Mobilizing Anger in Local School Board Politics

June 24, 2026

Abstract

Race-conscious education in American public schools has become increasingly polarized. We develop a theory that exposure to information attributing racial inequality to structural causes threatens the status of privileged groups, triggering emotional reactions that shape political participation. Two original survey experiments test this theory. In the first, we rule out the possibility that emotional reactions stem from discomfort. In the second, we find that white respondents reported significantly higher anger—but not shame—when presented with a textbook excerpt attributing inequality to discrimination against Black people. This anger, in turn, was associated with greater intentions to attend school board meetings and with the costly behavioral choice to donate one's survey reward. These results demonstrate that anger is the dominant emotional response to educational materials that highlight racial stratification among whites. Moreover, anger can mobilize political engagement, suggesting that emotional reactions to school books are a critical mechanism linking education to politics.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards This study was deemed exempt by the institutional review board at the authors' institution on 08/28/2022, and the authors confirm that participants gave informed consent to participate and to have the results of this study published. The authors also report no conflicts of interest.

Introduction

Local school board meetings, ordinarily among the quietest venues in American politics, have in recent years become flashpoints for conflict over how race and racism are taught to children. The dominant narrative casts these battles as one more front in a familiar partisan war: Republicans mobilize against DEI and CRT, Democrats defend them. But this framing obscures a puzzle. The emotion that animates these fights, anger, does not divide neatly along party lines. White Democrats and white Republicans alike bristle when told that racial discrimination, rather than individual effort, explains why Black Americans fare worse in the labor market. If partisanship structured these reactions, we would not expect racially liberal and racially conservative whites to respond with comparable emotional intensity. Why, then, does challenging colorblindness provoke anger across the partisan divide?

Since at least the 1980s, white racial attitudes have increasingly sorted along partisan lines. The racial realignment of the two major parties triggered the partisan divides we observe today across explicitly and implicitly racialized policy domains, including affirmative action and welfare. More recently, scholars have proposed that partisanship shapes not just preferences for racial redistribution but also preferences for how racism is discussed in corporate and educational settings (Safarpour et al., 2024; Giersch, 2025). Battles over DEI and CRT have accordingly been explained as an extension of this sort.

Yet this partisan story masks substantive variation in racial attitudes *within* parties. Racial resentment for example is more predictive of support (opposition) to race-targeted social policies for white Democrats than for white Republicans. (Feldman and Huddy, 2005). Additionally, support colorblind racism, a racial attitude grounded in principles of racial liberalism, also varies substantially among white Americans (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Mills, 2017). The notion that in a post-Civil Rights, post-Obama America merit matters more than race enjoys widespread support among racially liberal white Democrats (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2011). Partisanship, in short, largely explains whether race matters; it explains far less about how race matters, leaving unaddressed the ideological conflict at the heart of debates

over teaching race. A parallel literature points to where the answer may lie: in the emotions that racial attitudes evoke. White anger in particular has been linked to symbolic racism and ethnocentrism (Banks; Banks and Valentino; Banks and Bell), with a stronger relationship to these attitudes than fear or disgust. Crucially, anger's mobilizing effects are asymmetric not along partisan lines but along racial ones: whites, more than Black Americans or other minorities, are mobilized by anger(Phoenix, 2019), and both contemporary and historical backlash to race-conscious policies has been characterized as driven by white, not partisan, outrage (Davis and Wilson, 2021; Anderson, 2016; Hooker, 2023).

We argue that whites become angry when confronted with the prospect of colorblind ideologies being challenged in public schools, and that this anger uniquely drives an influx of white participation on matters where the average citizen typically defers to the discretion of local education board members and professionals. The key cleavage, on our account, is not partisan disagreement over whether race matters, but divergent emotional reactions to explanations of how it matters. When the discussion turns from the general existence of racial inequality to identifying discrimination as the cause of whites' elevated status and Black Americans' lower status, structural accounts imply that white Americans benefit from racial advantages, and that implication provokes anger among some whites while leaving others unmoved. Because this anger operates through racial rather than partisan channels, we expect it to mobilize white Democrats and white Republicans alike. We further expect the substance of that anger to differ: some white Democrats are angry that white racial advantage harms Black Americans, while others are angry precisely because the claim that race shapes outcomes threatens a colorblindness they hold dear.

We test these expectations using two original survey experiments that include open-ended measures of emotion. Respondents learn that a public school textbook will teach students that discrimination causes the racial gap in unemployment, and we vary whether the cause identified is racial or non-racial. Using the Imai et al. mediation method, we estimate whether anger mediates intent to participate in local school board activities and intent to

donate a survey reward, and we leverage the open-ended responses to test the mechanism linking the stimulus to anger directly.

White people become angry when told a textbook will attribute the racial unemployment gap to discrimination, and they express anger more than fear, enthusiasm, or shame. This anger mediates both intent to engage with local school boards and intent to donate. The increase is symmetric across party: white Democrats and white Republicans both express significantly more anger when the stimulus highlights racial discrimination than when it merely describes the gap, and neither group responds with anger when a non-racial cause is named. Finally, the open-ended data reveal a substantive divide among white Democrats in the quality of their anger. Some explain it in racially liberal terms, stating feelings of anger that white advantage exists and harms Black Americans, while others reject any link between employment and race, invoking work ethic or other factors instead. This asymmetry confirms that white anger mobilizes across party lines, and that racially liberal and racially resentful whites channel it differently.

This paper introduces nuance to the claim that racial attitudes are increasingly sorted by partisanship and elite cues. While clear divides separate white Democrats and Republicans on some racial issues, anger remains the dominant response to stimuli that threaten prevailing racial ideologies among whites across both parties. Some white Democrats continue to embrace colorblind racism, leading them to behave much like racially conservative Republicans. In illuminating the limits of partisanship as an explanation for racial liberalism, the paper speaks to research on racial attitudes and partisan sorting and to the role of emotions in shaping racial politics.

White Racial Attitudes Beyond the Partisan Sort

Since the decline of biological racism, political scientists have assessed the policy implications of whites' negative racial attitudes through measures of racial resentment (Kinder and

Sanders, 1996). Studies on the dynamics of white racial attitudes have identified durable and genuine reductions in racial resentment among white Democrats, suggesting that their views of race and racism have become more liberal over time (Engelhardt, 2021; Mikkelborg, 2025). Work on partisan sorting further indicates that this attitude change facilitated greater alignment between Democratic partisanship and racial liberalism (Engelhardt, 2023). Beyond attitudes, evidence for liberalization in white Democrats' racial views points to substantial increases in support for policies like affirmative action, welfare, and federal aid to Black Americans (Jardina and Ollerenshaw, 2022). Partisan sorting on race has also been used to explain asymmetric mobilization around emerging racial policy disputes, including the legality of corporate DEI training and the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in public education (Deshpande et al., 2024; Safarpour et al., 2024). These accounts locate opposition to new dimensions of racial policy within a broader trend: Democrats sorting into racially liberal positions, Republicans into racially conservative ones.

We argue that partisan sorting on race, while real, cannot fully explain backlash to "DEI" and "CRT" programs. Our theoretical framework makes three contributions to this literature. First, we show that racial resentment obscures politically consequential heterogeneity in white Democrats' racial attitudes. Second, we argue that the asymmetric structure of partisan coalitions, not sorting itself, determines how legible that heterogeneity is across parties. Third, we identify colorblind ideology, rather than racial resentment, as the dominant contemporary frame through which white Americans across parties rationalize racial inequality, with distinct implications for policy backlash.

Racial resentment has long been criticized as more revelatory of racial animus among white Democrats than white Republicans (Sniderman and Carmines, 1997). Feldman and Huddy (2005) show that many white Democrats express meaningful racial resentment, and that resentment predicts opposition to race-conscious policy more strongly for Democrats than for Republicans. Aggregating racial resentment across white Democrats therefore risks obscuring politically relevant variation with direct consequences for policy preferences. This

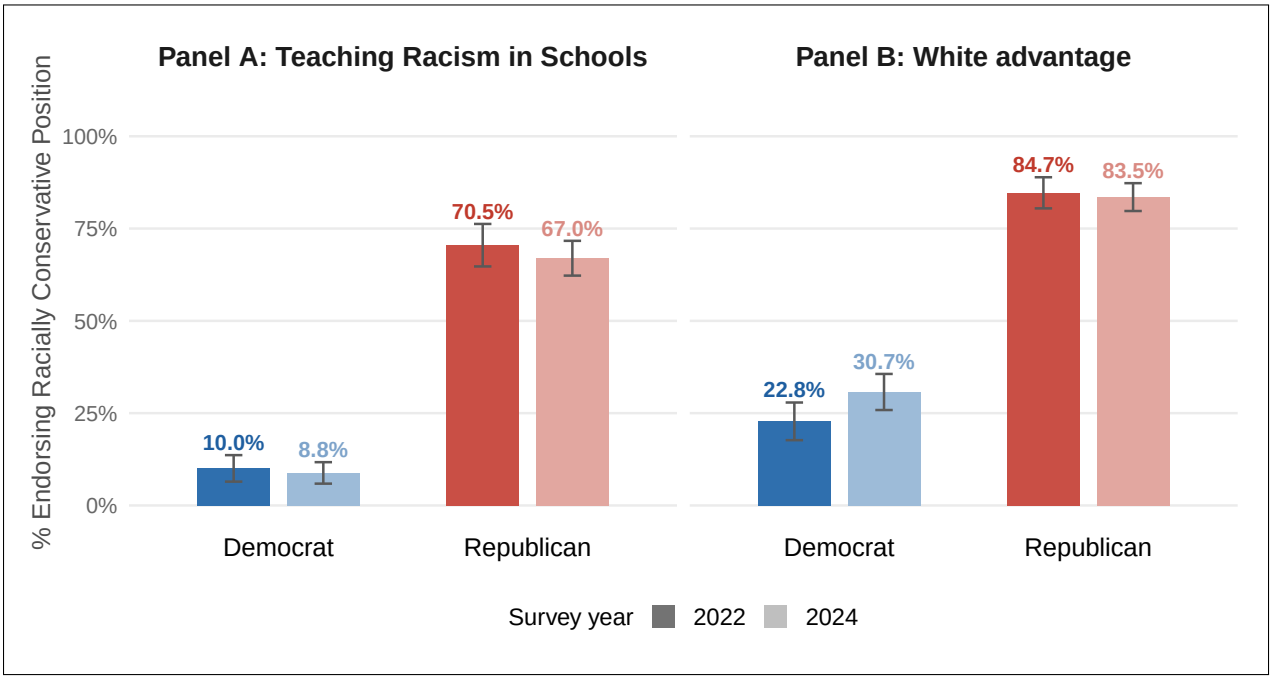
variation is consequential: while partisan cues strongly predict support for policies like aid to Black Americans and affirmative action, white Democrats' support for more redistributive racial policy, such as reparations, remains tepid (Hudgins et al., 2024).

[Need transition here] The intuition for this claim can be illustrated through a simple empirical exercise using observational data from the 2022 and 2024 ANES Pilot Studies. First, Figure 1, Panel A demonstrates a familiar pattern of partisan polarization: white Republicans are substantially more likely than white Democrats to endorse colorblind positions, particularly on questions concerning whether race and racism should be taught in public schools. Viewed through the lens of the existing literature, these results appear largely consistent with expectations. White racial attitudes seem strongly sorted by party identification, and contemporary debates over race appear to reflect another dimension of partisan conflict.

Panel B, however, reveals a more puzzling pattern. When respondents are asked whether being White confers social advantages, endorsement of a colorblind position among white Democrats increases substantially. Although descriptive, this shift suggests that partisan identification alone cannot fully account for variation in white racial attitudes. If partisan sorting were the primary explanation, we would expect white Democrats to respond similarly across both questions. Instead, attitudes become considerably more heterogeneous once race is framed in terms of structural advantage rather than school curricula.

Figure 2 takes a step toward explaining this heterogeneity. Using the 2024 ANES Pilot Study, we estimate survey-weighted linear probability models among white Democrats only and using a binary measure of endorsement of colorblind positions. The dependent variables are the two colorblind attitudes shown in Figure 1: support for minimizing schools' emphasis on racism and denial that whites enjoy social advantages. Each model includes both Democratic partisan strength and a standardized measure of racial resentment, allowing us to assess whether variation within the Democratic coalition is better explained by partisan intensity or by underlying racial predispositions. Points in Figure 2 represent coefficient

Figure 1: **White Democrats are More Divided About White Advantage than Teaching Racism**

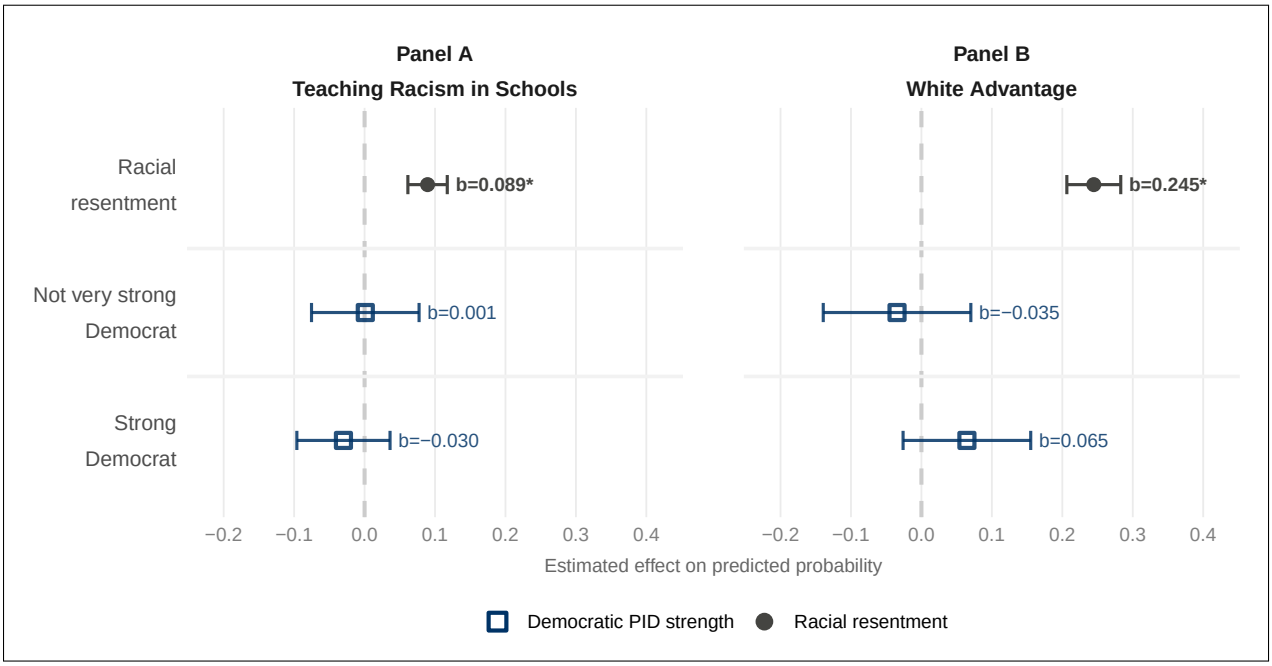


White respondents endorsements of racially conservative positions on two ANES pilot questions. White partisan gaps in racial attitudes depend on question framing. Panel A reports the percentage of white respondents who believe schools place too much emphasis on race and racism (ANES 2022) or that schools should place little to no emphasis on racism's impact in society (ANES 2024). Panel B reports the percentage denying that being white confers structural advantages. Party identification is measured using the seven-point ANES scale, with partisan leaners grouped with their respective parties and pure independents excluded. Darker shaded bars indicate 2022 estimates and lighter shaded bars indicate 2024 estimates. Bars represent survey-weighted percentages and error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. White respondents only. N: 2022—Democrats = 374, Republicans = 320; 2024—Democrats = 412–416, Republicans = 501–505, depending on item nonresponse.

estimates from these models, with horizontal bars indicating 95 percent confidence intervals.

The results indicate that Democratic partisan strength is not significantly associated with either outcome. Racial resentment, however, strongly predicts both support for minimizing schools' emphasis on racism and denial of white advantage. Importantly, the relationship is substantially stronger for the white advantage item than for the school curriculum item. That partisan strength is unrelated to these attitudes is not especially surprising, as debates over CRT and race in schools largely reflect differences between Democrats and Republicans rather

Figure 2: **Racial Resentment Predicts White Democrats' Denial of White Advantage**



The likelihood of white Democrats adopting racially conservative positions on two substantive dimensions, teaching about racism in schools and white structural advantage, modeled as a function of racial resentment and Democratic partisan strength. Racial resentment is measured using the standard four-item ANES racial resentment scale; Democratic partisan strength is measured using the three Democratic categories of the seven-point ANES party identification scale, with Lean Democrat serving as the baseline. Points show coefficient estimates from survey-weighted linear probability models estimated among white Democrats in the 2024 ANES Pilot. Horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Panel A models support for minimizing schools' emphasis on racism's impact in society; Panel B models denial of white structural advantage. Models include age, education, and gender as controls. Sample restricted to white Democrats, including Democratic leaners (N=412–414, depending on item nonresponse).

than variation among Democrats themselves. What is more surprising is that substantial variation remains within the Democratic coalition once attention shifts from whether race matters to how race matters. In particular, beliefs about structural white advantage and systemic racism appear to be shaped less by partisan intensity than by underlying racial predispositions.

Research on the asymmetric nature of partisan sorting further provides evidence that sorting accounts do not capture all of white racial attitudes. Republican identity sorts onto a comparatively narrow range of social characteristics (white, Christian, and so on), while

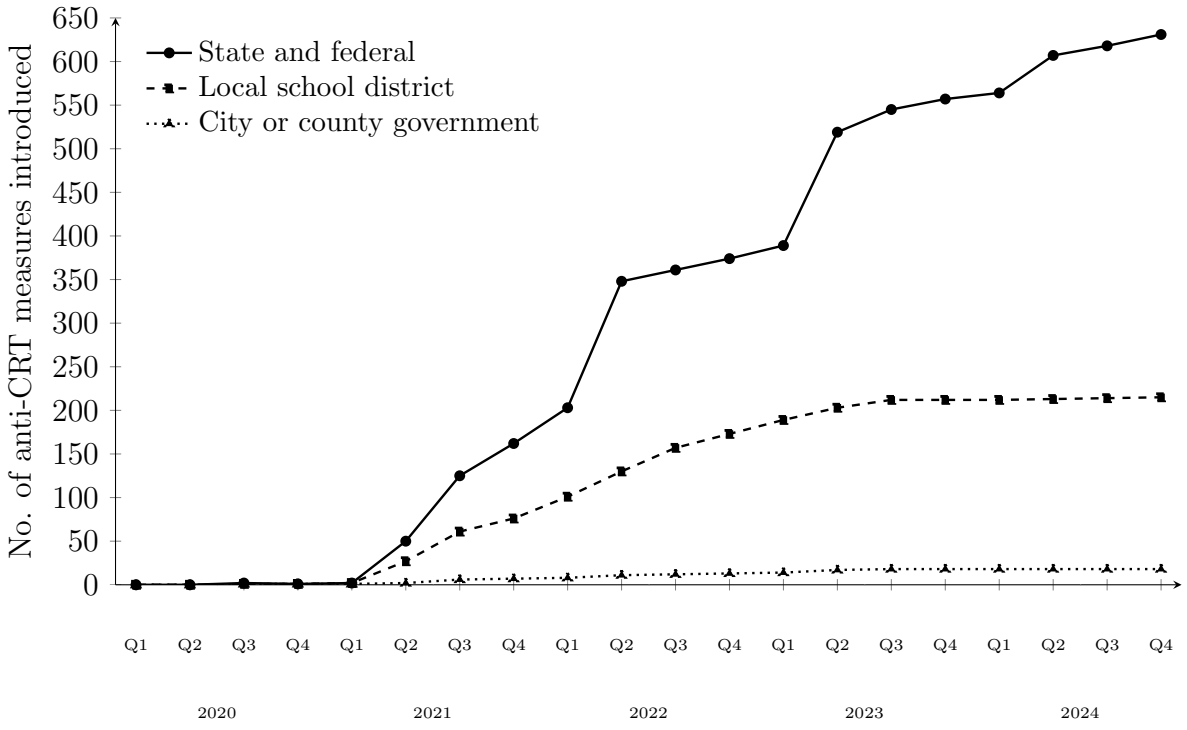
the Democratic coalition remains a "big tent" of social identities and interests (Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016; Mason and Wronski, 2018). Because the Democratic Party is more socially heterogeneous, racial resentment likely carries more variable meaning among white Democrats than among white Republicans. Measurable declines in racial resentment among white Democrats do not therefore imply that negative racial attitudes have lost political relevance; rather, racial resentment may have become so closely tied to partisan identity that responding to its items functions as a partisan litmus test rather than a genuine attitude report.

Beyond these measurement concerns, the focus on racial resentment overlooks a broader shift in American racial politics since Kinder and Sanders (1996) introduced the construct. The dominant racial ideology among white Americans, Republican and Democrat alike, is now colorblindness (Mills, 2017). Colorblind racism is a belief system grounded in abstract liberalism. Unlike racial resentment, which overlaps with preferences for smaller government, colorblind racism is characterized by the minimization of structural racism relative to individual factors like behavior, work ethic, and merit in determining life outcomes (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). As with racial resentment, scholars trace the rise of colorblindness to specific historical developments: declines in Black poverty, increases in Black political and economic representation, and especially the political ascent of Barack Obama, all of which appeared to confirm that America rewards effort without regard to race (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2011). Colorblindness is associated with negative racial attitudes and the justification of racial inequality as a matter of individual behavior (Richeson and Nussbaum, 2004), making it a subtler but no less consequential set of racial attitudes, and one more palatable to white Democrats than racial resentment. How educators and institutions discuss racism, white privilege, and racial bias thus has direct implications for the activation of colorblind racism.

[Need transition here] While public interest in local political issues is typically muted, the role of race in education has historically driven local political participation from protests against school integration in the 1960s to opposition to bussing in the 1990s. The resurgence

of school board politics as a point of national political debate in 2020 was similarly sparked by racial issues, but this time conflict emerged about *how* children are taught the history of racism in America and its ongoing effects in the present day (López and Sleeter, 2023). These debates had direct implications for policymaking. Figure 3 plots the number of state, federal, local, city and county government legislation introduced between 2020 and 2024 that sought to prohibit, restrict or censure books, curricula, teaching materials, trainings or other educational content. Specifically, this data reflects proposed or enacted legislation that prohibited material that "invokes critical race theory," suggest the United states is "fundamentally racist or sexist," or material that claims "meritocracy,or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist." With over 800 pieces of legislation introduced or enacted since 2020, the debate over how race is discussed in public schools is more than just a culture war talking point; it is a *substantive* issue with measurable impact on policymaking.

Figure 3: Number of Anti-CRT Measures Introduced by Level of Government, 2020–2024



Note: Table produced from data compiled by the University of California CRT Forward Project (Alexander et al., 2023).

Taken together, these findings suggest that existing accounts overstate the extent to which partisan sorting explains white racial attitudes. While party identification captures broad differences between Democrats and Republicans, it obscures meaningful ideological variation within the Democratic coalition itself, especially on colorblind racism. This oversight is especially important for emerging policy debates about *how* structural racism and white advantage are discussed in education. Our theoretical framework identifies the conditions under which we should see increased heterogeneity in white Democrats' racial attitudes. But we also expect this heterogeneity to shape political behavior. Here we posit that emotions, specifically anger, drive political behavior in response to colorblind racism being challenged.

Existing work therefore leaves unresolved an important question: Why does substantial heterogeneity emerge among white Democrats when racial inequality is framed in terms of structural *white* advantage, despite apparent partisan consensus on more salient race-related issues?

A compelling body of research maps white Americans' belief systems about who is to *blame* for racial disparities to emotions, especially anger (Banks and Valentino, 2012; Banks, 2014). With the decline of biological racism in American public opinion, scholars have argued that contemporary white racial attitudes are best characterized by a symbolic resentment of what many whites perceive to be unfair advantages conferred to Black people via policies like affirmative action (Kinder and Sears, 1981; Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Bobo, Kluegel and Smith, 1997). As Banks observes, "What makes a large percentage of whites angry is that they believe Blacks are receiving illegitimate and unfair advantages. Seeing Blacks continue to ask for assistance from the federal government while they are considered the ones to blame for their lower position in society evokes strong feelings of anger among many white Americans"(Banks, 2014, 28).

Importantly, Banks distinguishes between the quality of anger among white racial liberals and white racial conservatives, theorizing that for white *racial* liberals, anger is rooted in frustration with the fact that racial prejudice has yet to be fully eradicated. However, it is

important to note that Democratic partisanship is not interchangebale with racial liberalism. The final link in the chain from group position threats to political action is the movement from anger to political participation. Political psychologists have shown that anger serves as a motivation for individuals to seek ways to manage perceived threats. Anger empowers individuals to confront the threat directly (Mintz, Valentino and Wayne, 2021; Valentino et al., 2011; Van Zomeren, 2013) and has been shown to boost political participation in a variety of settings (Valentino and Neuner, 2017; Valentino, Wayne and Oceno, 2018; Izatt, 2025; Marcus et al., 2019). Accordingly, as anger activates pre-existing attitudes about race, it also boosts white opposition to racially targeted policies (Banks, 2014; Banks and Valentino, 2012) and should increase political participation among certain white people in these contexts as well. This theoretical framework lays the groundwork for the following hypotheses:[1]

Hypothesis 1a: *Compared to the control group, white respondents who learn that local schools may teach students about racial discrimination, will experience more anger.*

We contend any information suggesting that poor outcomes for minorities are driven by widespread racial discrimination threatens whites' group position. By white advantage, we mean the benefits that whites receive due solely to their skin color (Omi and Winant, 2014; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Our next hypothesis (H1b) offers a more nuanced test where we attempt to disentangle whether cueing white advantage vs Black disadvantage leads to different responses. We anticipate that Black deficit frames of racial inequality (e.g., discrimination makes it harder for Black people to get jobs) may be more familiar to respondents, thus making it more likely that social desirability may occur, and causing respondents to report less anger. However, we expect to see whites exhibit increased anger whenever we cue discrimination in the discussion about racial inequality, regardless of how it is framed.

Hypothesis 1b: *If white respondents learn that local schools may teach students about Black Disadvantage, then they will experience less anger compared to those respondents learning*

[1] A graphical illustration of our theoretical framework can be found in Appendix A.1

about White Advantage.

White people who become angry about the effects of racial discrimination being taught in schools should then show increased interest in participating in school board politics. This is because anger is an "approach" emotion", and when some people sense a threat, anger will lead them to control the threat by increasing their participation (Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk, 2009; Valentino et al., 2011). Further, whites who self-describe as experiencing anger are more likely to turn out to vote (Phoenix, 2019). Given this, we expect that:

Hypothesis 2a: *White respondents who experience increased anger post-intervention will be more likely to express intention to participate in a variety of school board activities, like attending a school board meeting or donating their survey reward.*

We also expect that whites who become angry will participate more than whites who do not experience as much anger or those who experience higher levels of other negative emotions (like fear or shame) in response to the treatments. We anticipate this given the literature showing that negative emotions, such as fear or shame, do not lead to increased levels of political engagement in meaningful ways (Vasilopoulos et al., 2019; Valentino and Neuner, 2017)

Hypothesis 2b: *White respondents who experience fear or shame post-intervention will be less likely to express more intention to participate in a variety of school board activities, like attending a school board meeting or donating their survey reward.*

Finally, we expect treatment effects to hold across partisanship (H3). This expectation is borne out of three attenuating reasons. First, while coverage of backlash against teaching race in schools has largely focused on conservatives, and Republican politicians have been at the helm of efforts to restrict or censor discussions of racism in school curricula, most school board positions are officially nonpartisan [2] Party cues about local school board politics are, therefore, vague at best, so we do not have strong reason to expect white Democrats

[2]According to data collected by Ballotpedia, 90% of school boards across the country are elected on non-partisan elections.

and Republicans to link education policy to party politics spontaneously. Second, many white Republicans and white Democrats share similar attitudes about the extent to which racial inequality is driven by systemic versus individual factors (Feldman and Huddy, 2005). Indeed, the principles of colorblindness are endorsed by both white Democrats and white Republicans (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2011; Davis and Wilson, 2021). If our theory is correct and exposure to information that challenges whites' group position elicits anger, and *both* Democrats and Republicans hold this belief, we should expect anger to increase participation for whites across party lines.

Hypothesis 3: *Anger will mediate the decision to participate in school board politics for both white Democrats and white Republicans when exposed to the treatments.*

Experimental Design & Estimation Strategy

Table 1: Summary of Experimental Stimuli (Social Studies Textbook Module)

Condition	**Module Title**	**Framing**
Control	What causes differences in unemployment by race?	No mention of racial discrimination; attributes gap to economist disagreement
Easier for Whites	Does racial discrimination cause differences in unemployment by race?	Discrimination makes it easier for White Americans to get jobs
Harder for Blacks	Does racial discrimination cause differences in unemployment by race?	Discrimination makes it harder for Black Americans to get jobs

Note: All conditions included an identical image depicting the unemployment gap between Black and white Americans. Conditions vary *only* in whether and how the racial employment gap is *attributed to racial discrimination.* See SI C.1 for full treatment modules.

To estimate the causal effects of whites' racial attitudes and anger on school board political participation, we designed and implemented a survey experiment (*n=2000*) fielded through a YouGov sample in the summer of 2023. 63% of our sample identified solely as non-Hispanic white, leaving us with a total of 1,300 respondents for analysis. The sample

was evenly split between men and women.[3]

Our design represents two important innovations in studies of white racial attitudes around education policy. First, existing experimental work in this area (Safarpour et al., 2024; Deshpande et al., 2024; Collins, 2024) uses stimuli with vague references to teaching about the legacy of racism to assess white support for teaching about racism in schools. This phrasing leaves room for the possibility that whites might enthusiastically support material on historical topics like chattel slavery and Jim Crow laws, but could altogether reject educational materials that identify present-day examples of racism creating disparities between Blacks and whites. Second, our design omits any overt references to "CRT" (Critical Race Theory) or "DEI" (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). These descriptive terms have proved to be of little use for assessing racial attitudes because they are so heavily partisan-coded. When someone says the oppose (favor) CRT, we learn vary little about them beyond their partisan affiliation (Deshpande et al., 2024). Our design thus presents a novel test of how langauge about race that is not partisan-coded elicits emotional responses from white Americans.

For our experimental intervention, we informed respondents that a textbook company is considering changing one of its textbooks and is soliciting opinions on those changes. Respondents viewed one of three randomly assigned excerpts from a hypothetical middle school social studies textbook.[4] Each excerpt includes the same bar chart depicting the gap in unemployment rates for White and Black Americans in 2020, reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In all three conditions, we kept the length of the excerpt roughly similar. Table 1 summarizes the manipulations in each condition which center on the title of the module and the framing of the bar chart. First, our control condition treats attribution for the racial gap in unemployment as an open question, framing the cause as a debate among economists. This condition allowed us to prime race without cuing racial discrimination or racial resentment.

[3]Appendix B summarizes the demographics of our white sample.

[4]See the Appendix B for sampling procedures and consent procedures.

Next, our two treatment conditions include the same title for the bar chart, "Figure 5.6: Does racial discrimination cause differences in unemployment by race?" In the "Easier for whites" condition, we add an explanation about the unemployment gap by stating in bold font: "Economists find that racial discrimination makes it easier for White Americans to get jobs." This graphic includes a "key term" learning tool defining "racial discrimination" as "when one group gets *better* opportunities than another group because of the color of their skin". In the "Harder for Blacks" condition, the explanation about the unemployment gap reads: "Economists find that racial discrimination makes it harder for Black Americans to get jobs." Here, the key term defines racial discrimination as "when one group gets *worse* opportunities because of the color of their skin."

Our treatment conditions explain the disparities in unemployment rates by directly mentioning discrimination. Given our theory, we expect that pointing to white advantage as the cause for the difference in unemployment will result in white respondents getting angry (1a) because this condition challenges colorblind explanations for racial disparities that are common among whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). A subtle yet significant difference we anticipate is that cuing white advantage brings to the forefront the idea that fixing inequality necessitates whites giving up resources, which should induce more anger compared to cuing Black disadvantage, which does not implicate whites losing their advantage (Lowery et al., 2006).[5]

Following the excerpt, respondents are asked to report how it made them feel. They reported their intensity of emotion (from *not at all* to *extremely*) across eight emotions.[6] Standard measures of emotions have exhibited that it is good practice to have two indicators on each emotional dimension (Valentino and Neuner, 2017; Mintz, Valentino and Wayne, 2021). As such, we operationalize anger by averaging how "angry" and "outraged" a respondent was and do this same thing across all our emotional measures to create an emotional

[5]The full text and illustration for each condition can be found in Appendix C.1.
[6]An example of how the emotions slider question appears is included in Appendix C.2.

index scale.[7]

Next, we asked participants to write about how the excerpt made them feel. We asked this in an open-ended format to allow for clarity on *why* the emotions arose. For instance, while White Democrats express more support for racially redistributive policies and racial minority candidates than white Republicans, attitudes about race (especially about the causes of racial inequality) vary substantially among white Democrats (Feldman and Huddy, 2005). That is, liberalism on non-racial issues is not a proxy for racial liberalism, even among Whites who align themselves with the Democratic party. On the other hand, Banks suggests that white Democrats and white Republicans express anger about race for different reasons: white Republicans become angry about the idea that racism contributes to racial inequality and white Democrats experience anger about the injustice of racial inequality (Banks, 2014). The open-ended format of our questions allows us to explore differences that may exist across partisans.

Before random assignment to one of our three experimental conditions, we obtained consent from each respondent, asked basic demographic questions, and probed for partisanship with the ANES measure that includes partisan strength and the typical "leaner" questions.

Although some scholars caution against experimental designs that aim to identify mediators (Gerber and Green 2012), directly randomizing an emotion like anger runs the risk of altering the treatment itself. Following a well-established work on the mediating role of emotions (Valentino and Neuner 2017; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008, 2023; Valentino et al. 2008; Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk 2009; Izatt 2025), we incorporated design features that should help with reducing bias and strengthening causal inference. First, we randomized the order in which the eight emotion items appeared in the survey. While not equivalent to randomizing the mediator, this step helps minimize order effects, priming, or demand characteristics that could contaminate measurement. Second, immediately after the

[7]We code happiness (average of happy and joyful), fear (average of anxious and afraid), shame (average of embarrassed and ashamed), and gladness (average of glad and proud). We create an emotional index scale where 0 is a required click to distinguish between no emotion present and a non-response, 1-3 is "a little", 4-5 "moderate", and 6-7 "extreme".

emotion battery, we asked respondents in an open-ended item to describe how the textbook made them feel. Following Pirlott and MacKinnon (2016)'s recommendations, this manipulation should enable us to gauge if the treatment increased negative affect in the theorized direction and provide evidence of the construct validity of our mediator.

After testing for an emotional reaction, we measure our primary outcome variable, political engagement, with a battery of 6 questions. We ask how likely a participant is to attend a hypothetical school board meeting, make a comment in the next school board meeting, donate to the school board, run for the school board, and volunteer for the school board. We also asked respondents whether they would like to donate their YouGov reward to one of two fictitious organizations aimed at changing school curricula content.[8]

We also measure, as a potential outcome variable for future inquiry, the degree to which respondents feel that white Americans are losing influence because of racial minorities. Finally, we include a question gauging opinions about the content of curricula in public school education. Both batteries were adopted from the ANES 2022 Pilot Study. [9]

Results

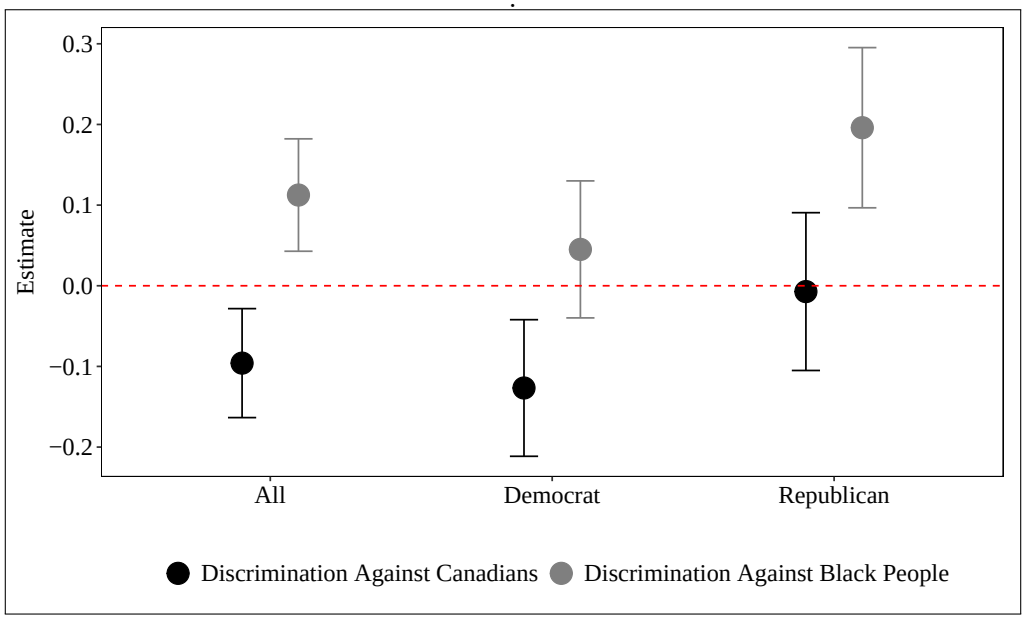
To ensure that the primary noticeable contrast between the two racial discrimination treatments and the control conditions is about racial discrimination and not another confounding variable, we conducted a pretest on Cloud Research ($n = 500$). To date, one side of the debate surrounding why there has been such an influx of White interest in education politics is that it is not about racism at all; rather, parents are concerned that when narratives of discrimination are taught in schools, it could condition white children to feel bad about their race. We test this concern directly in our pretest, distinguishing between the effects of teaching about racial discrimination and the potential concern that white parents might feel

[8]Note that we asked if participants would donate their YouGov rewards. Those who agreed were directed to a screen explaining that they could keep their reward. The question gauges a more realistic probability of a respondent's willingness to donate.

[9]A depiction of how our survey unfolds and a breakdown of the sample size in each of our experimental conditions can be found in Appendix 4.

when school curricula make their kids feel uncomfortable. We include a similar racial discrimination condition but test it against a treatment describing unemployment rates between immigrants from Canada and American-born citizens.[10] We similarly discuss discrimination in this test but frame discrimination to be against a group that white Americans typically feel "warmer" towards.(Center, 2016) After randomly assigning all participants to one of the three conditions, the pilot survey then unfolds virtually identically to our YouGov experiment. We used OLS regressions to estimate the average treatment effect (ATE) of the control, racial discrimination treatments, and national origin discrimination treatments on levels of anger. Figure 4 plots the results of these regressions.

Figure 4: Differential Effects of Racial and National Origin Discrimination Attributions on Anger



Note: Treatment stimuli were textbooks describing discrimination against Black Americans (dark) and Discrimination against Canadian-Born Americans (gray) as the cause of higher rates of unemployment relative to white Americans. Points are OLS regressions. Bars are 95% confidence intervals. Complete results in Appendix C.4

We find that anger levels were significantly higher among pre-test respondents randomly assigned to the racial discrimination treatment. As shown in Figure 4, white respondents expressed substantially more anger in the racial discrimination condition compared to the

[10]The full text and images used for the "National Origin Discrimination" treatment can be found in Appendix C.1.

control, which made no mention of discrimination. By contrast, there was no statistically significant difference in anger between whites in the national origin discrimination condition and the control. In fact, the coefficient for the national origin condition is negative, suggesting that whites, if anything, felt slightly less anger when told about Canadians facing labor market discrimination. Looking by partisanship, white Republicans reported significantly more anger in the racial discrimination condition relative to the control, while no difference emerged between control and national origin conditions. Among white Democrats, anger decreased in the national origin condition compared to control.

Overall, white people exposed to information about discrimination against Canadians experienced very little anger relative to those in the racial discrimination condition. This pre-test finding supports our theoretical claim that race, specifically, triggers anger in these debates. It also challenges the narrative that white parents are motivated only by a desire to shield children from feeling bad about their identity. If that were the case, we would expect respondents to react similarly when children's identities as Americans were implicated. The pilot results suggest otherwise.

Increased Anger in Response to Racial Discrimination Treatments

We first test the claim that white respondents feel increased anger when learning that a textbook module will discuss how racial discrimination advantages whites. In Figure 5, we report the main treatment effects on four emotions among white respondents. The whiskers extending from the shape correspond to a 95% confidence interval; meaning we can be reasonably confident that respondents' emotional reactions were the product of which treatment condition they were exposed to as long as the whiskers do not cross the 0.0 threshold.

Our results show that anger is the dominant emotional response to the racial discrimination treatments. Both of the treatment conditions increase anger by about 15 percentage points relative to the control. The treatments also significantly increased fear, but the in-

crease in fear are much smaller in magnitude (around 5 percentage points) than the increases in anger. In other words, the racial discrimination treatments make respondents a little more afraid and much more angry, consistent with the theory that the racial discrimination treatments threaten white's group position. Because anger is significantly higher (p-value $<$ .001), we can confirm our first Hypothesis 1a that white people will experience more anger than other emotions when they learn that local elementary schools are teaching about racial discrimination. Surprisingly, we find that the white advantage and Black disadvantage conditions increase anger at the same rate. We initially expected social desirability to attenuate the effects of the Black disadvantage framing, but the results indicate that simply mentioning racial discrimination in school spurs significant angry reactions among whites.

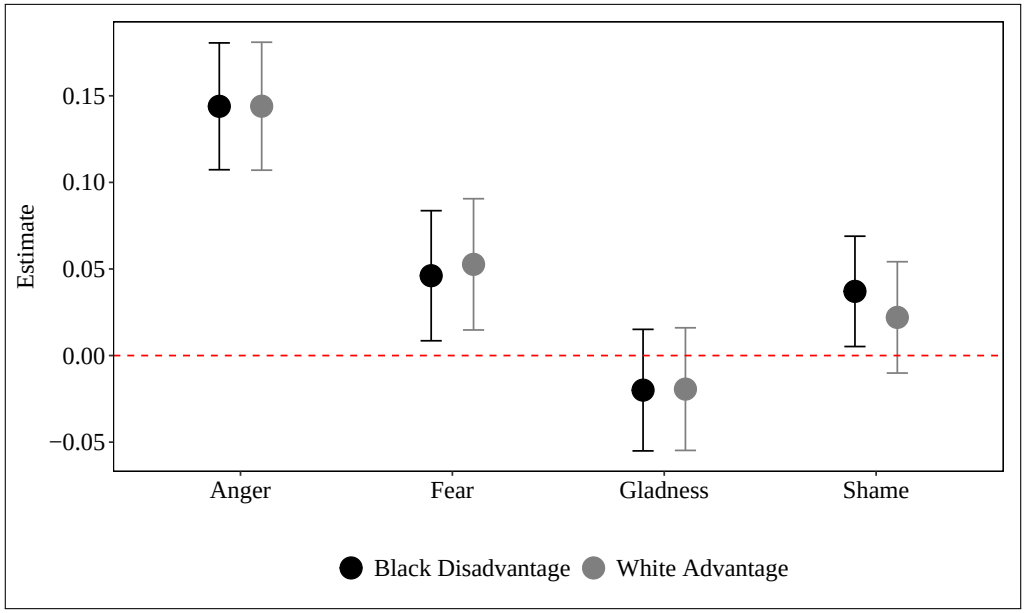
Moreover, we find no significant difference between treatment conditions when considering gladness and inconsistent effects for shame. The Black Disadvantage condition had only a small ($\beta < .05$) positive effect on shame and the White Advantage condition had no significant effect at all. The null or minimal effects for shame further indicate that the respondents feel threatened by the treatments. If anger and shame were both increased in the treatment conditions, this would suggest that whites are angry about racial injustice and ashamed that their group benefits from racial discrimination (Chudy, Piston and Shipper, 2019). However, anger without shame or guilt is less likely an emotional response to racial injustice and more likely a response to a perceived threat.

Assessing the Quality of Anger and the Role of Partisanship

To establish that these voices are representative rather than cherry-picked, we turn to *exemplary responses*, which are the responses most characteristic of each condition, obtained through Structural Topic Modeling (STM).[11] Formally, exemplary responses are the responses that maximize estimated topic prevalence for the dominant STM topic within each condition. Let θ_{ik} denote the estimated prevalence of topic k in response i. For each condi-

[11]See Roberts, Stewart and Tingley (N.d.) for details on this methodology

Figure 5: Effects of Attributing Unemployment Gap to White Advantage and Black Disadvantage on All Emotions

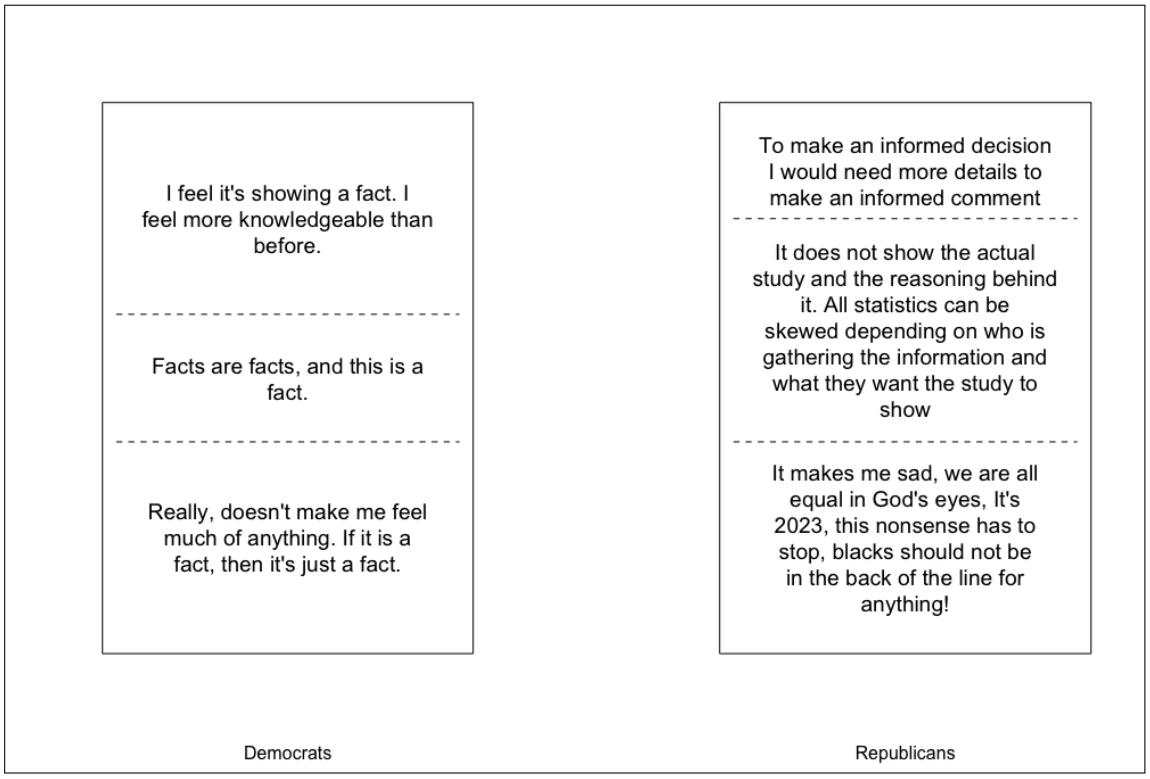


Note: Control (reference) condition for all models was bar chart of Black-white unemployment gap with no attributions to discrimination. Points are point estimates (OLS), bars are 95% confidence intervals. Red line indicates threshold for statistical significance at $p < .05$. Complete results in Appendix C.6

.

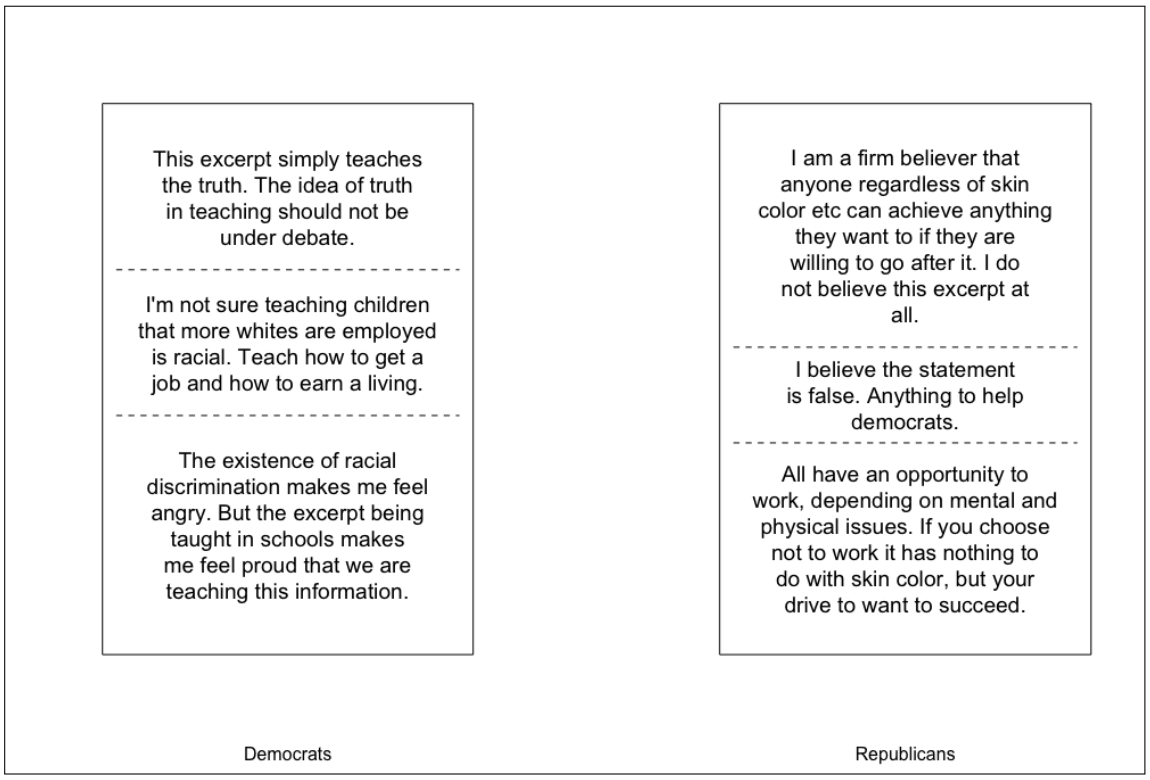
tion c, we identify the dominant topic as $k_c^* = \arg\max_k \bar{\theta}_{ck}$. We then rank responses within condition c by $\theta_{ik_c^*}$ and present the three top-ranked cases as exemplary responses. In this way, the excerpts shown are those most strongly representative of the dominant discourse in each experimental condition.

Figure 6: Exemplary Responses by White Respondents in the Control Condition



We present those exemplary responses by partisanship in Figures 6, 7, and 8. In the *control* condition (Fig 6), exemplary responses from both parties simply register the information as factual: a white Democrat notes that *'Facts are facts and this is a fact,'* while a white Republican explains that to make an informed decision *'I would need more details to make an informed comment.'* Neither expresses threat, confirming that unqualified information about the unemployment gap does not, on its own, activate a defensive reaction.

Figure 7: Exemplary Responses by White Respondents in the "Easier for Whites" condition

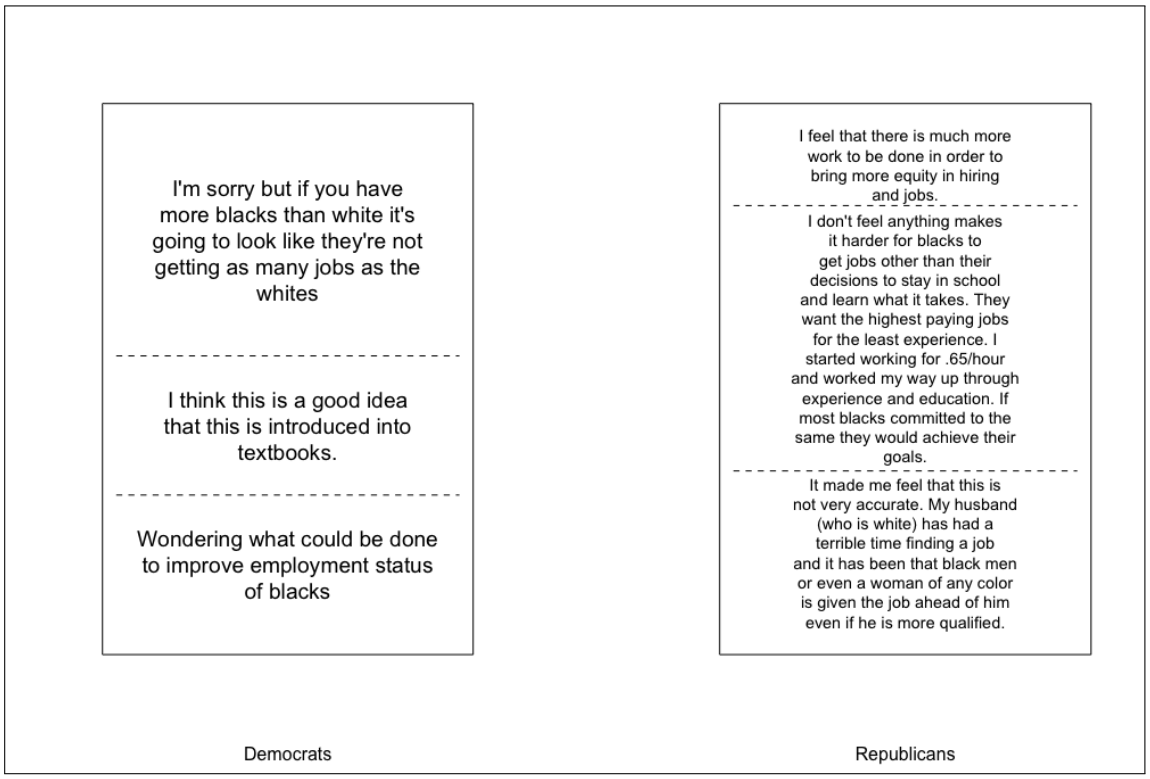


The treatment conditions, and especially the *Easier for Whites* condition (Fig 7), tell a different story. White Republicans in that condition contest the premise outright, insisting race is irrelevant to outcomes: one is a firm believer that *'anyone regardless of skin color etc can achieve anything they want to if they are willing to go after it'*, and another that *'...if you choose not to work it has nothing to do with skin color, but your drive to want to succeed'*. These responses are further evidence of backlash in response to any information that challenges the colorblind belief that America rewards effort regardless of race (Mills, 2017).

Compelling evidence for our argument of white Democrat heterogeneity is that some white Democrats in the survey sound *very* similar to Republicans in the sample. The white Democrat quoted above (Fig 7) saying *'Teach how to get a job and how to earn a living'* mirrors the Republican appeal to individual effort almost verbatim, deploying the individual-blame frame characteristic of white racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Feldman

and Huddy, 2005), and showing blindness to the role of race in disparities.

Figure 8: Exemplary Responses by White Respondents in the "Harder for Blacks" Condition

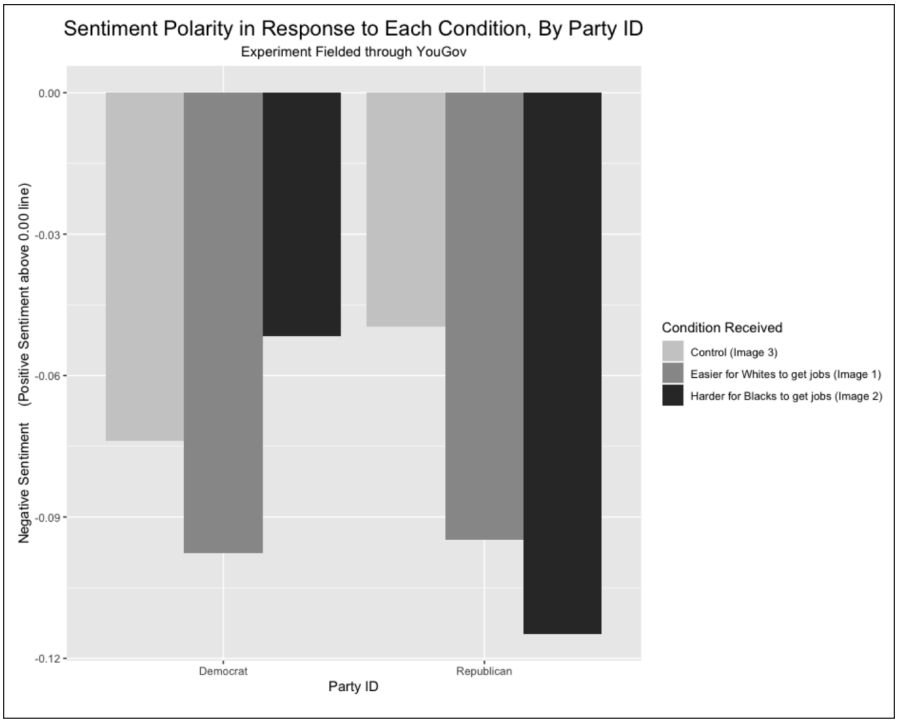


In the *Harder for Blacks* condition (Fig 8), another white Democrat questions the data itself, reasoning that *'if you have more blacks than white, it's going to look like they're not getting as many jobs as the whites.'* Set against the racially liberal Democrat who is *'proud that we are teaching this information'*, these responses make the heterogeneity unmistakable: white Democrats do not share a single emotional response to challenges to colorblindness and individual blame. Some are angry that white advantage harms Black Americans; others are angry, like Republicans, that the challenge to meritocracy is being made at all. These results are congruent with ongoing work by Hutchings et. al that shows this heterogeneity for white Democrats in the U.S.

Sentiment analysis corroborates this pattern at scale. Figure 9 reports sentiment polarity for the open-ended responses using the Harvard-IV dictionary in a lexicon-based sentiment analysis approach. Each response is assigned a polarity score based on the relative frequency

of words coded as positive and negative in the dictionary.[12] Both partisan groups skew negative across all the treatment conditions, and, consistent with the partisan story, white Republicans are more negative overall, peaking in the *'Harder for Blacks'* condition.

Figure 9: Negative Sentiment Polarity of Open-Ended Responses by Party



Note: Sentiments are classified using the Harvard-IV dictionary. See Appendix E for details and output.

But the result that matters for our argument concerns white Democrats: although they are less negative on average, they are *more* negative in the *'Easier for Whites'* condition than in the control, even as they are less negative in the *'Harder for Blacks'* condition. In other words, the prompt that most directly contradicts the meritocratic claim that *"whites have more because they worked harder"* is precisely the one that pushes white Democrats toward negativity. This asymmetry is hard to reconcile with a purely partisan account and

[12]The Harvard-IV dictionary is a lexicon-based sentiment tool that assigns words to predefined categories, including positive and negative valence. We score each response by tokenizing the text, matching words to the dictionary, and aggregating the number of positive and negative matches into a single polarity measure. This score reflects the relative frequency of positive versus negative language in the response: higher values indicate more positive sentiment, lower values indicate more negative sentiment, and values near zero indicate a more neutral balance.

squarely supports the group-position model: it is the challenge to earned advantage, not the mention of race as such, that provokes the defensive reaction.

To further explore the quality of anger among white partisans, we employ a novel open-ended coding approach developed by one of the authors. The approach scores each response along two separate dimensions, attribution and color-blindness, that together capture not just whether a respondent thinks race matters for unemployment, but how they explain the disparity. Full details appear in the [APPENDIX]; we summarize the scheme here. Figure **??** plots every response in the resulting two-dimensional space.

The first dimension, *Attribution*, captures what a respondent blames for the racial unemployment gap. It runs from -1 to 1. A score of -1 indicates a clearly *structural* explanation that locates the cause in forces outside the individual, such as a respondent who attributes the gap to institutionalized racism. A score of 1 indicates a clearly *individualizing* explanation that blames the people affected, such as a respondent who says the gap simply reflects a lack of work ethic. Responses that lean one way but less decisively, or that mix the two, receive intermediate scores of -0.5, 0, or 0.5, with 0 reserved for responses that are genuinely balanced or offer no dominant explanation.

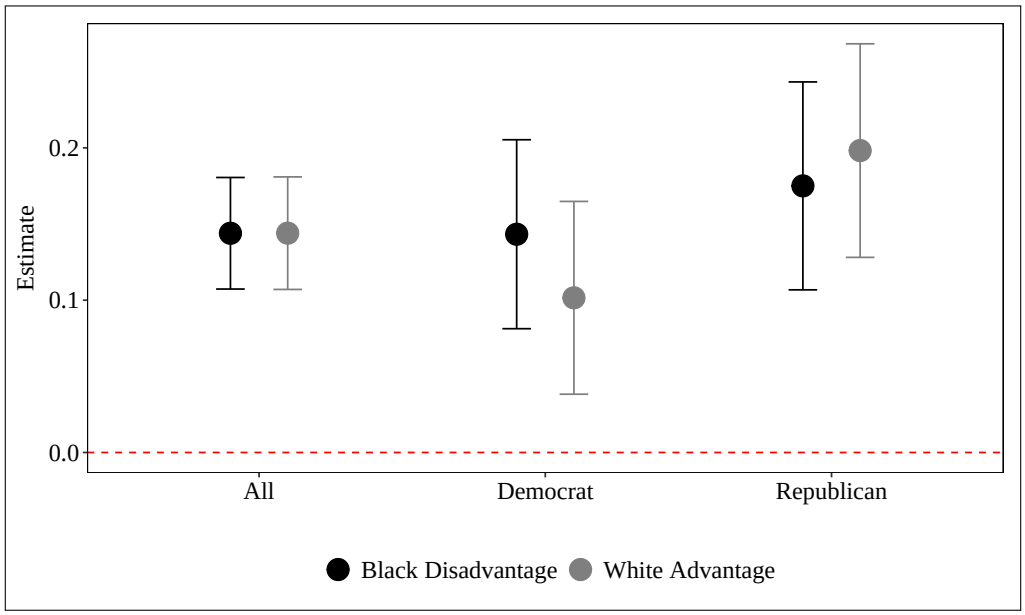
The second dimension, *Color-blindness*, captures whether a respondent treats race as relevant at all. It also runs from -1 to 1, but note that the two scales measure different things: attribution is about the *kind* of cause, color-blindness about whether race is acknowledged as a cause in the first place. A score of -1 indicates clearly *color-conscious* reasoning that treats race as consequential. For example, a respondent who says it is a shame that Black Americans face discrimination would receive -1. A score of 1 indicates clearly *color-blind* reasoning that minimizes or denies any role for race. For example, a respondent who says race has nothing to do with whether someone is employed would receive a 1. As with attribution, less clear-cut responses receive intermediate scores between these poles.

Scoring both dimensions lets us distinguish responses that a single measure would lump together. A respondent can acknowledge that race matters yet still individualize the cause,

or reject racial explanations while gesturing at structural ones; the two-dimensional space makes these distinct positions visible. This is what allows us to differentiate how white partisans, and white Democrats in particular, talk about racial disparity, rather than merely whether they react negatively to it.

Finally, the closed-ended anger effects confirm that the reaction to the conditions registers as anger specifically, and across party lines. Figure 10 plots the average treatment effect on anger for all white respondents, white Democrats, and white Republicans. The treatments significantly raise anger for both groups; Republicans are somewhat angrier, but the effect is unmistakable for Democrats as well. Quantity of anger, then, is bipartisan, while its quality, as the open-ended evidence shows, divides white Democrats internally.

Figure 10: Effects of Attributing Unemployment Gap to Discrimination on Anger by Partisanship



Note: Treatment stimuli were textbooks describing discrimination *against* Black Americans (dark) and discrimination *in favor of* white Americans (gray) as the cause of the Black-white unemployment gap. Points are point estimates (OLS), bars are 95% confidence intervals. Red line indicates threshold for statistical significance at $p < .05$. Complete results in Appendix C.6 Points are point estimates (OLS). Bars are 95% Confidence Intervals. White respondents only.

Overall, we find multi-method evidence for Hypotheses 1a and 1b: the sentiment results corroborate the closed-ended finding that whites react more negatively to the treatments than

the control, and the exemplary responses show this anger is driven by threats to colorblind and meritocratic ideology among both white Democrats and white Republicans. We also find support for Hypothesis 3, which proposed that partisanship alone does not account for the quality of white anger. For both parties the treatments elicit significantly more anger and negativity than the control, yet some white Democrats describe that anger as a response to threat rather than to injustice. These findings provide strong evidence of heterogeneity among white Democrats, though our ability to characterize the quality of anger is bounded by the depth of the open-ended responses. Future work should further probe how whites respond emotionally to information that unsettles colorblind ideologies.

The Mediating Role of Emotions on Participation

Having established through two experiments that our discrimination treatments significantly increase anger among white respondents, we now turn to the mediating role of anger in shaping participation. Our theory concerns the indirect pathway, or the Average Causal Mediation Effect (ACME), rather than the direct effect (ADE) or total effect (TE), which we still report for transparency.

Thus, to evaluate whether anger mediates the effect of discrimination frames on political engagement, we employ causal mediation analysis. Following Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto (2013), we define the ACME within the potential outcomes framework (Rubin 1974). This approach improves on traditional regression methods by formalizing the assumptions necessary for identification, providing nonparametric estimation, and offering sensitivity analyses to assess robustness. We estimate separate models for the mediator and the outcomes and recover the ACME, ADE, and TE using 10,000 nonparametric bootstrap simulations. Results are presented for both low- and high-cost forms of participation, with the prescribed sensitivity analyses included in Appendix D (Imai, Tingley and Yamamoto 2013).

In adopting this approach, our goal is to isolate the mechanism that links our experimental manipulation to our outcome variables (Druckman 2022, 2022, p. 45). Our design

explicitly follows the guidance of scholars who argue that mediation can be credibly identified when design choices are aligned with theory. Consistent with this idea, we treat our experimental manipulations as what Pirlott and MacKinnon (2016) call an "encouragement design": the race-based excerpts are expected to elevate anger relative to the control, thereby providing leverage to assess whether anger mediates the treatment effect. Likewise, Glynn (2021) emphasizes that mediation analysis is most useful when theory posits unobserved [psychological] processes and when direct effects may be weak or absent (267). Appendix C.5 shows that our treatments do not produce strong direct effects on participation, making it especially plausible (or at least worth testing) that anger is doing the implicit work of linking treatment to behavior.

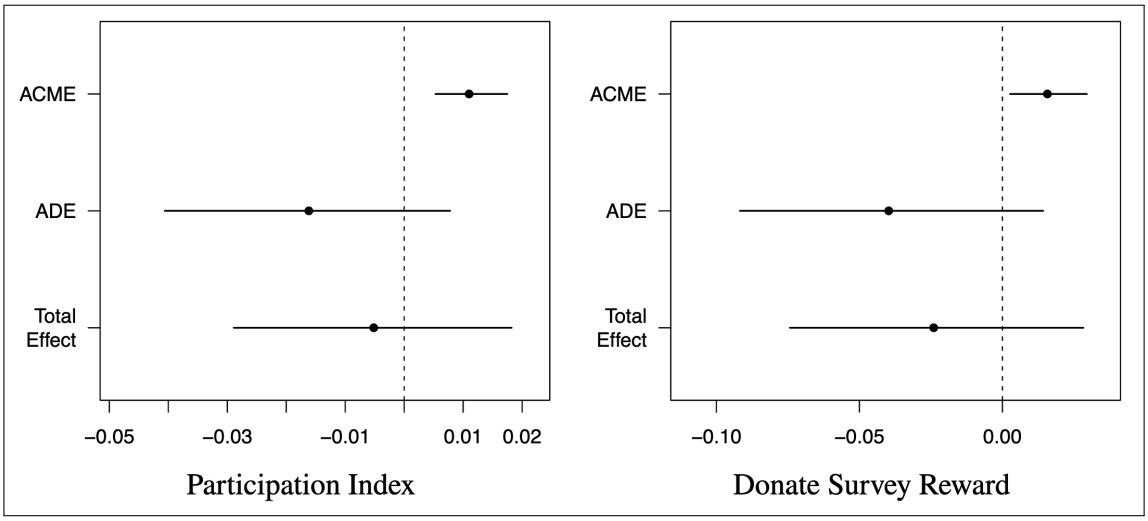
Mediation Effects of Anger

We first consider the mediating effects of anger on our participation outcomes across the full sample of white respondents. Figure 11 summarizes the mediation effects of anger, the direct effect of our treatment, and the total effect of both anger and the treatment on white respondents' likelihood to engage in school board politics. These findings show that white respondents were significantly more likely to participate because they experienced anger when exposed to the treatment conditions than white respondents who were exposed to the control condition. This confirms Hypothesis 2a that anger drives increased participation among white people.

Mediation Effects of Fear and Shame

Although our theory identifies anger as the central pathway linking curricular frames to participation, other negative emotions (e.g. fear and shame) are also plausible mediators. Given the centrality of these emotions in broader research on political behavior, we test whether they too mediate the effect of our treatments. This approach serves two purposes: it provides a robustness check against competing mediators (Pirlott and MacKinnon 2016),

Figure 11: Mediating Effects of Anger on Participation and Intent to Donate Survey Reward

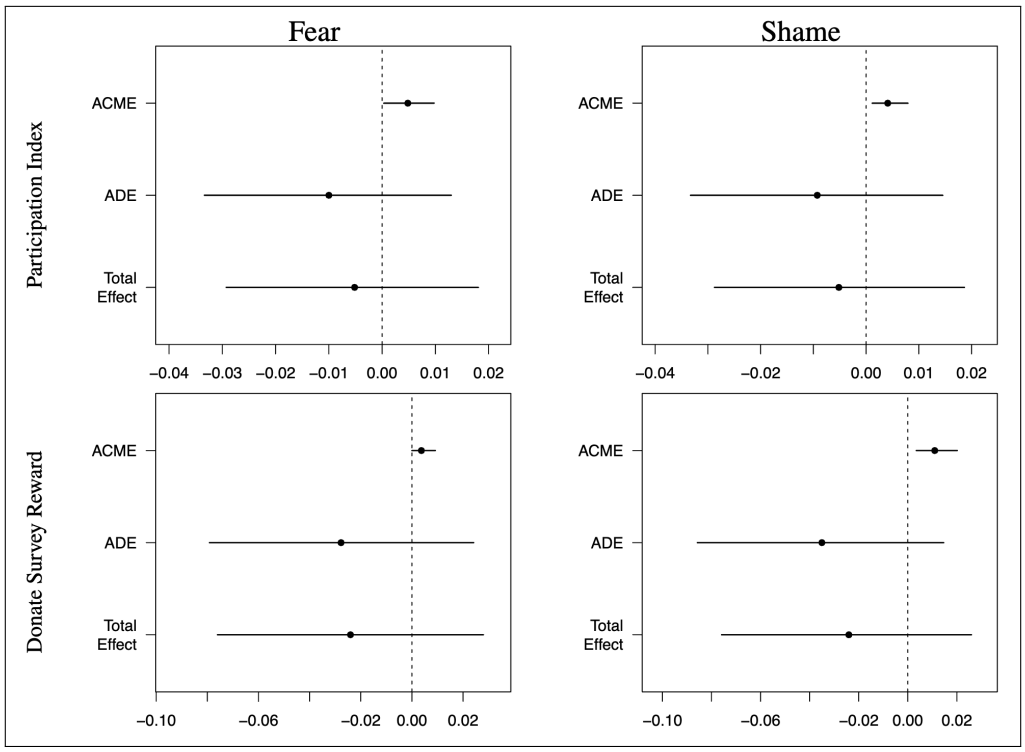


Note: Top row indicates the average causal mediation effect of anger on participation. Bottom row indicates direct and total effects. Bars are bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals based on N = 10,000 Monte Carlo Simulations. See Appendix C.7 for full mediation output

and it demonstrates the specificity of anger's role as the primary emotional channel. As we show below, the indirect effects (ACME) of fear and shame are comparatively modest, underscoring that anger, rather than a generalized negative affect, drives the mobilizing response. Figure 12 summarizes the mediation effects of fear and shame, the direct effects of our treatments, and the total effects of both the two emotions and the treatment on white respondents.

Both fear and shame exhibit weaker but statistically significant mediating effects on participation. We estimate an ACME of 0.004 for fear and 0.001 for shame ($p < .001$) in low-cost participation, though the confidence interval for fear is closer to zero. By contrast, the ACME for anger is larger (0.01), making anger the more potent driver of turnout. These results confirm our theoretical expectation: anger mobilizes white respondents more strongly than fear or shame, underscoring its central role in participation.

Figure 12: Mediating Effects of Fear and Shame on Participation and Intent to Donate Survey Reward



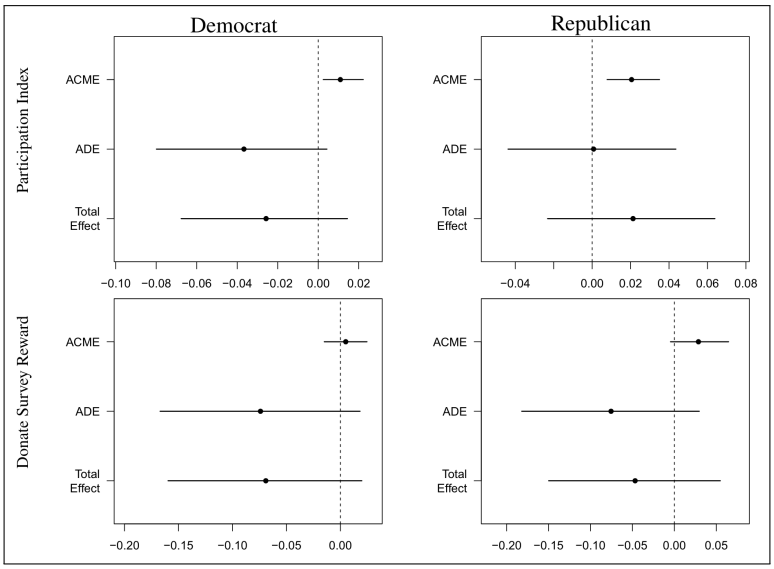
Note: Top row indicates the average causal mediation effects of fear (left) and shame (right) on participation. Bottom rows indicate direct and total effects. Bars are bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals based on N = 10,000 Monte Carlo Simulations. See the Supplemental Appendix C for complete results for fear and shame on participation

Heterogeneous Mediation Effects by Partisanship

Finally, we consider the heterogeneous effects of partisanship. Recall that we theorize partisanship will have no effect on how much anger perpetuates political participation when racial discrimination is cued (Hypothesis 3). Figure 13 summarizes the mediating effects of anger on participation, conditioned by partisanship. When it comes to our participation index, we find anger mediates participation, regardless of partisanship. Thus, we can confirm Hypothesis 3. Respondents were more willing to participate in school board politics irrespective of partisanship. While the effects on donating their survey reward, are not significant, the direction is still positive and consistent with our theoretical expectations. This implies that anger motivates intent to participate in school board politics but may not motivate

respondents to donate their survey reward in real-time.

Figure 13: Causal Mediation Effect of Anger on Participation and Intent to Donate Survey Reward by Partisanship



Note: Top row indicates the average causal mediation effect (ACME) of anger among white Democrats (upper left left) and among white Republicans (upper right) on participation. Bottom rows indicate direct and total effects. Bars are bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals based on N = 10,000 Monte Carlo Simulations. See Appendix C.7 for full mediation output.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that debates about how racial inequality should be taught in public schools have political consequences. Across two survey experiments, we show that educational materials describing systemic racial discrimination cause white people to experience anger more than any other emotion. This anger then increases costly political participation. While organized opposition to race-conscious education is often characterized as a partisan issue, we find that the mobilizing effects of anger hold for both white Republicans and some white Democrats. These findings provide a window into how race, emotions, and education intersect to shape political behavior.

We extend research on the relationship between racial attitudes, emotions, and participation in several ways. First, our experimental results show that informational stimuli about racial discrimination trigger white anger and, to a much lesser extent, fear. The fact that information about racial discrimination increases anger but has little to no effect on shame suggests that this emotional reaction is a threat response rather than a response to racial injustice. Our sentiment analyses of open ended data further illustrate that the treatments elicited more negatively valenced emotions from white respondents. Perhaps most telling, however, were the respondents' own words. According to the exemplary answers, respondents' own interpretations of their emotional reactions reflected both anger and a sense of threat in response to the treatment conditions that was not present in the control condition.

Second, we add nuance to partisan polarization models of mobilization around race in school curricula by illustrating that white Americans, regardless of their partisanship, feel threatened by the possibility of schools teaching children that structural racism (as opposed to behavioral or motivational deficiencies within Black people) is the primary cause of racial inequality. This result highlights the need to further investigate ideological heterogeneity among white Democrats when it comes to racial attitudes. Third, our findings contribute to a growing body of literature showing that anger mediates political participation. Specifically, our causal mediation results underscore the importance of measuring variables like emotions

which are harder to detect but have significant effects on participation.

More broadly, our results contribute to work on the politicization of public schools. Education has long been recognized as a mechanism for transmitting civic values and shaping political identity, but the present findings underscore that schools are equally sites of contestation where group status, privilege, and legitimacy are negotiated. These battles are neither new nor novel, they have played out in schools throughout American history. We argue that anger has been central to these debates. When schools adopt materials that foreground structural racism, they do more than educate: they provoke emotional reactions that reverberate through local and national politics.

The current study sheds light on white Americans but limitations remain for our understanding of non-white minority groups. Thus, the test of our theory is incomplete, as we cannot rule out the possibility that Black and other non-white groups also experience more anger when they learn that schools are simply teaching about the existence of racial disparities. Future work should over-sample non-white respondents to explore the relationship between racial attitudes, emotions, and participation for these groups.

Overall, our studies show that anger, more than any other emotion, mediates the relationship between white Americans learning about school curricula about racial discrimination, and participation in school board politics. Our findings explain the political potency of debates about diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in public education that continue to dominate public discourse. Instead of becoming angry about the mere discussion of racial differences, white Americans across party lines appear to be angry about the suggestion that racial differences are not driven by innate ability, motivation, or hard work. Simply put, white respondents are angry at the thought of children learning in schools that America is not colorblind. Any book, school material, or curriculum that declares racial disparities stem from discrimination and racial biases woven into American institutions is likely to draw significant anger from whites and, thereby, lead them to participate more in political actions. Although this study centers on school board politics, anger likely mediates the link between

white racial attitudes and participation in broader domains, including presidential elections and support for race-targeted policies. Future research should test these possibilities.

Table 2: Anti-CRT Measures by Year, Level of Government, and Status

Year	Level	Progress Status				
		Adopted	Introduced	Failed	Withdrawn/ Expired	Revoked/ Overturned
2021	Federal	0	0	0	29	0
	State	69	0	14	90	1
	Local School Dist.	60	0	15	2	0
	City/County Gov.	4	0	2	0	1
	Total	*133*	*0*	*31*	*121*	*2*
2022	Federal	0	0	0	8	0
	State	39	0	7	136	0
	Local School Dist.	80	0	11	6	1
	City/County Gov.	2	0	1	3	0
	Total	*121*	*0*	*19*	*153*	*1*
2023	Federal	1	25	1	1	0
	State	47	0	12	86	1
	Local School Dist.	33	0	2	1	1
	City/County Gov.	3	0	1	1	0
	Total	*84*	*25*	*16*	*89*	*2*
2024	Federal	0	13	0	0	0
	State	12	3	3	28	0
	Local School Dist.	1	0	0	0	0
	City/County Gov.	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	*13*	*16*	*3*	*28*	*0*

Note: Data from the CRT Forward Tracking Project. Three records from 2020 and one record with no date are excluded. "Introduced" reflects measures pending at time of data collection.

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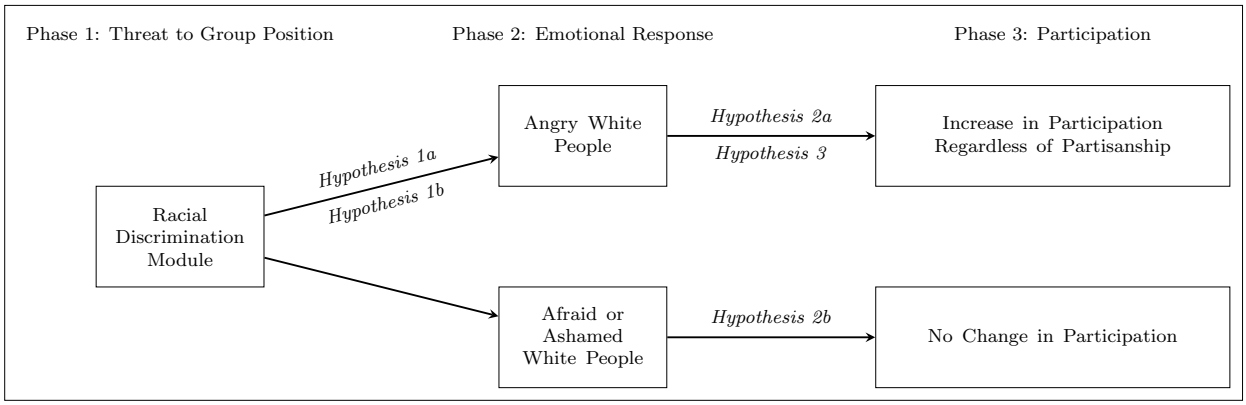
Supplementary Appendix

Contents

A Theoretical Expectations

A.1 Theoretical Framework

Figure 1: Theoretical predictions regarding the mediating effects of anger on participation



B Sampling Procedures and Descriptive Statistics

B.1 Experiment Structure

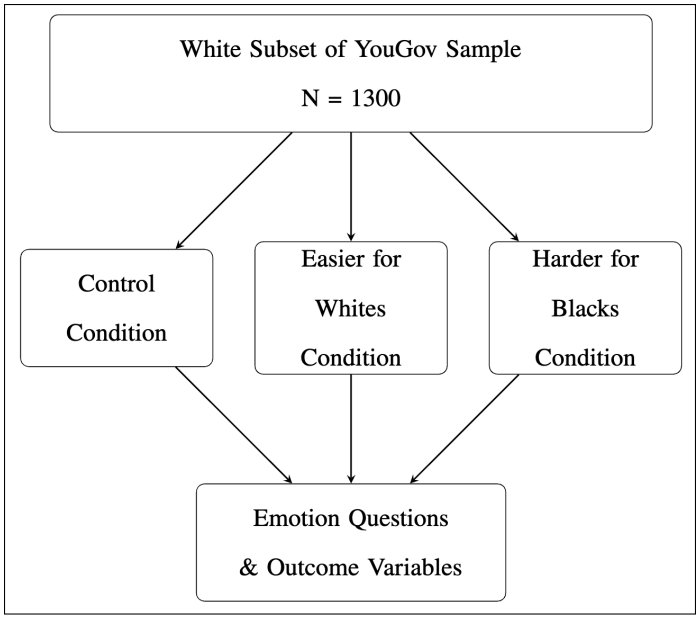


Figure 2: Survey Experimental Design

YouGov interviewed 2031 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 2000

to produce the final dataset. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The sampling frame is a politically representative "modeled frame" of US adults, based upon the American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata file, public voter file records, the 2020 Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration supplements, the 2020 National Election Pool (NEP) exit poll, and the 2020 CES surveys, including demographics and 2020 presidential vote.

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, home ownership status, region and Presidential vote choice. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

The weights were then post-stratified on 2020 Presidential vote choice, and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

B.2 Sample Descriptive Statistics

Children under 18	Yes	No				
	22%	78%				
Gender	Female	Male				
	51%	49%				
Party ID	Democrat	Republican	Pure independent	Other/Not sure		
	37%	42%	17%	3%		
Education	No HS	HS Diploma	Some college	Two-year	Four-year	Post-grad
	4%	30%	19%	10%	24%	14%
Ideology	Very liberal	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Very Conservative	Not Sure
	12%	14%	30%	23%	13%	7%
Age	Min	1st Quarter	Median	Mean	3rd Quarter	Max
	19	41	57	54	67	94

Figure 3: YouGov Sample Statistics

B.3 Sample Size in Each Experimental Condition

	Control	Easier for Whites	Harder for Blacks
1st Dimension			
White	$n = 432$	$n = 448$	$n = 420$
2nd Dimension			
White Republican	$n = 189$	$n = 209$	$n = 182$
White Democrat	$n = 172$	$n = 147$	$n = 155$

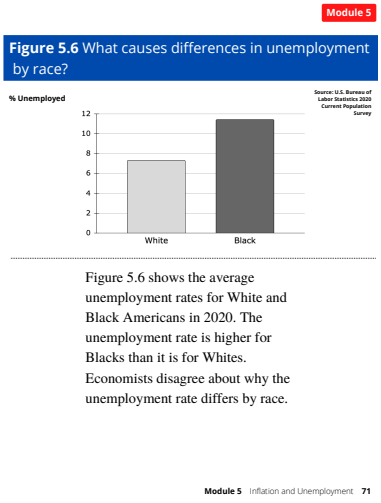
Figure 4: Analytical Dimensions and Experimental Conditions

C Design

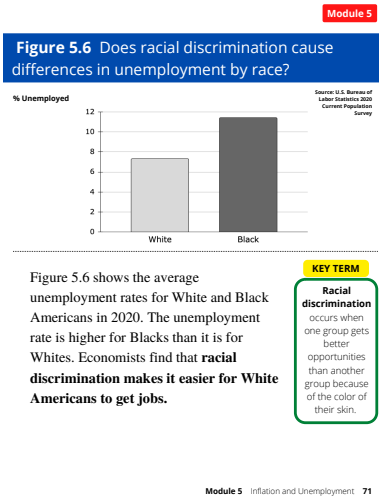
C.1 Stimuli

Figure 5: Cloud Research Pre-Test Stimuli

(a) Control



(b) Discrimination by Race



(c) Discrimination by National Origin

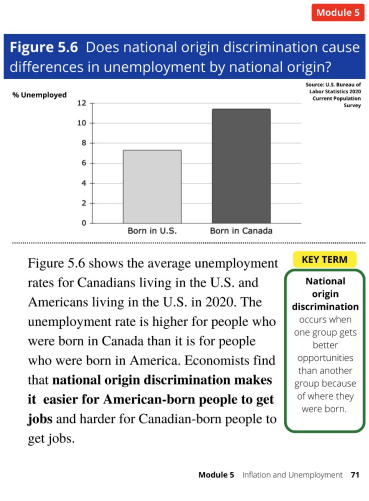
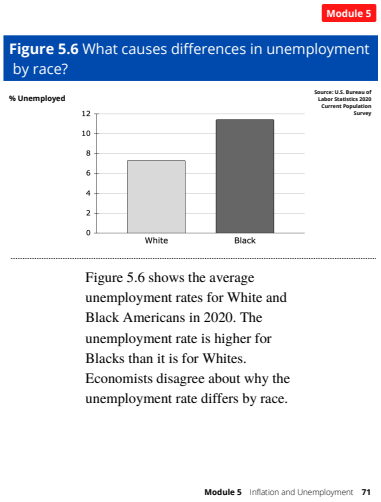
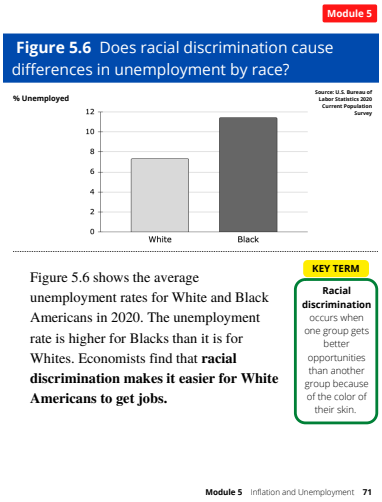


Figure 6: YouGov Stimuli

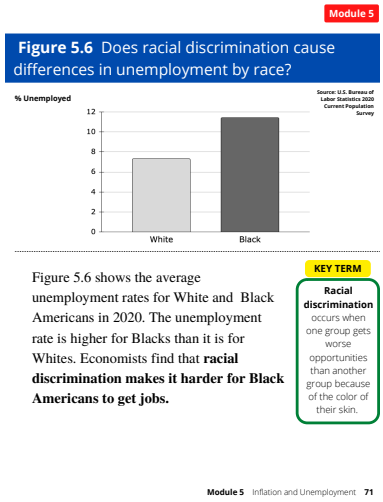
(a) Control



(b) Easier for Whites



(c) Harder for Blacks



Stimuli for each of the three experimental conditions, each an excerpt from a hypothetical middle school social studies textbook. Note that **(a)** represents the control condition where we do not connect the racial employment gap to racial discrimination. Figure **b** represents the "easier for whites" condition. And Figure **c** represents the "harder for blacks" condition.

C.2 Emotion Measure

We measured all four of our composite emotions using a 7-point scale in the shape of a thermometer. Figure 7 shows how this item appeared in the survey for each emotion. Participants were required to move the slider at least to 0 to indicate no emotion.

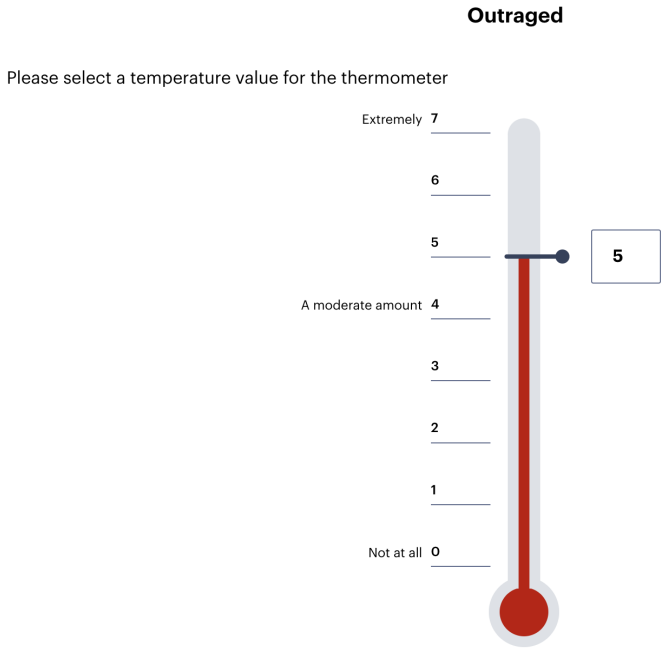


Figure 7: An example of how the slider questions appear measuring each of our 4 composite emotions

C.3 Participation Measure

We measured participation by creating an index of variables gauging intent to participate in 5 activities. Note that all participants were debriefed and informed that their reward would not actually be donated.

Table 1: Distribution of Participation and Intent to Donate Survey Reward

	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very	
How interested are you in participating	23%	30%	35%	12%	
How likely are you to:	**Not at all**	**Not very**	**Moderately**	**Very**	**Extremely**
Attend a meting	46%	29%	15%	7%	4%
Make a comment	52%	26%	13%	6%	3%
Volunteer	52%	27%	13%	5%	3%
Donate	57%	21%	13%	6%	3%
Run for a seat	67%	21%	7%	2%	3%
	No/ Skipped		Yes,to the Equitable Education Fund		Yes, to the Patriot Education Fund
Would you like to donate your reward	74%		16%		10%

Results

C.4 Cloud Research Pre-Test: Main Effects on Anger

Table 1 shows the ATE of our textbook treatments on anger among white participants using OLS as the estimator.

Table 1: Average Treatment Effect of Race and National Origin Discrimination on Anger by Partisanship (Output for Figure 4)

	Dependent variable:		
	Anger		
	All	Democrat	Republican
National Origin	-0.096^{***}	-0.127^{***}	-0.007
	(0.034)	(0.043)	(0.050)
Race	0.112^{***}	0.045	0.196^{***}
	(0.036)	(0.043)	(0.051)
Constant	0.364^{***}	0.432^{***}	0.297^{***}
	(0.024)	(0.031)	(0.035)
Observations	402	257	208
R^2	0.080	0.063	0.090
Adjusted R^2	0.075	0.055	0.081
Residual Std. Error	0.287 (df = 399)	0.283 (df = 254)	0.297 (df = 205)
F Statistic	17.297^{***} (df = 2; 399)	8.471^{***} (df = 2; 254)	10.156^{***} (df = 2; 205)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

C.5 YouGov: Main Effects on Intent to Participate

We present estimates of the average direct effects (ADE) of the experimental treatments on the participation index and intent to donate outcomes. Tables 2 and 3 show the direct effects of treatment assignment on participation and donating, respectively.

C.6 YouGov: Main effects on other emotions

Tables 4, 5, and 6 present results for the ATE on all four of our composite emotions by analytical dimension (all whites, white Democrat, and white Republican).

Table 2: Direct Effects of Treatments on Participation Index by Partisanship

	Dependent variable: Particpation Index		
	(Whites)	(White Democrats)	(White Republicans)
Harder for Blacks	−0.004	−0.026	0.031
	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.027)
Easier for whites	−0.006	−0.025	0.010
	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.028)
Constant	0.165***	0.168***	0.144***
	(0.010)	(0.017)	(0.020)
Observations	1,300	445	344
R^2	0.0002	0.004	0.004
Adjusted R^2	−0.001	−0.001	−0.002
Residual Std. Error	0.205 (df = 1297)	0.197 (df = 442)	0.206 (df = 341)
F Statistic	0.106 (df = 2; 1297)	0.815 (df = 2; 442)	0.713 (df = 2; 341)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Direct Effects of Treatment on Intent to Donate by Partisanship

	Dependent variable: Donating		
	(Whites)	(White Democrats)	(White Republicans)
Harder for Blacks	−0.053*	−0.110**	−0.068
	(0.030)	(0.050)	(0.058)
Easier for whites	0.006	−0.025	−0.023
	(0.030)	(0.051)	(0.059)
Constant	0.279***	0.297***	0.294***
	(0.021)	(0.037)	(0.042)
Observations	1,300	445	344
R^2	0.004	0.012	0.004
Adjusted R^2	0.002	0.008	−0.002
Residual Std. Error	0.440 (df = 1297)	0.432 (df = 442)	0.441 (df = 341)
F Statistic	2.424* (df = 2; 1297)	2.693* (df = 2; 442)	0.718 (df = 2; 341)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4: Average Treatment Effect on All Composite Emotions for Whites (Output for Figure 5)

	Dependent variable: Composite Emotion			
	Anger	Fear	Shame	Gladness
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Harder for Blacks	0.144***	0.037**	0.046**	−0.020
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Easier for whites	0.144***	0.022	0.053***	−0.019
	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Constant	0.333***	0.217***	0.276***	0.192***
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.013)
Observations	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300
R^2	0.057	0.004	0.007	0.001
Adjusted R^2	0.055	0.002	0.005	−0.0003
Residual Std. Error (df = 1297)	0.275	0.239	0.282	0.264
F Statistic (df = 2; 1297)	38.940***	2.622*	4.404**	0.793
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Average Treatment Effect on All Composite Emotions for White Democrats (Output for Figure 6)

	Dependent variable: Composite Emotion			
	Anger	Fear	Shame	Gladness
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Harder for Blacks	0.143***	0.024	0.012	−0.012
	(0.032)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Easier for whites	0.102***	0.017	0.041	0.012
	(0.032)	(0.027)	(0.033)	(0.031)
Constant	0.349***	0.218***	0.301***	0.176***
	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.023)
Observations	445	445	445	445
R^2	0.046	0.002	0.004	0.001
Adjusted R^2	0.042	−0.003	−0.001	−0.003
Residual Std. Error (df = 442)	0.272	0.231	0.282	0.265
F Statistic (df = 2; 442)	10.653***	0.412	0.795	0.313
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: Average Treatment Effect on All Composite Emotions for White Republicans (Output for Figure 6)

	Dependent variable: Composite Emotion			
	Anger	Fear	Shame	Gladness
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Harder for Blacks	0.175***	0.059*	0.095***	−0.048
	(0.035)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.032)
Easier for whites	0.198***	0.043	0.073*	−0.035
	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.038)	(0.033)
Constant	0.300***	0.195***	0.251***	0.190***
	(0.025)	(0.023)	(0.027)	(0.023)
Observations	344	344	344	344
R^2	0.098	0.010	0.021	0.007
Adjusted R^2	0.093	0.004	0.015	0.001
Residual Std. Error (df = 341)	0.265	0.244	0.279	0.243
F Statistic (df = 2; 341)	18.527***	1.762	3.634**	1.199
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

C.7 Mediation Results

The following tables include outputs from the "mediate" package for each of our mediation tests reported.

Table 7: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Participation (Output for Figure 11)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.01101	0.00523	0.02	<2e-16 ***
ADE	-0.01617	-0.04038	0.01	0.19
Total Effect	-0.00516	-0.02842	0.02	0.67
Prop. Mediated	-2.13364	-13.38593	13.34	0.67

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

Recall that "ACME" is the average causal mediate effect while "ADE" is the average direct effect. Here, the DV = Participation. Mediator = Anger

Table 8: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Donating the Reward (Output for Figure 11)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.01572	0.00261	0.03	0.02 *
ADE	-0.03975	-0.09266	0.01	0.15
Total Effect	-0.02403	-0.07472	0.03	0.37
Prop. Mediated	-0.65429	-6.75861	6.17	0.38

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

DV = Donate Survey Reward. Mediator = Anger

Table 9: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Fear on Participation (Output for Figure 12)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.00483	0.00026	0.01	0.039 *
ADE	-0.00999	-0.03383	0.01	0.405
Total Effect	-0.00516	-0.02952	0.02	0.662
Prop. Mediated	-0.93644	-5.34013	5.67	0.687

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

DV = Participation. Mediator = Fear

Table 10: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Shame on Participation (Output for Figure 12)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.00410	0.00117	0.01	0.003 **
ADE	-0.00926	-0.03404	0.01	0.435
Total Effect	-0.00516	-0.03018	0.02	0.665
Prop. Mediated	-0.79438	-4.79418	5.50	0.667

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

DV = Participation. Mediator = Shame

Table 11: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Fear on Donating (Output for Figure 12)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	3.70e-03	-2.33e-05	0.01	0.053
ADE	-2.77e-02	-7.85e-02	0.02	0.285
Total Effect	-2.40e-02	-7.50e-02	0.03	0.349
Prop. Mediated	-1.54e-01	-1.48e+00	1.28	0.388

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

DV = Donate Survey Reward. Mediator = Fear

Table 12: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Shame on Donating (Output for Figure 12)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.01098	0.00344	0.02	0.0026 **
ADE	-0.03500	-0.08682	0.02	0.1766
Total Effect	-0.02403	-0.07606	0.03	0.3566
Prop. Mediated	-0.45695	-4.58709	4.59	0.3588

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 1300 Simulations: 10000

DV = Donate Survey Reward. Mediator = Shame

Table 13: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Participation Index for Republicans (Output for Figure 13)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.020513	0.007847	0.03	0.001 ***
ADE	0.000769	-0.043115	0.05	0.964
Total Effect	0.021282	-0.022306	0.07	0.346
Prop. Mediated	0.963867	-8.155181	8.93	0.347

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 344 Simulations: 10000

DV = Participation. Mediator = Anger

Table 14: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Participation Index for Democrats (Output for Figure 9)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.01094	0.00219	0.02	0.011 *
ADE	-0.03668	-0.07844	0.00	0.082 .
Total Effect	-0.02573	-0.06688	0.01	0.220
Prop. Mediated	-0.42516	-3.87896	3.65	0.229

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 445 Simulations: 10000

DV = Participation. Mediator = Anger

Table 15: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Donation for Republicans (Output for Figure 13)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.02870	-0.00502	0.06	0.089
ADE	-0.07547	-0.18446	0.03	0.168
Total Effect	-0.04677	-0.15105	0.06	0.373
Prop. Mediated	-0.61368	-5.89426	5.69	0.435

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Sample Size Used: 344 Simulations: 10000

DV = Donation. Mediator = Anger

Table 16: Complete Results for Causal Mediation Effects of Anger on Donation for Democrats (Output for Figure 13)

	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
ACME	0.00494	-0.01468	0.02	0.61
ADE	-0.07403	-0.16833	0.02	0.12
Total Effect	-0.06909	-0.15908	0.02	0.13
Prop. Mediated	-0.07151	-1.10008	0.87	0.64

—

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

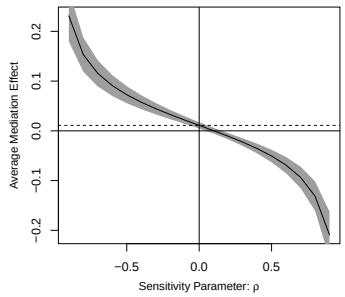
Sample Size Used: 445 Simulations: 10000

DV = Donation. Mediator = Anger

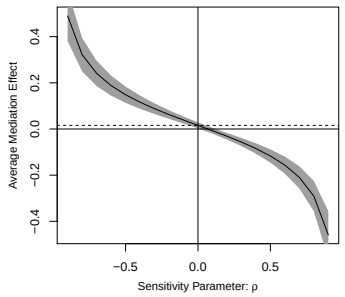
D Sensitivity Analyses of Mediation Effects to Address the Ignorability of Treatment Assignment Assumption

Figure 1: Sensitivity concerning Error Terms

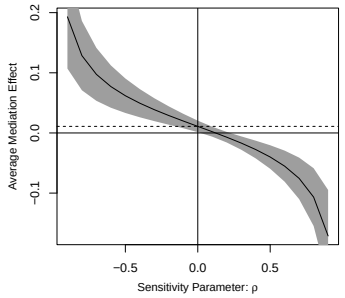
(a) ACME ρ Participation Index for whites



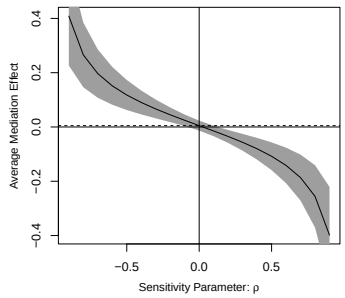
(b) ACME ρ Intent to Donate for whites



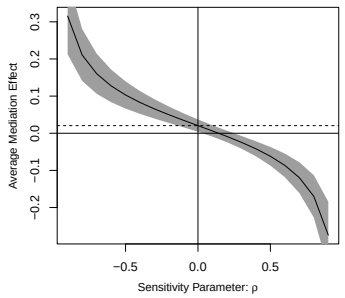
(c) ACME ρ Participation index for white Democrats



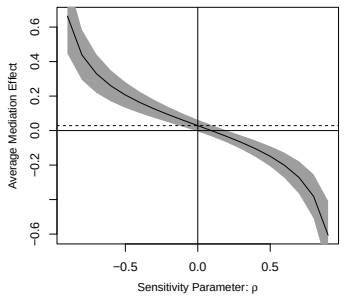
(d) ACME ρ Intent to Donate for white Democrats



(e) ACME ρ Participation Index for white Republicans



(f) ACME ρ Intent to Donate for white Republicans



E Sentiment Analysis and Exemplary Answers

We use the package 'SentimentAnalysis,' which employs a dictionary generation approach and utilizes LASSO regularization to identify and select words from texts that are statistically indicative of either positive or negative sentiment. More information about this package is available here.

Additionally, we employ the Harvard IV-4 dictionary to evaluate the sentiment of the responses. More information on the dictionary can be found **here**.. As a second check of our manipulation of anger, we present exemplary responses to the open-ended item. See Roberts, Stewart and Tingley (N.d.) for further details on this method and the 'stm' package in R.

Table 1: Sentiment Polarity in Response to Each Condition, By Party ID

Average Sentiment Expressed in the Open Ended Responses
White Respondents Only

Condition	**Partisanship**	**N**	**word_count**	**sd**	**ave_sentiment**
Control (Image 3)	Democrat	155	3087	0.3006879	-0.07382
Control (Image 3)	Independent	68	1607	0.2656269	-0.09251
Control (Image 3)	Not Sure	15	236	0.3566609	0.089945
Control (Image 3)	Republican	182	4098	0.2723651	-0.04954
Easier for Whites to get jobs (Image 1)	Democrat	172	3248	0.3533964	-0.09769
Easier for Whites to get jobs (Image 1)	Independent	64	1512	0.3185054	-0.10235
Easier for Whites to get jobs (Image 1)	Not Sure	7	151	0.2219483	-0.10395
Easier for Whites to get jobs (Image 1)	Republican	189	4372	0.3020592	-0.09477
Harder for Blacks to get jobs (Image 2)	Democrat	147	2664	0.3591952	-0.05156
Harder for Blacks to get jobs (Image 2)	Independent	76	1775	0.3421368	-0.09162
Harder for Blacks to get jobs (Image 2)	Not Sure	16	185	0.2224727	-0.17358
Harder for Blacks to get jobs (Image 2)	Republican	209	4682	0.3232456	-0.11476

F Ethical Considerations and Debriefing

F.1 Deception and Consent

We assess public attitudes toward race-conscious education materials. We are attentive to the fact that race is an emotionally potent issue. We minimize the harm to participants by giving them an opportunity to reflect on any negative emotions they might feel in an open-ended response. While the treatments we present are fictitious (that is, they do not represent a real school textbook) they include fully accurate statistics maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Labor. Thus, while respondents might have negative feelings about the information we present, this information is widely publicly available and presented in a format that could easily come across in their daily lives. Moreover, our debrief clarifies the purpose of the study and addresses any potential misunderstandings. Participants are required to click "I confirm" to acknowledge understanding. This clarification was delivered respectfully and in line with best practices for addressing misinformation in survey research (Murphy and Greene 2023; Greenspan and Loftus 2022; Greene et al. 2023). One important design element for us to consider in our experiment is its use of deception. Specifically, we inform respondents that the textbook excerpts they read will be considered for adoption in a local public school curriculum. This deception is necessary for us to evaluate how emotions influences school board participation, but we do not wish to misinform individuals permanently. Consequently, our debrief A) informs respondents that they were deceived and B) stresses that the information they read is accurate, though not being considered for school curricula. Additionally, as we mentioned above, participants are required to confirm that they understand the debrief before finishing the survey. Finally, we have received "exempt approval" by our Institutional Review Board for the pilot and follow-up studies.

F.2 Consent Form for Research Participation

REDACTED

Public Affairs Survey

Principal Investigators: REDACTED

Co-Principal Investigator: REDACTED

Before you begin this survey, please read the following:

You are invited to participate in a research study with the REDACTED FOR ANONYMOUS VERSION The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you agree to be part of this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your feelings about politics. REDACTED FOR ANONYMOUS VERSION, researchers at REDACTED, are conducting this research.

The risks involved in these studies are minimal. Findings will be reported in scholarly journals, at academic seminars, and at research association meetings. The data will be stored in a secured location and retained indefinitely, but your responses will remain anonymous. None of your responses can be linked to you. Your participation is voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

Please note that the purposes/procedures of this research will not be revealed to you until after completing this survey.

Should you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact REDACTED FOR ANONYMOUS VERSION (`research.contact.q@gmail.com`).

By clicking below, you confirm that you understand the following:

- Your participation in the study is voluntary.
- You are at least 18 years of age.
- You are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation at any time for any reason.

[I am at least 18 years of age and I consent, begin the study]

F.3 Debriefing

Thank you for your participation in our research study.

We want to discuss with you in more detail the study you just participated in and explain exactly what the purpose of this study is. We are interested in understanding more about racial attitudes and local political participation.

In this study, you read a short prompt about a publishing company's proposed textbook. The information provided to you was **not** based on any actual textbook being considered by a publisher. While the data presented in the excerpt was accurate, it was designed by the researchers solely for the purposes of this project.

If you have any further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the research team at: `research.contact.q@gmail.com`

Acknowledgement:

- I understand that the excerpt used in this survey was fake and not based on any actual textbook being proposed by a publisher.

We really appreciate your participation in this study! Please provide any additional comments, thoughts, or questions below. Your feedback will help to develop this research even more.

[NEXT: End survey and record my responses]