al. 2001; Masuoka 2006).

Thus, those who either perceive significant discrimination against their in-group or personally experience discrimination should express less racial efficacy. Such experiences and perceptions signal that the playing field is tilted against one's racial group, limiting their confidence that their collective actions can be effective. In contrast, individuals expressing optimistic assessments of their in-group's political incorporation or the state of race relations should express greater racial efficacy. This positive sentiment should boost confidence that the racial in-group can advance its political demands through traditional political channels.

White Americans have also increasingly applied a group-centric lens in their engagement of politics. Demographic changes that portend the future shift to a majority-minority country (Bai and Federico 2021; Craig and Richeson 2014), the election of a Black president (Tesler and Sears 2010), and increasingly popular movements against structural racism (Cole 2020; Spry and Nunally 2019) all signify potential erosion of white people's dominant societal status. Many whites have responded with what Marsh and Ramirez (2019) term white linked anxiety, which increases the salience of their racial identity in their political decision making. Threats to white dominance have increased the salience of white people's racial in-group identity (Jardina 2019). Accordingly, whites have reported levels of intra-racial linked fate that are comparable to people of color (Berry, Ebner, and Cornelius 2019). This work indicates that in a manner not

unlike people of color, white people now view politics through the prism of which candidates, platforms, and policies advance the position of their racial in-group—particularly when they perceive that position to be tenuous.

We also acknowledge the possibility that whites may view the racial efficacy measures as broad gauges of the extent of racial equity in politics. Accordingly, responses that would signify higher levels of racial efficacy among people of color may for whites reflect acknowledgment of the unearned privileges of whiteness in a racially stratified political system. As the subsequent discussion makes clear, our analyses unearth trends that suggest racial efficacy is tapping into both group-centric calculations of interest and broader assessments of racial equity among white respondents.

Connecting Racial Efficacy to Behavior

We detect a clear pathway from perceptions of racial group efficacy to volume of political activity. We expect those with lower racial efficacy to feel less incentivized to expend the effort and resources required to participate in politics. In contrast, individuals expressing more confidence in their racial group's political influence should be more likely to take up such actions.

There is reason to suspect that racial efficacy directs individuals toward participation in certain forms of activity over others. Earlier work has noted that strong senses of racial identity and consciousness are more strongly associated with unconventional forms of political action such as protest (Banks, White, and McKenzie 2019; Chong and Rogers 2005; Miller et al. 1981; Shingles 1981; Lee 2010; Stokes 2003; Wong, Lien, and Conway 2005). We theorize that in contrast to such racial intra-group ties, racial efficacy should mobilize participation in more conventional forms of political involvement, such as voting, canvassing, and donating.

This is because racial efficacy captures variation in people's perception that the political system works for their racial group. When people perceive that their racial in-group has strong capacity to influence politics, they feel more confident that conventional actions to advance their group interests will be met with responsiveness. In contrast, those with less racial efficacy will feel less inclined to act within a system they feel is unresponsive to their demands (see Tate 1991).

Additionally, our expectations further distinguish our measures from the classic efficacy measures. Whereas greater internal efficacy has been linked to higher rates of Black political participation in the face of systemic mistrust (Miller, Gurin, and Gurin 1978; Shingles 1981), we surmise that such mistrust diminishes racial efficacy, thus dampening political participation. While both forms of efficacy should promote greater participation, people of color's internal efficacy may not translate to expected levels of political activity once racial efficacy is considered.

External efficacy is associated with increased participation in system-oriented activities, but not system-challenging activities (de Moor 2016). Yet classic external efficacy measures have sometimes exhibited unexpected negative associations with political engagement (Gil de Zúñiga, Diehl, and Ardévol-Abreu 2017; see also Morrell 2003). Again, conventional external efficacy may capture something more akin to satisfaction with government than political influence. Our racial efficacy measures should more directly capture the perceived political influence of a salient reference group. Accordingly, our measures should exhibit clear associations with participation.

The increased salience of race in the current era means that our racial efficacy measures should be strongly predictive of behavior across racial groups. Yet strong expressions of racial identity and solidarity, as captured in a measure of linked fate, should not influence the direction of racial efficacy (see Chong and Rogers 2005). Linked fate does not tap directly into people's perceptions of their group's relative status on the racial hierarchy. Further, while acknowledgment of the in-group's subjugated status is a core component of group consciousness, traditional measures of group consciousness do not capture variation in individuals' perceptions of their racial in-group's political influence from one context to another. In contrast, our measure directly captures an individual's sense of the relative advantages or disadvantages faced by their racial in-group in a given moment in time, allowing us to better pinpoint the contexts in which people high in linked fate or group consciousness will be more or less inclined to take on distinct types of political actions.

We do not expect a measure of racial identity such as linked fate to inform racial efficacy in a unidirectional manner. Yet measures conveying one's sense of their group's favored or marginalized position in the hierarchy, such as a gauge of perceived discrimination or a personal experience with racial discrimination, should exert consistent influences on racial efficacy. We next lay out our expectations regarding the antecedents of racial group efficacy and its relationship to political participation.

Hypotheses

We believe racial efficacy gives us deeper insight into the way that people's perceptions of their racial group inform their senses of political influence, in turn shaping how people participate in politics. We test a set of hypotheses relating to the factors shaping racial efficacy, and its ensuing influence on political behavior across racial groups.

First, due to their long-engrained senses that government outcomes are not racially equitable, we expect African Americans will report the lowest racial efficacy among all groups (H1A). Despite their increasing sense of

an aggrieved in-group identity, we expect whites to report the highest racial efficacy (H1B). Because Latina/o and Asian Americans exhibit perceptions of in-group subjugation that are not on the level of African Americans yet increasingly salient, we expect their reported racial efficacy to fall in between those of Black and white Americans (H1C).

Second, we expect that for all racial groups, either greater perceptions of discrimination against their in-group or firsthand experiences with discrimination correspond with lower reported levels of racial efficacy (H2).

Finally, we expect that for all groups, greater racial efficacy is associated with greater political participation (H3A). Additionally, we expect the relationship will be stronger in the domain of conventional rather than unconventional actions (H3B). Because racial efficacy should tap into a particularly salient reference group, we expect that our racial efficacy measures exhibit a substantively stronger association with participation than the conventional measures of efficacy (H3C).

Operationalizing Racial Efficacy

We shift beyond the "people like me" conceptualization to focus on racial in-groups specifically, while maintaining a focus on political actors and outcomes. The measures adhere most closely to the construction of the external efficacy questions, given our interest in perceived government responsiveness to one's racial group. We list our three measures of racial efficacy:

- How often would you say public officials work hard to help [Respondent's racial group]?
- How often would you say [Respondent's racial group] has a say in how government handles important issues?
- How often would you say [Respondent's racial group] elected to office can make changes for people in your racial group?

Our first two measures modify the language of the ANES measures. Consistent with aforementioned scholarship highlighting the importance of descriptive representation on people of color's political efficacy (i.e., Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Pantoja and Segura 2003), we also gauge people's perceptions of the capacity of shared-race elected officials to advance in-group interests. Our racial efficacy measures eschew the agree-disagree response options in favor of a five-item frequency response category: All the time, Most of the time, About half of the time, Rarely, and Never. This decision was made to eliminate the risk of acquiescence bias and to facilitate interpretation of response variation. We believe the difference between a response of *all the time* and *most of the time* is more clearly delineated than the difference between *strongly agree* and *somewhat agree*.

Data

We utilize the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) (Barreto et al. 2017), where we first contributed our racial efficacy index. The CMPS is widely used in scholarship examining trends in opinion and behavior across racial and ethnic groups (i.e., Berry, Ebner, and Cornelius 2019; Gutierrez et al. 2019; Marsh and Ramirez 2019; Masuoka, Ramanathan, and Junn 2019). The survey contains a total of 10,145 respondents, including 3,102 African Americans, 3,006 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, 3,003 Latina/o Americans, and 1,034 whites. The survey was conducted completely online and self-administered in multiple languages between December 3, 2016, and February 15, 2017 (Barreto et al. 2018b). Survey data are weighted within each racial group by age, gender, education, nativity, ancestry, and voter registration status to match the population in the 2015 Census American Community Survey.

We scaled the three racial efficacy questions into one index ranging from 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest). The scale has high internal reliability for the entire survey sample (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.79), as well as the four racial groups—African Americans (a = 0.77), Latina/os (a = 0.77), Asian Americans (a = 0.80), and whites (0.79). The CMPS includes standard measures of internal and external efficacy from the ANES. Respondents are asked their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" and "Public officials don't care much what people like me think."

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

For Black, Latina/o, and Asian American respondents, we employ the following as a measure of perceived in-group discrimination: How much discrimination is there in the United States today against [Respondent's racial group]? There are four response options: *none at all; a little; some;* and *a lot.* For white respondents, we follow the lead of Berry, Cepuran, and Garcia-Rios (2020) to create a measure of perceived relative group discrimination. We subtract whites' perceived levels of discrimination faced by African Americans from their perceived level of discrimination faced by their own racial in-group. Positive values indicate the perception that whites face more discrimination

than Black people, while negative values indicate the perception that white people face less discrimination than African Americans. Additionally, we include a dichotomous measure of personal experience with discrimination: Have you ever been treated unfairly or personally experienced discrimination because of your race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, being an immigrant, religious heritage or having an accent? [Yes/No] Although this question includes categories beyond race or ethnicity, we are confident it nonetheless informs broader senses of collective racial agency.

In addition to perceived discrimination, we include a set of measures that capture various aspects of racial group ties, attitudes, and experiences. We limit our formal hypothesis to the association between group discrimination—perceived or experienced—and racial efficacy. But we lay out how we expect these additional racial measures to inform respondents' reported racial efficacy.

We include a dichotomous measure of whether respondents report ever experiencing unfair treatment or excessive force by police ("Unfairly Treated by Police"). We expect that a negative experience with police is a signal of one's subjugated societal status; accordingly, such an experience should be associated with lower racial efficacy (Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019).

We include a set of dichotomous measures reporting which race others perceive the respondent to be ("Perceived Race"). We suspect that the respondent's potential capacity to elude the marginalization particular to their racial group, by being able to essentially pass as a member of another racial group, can disrupt the sense of inefficacy associated with belonging to a racially subjugated group. Accordingly, respondents of color who report being perceived by others as a race other than their own should exhibit more racial efficacy.

We include a measure of how strongly respondents feel they belong in America ("Belonging"). We view a stronger sense of belonging as a proxy for feeling incorporated within the American polity; hence, we expect a positive association between respondent sense of belonging and reported racial efficacy (Masuoka and Junn 2013; Ocampo, Dana, and Barreto 2018). Similarly, we expect that respondents who report that being American is an important part of how they view themselves ("American Identity") also feel incorporated within the fabric of American politics. Thus, we expect a positive association between this variable and racial efficacy.

We also include a measure asking Black, Latina/o, and Asian American respondents whether they believe racial equity will ever be achieved ("Racial Equity Achieved"). Responses to this four-category measure range from the belief racial equity will never be achieved (coded as the lowest value) to the belief that racial equity has already been achieved. We expect a positive association between optimistic assessments of the state of race relations and reported racial efficacy (Barreto et al. 2018a).

We leverage a question asking Black respondents specifically whether they are members of any organization working to improve the status of African Americans ("Black Organization"). Whereas group consciousness may propel Black individuals to affiliate with such organizations, we suspect that these organizations cultivate a group-specific social capital among members. In turn, that capital can augment individual perceptions of the collective political power of their racial group. Accordingly, we expect a positive relationship between Black respondents' membership in such an organization and racial efficacy.

On its own, group consciousness should convey skepticism about the racial in-group's political influence. However, some forms of engagement that may be motivated by group consciousness can have the effect of increasing one's impression that their racial group does have political power, in spite of the acknowledged structural impediments to the group's full political equity. Thus, racial efficacy can inform political behavior apart from the influence of group consciousness.

For Latina/o and Asian American respondents, we include a dichotomous measure indicating whether or not the respondent is first generation. We suspect that second and later generation members of these groups are more likely to develop pan-ethnic racial ties, and to have greater familiarity with the U.S. racial order and their position within it (Masuoka 2006). Hence, we expect later generation respondents to exhibit lower levels of racial efficacy. We also include controls for national origin identities within these models. Lastly, we include linked fate in the respective models for each group. Recall that we do not expect levels of racial intra-group linked fate to uniformly correspond with levels of racial efficacy.

For our measure of political participation, we create a nine-item participation index inclusive of whether individuals voted in the 2016 presidential election, donated to a political or social organization, volunteered for a campaign, attended a local meeting or town hall, worked with others within their communities to address a political or social issue, contacted an elected official, attended a protest or rally, signed a petition, or boycotted a product for political reasons. This index of behavior is re-scaled to range from 0 to 1. Additionally, we disaggregate the index to examine racial efficacy's associations with conventional actions, which includes whether respondents voted, volunteered on a political campaign, worked collaboratively with others on a political issue, attended a political meeting, or contacted an elected official. Our index of unconventional political actions includes whether respondents protested, signed a petition, or took part in a consumer boycott.

In addition to racial efficacy, our models include standard control variables, including socioeconomic status (household income and education), demographics (place of birth, age, and gender), partisanship, political orientations

(strength of partisan identification, trust, and interest in politics), how often respondents attended religious services, and their perceptions of the state of the economy.

Results

Levels of Racial Efficacy across Race

Figure 1 presents the mean levels of racial efficacy across racial groups. In support of HYPOTHESES 1A and 1B, respectively, the mean levels of racial efficacy were lowest among African Americans and highest among white Americans. In contrast to HYPOTHESIS 1C, however, Asian American (~0.42) and Latina/o respondents (~0.44) exhibit mean racial efficacy levels that are on par with those of Black respondents. All groups of color report similarly low racial efficacy relative to whites.

There is also variation in mean internal and external efficacy. Whites express more racial efficacy than internal or external efficacy. Among Black and Latina/o respondents, mean external efficacy levels are lowest. The mean levels of all three types of efficacy are similar for Asian Americans.
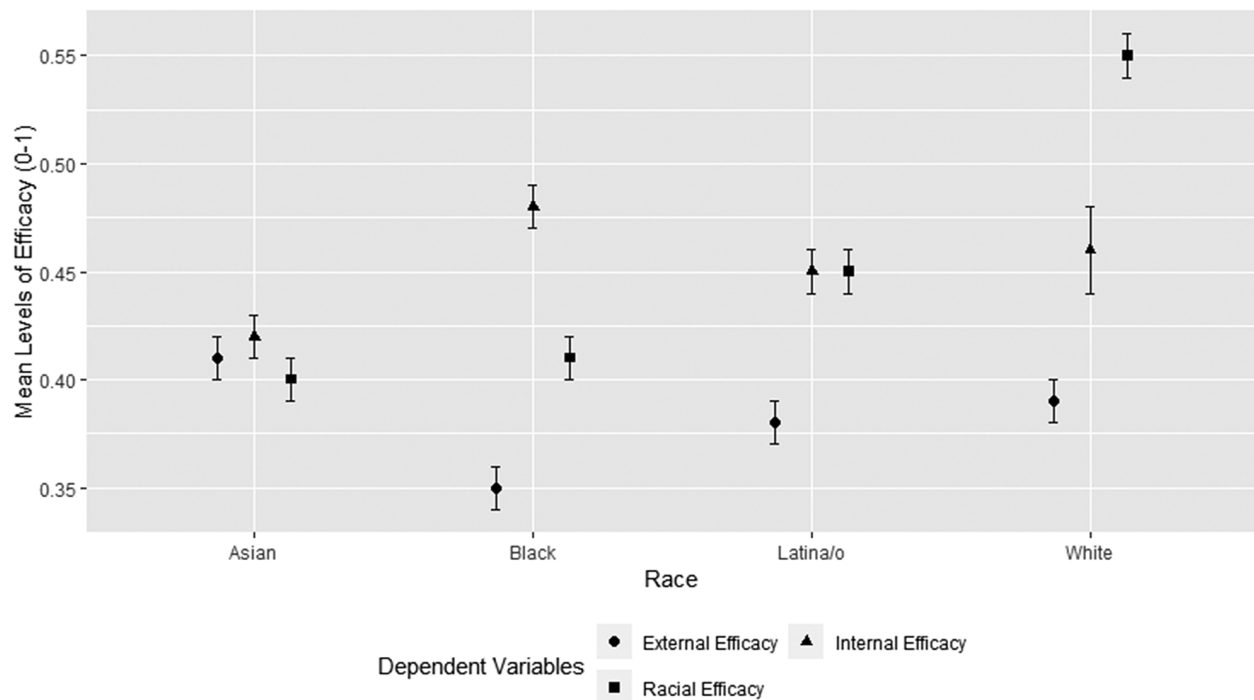
Predictors of Racial Efficacy

In tables 1 and 2, we present results from OLS regression models with racial efficacy as the dependent variable for each respective racial group. We first display results for

white and Black respondents in table 1. Supporting HYPOTHESIS 2, we find that whites who believe that there is more discrimination against whites than against Black people report lower levels of racial group efficacy. Likewise, African Americans who report greater perceived discrimination against their racial group report less racial efficacy. Further, Black respondents who report experiencing discrimination report lower levels of racial efficacy.

Table 2 presents the results for Latina/os and Asian Americans. For both groups, we find no relationship between perceived discrimination against the respective racial in-group and racial efficacy. Yet similar to African Americans, Latina/o, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) respondents who report firsthand experiences with discrimination express less racial efficacy. Overall, we see staunch support for our contention in Hypothesis 2 that individuals' firsthand experiences with or broader perceptions of racial discrimination influence their senses of racial efficacy.

A divergent pattern emerges across groups when examining the relationship between linked fate and racial efficacy. Among white Americans, linked fate is positively associated with racial efficacy. This observation resonates with Jardina's (2019) finding that white racial identity is positively associated with awareness of whites' privileged standing vis-à-vis other groups. We also find that this is the case among Asian Americans. Yet linked fate exhibits no

Figure 1
Mean levels of internal, external, and racial efficacy, across respondent race

Note: Each point estimate represents the mean level of efficacy, ranging from 0-1, with 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1
Predictors of racial efficacy across white and Black respondents

	Dependent Variable: Racial Efficacy	
	White	**Black**
Income	0.016	−0.042***
	(0.027)	(0.015)
Education	0.021	−0.075***
	(0.037)	(0.019)
Age	−0.224***	−0.001
	(0.049)	(0.027)
Female	−0.034**	−0.019**
	(0.015)	(0.008)
Democrat	0.046**	−0.007
	(0.019)	(0.015)
Partisan Strength	0.036	0.018
	(0.024)	(0.019)
Interest in Politics	−0.022	−0.092***
	(0.037)	(0.018)
Trust in Politics	0.187***	0.192***
	(0.036)	(0.016)
Protestant	−0.005	−0.005
	(0.020)	(0.011)
Catholic	−0.021	0.043***
	(0.017)	(0.013)
Religious Attendance	−0.006	0.036***
	(0.021)	(0.011)
Not Straight	0.059**	−0.002
	(0.026)	(0.014)
Economic Evaluations	−0.002	−0.012
	(0.024)	(0.013)
Internal Efficacy	−0.067**	−0.066***
	(0.026)	(0.013)
External Efficacy	0.114***	0.133***
	(0.028)	(0.016)
Linked Fate	0.074***	0.001
	(0.020)	(0.010)
Personal Discrimination	0.018	−0.024***
	(0.016)	(0.009)
Perceived Race-Black	−0.143**	0.013
	(0.063)	(0.019)
Perceived Race-Latina/o	−0.005	0.033
	(0.033)	(0.024)
Perceived Race-AAPI	−0.032	0.108***
	(0.045)	(0.039)
Perceived Race-Other	0.035	0.072***
	(0.045)	(0.025)
Belonging	0.052	0.064**
	(0.064)	(0.025)
American Identity	0.026	0.058***
	(0.038)	(0.017)
Discrimination white vs. Black	0.097***	
	(0.017)	
Discrimination against Black		−0.086***
		(0.018)
Racial Equity Achieved	—	0.178***
		(0.014)
Unfairly Treated by Police	—	0.0003
		(0.009)

(Continued)

TABLE 1 *(Continued)*

	Dependent Variable: Racial Efficacy	
	White	**Black**
Black Organization	—	0.029***
		(0.010)
Constant	0.412***	0.360***
	(0.073)	(0.039)
Observations	643	1,860
R^2	0.256	0.390
Adjusted R^2	0.227	0.381
Residual Std. Error	0.180	0.156
	(df = 618)	(df = 1832)
F Statistic	8.840***	43.373***
	(df = 24; 618)	(df = 27; 1832)

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

relationship with racial efficacy among African Americans and Latina/os.

These findings enhance our confidence that our racial efficacy measures are not redundant to measures of racial intra-group ties. If linked fate and racial efficacy were analogous, then we would expect the positive association between the two concepts to be most pronounced for African Americans, who consistently display the strongest sense of linked fate (McClain et al. 2009). On the contrary, we find an association for the two groups for whom pan-ethnic racial identity may be the least stable. This trend suggests that interpretations of the linked fate measure may vary by stability and salience of racial identity. Following the lead of Rogers and Kim (2021), we urge caution in presuming that the meaning of linked fate is consistent across groups with divergent histories and social contexts of racialization.

With two exceptions, the additional racial-related measures exhibited the expected associations with racial efficacy. Contrary to what we surmised, reporting an unfair or violent experience with police was positively associated with racial efficacy among AAPI respondents, while exhibiting null effects on all other groups.

As expected, people of color's perceptions of how their placement within the racial hierarchy—and their capacity to transcend that hierarchy—inform their senses of racial efficacy. Both Black and Latina/o respondents who report that others perceive their race to be either Black or Latina/o express lower racial efficacy than those who report being perceived as another race. AAPI respondents who report being perceived as Asian American report lower racial efficacy than those who are perceived to be another race. Thus, all groups of color report lower efficacy when perceived by others as their actual race. This pattern illuminates how each racial minority group views their

in-group in relation to others in the racial order. These perceptions matter for their senses of racial efficacy.

We find that Black, Latina/o, and Asian Americans' senses of belonging within American society correlate with greater racial efficacy. Similarly, we find that for Black and Latina/o respondents, attaching greater importance to their identity as American is associated with greater racial efficacy. These patterns suggest that people of color's perceptions of racial efficacy are informed in part by the degree to which they feel their group is incorporated and valued within political spheres. Finally, for Black, Latina/o, and Asian American respondents, more positive assessments of the state of racial equity correspond with greater racial efficacy. As expected, more optimistic views about race translates to more confidence in the racial in-group's political influence.

We turn briefly to the questions asked of specific racial groups. As expected, Black respondents who belong to an organization seeking to improve the status of African Americans report greater racial efficacy. The social and political capital generated by their affiliation with such groups likely augments the belief that their actions matter. Yet in the other departure from our expectations, first generation status is associated with lower racial efficacy among AAPI respondents, while producing null effects among Latina/os. This finding among Asian Americans suggests that immigrants from these groups perceive less political agency for their racial in-group.

Notable distinctions emerge in the socioeconomic indicators of racial efficacy. Among white respondents, education exhibits no association with racial efficacy. In contrast, education is associated with less racial efficacy among Black, Latina/o, and AAPI respondents. We posit that the negative association between educational attainment and racial efficacy is attributable to the educational environment's ability to provide people of color with useful frameworks to critically discern structural racial inequities in the political system (Chan and Hoyt 2021). Additionally, people of color's incorporation into the professional and social spaces accessed through higher education can make them acutely aware of the racial biases embedded within such privileged spaces (Dawson 1994; Feagin 1991).

Religious institutions produce unique effects for congregants of color. For all three groups, there is a positive association between attending religious services and racial efficacy. This highlights an additional avenue through which churches can mobilize racial minorities toward political action. In addition to developing civic skills, lowering costs of participation, and facilitating intra-group solidarity (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Greenberg 2000; Peterson 1992), churches may cultivate a sense of in-group empowerment that enhances racial efficacy.

These analyses reveal how perceptions of placement within the racial hierarchy and the state of race relations in the U.S. inform individuals' racial efficacy. The indicators of racial efficacy diverge notably between whites and non-whites when we examine measures of racial discrimination, linked fate, socioeconomic status, and senses of belonging in American society. These trends help paint a picture of which factors distinguish the more and less efficacious within each racial group. In the discussion, we note how future research can more thoroughly examine these antecedents of racial efficacy.

Racial Efficacy and Political Participation

Next, we specified a model using an overall index of political participation as the dependent variable, before running respective models that examine conventional and unconventional actions. Table 3 displays the results of OLS regressions using the nine-item political action scale as the dependent variable.

Our racial efficacy measure is strongly and positively associated with the participation index for all racial groups, supporting HYPOTHESIS 3A. Additionally, for all groups, the magnitude impact of racial efficacy on participation is larger than that of both internal and external efficacy measures, supporting HYPOTHESIS 3C.

For all four groups, more external efficacy corresponds with significantly *lower* levels of participation.[1] This trend is consistent with our suggestion that the external efficacy measure captures respondents' general satisfaction with government at the moment of the survey, which may preclude them from feeling compelled to take up political action. With these freshly raised doubts about what precisely this measure is gauging, we echo the aforementioned calls by Chamberlain (2012), Morrell (2003), and Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) to interrogate the attitudinal dimension actually tapped into by this measure.

Only limited inferences can be drawn from comparing coefficient sizes across multiple regression models. Thus, we calculated the change in predicted probability of participation as respondents move from the lowest to highest level of efficacy, with all control variables set at their means. Calculating the predicted probabilities facilitates comparison of the substantive association between each type of efficacy and political behavior. Figure 2 displays these predicted probabilities.

For all groups, our racial efficacy measure exhibits a larger association with participation than internal and external efficacy. The relationship is most pronounced among white and Latina/o Americans. Moving from least to most racially efficacious corresponds with increases of about fifteen percentage points for Latina/o respondents and eleven percentage points for white respondents. Movement from least to most racially efficacious is

Table 2
Predictors of racial efficacy across Latina/o and Asian American respondents

	Dependent variable: Racial Efficacy	
	Latina/o	AAPI
Income	0.021	−0.028*
	(0.018)	(0.015)
Education	−0.048**	−0.060***
	(0.021)	(0.019)
Age	−0.034	0.070**
	(0.033)	(0.028)
Female	0.029***	−0.026***
	(0.010)	(0.009)
Democrat	0.012	0.030***
	(0.012)	(0.010)
Partisan Strength	0.015	−0.006
	(0.018)	(0.015)
Interest in Politics	−0.055**	0.015
	(0.022)	(0.020)
Trust in Politics	0.140***	0.209***
	(0.021)	(0.020)
Protestant	−0.035	0.010
	(0.024)	(0.018)
Catholic	0.002	0.024**
	(0.010)	(0.011)
Religious Attendance	0.017	0.034***
	(0.014)	(0.013)
Not Straight	−0.008	−0.032**
	(0.016)	(0.014)
Economic Evaluations	−0.033**	−0.052***
	(0.016)	(0.015)
Internal Efficacy	−0.050***	−0.039**
	(0.017)	(0.017)
External Efficacy	0.118***	0.120***
	(0.019)	(0.019)
Linked Fate	0.018	0.051***
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Personal Discrimination	−0.028***	−0.066***
	(0.010)	(0.009)
Perceived Race-Black	−0.085***	−0.045
	(0.025)	(0.035)
Perceived Race-Latina/o	−0.020*	−0.017
	(0.011)	(0.023)
Perceived Race-AAPI	0.079***	−0.048**
	(0.029)	(0.019)
Perceived Race-Other	−0.039**	−0.039
	(0.019)	(0.026)
Belonging	0.130***	0.074***
	(0.033)	(0.028)
American Identity	0.034*	−0.032*
	(0.021)	(0.019)
First Generation	−0.011	−0.033***
	(0.010)	(0.010)
Discrimination against Racial Group	0.024	−0.010
	(0.020)	(0.017)
Racial Equity Achieved	0.082***	0.142***
	(0.018)	(0.017)
Unfairly Treated by Police	−0.008	0.050***
	(0.013)	(0.016)

(Continued)

TABLE 2 *(Continued)*

	Dependent variable: Racial Efficacy	
	Latina/o	AAPI
Constant	0.280***	0.370***
	(0.046)	(0.046)
Observations	1,532	1,732
R^2	0.186	0.314
Adjusted R^2	0.168	0.300
Residual Std. Error	0.167	0.160
	(df = 1497)	(df = 1697)
F Statistic	10.087***	22.859***
	(df = 34; 1497)	(df = 34; 1697)

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

associated with a 7.5% shift in the participation scale for Black respondents and a 6% shift for Asian Americans.

As evidenced by the overlapping confidence intervals, the correlation between racial efficacy and participation is comparable to that of internal efficacy and participation for white and AAPI respondents. For African Americans and Latina/os, racial efficacy is far more predictive of political behavior than internal efficacy, which produces statistically null effects. The larger relative effect of racial efficacy on participation for Latina/o and Black respondents relative to Asian Americans suggests that racial efficacy informs behavior to a greater extent for groups with stronger senses of racial identity (Junn and Masuoka 2008; Lien, Conway, and Wong 2003).[2]

Differences in language and national origin have contributed to Asian Americans holding a less stable and consistent sense of pan-ethnic group identity (McClain et al. 2009). However, the rise in anti-Asian sentiment and incidents in the wake of COVID-19 may have increased the sense of pan-ethnic cohesion within the group (Chan, Kim, and Leung 2021). Thus, the linkages between racial efficacy and political behavior may be more pronounced among Asian Americans in a post-COVID context.

To test Hypothesis 3b, we first examine the relationship between racial efficacy and conventional forms of political activity (which includes whether respondents voted in 2016, donated to a political organization, volunteered on a political campaign, worked with others to address a local issue, attended a local meeting or town hall, or contacted a government official).

Figure 3 displays the change in predicted probability of participating in these system-oriented actions, comparing respondents from the lowest and highest categories of each efficacy measure with control variables at their means.[3] Similar to the results for the full participation index, racial efficacy elicits the largest substantive correlation with conventional activity relative to internal and external efficacy.

Table 3
OLS models regressing racial efficacy on full political participation index

	Dependent Variable: Political Participation (Nine-Item Scale)			
	White	**Black**	**Latina/o**	**AAPI**
Racial Efficacy	0.106**	0.075***	0.149***	0.064***
	(0.044)	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.024)
Internal Efficacy	0.035	−0.013	0.015	0.044**
	(0.029)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.018)
External Efficacy	−0.088***	−0.098***	−0.048***	−0.069***
	(0.032)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.020)
Linked Fate	0.093***	0.068***	0.085***	0.071***
	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Income	0.078***	0.075***	0.076***	0.074***
	(0.030)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.015)
Education	0.164***	0.114***	0.176***	0.037*
	(0.040)	(0.024)	(0.018)	(0.020)
Age	−0.022	0.091***	0.059**	0.080***
	(0.050)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.028)
Female	−0.025	−0.005	−0.028***	−0.015*
	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Democrat	0.033	−0.016	0.030***	−0.032***
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Partisan Strength	0.021	0.011	0.034**	0.067***
	(0.026)	(0.024)	(0.017)	(0.015)
Political Interest	−0.297***	−0.247***	−0.214***	−0.235***
	(0.041)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Trust in Politics	0.056	0.021	−0.073***	−0.024
	(0.042)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.021)
Attend Church	0.028	0.075***	0.059***	0.008
	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Economy Eval	−0.036	−0.072***	0.015	−0.002
	(0.027)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.016)
Not Born in U.S.	0.041	−0.102***	−0.058***	−0.069***
	(0.047)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Constant	0.226***	0.268***	0.111***	0.237***
	(0.064)	(0.035)	(0.029)	(0.032)
Observations	666	1,899	1,935	1,834
R^2	0.270	0.232	0.304	0.188
Adjusted R^2	0.253	0.226	0.299	0.182
Residual Std. Error	0.206	0.200	0.174	0.177
	(df = 650)	(df = 1883)	(df = 1919)	(df = 1818)
F Statistic	15.989***	37.947***	55.993***	28.128***
	(df = 15; 650)	(df = 15; 1883)	(df = 15; 1919)	(df = 15; 1818)

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

Racial efficacy exhibits the strongest linkage with conventional activity among Latina/o respondents, about seventeen percentage points on the scale. Going from least to most racially efficacious is associated with increases of about eleven percentage points of the scale for African Americans, 10% for AAPIs, and about 9% for whites.[4] Consistent with HYPOTHESIS 3B, these groups' senses of racial efficacy are strongly correlated with their participation in system-oriented actions.

Finally, figure 4 displays the relationship between efficacy and predicted change in the probability of participating in the unconventional actions of petitioning, protesting, and boycotting.[5]

The domain of system-challenging actions provides mixed support for HYPOTHESIS 3B. In contrast to conventional action, our measure bears an empirically null association with participation in unconventional activity among Black and Asian American respondents. Our expectations are supported for these two groups.

In contrast to our expectations, movement for Latina/o Americans from least to most efficacious is associated with an increase of about eleven percentage points of the scale. And in a departure from past trends, racial efficacy exhibits the largest substantive association with unconventional participation among white respondents. Movement from least to most racially efficacious is associated with an

Figure 2
Predicted change in probability of political participation (nine-item index)
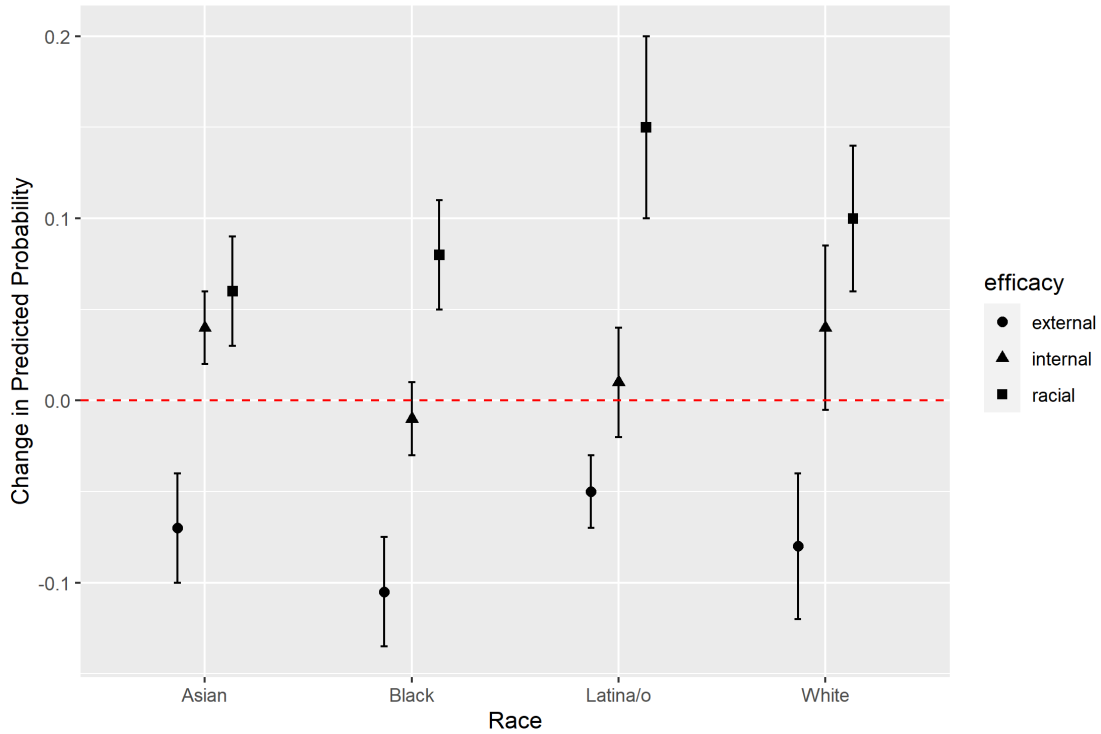
Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of political participation on a 9-point scale, comparing respondents with the highest and the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure 3
Predicted change in probability of participating in system-oriented actions
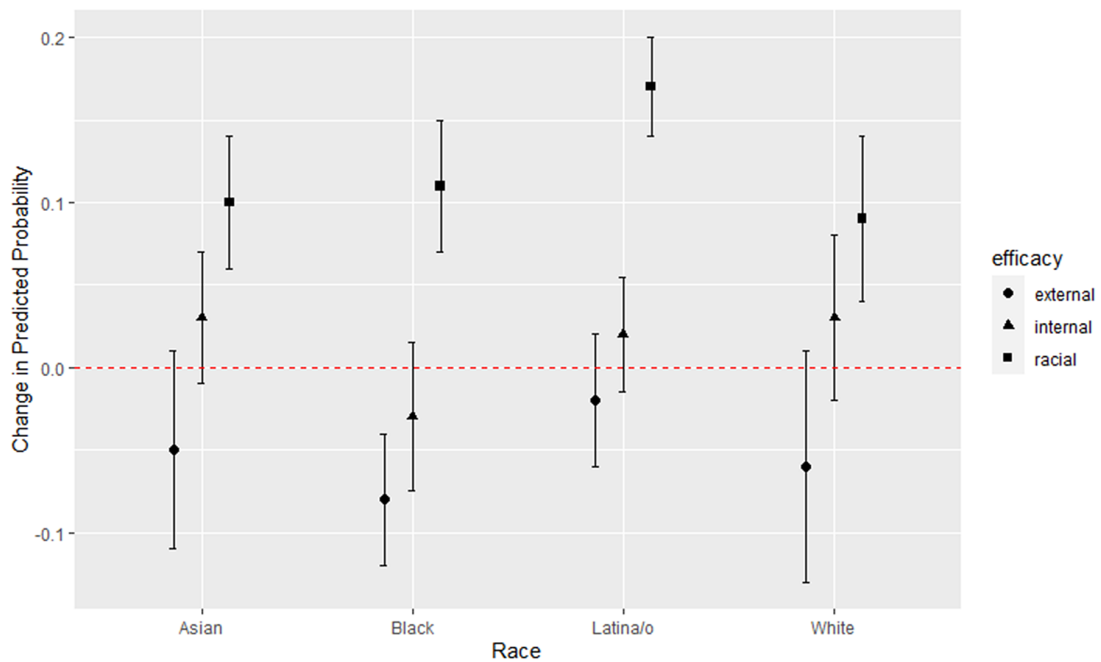
Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of voting in 2016, comparing respondents with the highest and the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Figure 4
Predicted change in probability of unconventional political action
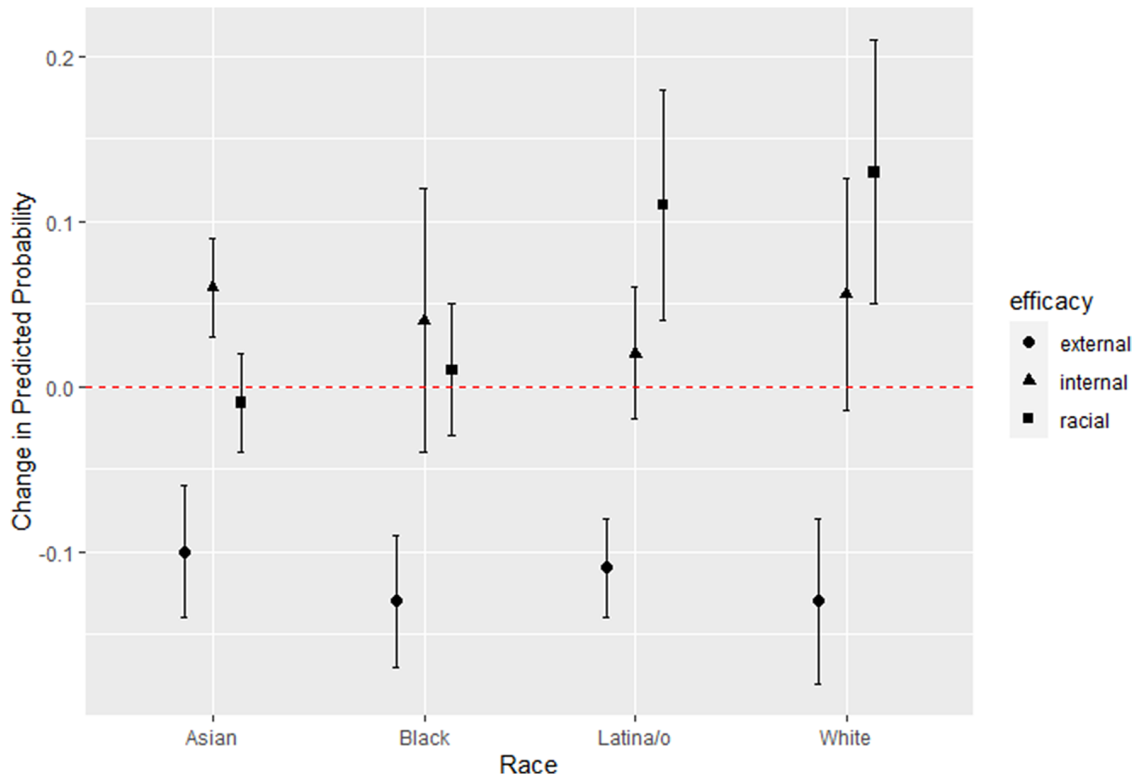
Note: Point estimate represents the change in predicted probability (%) of protest, comparing respondents with the highest and the lowest perceptions of efficacy. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

increase of about thirteen percentage points of the scale for whites.[6]

This counterintuitive finding for white respondents may lend insight into what the racial efficacy measure taps into for this group. If whites generally interpret these questions as assessments of the racial fairness of the political system, then those who most strongly acknowledge the political privileges of whiteness may be more inclined to work in solidarity with socially marginalized groups engaging in activism. Alternatively, this association may reflect an altogether different phenomenon—whites who acknowledge their group's formidable political status and are participating in rallies affiliated with Trump and conservative causes throughout 2016 in response to perceived threats to white status (Parker and Barreto 2014).[7]

These analyses make clear the value of disaggregating distinct types of participation. We find that racial group efficacy matters less for Black and Asian Americans' system-challenging forms of political engagement. For Latina/os, racial efficacy shapes both forms of political engagement; however, racial efficacy is more strongly correlated with conventional action. As we contended, this finding suggests that if people of color are confident in

their racial groups' capacity to influence politics, they will prefer more system-oriented forms of action. On the other hand, racial efficacy among white Americans is more strongly associated with unconventional forms of political participation.

These examinations offer more precise insight into what our racial efficacy measures mean, particularly for people of color. Given its relationship with race-relevant attitudes and participation, racial efficacy captures variation in people's perceptions that the system works for their racial group. This perception informs whether and how they participate in politics. For white respondents, the findings suggest that racial efficacy may gauge either calculations of the group's relative political influence, or perceptions of the racial fairness of the political system.

Discussion and Conclusion

To summarize the findings, we found mixed support for our first set of hypotheses about the distribution of racial efficacy across white, Black, Latina/o, and Asian Americans. People of color reported levels of racial efficacy that were indistinguishable from one another, yet significantly lower than white Americans. Consistent with our second

set of hypotheses, we found that firsthand experiences with discrimination, and in some cases greater perceived in-group discrimination, were correlated with less racial efficacy. Other racial attitudes exhibited correlations with racial efficacy in a similar fashion.

Finally, we found mixed support for our third set of hypotheses. Our finding that racial efficacy was consistently and strongly associated with all racial groups' political participation corroborated HYPOTHESIS 3A. Supporting HYPOTHESES 3B, racial efficacy propelled people of color toward greater participation in conventional actions that influence election and policy outcomes. But counter to our expectations, racial efficacy propelled whites toward greater participation in counter-systemic actions. Finally, in support of HYPOTHESES 3C, our racial efficacy measures exhibited substantially larger and significant associations with participation compared to the conventional efficacy measures.

Our novel measure of racial efficacy illuminates how racial groups derive understanding of their collective capacity to make change from their interactions with civic, political, and social institutions. Attending religious services appears to foster racial efficacy among people of color. Yet higher educational attainment may increase their skepticism about the political influence of their group. While education is typically thought to promote greater political activeness (Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry 1996; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), it may be the case that for people of color, sites of higher education engender critical racialized ideologies that inhibit a collective sense of political efficacy, even as they engender group consciousness (see Nelsen 2021).

How higher educated people of color resolve the tension between possession of skills and resources that translate to political behavior and skepticism about their political agency as a racial group can determine how they engage with politics. This tension may be especially evident within the behavior patterns of young African Americans, who exhibit strong resignation about the scope of racial progress, and have shown strides in participation in activist yet not electoral politics (Cohen 2010; Williams and Clement 2016). Examinations of the relationship between college experiences and racial efficacy can open up a new line of research that clarifies how secondary education shapes political behavior among people of color.

We see fertile ground for future inquiry into how partisan ties affect racial efficacy. For example, do Black self-identified Democrats who were critical to the 2020 election outcomes in Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania feel differently about their collective racial influence in the aftermath of the 2020 election relative to 2016? Further, is it increased partisan contact generally, or contact specifically from shared-race individuals that facilitates racial group efficacy? Our racial efficacy measures can be utilized in research seeking to unearth the effects of varying mobilization strategies on minority behavior across states that experienced surges or stagnation in minority turnout.

We also see practical relevance in our exploration of the associations between racial efficacy and political behavior. The divergent role of racial efficacy in shaping white and non-white participation in system-challenging actions offers a useful framework for reflecting on the summer of unrest in 2020. That African Americans who exhibited higher racial efficacy would be more active in all forms of participation *except* unconventional activity suggests that protest is the refuge of those who feel their group does not have adequate voice within conventional political channels. We view this trend as resonant with Martin Luther King's proclamation of insurgent activity as "the language of the unheard."

In contrast, white respondents' perceptions of racial efficacy were most influential in their participation in system-challenging actions. Summer 2020 bore witness to vast numbers of white Americans participating in Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. How many of these white protest participants were motivated to act in solidarity with this Black-led effort due to a prevailing belief that the political system is tilted too far in favor of whites—a belief that may be captured in our racial efficacy measure?

On the other hand, non-trivial proportions of white protesters participated to signal their general dissatisfaction with the federal government rather than their alignment with the goals of BLM (Gause and Arora 2021). Additionally, white Americans reported a precipitous decline in support for the BLM movement in the months after summer 2020 (Chudy and Jefferson 2021). Together, these trends potentially offer a window into how white participation in protest politics reflects a racially distinct sense of entitlement from government. Our racial efficacy measure could be tapping into that sense.

The majority-white protests conducted throughout 2020 that opposed mask mandates and demanded the re-opening of gyms and other public businesses appeared to be fueled by a distinct undercurrent of entitlement. These protestors' unwillingness to accept disruptions to their daily routines for public health goals reflects an engrained modal expectation of comfort and full sociopolitical mobility, an entitlement to which people of color generally do not feel accustomed. The January 2021 siege on the Capitol reflects this entitlement taken to extreme levels. How was the perpetration of this insurrection by white participants informed by their senses of racial group efficacy? That is, how did their impressions that their racial group typically gets its say in politics fuel this response in an instance in which they did not?

The contrasting influence of racial efficacy on the political participation of whites and people of color suggests that while our concept is predictive of behavior for both groups, it likely taps into varying attitudinal dimensions across them. We have highlighted here areas for further

exploration into how interactions with religious, civic, and partisan institutions shape efficacy, and how and why it translates to distinct patterns of political action across race. Such exploration can provide deeper understanding of what the racial efficacy measure means to various groups within the racial hierarchy. In turn, employment of our measure may allow scholars to gain better purchase into how racial identity and consciousness inform political behavior as a group's political prospects shift as a result of regime, legal, and demographic changes. The dynamism in these measures gives us confidence that research making use of racial efficacy can capture variation in levels and types of political engagement among racial groups across varying sociopolitical contexts.

Further, the findings displayed in tables 1 and 2 reveal additional layers of identity that shape racial efficacy. White, Black, and AAPI women are less racial efficacious than their men counterparts. In contrast, Latinas express greater racial efficacy than Latinos. To what degree are the patterns here driven by the presence of a woman on a presidential ticket? How do these trends comport with or differ from our understanding of women's rates of political participation relative to men across these racial groups? Additionally, among Asian Americans, those who identify as a sexual identity other than straight express less racial efficacy. We see great promise in future research that pinpoints how gender and sexual identities shape individual's impressions of their racial group's collective political influence.

We also acknowledge the limitations of this project. As a one-time cross-sectional study, we can do little more than speculate about how stable or dynamic racial efficacy levels are across contexts. Making use of data from the 2020 election in the future will allow us to assess how a different political context shapes both levels of racial efficacy and its impact on behavior. We also just scratch the surface in exploring how racial efficacy differs across cross-cutting identities such as gender, sexuality, and age. Future work employing a diverse set of study designs can glean further insights. For instance, experimental work can attempt to prime racial efficacy and examine its subsequent impact on behavior. In-depth interviews can determine how people's experiences in educational settings, religious institutions, and in partisan or race-specific organizations shape their racial efficacy.

For the questions raised by our exploration, we hope to have made clear what racial efficacy can contribute to scholarly and practical understanding of race and political behavior. Our racial efficacy measures illuminate how viewing politics through a group-centric lens shapes political activity among members of marginalized and dominant social groups. By offering a frame of reference more precise than "people like me," we better trace the contours of the political engagement of various racial groups. Further, by offering in racial efficacy a conceptual and operational bridge from racial identity to behavior, we offer

researchers a tool that can better illuminate the dynamic patterns of political behavior in an era in which political issues, actors, regimes, and divides are increasingly sorted along racial lines.

Supplemental Materials

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Importantly, analyses not presented reveal that this relationship holds even in models with our racial efficacy measures excluded.
2 We ran interactions between racial group membership and racial efficacy on our political participation index (first column, online appendix tables D–F). We find that while there are differences in magnitude, there are not statistically significant differences between how racial efficacy impacts white respondents, relative to Black, Asian, and Latina/o American respondents.
3 Table B in the online appendix presents the full OLS regression model results.
4 We also ran interactions between racial group membership and racial efficacy on conventional political participation (second column, online appendix tables D–F). We find that while there are differences in magnitude, there are no statistically significant differences between how racial efficacy impacts white respondents, relative to Black, Asian, and Latina/o American respondents.
5 Table C in the online appendix presents the full OLS regression model results.
6 We also ran interactions between racial group membership and racial efficacy on unconventional political participation (third column, online appendix tables D–E). We find that the relationship between racial efficacy and unconventional actions is significantly more negative for Black and AAPI respondents relative to whites.
7 Another set of analyses not presented within this article suggests that white respondents interpret the racial

efficacy measures as gauges of their racial in-group's political influence. We find a strong association between racial efficacy among white respondents and vote choice, with those reporting lower racial efficacy more likely to have voted for Trump in the 2016 election. Consistent with studies finding that perceptions of racial threat (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019) and the declining status of their racial group (Mutz 2018) motivated whites to vote for Trump, this finding suggests that whites who feel their racial group is insufficiently influential in politics gravitated toward the candidate who signaled he would champion white interests.

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