

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Does Racial Civic Pride Differentially Shape White and Non-White Views on Voter Fraud? Evidence from the 2020 Election

John Kuk¹, Nazita Lajevardi² and Kelsey Osborne-Garth³

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA

Corresponding author: John Kuk; Email: jskuk@msu.edu

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Abstract

Widespread claims of voter fraud following the 2020 election were leveraged in an attempt to overturn the result. While many studies have focused on White Americans' acceptance of these claims, few have examined the responses of Americans of color. This study explores how racial civic pride influences attitudes toward voter fraud claims among different racial groups. We turn to the 2020 CMPS and find that for Black, Latino, and Asian Americans, increased racial civic pride correlates with reduced belief in voter fraud. In contrast, White Americans with higher racial civic pride are more likely to believe such claims. This divergence is evident across all partisan groups. For non-White Americans, racial civic pride is tied to historical struggles for voting rights and racial justice, with voter fraud allegations threatening these values. Conversely, for White Americans, high racial civic pride is linked to preserving their dominance and status. Finally, we find that voter fraud beliefs are not without consequence: they diminish trust in electoral democracy, result in greater support for restrictive electoral policies, and increase support for future violence. Together, these results highlight the differential influence of race and racial civic pride on Americans' democratic beliefs.

Keywords: racial civic pride; race and ethnic politics; voter fraud; 2020 election

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, Republican lawmakers, election officials, and courts have frequently cited voter fraud to justify restrictive voter requirement laws. Restrictive voter ID laws, such as strict photo ID requirements, have been upheld by courts for nearly two decades as reasonable measures to prevent voter fraud.¹ In more recent

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years, however, Republicans have shifted from mostly invoking voter fraud concerns in courts to leveraging them more regularly in public discourse as a bold tactic to mobilize voters and challenge presidential election results. Despite extensive safeguards against voter fraud in American elections, the Trump campaign and Republican officials spread sensationalist claims about voter fraud in the lead up to, as well as in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election. In 2020, this strategy marked a change. Rather than warning about the potential *future* risk of voter fraud, Republican politicians—especially President Trump—repeatedly declared without evidence that the election was “rigged” and that substantial voter fraud had actually taken place (Brennan Center for Justice 2017). This message, echoed for months by politicians and the media, undermined public confidence in the electoral system and questioned the integrity of the 2020 U.S. presidential election results (Jacobson 2024), and ultimately served as the catalyst for the January 6th Capitol insurrection.

The proliferation of a false narrative of voter fraud in the 2020 election is particularly alarming. Not only did a majority of Trump voters falsely believe that election fraud was widespread in the 2020 election (Jacobson 2024; Pennycook and Rand 2021), but research has extensively documented that belief in voter fraud has deleterious effects. For instance, those with greater levels of concern about voter fraud have less confidence in election results (Alvarez, Cao and Li 2021). Moreover, exposure to voter fraud claims reduces confidence in electoral integrity, particularly among Republicans and Trump supporters, and corrective messages from mainstream sources do not measurably reduce the damage these accusations inflict, suggesting that these effects are durable and cannot easily be mitigated by fact-checking (Berlinski et al. 2023). Other research testing the strength of corrective messages similarly finds heterogeneous effects by partisanship. For instance, Jenkins and Gomez (2024) noted that voter fraud corrections endure among Democrats, but disappear among Republicans. Alarming, research also finds that Americans with greater beliefs in voter fraud can be induced into supporting anti-democratic measures, like the January 2021 insurrection (Kimball, Manion and Udani, N.d.) and postponing elections (Craig and Gainous 2024). Also, in an experiment before the 2020 election, respondents were more likely to support postponement of the 2020 election if they received a fake news message that voter fraud is common. Again, these effects are more pronounced among Republicans (Craig and Gainous 2024).

While past work has largely examined how Americans differ in their beliefs about voter fraud and what the differential effects of those beliefs are among partisans, it has yet to critically incorporate the role of race. Specifically, it has yet to consider not only that racial and ethnic minorities may differ from White Americans in their levels of resistance to messaging surrounding voter fraud, but also how racial civic pride may differentially motivate how White and non-White Americans processed Trump’s voter fraud claims. This is an important omission, given that research has demonstrated time and again that party structures racial and ethnic minorities’ political attitudes differently than White Americans (Berry, Cepuran and Garcia-Rios 2022; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Jardina and Piston 2019; Schildkraut and Marotta 2018). As such, it warrants immediate exploration to see whether these differences extend to attitudes toward voter fraud in the 2020 election.

We fill this scholarly gap and argue that racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are distinct from White Americans in how they respond to claims of voter fraud. Specifically, we argue that non-Whites, and particularly Black Americans, have had a historical struggle for voting rights and, therefore, have a deep appreciation for the importance of each vote, making them particularly resistant to systematic disenfranchisement efforts. Given that minorities are more likely than White Americans to view institutional barriers—such as voter ID laws, gerrymandering, and voter roll purges—as threats to their electoral representation (Banks and Hicks 2016; Wilson and Brewer 2013), we argue that they were less likely to be susceptible to efforts to discount votes in the 2020 election. Conversely, research has shown that a majority of White Americans believe that most voters who commit voter fraud are immigrants and people of color, and as such, belief in voter fraud is racialized for White Americans (Udani, Manion and Kimball 2024; Udani and Kimball 2018; Wilson, Brewer and Rosenbluth 2014). Moreover, some White Americans may view the increasing political power of racial and ethnic minorities as a threat to their status and traditional dominance in the political realm (Major, Blodorn and Major Blascovich 2018), rendering them more receptive to claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election. Coupled with messaging from their trusted news media and political leaders that voter fraud was pervasive in the 2020 election, some White Americans may be more likely to accept these claims at face value.

Driving these racial differences, we argue, is *racial civic pride*. Racial civic pride refers to the sense of pride that individuals feel in relation to their racial group's achievements, their political representation, and the sociopolitical issues that affect their community. In simpler terms, racial civic pride is the extent to which individuals identify with their racial group and feel pride in the collective political achievements and representation of their group. We argue that White Americans with high levels of racial civic pride hold more conservative attitudes. These individuals are likely concerned with perceived threats to structures that maintain their dominance in the sociopolitical world (such as resistance to demographic changes), and therefore would be more susceptible to believing claims of voter fraud as a way to explain the 2020 election outcome that did not align with their preferences. In contrast, racial and ethnic minorities with high racial civic pride tend to view their group's achievements as being linked to progressive change, equality, and social justice, and are, therefore, more liberal in their ideological nature. We argue that racial and ethnic minorities with high racial civic pride will be more resistant to claims about voter fraud in the 2020 election because these claims will be seen as another systemic barrier used to suppress minority voter power, in line with an historical resistance against political injustice and suppression.

To test these claims, we draw on the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Study, fielded in 2021. Our analyses reveal significant distinctions between White Americans and Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. White Americans were more susceptible to claims of voter fraud, and high levels of racial civic pride were associated with stronger beliefs in voter fraud in the 2020 election. Conversely, higher levels of racial civic pride among Black, Latino, and Asian Americans were linked to lower levels of belief in voter fraud in the 2020 election. Notably, these effects persisted among White Americans regardless of their partisan leanings,

indicating that even White Democrats and Independents with high levels of racial civic pride were more likely to believe in voter fraud. For Black, Latino, and Asian Americans across the political spectrum, higher levels of racial civic pride reduced their beliefs in voter fraud.

Our research also draws from an original survey fielded in 2024 on CloudResearch. This survey was designed to examine whether the racial differences we observed in the association between racial civic pride and belief in voter fraud also extend to other issues that are critical to the health of American democracy. These analyses reveal that racial civic pride also differentially shapes Whites' and non-Whites' trust in elections, support for inclusive election laws, and attitudes toward the use of future political violence in 2024 should the presidential election result not favor their preferred candidate. Furthermore, our analyses reinforce findings from past research, confirming that belief in voter fraud is not without consequence. Importantly, we find that belief in voter fraud correlates with ten issue areas that undermine democratic norms and principles. This article makes two key contributions. First, it demonstrates the differences in how White and non-White Americans perceive false claims about voter fraud in the 2020 election and demonstrates how racial civic pride leads them to hold vastly different views on these claims. Second, it highlights the exclusionary and contradictory nature of racial civic pride for White Americans, contrasting it with the inclusive and protective nature of racial civic pride for non-White Americans, which centers on safeguarding voting rights for all. Together, this study demonstrates the urgency with which we must incorporate the role of race in our examination of attitudes toward voter fraud in the 2020 election, and introduces racial civic pride as a previously under-examined mechanism in driving these racial differences. All of this has profound implications for how we understand support for the January 6, 2021 Capitol insurrection, which was fueled by claims of voter fraud, and which saw American democracy come under threat. The racialization of voter fraud beliefs and their differential impact by racial civic pride highlight the dangers of racial civic pride in shaping support for the insurrection and other future actions that can threaten the legitimacy of American democracy.

Revisiting America's History of Voter Suppression

This study focuses on the determinants of beliefs in accusations of voter fraud surrounding the 2020 presidential election. Normatively, this question must be paid great attention because then-President Trump not only asked some states to disqualify ballots cast in the election and asked the Vice President not to certify the election results, but also incited a group of individuals to commit an insurrection at the nation's Capitol on January 6, 2021, by alleging that widespread voter fraud had taken place in the 2020 presidential election. His actions and statements tested the limits of—and arguably undermined—trust in our democracy and institutions. But, it is also important to note that Trump's past and present efforts to invalidate ballots on the basis of voter fraud have been concentrated in locales with large Black populations (Jones 2024; Summers 2020).

Concerns about minority votes and efforts to suppress their political voices in this instance were not a one-off incident. While concerns about voter fraud are

regularly invoked today to justify efforts to invalidate votes or limit access to the ballot, historically, the nation has also found ways to systematically suppress the minority vote using different tactics. Thus, before introducing our core concepts, it is important to briefly review the historical and institutional efforts to mute the voices of racial and ethnic minorities. In this section, we provide an abbreviated account of some of the measures that have limited the political rights of Black Americans and immigrant-background minorities who were not classified as “White,” in order to illustrate that efforts to curtail, discredit, and discount the votes of these populations today are nothing new. Rather, these practices are deeply rooted and embedded in this country’s history. It should therefore come as no great surprise that the rules shaping who can and cannot vote have been subject to great controversy throughout the course of American history. As the centerfold tenet of American democracy, voting is the most critical institutional mechanism for preserving other rights, as it allows citizens to choose leaders, influence policy, and ultimately shape democracy (Hajnal, Lajevardi and Nielson 2017).

The United States has long suppressed the voting rights—and thus, the political incorporation, representation, and power—of racial and ethnic minorities (Fraga 2018). For much of its history, the country has excluded groups from participating in the franchise *on the basis of race*. The original Constitution counted enslaved people as three-fifths of a person, and from the country’s inception until 1870, enslaved Black Americans were precluded from voting. Other non-White, non-enslaved people, including Native Americans (McCool, Olson and Robinson 2007), were also barred from the franchise for much of the country’s history. For over a century, federal law restricted citizenship—and thus voting rights—to those categorized as “White.” The Naturalization Act of 1790 used race as a condition to citizenship, and therefore voting rights, by limiting the acquisition of citizenship through naturalization to “free white persons.” As such, it explicitly excluded non-White people from eligibility to naturalize, and thus the ability to attain voting rights. As Lopez (1996) writes, “[t]hrough the requirements for naturalization changed frequently thereafter, this racial prerequisite to citizenship endured for over a century and a half, remaining in force until 1952” (p. 1). Naturalized citizenship was conditional on race until 1952, when the McCarran-Walter Act removed it as a precondition (Fraga 2018).

Similarly, enslaved Black Americans were formally excluded from the franchise from the country’s inception for almost a century until the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Amendment prohibited federal and state governments from denying a citizen the right to vote based on race, color or previous condition of servitude, and was one of the earliest efforts to integrate racial minorities into the franchise. In practice, however, while Black Americans may have had a *de jure* right to vote between 1870 and 1965, their *de facto* voting rates were strikingly minimal during this period of time, if effectively non-existent in some cases (Fraga 2018; Walton, Puckett and Deskins 2012). Between 1890 and 1910, nearly all of the former southern Confederate states rewrote their state constitutions to introduce voting restrictions that effectively disenfranchised Black voters (Kousser 1974). Thus, even with the enactment of the Fifteenth Amendment, state legislatures enacted burdensome laws and voter requirements (e.g., residency requirements, periodic registration dates, poll taxes, literacy requirements, and grandfather clauses) that

restricted Black Americans' voter participation (Valelly 2009). For example, while Reconstruction originally restored voter registration among Black men in Louisiana to over 90% by 1880, a new state constitution in 1888 instituted a poll tax, literacy, and property requirements, and a grandfather clause that dramatically reduced Black male voter registration to only 3% by the next major election, and all the while exempted Whites from these burdensome requirements (Brown-Dean et al. 2006).

By the 1950s and 1960s, Black Americans, Brown Americans, and their allies were demanding civil rights by engaging in costly political action, such as through large-scale protests and marches, boycotts, sit-ins, and registration drives. These efforts succeeded, and in 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act ("VRA") into law, securing the right to vote for racial minorities throughout the country, particularly in the South. This piece of legislation provided federal protections for voting rights, and expressly prohibiting state and local jurisdictions from enacting any provision that discriminated on account of race or color.² It also expressly outlawed the very policies that were adopted by state legislatures to disenfranchise racial minorities, and particularly Black Americans.

The passage of the VRA was accompanied by appreciable increases in Black political participation (Brown-Dean et al. 2006; Fraga 2018). Brown-Dean et al. (2006), for instance, found that the racial gap in voter registration between White and Black registrants in the former Confederate states had fallen to single digits five years after the passage of the VRA. Research also finds that Black turnout lagged White turnout by slim margins in the decades that followed, and that the racial turnout gap in has since decreased dramatically in presidential elections (Brown-Dean et al. 2006; Fraga 2018), with some studies finding a total elimination of the Black/White turnout gap in 2008 and 2012 when Barack Obama was on the ballot (Brown-Dean et al. 2006; Philpot, Shaw and McGowen 2009).

However, the protections afforded by the VRA were significantly weakened by *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (2013), when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down section 4(b) of the VRA, thus stalling the advancement of section 5 claims. The impacts were immediate and profound: the racial turnout gap, which had been narrowing since the VRA was signed into law in 1965, began to widen once again, reversing with alarming speed decades of progress. Racial turnout gaps immediately widened once again, with Morris, Miller and Grange (2021) finding that "the racial turnout gap has increased in most jurisdictions that were previously covered by preclearance."

The *Shelby County* decision also saw the proliferation of policies and efforts to suppress the minority vote once again. At least two such policies have been touted and successfully advanced by conservative state legislatures under the guise of combating widespread voter fraud: (1) voter identification laws and (2) efforts to purge voter rolls. In practice, both of these policies are most likely to affect minority voters. Strict voter ID laws, for example, are racially discriminatory: not only are racial and ethnic minorities less likely to possess the correct form of ID necessary for voting (Barreto, Sanchez and Walker 2022; Barreto et al. 2019; Fraga and Miller 2022), when they are enacted their depressive impacts on turnout are more concentrated among Americans of color (Darrah-Okike, Rita and Logan 2021; Fraga 2018; Hajnal, Kuk and Lajevardi 2018; Hajnal, Lajevardi and Nielson 2017; Kuk, Hajnal and Lajevardi 2022), a durable effect that persists even once these laws

are removed (Grimmer and Yoder 2022). Similarly, when states delete names from the voter rolls to remove outdated registrations or ineligible registrants,³ disastrous consequences can arise for minority voters. The purging of eligible voters from voter rolls poses a significant barrier to voter registration (Wilder 2021), and when minority voters are more likely to be inappropriately removed from these rolls, they are disproportionately targeted by these election practices. In 2017, for instance, Georgia conducted a voter roll purge of 560,000 names from its registration rolls in one day, the largest single voter roll purge in American history (Wilder 2021). This effort removed Black, Latino, and Asian voters from election rolls at a disproportionate rate compared to White voters (Wilder 2021). Likewise, in 2019, a court intervened and blocked Texas from wrongfully purging thousands of voters of color from its voter rolls based on false stories of non-citizen voting that were perpetrated by Texas Secretary of State Whitley and amplified by President Trump (Wilder 2021).

Both voter identification laws and voter roll purges are practices that uniquely affect minority voters' ability to cast a ballot, and both are justified through the lens of voter fraud prevention. Supporters of voter identification laws, for example, argue that the strictest forms of these laws are warranted, because fraud is a real and potentially widespread phenomenon that could alter electoral outcomes and erode faith in democracy (Hajnal, Lajevardi and Nielson 2017). Despite voter fraud being incredibly rare in American elections (Brennan Center for Justice 2017),⁴ research has shown that the implementation of strict photo identification laws do not reduce perceptions of, nor actual instances of, voter fraud (Cantoni and Pons 2021).

Similarly, voter roll purges are often justified as a means to remove inactive voters from voter files and reduce non-citizen or "illegal" voters from casting ballots,⁵ and to prevent Democrats from using "excess registrations" to artificially increase ballots and "steal" elections (Berzon and Corasaniti 2024). Mass purges and challenges, however, are arguably creating more harm than good, given that there are already systems in place to remove inactive and deceased voters from voter lists. Rather, these measures disenfranchise voters en masse without much concern for their constitutional right to vote (Berzon and Corasaniti 2024). As Barber et al. (1988) note, early work not only found that purging had racially discriminatory effects, but even in jurisdictions where purges were not selectively targeting minority voters, they disproportionately created discriminatory results, such as in Maricopa County, Arizona where Mexican American turnout was 10% lower than the rest of the county population following a two-year purge (pp. 491–492). Voter purges, thus, serve as another discriminatory tactic that ultimately serve to threaten and reduce minority political power, yielding racially discriminatory results (Barber et al. 1988). Given that Republican activists in battleground Democratic jurisdictions with large minority populations are presently seeking to purge and challenge voter lists under the guise of voter fraud, voter roll purges are arguably racialized insofar as they appear to disproportionately target and disenfranchise minority voters.

Thus, for our purposes here, it is important to recognize that efforts to curtail the minority vote have been historically rooted in the United States' institutions from the day of its founding. These practices endure today in other forms, often under the guise of preventing voter fraud. That meritless accusations of widespread voter fraud are leveraged as a justification for enacting laws and pursuing policies that

disproportionately hinder minority voters' right to vote should alarm us all. However, as we will test in the empirical analyses that follow, belief in voter fraud by ordinary citizens may result in other anti-democratic measures as well, extending so far as to predict support for the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol, as well as future political violence in the 2024 presidential election.

Introducing Racial Civic Pride

We argue that belief in widespread voter fraud shaping the outcome of the 2020 presidential election was not unanimous among all Americans, but that individuals' racial identities largely shaped whether they were susceptible to such claims. Moreover, we argue that one important factor that differentially drove White Americans versus Black, Asian, and Latino Americans to respond to voter fraud allegations was *racial civic pride*. We propose that discriminatory voter laws and beliefs of voter fraud are rooted in perceptions of race, oppression, and privilege that may activate a "racial civic pride" in Americans. Importantly, we suggest that when racial civic pride is activated for Whites and non-Whites, it yields different outcomes, given the extensive legacy of voter suppression in the United States. Understanding this phenomenon is important for understanding how allegations and the belief in voter fraud may serve to justify the disenfranchisement of Black and Brown voters.

Scholarship on group pride has found that pride in one's social or identity group can have various consequences on society. Group pride can lead to prejudice and conflict between an in-group and out-group, but group pride can also empower a group that has faced oppression and discrimination (Allport, Clark and Pettigrew 1954; Markus 2008). Racial civic pride, in particular, we argue, is an important mechanism that shapes individuals' preferences and support for policies that enfranchise or disenfranchise groups with less power. Racial civic pride refers to the sense of pride that individuals feel in relation to their racial group's achievements, their political representation, and the sociopolitical issues that affect their community. It captures the extent to which individuals identify with their racial group and feel pride in the collective achievements of their group.⁶

Racial civic pride is rooted in one's pride in their racial group's contributions to the nation and civic life. Incorporating concepts from national civic pride and racial group solidarity, we define racial civic pride as one's pride toward their racial group's civic and political contributions (Butler-Barnes, Williams and Chavous 2012). Racial civic pride emphasizes the valuable roles and positive impacts of one's racial group in shaping the nation's identity and institutions. We argue that racial civic pride combines one's solidarity and pride in their racial group with their racial group's contribution and belonging to the larger civic and national community. Central to racial civic pride is a strong sense of racial group solidarity. Racial civic pride is an understudied phenomenon in the literature, and, to our knowledge, no study to date has defined such a term. We contend that while related to group consciousness and linked fate, racial civic pride is a distinctly *political* phenomenon and an explicit bridge between group attachment and achievements in the political realm. Racial civic pride may result from racial group solidarity and consciousness,

but this measure's strength lies in these political aspects and serves as a link between group consciousness and political involvement.

For Americans of color, racial civic pride is deeply influenced by historical and ongoing struggles for voting rights. Given that these populations have been systematically excluded from political power since the inception of this country, racial civic pride has served as a mechanism to further progressive change, equality, and political. It thus ensures that those non-White Americans with greater levels of racial civic pride would be more resistant to policies that introduce more barriers to the vote, and more political exclusion, particularly for communities without much political power to begin with. For these communities, which have been historically disenfranchised, racial civic pride is not just about cultural identity but is intricately linked to the resistance against political exclusion, which presently often manifests in the form of voter suppression, and in other efforts to expel racial and ethnic minorities from politics.

For White Americans, high levels of racial civic pride yields very different consequences. Given their dominant political status in the United States, we argue that high racial civic pride among White Americans is driven by their desire to protect a shared privileged status, rooted in racial antipathy, and the belief that Americans of color are “out of place” (Combs 2016, p. 536) in the electoral process (Berry, Ebner and Cornelius 2021; Jardina and Mickey 2022). Whereas Americans of color have had to fight for racial justice and access to politics, White Americans have not had to do so, and thus, “pride” in their racial group's political accomplishments may be weaker, in the aggregate. When racial civic pride is high for White Americans, however, the political accomplishment or presence of another White public official does not signify change, but rather a maintenance of the status quo, and by result, White supremacy. For many Whites, their race has been invisible to them, and only recently have many been forced to reconcile with their racial identity. This has led to diverse reactions among White Americans. Among some Whites, this leads to feelings of guilt or shame (McDermott and Samson 2005) while others may have developed a “White identity” (Jardina 2019), that has historically associated with the denigration of minorities and support for White supremacist ideologies (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Given the historical racial disparities in voting rights—Whites who were historically afforded voting rights and non-Whites who were historically disenfranchised—we anticipate that racial civic pride will differentially influence beliefs about voter fraud in the 2020 election. High racial civic pride among Whites, we contend, is associated with preserving political dominance, while for non-Whites, it relates to democratizing political participation and expanding inclusion in the franchise. This pride likely influenced perceptions of pervasive voter fraud during the 2020 election, which Republican leaders characterized in order to discredit votes in battleground jurisdictions and by large numbers of people of color. Additionally, we expect these beliefs to extend to support for other restrictive policies restricting the vote, as well as to potential future violent responses following the 2024 election outcome.

Arguably, for those White Americans high on racial civic pride, racial and ethnic minorities are often perceived as the typical perpetrators of voter fraud (Udani, Manion and Kimball 2024). These perceptions, moreover, are linked to their

support for restrictive election laws and harsher punishments for illegal voting. For instance, Brown-Iannuzzi et al. (2023) found a positive relationship between racial prejudice, support for voter ID laws, and perceptions of Asian, Black, and Latino Americans as more likely than Whites to vote illegally. In this context, high racial civic pride among Whites stems from a desire to protect their privileged political status that may intertwine with White supremacy and reinforce a commitment to preserving their political dominance.

On the other hand, for non-Whites, high racial civic pride develops from a historical struggle for voting rights. For this subset of Americans, discriminatory voter laws are likely perceived as being rooted in voter suppression tactics, and allegations of voter fraud are seen as attempts to justify disenfranchisement. This form of pride leads Americans of color to oppose narratives, policies, or actions that undermine the political voice and full electoral participation of all citizens. Given that racial civic pride for these populations is motivated by the socio-political challenges their racial groups have faced—and continue to endure today—we expect those high on racial civic pride to be particularly opposed and resistant to schemes, such as the accusations of voter fraud in the 2020 election. These accusations were widely seen as attempts to discredit the lawfully cast votes of thousands of Americans, a large number of who were people of color, and were seen as ultimately precipitating the events and political violence witnessed on January 6, 2021.

Theoretical Expectations

Given that racial solidarity promotes higher political participation (Chong and Rogers 2005), those with higher levels of racial civic pride may be more likely to vote, protest, and participate in politics motivated by their racial or ethnic identity. We argue that racial civic pride activates differently among White Americans and people of color, given the racial hierarchy that exists within the United States, and that these differences may help to explain conflicting attitudes toward voter fraud allegations in the 2020 election.

Racial civic pride among non-Whites has primarily existed to uplift one's racial group despite the historical discrimination they have faced. We posit that Americans of color view racial civic pride as a means of asserting their political identity and achieving racial justice in American democracy. They feel pride in participating in American institutions, witnessing their racial group politically active and championing issues that affect their community, or making political strides by being elected to public office. Among minorities with higher levels of racial civic pride, voter fraud allegations may be seen as an attempt to undermine a fair election that advantaged people of color's political interests and another attempt at suppressing their votes. Thus, we hypothesize that among non-Whites, greater racial civic pride is negatively associated with the belief that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election.

H1. *Among Non-Whites, more racial civic pride is negatively associated with greater belief that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election.*

We suggest that beliefs of voter fraud have become racialized among White Americans, as perceptions of voter fraud may be rooted for some in antipathy and outright racism toward racial and ethnic minorities (Brown-Iannuzzi *et al.* 2023; Minnite 2007; Udani, Manion and Kimball 2024; Wilson, Brewer and Rosenbluth 2014). The loss of an election victory, coupled with rhetoric that the election was “rigged”, may result in White Americans with more racial civic pride to be concerned with perceived threats to the structures that maintain their supremacy, and thus with greater beliefs that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election. Therefore, 2020 voter fraud allegations may activate a sense of fear among those White Americans with greater racial civic pride that democratic institutions in the United States are under threat and must be protected, and may encourage a belief in a fraudulent election. We hypothesize that for Whites, greater racial civic pride is positively associated with the belief that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election.

H2. *Among Whites, more racial civic pride is positively associated with greater belief that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election.*

Much of the literature suggests that belief in voter fraud is explained by partisanship, but we argue that racial civic pride helps to explain why these allegations persist among even White Democrats. While we recognize the strength of partisanship in influencing voter fraud beliefs, we suggest that high racial civic pride among Whites may have a stronger influence on voter fraud attitudes in the 2020 election, explaining why some White Democrats were susceptible to voter fraud allegations. Though White Democrats most often express support for racially progressive policies, Lajevardi and Oskooii (2024) found that attachment to American identity predicts even Democrats’ support for anti-Muslim policies due to the exclusionary nature of American identity. We suggest that racial civic pride is similarly activating White Democrats in this study, given the racial antipathy and white supremacist ideologies inherent in White racial civic pride. Thus, we expect a positive association between high racial civic pride and White Americans’ belief in voter fraud during the 2020 election to persist among *both* White Republicans and Democrats.

H3. *Regardless of party, more racial civic pride among Whites is positively associated with greater belief that there was voter fraud in the 2020 election.*

We do not make any claims of the relationship between racial civic pride, party, and voter fraud beliefs among non-Whites and, particularly, non-White Republicans. On the one hand, we may observe that racial civic pride overrides party narratives, leading non-White Republicans with greater racial civic pride to recognize their racial and ethnic groups’ struggle to achieve political equality and similarly perceive voter fraud allegations as a way to disenfranchise voters of color. In this case, racial civic pride would be a powerful motivator, transcending party lines.

On the other hand, Republicans of color with greater racial civic pride may align with their party and interpret allegations of fraud as an answer for why their party lost the 2020 election. This perspective reflects a nuanced relationship between their

pride in their racial group's political contributions and their partisan identity. While such a relationship may seem contradictory, we acknowledge that individuals have complex relationships with their racial, political, and partisan identities that may not fit a stereotypical understanding of these phenomena. It may be the case that individuals have pride in their racial group's political contributions and also believe that the Republican party is best suited to achieve their racial group's political goals. As such, we remain agnostic on the influence high racial civic pride may have on voter fraud beliefs for non-White Republicans.

Data and Methods

We turn to two different data sources to test our hypotheses and examine how racial civic pride predicts beliefs in voter fraud in the 2020 election. The first dataset is the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) 2020 (Frasure-Yokley et al. 2020). The CMPS is a collaborative effort among numerous researchers that samples a large number of non-White respondents. The 2020 iteration includes 3,198 White respondents, 4,396 Black respondents, 4,311 Latino respondents, and 4,238 Asian respondents. The survey incorporates multiple questions addressing the issues of voter fraud and the January 6 insurrection. Due to its fielding in the summer of 2021, the CMPS is uniquely advantaged over other surveys insofar as it was able to capture views on these issues in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election and the January 6th insurrection, and in its large numbers of racial and ethnic minorities.

The outcome variable, belief in voter fraud in the 2020 election, is derived from survey questions assessing whether respondents believe voter fraud impacted the election results. The CMPS employed three different versions of this question, randomly presenting one version to each respondent.⁷ This variable is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from complete disagreement to complete agreement regarding the existence of voter fraud.

Our main independent variable, racial civic pride, is constructed from three questions that gauge the level of pride respondents feel when encountering achievements or news related to their racial group. These questions address 1) viewing news or thinking about protests on issues important to the respondent's racial group, 2) an individual from the respondent's racial group achieving a major milestone, and 3) a member of the respondent's racial group holding elected office. We create this measure by calculating the average of the responses to these three questions. The Cronbach's Alpha for this measure is .84.

The second dataset comes from a survey we conducted in July 2024 to better understand the racial civic pride measure. We recruited survey respondents via CloudResearch, an opt-in online survey platform, with a total of 1,000 participants. To maintain a sampling framework similar to CMPS, we aimed to include comparable numbers of White, Black, Latino, and Asian respondents. The racial breakdown of the survey respondents is as follows: 295 White, 261 Black, 191 Latino, and 253 Asian respondents. The survey comprised a series of "stop and reflect" cognitive response exercises (Ericsson and Simon 1980; Kam and Burge 2018)⁸, questions on belief in voter fraud, policy preferences regarding voter ID laws

and other election administration policies and issues, belief in the justification for future political violence, and demographic measures.

Before turning to our main results, our analyses first examine which variables predict racial civic pride using the CMPS data. As racial civic pride is not a widely used concept in political science, understanding its predictors provides deeper insight into the concept. We selected six variables from CMPS to test their association with racial civic pride: civic engagement, protest participation, linked fate (Dawson 1995), protest efficacy, social approval, and racial attitudes. To measure civic engagement, we calculate the average response for nine questions that ask whether respondents engaged in various social and political activities in the past year. Protest participation is measured using a question about attending a protest, march, demonstration, or rally in the past year. Linked fate was measured separately for each group following the standard question format. We use nine questions to measure protest efficacy, focusing on the perceived effectiveness of protests and demonstrations on various issues. The social approval measure is derived from responses to eight questions on whether the respondent's community, such as friends and family, approves of the activity type or considers it important. To measure racial attitudes, we use the fear, institutionalized racism, and empathy (FIRE) battery (DeSante and Smith 2020).⁹ In addition to these variables, we control for age, gender, income, education, party ID, an indicator for Evangelical Christians, ideology, Trump favorability, and political interest. We rescaled every covariate to range from 0 to 1.

To investigate the extent to which racial civic pride predicts beliefs in voter fraud in the 2020 election, we conduct a series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models. All regression models are run using sample weights provided by the 2020 CMPS to improve representativeness. Racial civic pride is our key explanatory variable. However, to test the strength of racial civic pride as an explanatory variable, we also include measures of strength of racial identity, linked fate, and anxiety about white supremacy.¹⁰

Additionally, these analyses also control for an index of national civic pride from two other pride-related questions. We control for national civic pride because it can inspire civic actions such as voting or protesting, and attachment to it can be high regardless of race, ethnicity, or party. These questions assess the degree of pride respondents feel when they see an American flag or hear the national anthem, and when they participate in civic or political action. Our analyses also control for party identification, ideology, racial resentment (see Morris and Shapiro 2024), Trump favorability, political interest, age, gender, income, a binary variable indicating whether the respondent has a four-year college degree, and whether the respondent is an Evangelical Christian. All covariates are scaled from 0 to 1 for ease of interpretation and comparison.

Results

Examining Racial Civic Pride

To better understand our key explanatory variable, racial civic pride, we ran a series of regression models to explore which variables predict it. Table 1 presents the

Table 1. Predicting racial civic pride

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Racial civic pride			
	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Civic engagement	.028 (.030)	.002 (.016)	.023 (.021)	.024 (.025)
Protest attend	.056 * (.028)	.026 ⁺ (.013)	.021 (.020)	-.003 (.023)
Linked fate	.081 ** (.022)	.104 ** (.012)	.111 ** (.017)	.134 ** (.019)
Protest efficacy	.288 ** (.032)	.220 ** (.019)	.213 ** (.024)	.196 ** (.028)
Social approval	.361 ** (.047)	.369 ** (.028)	.341 ** (.033)	.395 ** (.040)
Racial attitudes: FIRE	.530 ** (.043)	-.232** (.025)	-.217** (.031)	-.100** (.038)
Observations	1,931	3,172	2,856	2,139
R ²	.274	.317	.191	.213
Adjusted R ²	.268	.314	.186	.207
Residual std. error	.307	.193	.245	.227
F statistic	45.101 **	91.665 **	41.877 **	35.962 **

Note: ⁺ $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

All models control for age, gender, income, education, Evangelical Christians, party ID, ideology, Trump favorability, and political interest. Full results in Table A3.

results of these models, which were run separately for each racial group. As outlined earlier, racial civic pride is rooted in a strong sense of racial group consciousness. For every group, linked fate is positively associated with racial civic pride, with a stronger correlation observed among respondents of color compared to White respondents.

Actual participation in political or social activities or protest attendance is not statistically significant among all people of color. Protest attendance is only significant at the $p < 0.05$ level among White respondents. Instead of the level of participation, individuals' perceptions of civic and political engagement are predictive of racial civic pride. A deep sense of racial civic pride correlates with a sense of efficacy that respondents feel about political actions such as protests and demonstrations, with White respondents showing the strongest correlation.

For non-White respondents, the strongest correlations are observed with the perceived approval and importance of political and social activities by their community, especially friends and family. Social approval of civic engagement is

positively associated with racial civic pride across all racial groups. The significance of social approval highlights how racial civic pride links racial group solidarity and political participation. It reveals that people engage in political activities not in isolation, but through their belief that these activities are important to their community.

Racial attitudes show the starkest contrast between White and non-White respondents. Among White respondents, more conservative racial attitudes are associated with higher levels of racial civic pride. In contrast, people of color consistently show a negative correlation between conservative racial attitudes and racial civic pride. These findings are aligned with our expectation that racial civic pride among White Americans is rooted in their disposition to protect their social status.

The results from other control variables generally align with our expectation that racial civic pride among White Americans is associated with conservative attitudes, while it correlates with liberal attitudes among Non-White Americans. White Americans who are more conservative and have more favorable views of Trump are more likely to have higher racial civic pride. For Black Americans, the signs of the coefficients are opposite: Black and liberal Democrats have higher racial civic pride. Latino and Asian Americans show a more nuanced relationship. Latino and Asian Democrats are more likely to have higher racial civic pride compared to Independents, but there is no statistically significant difference compared to Republicans. Additionally, conservative Latinos are likely to have higher racial civic pride. Trump favorability is not statistically significant among Latino and Asian Americans. Higher political interest and older age are associated with stronger racial civic pride across all racial groups. When we look at gender, women of color have higher racial civic pride than men of color.

The regression models on racial civic pride show that while actual indicators of political participation do not predict racial civic pride, racial group consciousness and beliefs on political activities are predictive of racial civic pride. These findings are mostly consistent across all racial groups. Meanwhile, White and non-White Americans demonstrate an opposite direction of correlation when it comes to racial attitudes.

Although these findings provide a rich understanding of what the racial civic pride variable indicates, it remains unclear whether these survey measures accurately capture what they intend to elicit from respondents. We present results from cognitive response exercises using the CloudResearch survey to examine what survey respondents thought when answering the racial civic pride questions. Table 2 shows examples of common responses among white individuals high in racial civic pride when they were asked how they felt about seeing someone from their race achieve elected office or other important milestones and hear about issues important for white people. Several responses expressed pride in White achievements that oppose “reverse racism,” “DEI” or were affiliated with white nationalist movements. Many also frequently suggested that “White issues are American issues” or that the color of the individuals achieving success did not matter to them. These examples evidence beliefs among White respondents high in racial civic pride that White people do not often consider the political and social success of their race, and when they do, it is connected to White supremacy and the rejection of racial progress.

Table 2 reveals the stark differences that emerge from people of color with high racial civic pride compared to Whites high in racial civic pride. Black, Asian, and

Table 2. Example quotes for the high *racial civic pride* measures by race

Race	RCP measure	Example quotes
White	High RCP News	"When I see news or think about protests on issues important to the white community, I feel a deep sense of pride in the ongoing fight for equality and white supremacy."
	High RCP News	"I had to think about what this even meant. For the most part, white issues are American issues. They aren't uniquely white. I do have a lot of pride in protests that are specifically about whites though, like by white nationalist groups or sensible people just fed up with the current social nonsense and reverse racism."
	High RCP Milestone	"I don't just celebrate what white people do. I am impressed by the achievement, not the skin color of the person achieving something."
	High RCP Milestone	"OK, you want to see if I am racist. I don't really see the race when it is a white person. If the person is of different color then I will notice."
	High RCP Office	"I feel pride about this because DEI candidates have been pushed heavily and have largely been disappointing even damaging."
	High RCP Office	"I felt good because we deserve it."
Black	High RCP News	"I thought about how black people have had to defend and fight for their rights in the past and even now in the present. It makes me proud that black people are vocal about what issues are bothering them, we typically don't just sit and take nonsense."
	High RCP News	"I reflect on the long history of struggle and perseverance that Black Americans have faced. I think about the progress that has been made, as well as the significant challenges that still remain."
	High RCP Milestone	"I was thinking about how Obama became President of the United States and how I never thought I'd be alive to see this happen."
	High RCP Milestone	"I thought about our ancestors surviving slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow/Civil Rights in order for us to be successful."
	High RCP Office	"Again, fighting against a system rigged against us and winning is a great confidence booster."
	High RCP Office	"When I see a Black individual holding elected office, it signifies significant progress toward diversity and inclusion in politics. It highlights the impact of representation and the positive change that diverse leadership can bring to our communities and society."
Latino	High RCP News	"I thought about pride and power of the Latino people. I also thought about how we need to stand up for ourselves and set an example for every person out in the world that you stand up to hate and racism and do what is right not only for you, but also the group as a whole."
	High RCP News	"I thought about all the protests that Latinos have participated that have helped my people to get almost equal rights. I feel very proud of them for fighting for their rights and for justice."
	High RCP Milestone	"We want to be taken seriously."
	High RCP Milestone	"I think about the Hispanic/Latino Americans that were able to make their way into government to attempt to change the status quo."

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Race	RCP measure	Example quotes
	High RCP Office	"I thought about different Latinos and how hard they have struggled. I think about representation in government."
	High RCP Office	"I think about how important is to have Hispanics holding elected positions in the government. Those individuals may bring issues to the house or the senate to advanced laws to benefit the Hispanic community."
Asian	High RCP News	"I thought about Asian American advocacy, community resilience, cultural celebrations, and the importance of raising awareness against discrimination. Pride stems from collective efforts to promote equality, justice, and representation in society."
	High RCP News	"I think about the racial discrimination Asian Americans suffer from."
	High RCP Milestone	I thought about the constant challenges and obstacles that fellow Asian American people face and struggle with and feel proud that my racial group tends to persevere."
	High RCP Milestone	"I feel proud whenever I learn about a fellow Asian American achieving something good because it shows everyone how worthy this demographic is."
	High RCP Office	"I take pride in seeing Asian Americans win spots in local elections and hope an Asian American can ascend to the position of US President"
	High RCP Office	"When considering an Asian individual holding elected office, I think about the strides in representation, leadership, and the breaking of political barriers. It signifies broader inclusion, the power of diversity in governance, and inspiring future generations."

Latino respondents similarly cited how historical racism and discrimination influenced their pride in their racial groups' political and social successes as well as issues unique to their community. Many responses explicitly named individuals they were proud of, including Kamala Harris, Barack Obama, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Others cited how proud they were of their group's political representation and their continued perseverance. They also expressed their hope to see further political progress, such as someone from their racial group becoming president.

Racial Civic Pride and Voter Fraud Belief

White and non-White respondents from CMPS exhibit different distributions of belief in voter fraud and racial civic pride. Figure 1 displays the distribution of the dependent and key independent variables of our study. A substantial proportion of respondents of color disagreed that there was voter fraud, with Black respondents being particularly distinctive in their strong disagreement regarding voter fraud in the 2020 election. While 34% of non-White respondents acknowledged the possibility of voter fraud, a majority of White respondents (52%) believed in its occurrence.

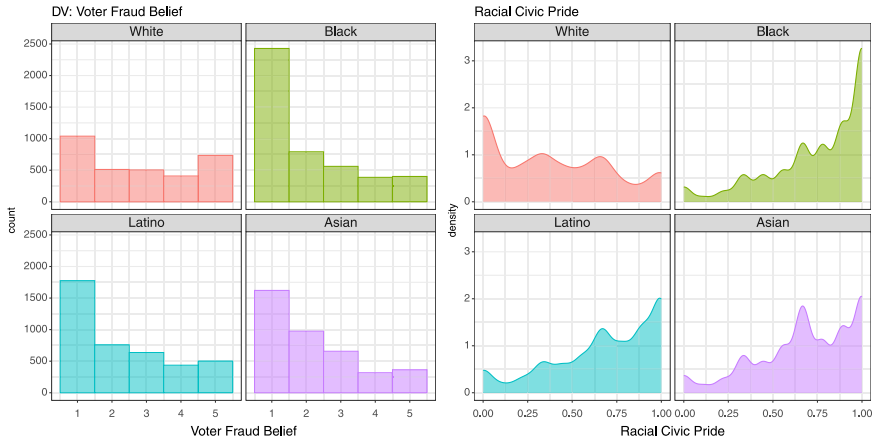


Figure 1. Distribution of voter fraud beliefs (left) and racial civic pride (right).

Similar contrasts emerge between White and non-White respondents when examining racial civic pride. Non-White respondents demonstrate high levels of racial civic pride, with most concentrated at the higher end of the distribution. Black respondents exhibit the highest level of racial civic pride with an average score of .75, followed by Latino (average .68), Asian (average .67), and White (average .39) respondents. White respondents have a distinctively lower mean value compared to other groups. The racial civic pride index for White respondents is not as concentrated as that of non-White respondents. While the mode of the distribution for White respondents is at the lowest point of racial civic pride, there is also a significant cluster of respondents in the middle of the distribution.

Does racial civic pride predict belief in voter fraud? Table 3 presents the results of a series of regression models predicting belief in voter fraud. When we run models on a sample that includes all racial groups, racial civic pride is negatively associated with belief in voter fraud. Interestingly, even though racial civic pride among White and Non-White Americans has opposite correlations with voter fraud belief, which would likely cancel out when aggregated into the full sample, we still find a negative correlation. This negative correlation stems from the unique composition of the CMPS sample, which includes more respondents of color than White respondents.

Among White respondents, racial civic pride is positively correlated with the belief that voter fraud was prevalent in the 2020 election. Conversely, Black, Latino, and Asian respondents all show a negative and significant association between racial civic pride and voter fraud belief. The strength of the correlation is more pronounced among Black and Asian respondents, followed by Latino and White respondents.

Results for other control variables generally confirm existing research on voter fraud belief.¹¹ Respondents are more likely to believe voter fraud occurred in 2020 if they have more favorable views of Trump, are more conservative, have higher levels of racial resentment and political interest, and if they identify as Republicans or

Table 3. Racial civic pride and voter fraud beliefs by race and ethnicity

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Belief in voter fraud				
	All	White	Black	Latino	Asian
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Racial civic pride	−.112** (.043)	.196 * (.078)	−.288** (.092)	−.264** (.087)	−.481** (.095)
Observations	10,488	1,883	3,003	2,697	2,009
R ²	.557	.689	.381	.450	.569
Adjusted R ²	.556	.687	.378	.448	.566
Residual std. error	.959	.946	.932	.998	.874
F statistic	730.090 **	318.626 **	141.554 **	169.041 **	202.833 **

Note: + $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.
All models control for national civic pride, racial identity strength, linked fate, white supremacy anxiety, age, gender, income, education, Evangelical Christians, party ID, ideology, racial resentment, Trump favorability, and political interest. Full results in Table A3.

Independents.¹² Older individuals, Evangelical Christians, and female respondents are also more likely to believe in the occurrence of voter fraud in 2020.

While our regression results indicate that White and non-White Americans have different relationships between racial civic pride and voter fraud belief, it is possible that party identification moderates this relationship. Given that belief in voter fraud is a deeply partisan issue dividing Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, partisanship could drive the relationship between racial civic pride and voter fraud belief. For a clear presentation, we created a plot with smoothed LOESS lines showing the relationship between racial civic pride and belief in voter fraud by race and party ID.

According to Figure 2, Democrats, Independents, and Republicans all show similar relationships between our explanatory and outcome variables across all racial groups. These relationships indicate that even among Democrats, White Americans with higher levels of racial civic pride are more likely to strongly believe there was voter fraud in 2020. The negative association between racial civic pride and voter fraud belief among non-White Americans is also similar between Democrats and Independents. Non-White Republicans demonstrate a slightly different relationship; however, we suspect the low number of Republican minority respondents prevents us from drawing a definitive conclusion on this matter.

To systematically test Hypothesis 3, we included an interaction term between party ID and racial civic pride in our existing models from Table 3. None of the interaction terms are statistically significant except for Independents among Asian Americans (Table A7). These results indicate that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the differences between coefficients for Democrats and Republicans, as well as Democrats and Independents, are equal to 0. In other words, there is no notable difference in the strength of correlation between racial civic pride and voter

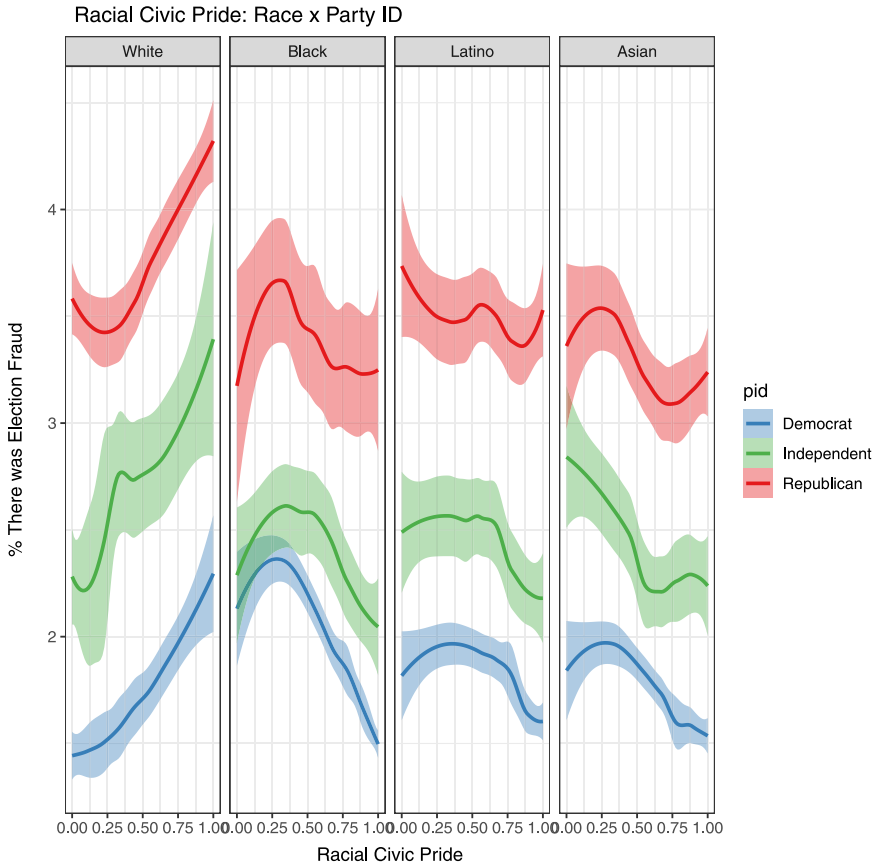


Figure 2. Racial civic pride and voter fraud belief by race and party ID.

fraud belief across Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. Another interesting finding is that the differences across partisans are much smaller among White Americans than non-White Americans. The difference in slopes between White Democrats and Republicans is .013, which is smaller than the range observed for non-White Americans (.182 to .373). Similarly, the difference in coefficients between White Democrats and Independents is .032, again smaller than the interaction terms from non-White models (−.466 to .200).

Finally, we examine whether racial civic pride is simply another manifestation of American identity. For decades, research has found time and again that, while distinct from ethnocentrism, higher levels of American identity are related to greater support for restrictive policies that target and restrict the rights of minority outgroups (e.g., Citrin, Reingold and Green 1990; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Frendreis and Tatalovich 1997; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2024; Schildkraut 2003; Smith 1988). Given that those with higher American identity may be more inclined to restrict who can and cannot be a part of the franchise, particularly when majority-minority jurisdictions are alleged to be violating democratic norms and stuffing

ballots, it may well be that those who rank American identity higher would also be more inclined to believe allegations of voter fraud.

More recent work, however, has drawn from Tesler's (2015) theory of issue crystalization to argue that the more inclusive elements of American identity have in unique circumstances been activated so as to become associated with *less* restrictive policy attitudes targeting outgroups. Collingwood, Lajevardi and Oskooii (2018) and Oskooii, Lajevardi and Collingwood (2021), for example, took the case of the 2017 Muslim ban, which President Trump issued as one of his first acts in office and which immediately spurred nationwide protests, to argue that political communication characterizing the ban as "un-American" primed citizens' underlying predispositions and resulted in a change to less restrictive immigration policy attitudes, because at the time, attitudes toward banning Muslims from entering the United States were less crystalized. In that case, the priming of American identity shifted citizens' opinions toward more *inclusive*, rather than restrictive, policy stances targeting a minority outgroup. Trump's assertions that the 2020 election was stolen arguably present a similar circumstance. That a sitting President would challenge the U.S. election result and attribute his loss to voter fraud was unprecedented at that time, as was the Capitol insurrection that followed. In the political communication by elites and in the media coverage that followed, both the claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election and the ensuing violence at the Capitol were almost ubiquitously denounced as un-American. As such, it could very well be those with higher rankings of American identity would be less willing to believe accusations of voter fraud.

To test this, we present Table 4, which also controls for how respondents ranked their American identity. If the inclusion of American identity diminishes and erodes the substantive size and significance of the racial civic pride measure, then we could conclude that the three are indeed correlated and capturing very similar attitudes. The results present three interesting findings. First, the racial civic pride measure retains its substantive size and significance across all racial groups examined (as compared to Table 3), indicating that the inclusion of the American identity variable is not capturing a similar attitude. Second, while national civic pride was not originally significantly associated with belief in voter fraud for all racial groups (see Table A5),¹³ the national civic pride measure lost its explanatory power across each racial group examined with the inclusion of the American identity variable, suggesting that the two measures are more closely related. Third, and perhaps most surprisingly, ranking American identity as a more important identity is *negatively* correlated with belief in voter fraud in the 2020 election, across all racial groups, *including* White respondents. Across the board, those with stronger American identity were less likely to believe in allegations of voter fraud. Thus, backlash toward accusations of voter fraud in the 2020 election before attitude crystalization may have constituted another case in which inclusive aspects of American identity became associated with a less restrictive attitude.

Considering all the results thus far, we observe that not only does racial civic pride have different intensities and distributions between White and non-White Americans, but its relationship with voter fraud belief also differs between these groups. As suggested earlier, if racial civic pride serves as a bridge connecting racial group consciousness and political action, the correlation between racial civic pride

Table 4. Predicting voter fraud belief with racial civic pride and other identity measures

	Dependent variable:				
	Belief in voter fraud				
	All	White	Black	Latino	Asian
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Racial civic pride	−.119** (.043)	.182 * (.078)	−.285** (.092)	−.274** (.087)	−.494** (.095)
National civic pride	.029 (.040)	−.136 (.087)	.056 (.071)	.005 (.084)	.357 ** (.087)
Racial identity strength	.048 (.036)	.005 (.065)	.004 (.071)	.006 (.078)	.007 (.083)
American identity more important	−.148** (.032)	−.203** (.069)	−.225** (.059)	−.118+ (.062)	−.080 (.066)
Racial linked fate	−.005 (.009)	.032+ (.017)	−.064** (.015)	.022 (.018)	.015 (.019)
White supremacy not anxious	.138 ** (.037)	.235 ** (.077)	.009 (.065)	.125+ (.073)	.223 ** (.083)
Observations	9,592	1,883	3,003	2,697	2,009
R ²	.551	.692	.388	.452	.571
Adjusted R ²	.551	.689	.384	.448	.568
Residual std. error	.948	.943	.928	.998	.873
F statistic	588.361 **	246.612 **	111.224 **	129.817 **	155.995 **

Note: + $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

and voter fraud belief could explain protest participation or other forms of political engagement. White Americans with a strong sense of racial civic pride might be more inclined to protest against alleged voter fraud. Meanwhile, racial and ethnic minorities with higher levels of civic pride might be more likely to participate in political activities that oppose attempts to undermine the democratic outcome of an election. We examine these possibilities further in the next section.

Exploratory Analysis on the Consequences of Beliefs in Voter Fraud

Thus far, our analyses have demonstrated that racial civic pride is significantly associated with beliefs in voter fraud occurring in the 2020 presidential election. However, racial civic pride manifests differently among White Americans compared to Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. Specifically, racial civic pride correlates with diminished beliefs in voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election among Black, Latino, and Asian Americans across all partisan stripes. Conversely, it correlates

with heightened beliefs in voter fraud among White Americans, regardless of their partisan affiliation.

It remains a lingering question what the implications of these results are for support for democratic norms, institutions, and progressive electoral policies. To test the implications of these results, we again turn to the 2024 CloudResearch survey. If racial civic pride differentially predicts beliefs in voter fraud among different racial and ethnic groups—and if these beliefs are associated with attitudes, policies, and actions that undermine American democracy—it is imperative to investigate whether this differential impact of racial civic pride extends beyond beliefs in voter fraud to other aspects of democratic institutions and norms.

We conducted additional analyses to explore the broader significance of these findings. First, to assess the “so-what” of these results, we evaluate whether beliefs in voter fraud are indeed associated with less democratic policy attitudes and beliefs. Second, we re-examine whether racial civic pride is differentially associated with beliefs in voter fraud among White and non-White Americans. Finally, we explore whether racial civic pride correlates with other issue areas beyond voter fraud. All of the analyses that follow employ OLS regression models, with all of our independent and dependent variables having been rescaled to a 0–1 range for ease of interpretation.

In Table 5, we evaluate the consequences that beliefs in voter fraud have on democratic norms and principles. We present ten OLS regression models assessing the impact of beliefs in voter fraud on trust in democratic norms and elections, a number of policy issue areas, and future political violence. Though these models also include a number of control variables,¹⁴ we present only the coefficients for the key independent variable, belief in voter fraud.¹⁵ The ten dependent variables examined include an additive measure of democratic trust (Model 1), trust in elections (Model 2), support for voter identification laws (Model 3), support for automatic voter registration (Model 4), support for making Election Day a national holiday (Model 5), support for early in-person voting (Model 6), support for same-day registration (Model 7), support for mail-in voting (Model 8), and support for electoral violence among likely Trump and Biden supporters if their preferred candidate loses in the 2024 presidential election (Models 9 and 10, respectively).¹⁶

The findings in Table 5 indicate that belief in voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election is associated in large and meaningful ways across every issue we examined. Belief in voter fraud correlates with a .319 point reduction in the aggregate trust measure (Model 1) and a .445 point reduction in trust in elections on a 0–1 scale (Model 2). Furthermore, belief in voter fraud increases support for voter ID laws by .162 points (Model 3), while reducing support for automatic voter registration by .154 points (Model 4), making Election Day a holiday by .147 points (Model 5), early voting by .162 points (Model 6), same-day registration by .197 points (Model 7), and voting by mail by .376 points (Model 8). Those with a greater belief in voter fraud in the 2020 election, particularly among likely 2024 Trump supporters or those backing another candidate, were .167 points more likely to endorse violence (Model 9). Importantly, this finding is not limited to Trump supporters; among likely Biden 2024 supporters and supporters of another candidate, we also find that those with greater belief in voter fraud in 2020 were more likely to justify violence if Trump is elected in 2024 by .187 points (Model 10).

Table 5. Examining the consequences of beliefs in voter fraud

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Trust (Agg Measure)	Trust Elections	Voter ID	Automatic Registration	ED Holiday	Early Voting	Same Day Registration	Vote by Mail	Violence Biden	Violence Trump
Voter fraud belief	-.319***	-.445***	.162***	-.154***	-.147***	-.162***	-.197***	-.376***	.167***	.187***
	(.023)	(.025)	(.032)	(.037)	(.028)	(.027)	(.032)	(.033)	(.041)	(.040)
Observations	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	424	715
Adjusted R ²	.224	.356	.207	.159	.098	.172	.184	.329	.061	.054

Standard errors in parentheses.
Note that all models control for race, gender, income, education, ideology, partisanship, and age.
+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 6. Re-evaluating the relationship between racial civic pride and voter fraud

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Among all multivariate	Among Whites multivariate	Among Blacks multivariate	Among Latinos multivariate	Among Asians multivariate
Racial civic pride	.077**	.204***	.001	.124	.002
	(.027)	(.057)	(.074)	(.082)	(.069)
Observations	1000	295	261	191	253
Adjusted R^2	.268	.420	.224	.294	.119

Standard errors in parentheses.

All models control for gender, income, education, ideology, partisanship, and age. Model 2 controls for race.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Having established that belief in voter fraud is associated with outcomes detrimental to democratic trust and increased support for restrictive voting policies and political violence, we now turn to racial civic pride as a key variable differentially influencing these beliefs among racial groups.¹⁷ Table 6 re-evaluates the relationship between racial civic pride and belief in voter fraud using the same independent and dependent variables from our earlier analysis using the 2020 CMPS.¹⁸ Model 1 presents the relationship between racial civic pride alone and belief in voter fraud and finds a positive and significant relationship between the two. In Models 2–5, we subset our analyses to White (Model 2), Black (Model 3), Latino (Model 4), and Asian (Model 5) subgroups. Here, we find that racial civic pride significantly correlates with beliefs in voter fraud only among White Americans (Model 2). This core finding of racial civic pride’s association with voter fraud beliefs among White Americans is reconfirmed, although the significant negative association that we observed in the 2020 CMPS sample among Black, Latino, and Asian Americans is not. While we cannot know for certain, we posit that the reason this result may not replicate for Black, Latino, and Asian Americans in 2024 might be due to the fact that while voter fraud continues to be a salient consideration and policy area for Trump supporters, for many Americans of color who are more likely to be aligned with Democrats, the voter fraud claims in 2020 might be more dated and therefore less salient to them.

Next, we examine the democratic consequences of racial civic pride. We begin here by evaluating how race shapes racial civic pride. Table 7 presents four OLS regressions exploring the relationship between race and the three measures used to construct our racial civic pride variable, as well as the composite variable.¹⁹ Black, Latino, and Asian American respondents are significantly more likely to consistently report higher levels of racial civic pride than White respondents, confirming the findings from the 2020 CMPS.

Finally, we evaluate the relationship between racial civic pride and the 10 key dependent variables we previously examined in Table 5. Table 8 presents these results. It reveals that racial civic pride influences policy attitudes of Black, Latino, and Asian Americans differently than those of White Americans. Except for voter ID laws, racial and ethnic minorities with higher racial civic pride exhibit greater

Table 7. Race and racial civic pride

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	RCP News	RCP Milestone	RCP Elected Office	RCP Aggregate
Race: Black	.413*** (.028)	.473*** (.027)	.522*** (.030)	.470*** (.024)
Race: Latino	.351*** (.031)	.375*** (.030)	.474*** (.032)	.400*** (.026)
Race: Asian	.336*** (.029)	.290*** (.028)	.413*** (.030)	.346*** (.024)
Observations	1000	1000	1000	1000
Adjusted R^2	.235	.288	.310	.355

Standard errors in parentheses.

All models include controls for gender, income, education, ideology, partisanship, and age.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

trust in democratic institutions, support for policies expanding ballot access, and less support for political violence if their preferred candidate loses in the 2024 elections. Across the board, we see that racial civic pride differentially shapes the policy opinions of Black, Latino, and Asian Americans from that of White Americans. Apart from one issue area—on voter ID—racial and ethnic minorities with greater levels of racial civic pride are more likely than White Americans with high levels of racial civic pride to have more trust in American democratic institutions and elections, support progressive policies that widen access to the ballot, and to be less supportive of violence if the candidate of their liking loses the upcoming 2024 elections.

Together, the findings from the 2024 CloudResearch data not only illustrate the detrimental consequences of voter fraud beliefs, but they also reconfirm that racial civic pride is associated with shaping voter fraud beliefs in the 2020 presidential election differently among White Americans compared to Black, Latino, and Asian Americans. Additionally, racial civic pride significantly influences other critical areas for democratic health and engagement. For Black, Latino, and Asian Americans, higher levels of racial civic pride are associated with more progressive attitudes, increased trust in elections and institutions, and decreased support for political violence. In contrast, among White Americans, higher racial civic pride correlates with less progressive attitudes, diminished institutional trust, and increased support for future electoral violence if their preferred candidate loses the 2024 election (see Table A14).

Discussion and Conclusion

The 2020 presidential election marked an important turning point in contemporary American elections, and raised questions about the vibrancy of the democracy and its ability to withhold attempts at challenging its legitimacy and institutions. The

Table 8. The differential consequences of racial civic pride

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
	Trust (Agg Measure)	Trust Elections	Voter ID	Automatic Registration	ED Holiday	Early Voting	Same Day Registration	Vote by Mail	Violence Biden	Violence Trump
Racial Civic Pride	.010 (.046)	-.057 (.053)	.007 (.059)	-.063 (.069)	-.129* (.052)	-.159** (.051)	-.253*** (.060)	-.226*** (.066)	.334*** (.084)	.241*** (.070)
Race: Black × Racial Civic Pride	.161* (.071)	.148+ (.081)	.215* (.092)	.280** (.105)	.302*** (.080)	.112 (.078)	.091 (.093)	.221* (.101)	-.240* (.117)	-.277* (.108)
Race: Latino × Racial Civic Pride	.092 (.075)	.114 (.085)	.045 (.096)	.086 (.110)	.134 (.084)	.230** (.082)	.381*** (.097)	.229* (.105)	-.394** (.134)	-.122 (.111)
Race: Asian × Racial Civic Pride	.038 (.069)	.070 (.079)	-.027 (.089)	.052 (.102)	.141+ (.078)	.212* (.076)	.263** (.090)	.236* (.098)	-.419** (.127)	-.276** (.101)
Observations	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	424	715
Adjusted R^2	.083	.144	.192	.149	.083	.150	.172	.249	.058	.040

Standard errors in parentheses.

Note that all models control for race, gender, income, education, ideology, partisanship, and age.

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

sitting U.S. President challenged the votes that were cast, and the outcome of the election was stalled from Election Day, November 3, 2020, until November 7th, when Nevada was at last called for then-candidate Biden.²⁰

Over the next two and a half months, Trump pursued an unprecedented effort to overturn the election by pressuring state election officials around the country, as well as his own Vice President, urging them to invalidate votes. Throughout this time, Trump perpetuated the “big lie,” falsely alleging that the election was stolen as a result of massive voter fraud (Dale 2021).²¹ Trump’s voter fraud allegations also culminated in the incitement of protesters at the “Stop the Steal” rally on January 6, 2021 to go to the Capitol building and attempt to stop the certification of the 2020 presidential election results. The insurrection that followed that day saw over 2,000 rioters unlawfully enter the Capitol building (NPR 2024), committing unprecedented vandalism, assaults, and harm. Thus, the myth of voter fraud resulted in at least two profoundly anti-democratic outcomes: 1) the measures that were taken by some public officials and the then-sitting U.S. President to discount the lawful votes cast by Americans around the country, particularly in areas with large numbers of Americans of color, and 2) the efforts by citizens on January 6th, 2021 to halt the certification of the 2020 presidential election, which led to the attack at the Capitol.

These historic efforts to rattle the foundations and institutions of American democracy necessitate intensive scrutiny. Though past research has examined how partisanship shaped acceptance of voter fraud allegations, it has yet to extend its inquiry to the role of race. Namely, it remains an open question whether racial and ethnic minorities may differ from White Americans in their levels of resistance to voter fraud messages and the underlying reasons for these differences. Our study fills this gap and argues that racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are distinct from White Americans in how they respond to claims of voter fraud in the 2020 presidential election. We argue that the historical struggle for voting rights—where Black, non-White immigrants, and other marginalized communities were formally excluded from the franchise—has uniquely fortified these groups against efforts that seek to exclude or diminish their electoral influence.

Our results from the 2020 CMPS survey, fielded in 2021 after the January 6th insurrection, indicate that racial civic pride significantly shapes how Americans of all racial backgrounds respond to claims of voter fraud and other efforts that may undermine democratic values. However, the direction of this relationship differs by race. Namely, those racial and ethnic minorities who take pride in their group’s civic achievements are likely to value progressive change, equality, and social justice. This pride translates into a heightened resistance to narratives that threaten the full participation of *all* citizens. In contrast, for White Americans, racial civic pride plays a different role. Those high in racial civic pride perceive threats to the social and political structures that maintain their dominance. As a result, high racial civic pride predisposes them to accept claims of voter fraud, which they believe may secure electoral outcomes that preserve their preferred status quo.

Additional analyses of a July 2024 CloudResearch survey reveal that belief in voter fraud in the 2020 election has deleterious consequences for democracy, including reduced trust in the electoral process, increased resistance to policies designed to enhance voter participation, and heightened support for future electoral violence. These additional analyses also underscore the significant role of racial civic

pride in shaping responses to these outcomes for both White Americans and non-Whites. Racial civic pride tends to align White Americans with more conservative views regarding these democratic principles and policies, whereas, for Americans of color, it is associated with increased trust, more progressive policy views, and reduced support for political violence. These findings are also in line with recent research that has found that even though factors like racial resentment predicted strong Trump support among non-White Americans, the probability of voting for Trump did not surpass 37% even among those with the highest levels of animus (Geiger and Reny 2024).

Finally, it is important to note that the fielding of the second survey concluded just one day before former President Trump's assassination attempt on July 13th, 2024. In that survey, among those likely to vote for Trump or another candidate, 8.5% of respondents indicated they would consider "a great deal" or "a lot" justified if Joe Biden wins the 2024 presidential election. A similar sentiment emerges when evaluating likely Biden voters or voters of some other candidate, with 8.4% expressing that a significant amount of violence would be justified if Donald Trump wins the 2024 presidential election. While these percentages may appear marginal, they are arguably non-negligible and indicate that even *before* the assassination attempt of a current presidential contender and past President, there was a tangible readiness on both sides of the aisle to support future political violence. The extent to which these attitudes have shifted in the wake of that assassination attempt remains an open question and one of grave concern.

In closing, these findings illustrate the profound impact that pervasive misinformation about voter fraud during the 2020 presidential campaign has had on American democracy. It underscores the urgent need for efforts to combat misinformation and to reinforce the democratic values of trust and inclusivity in the electoral process. Additionally, these results highlight the critical importance of acknowledging race and historical struggles for equality when examining public opinion and support for anti-democratic myths, policies, and actions.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2025.11>

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Notes

1 In *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*, 553 U.S. 181, 191 (2008), for example, the Supreme Court upheld a strict photo ID law in Indiana, despite acknowledging a lack of evidence for voter fraud in the state's history. Specifically, the Court noted that even though "[t]he record contains no evidence of any such fraud actually occurring in Indiana at any time in its history," the risk of voter fraud through in-person impersonation at polling places was real, and "could affect the outcome of a close election." Concerns over voter fraud have since resulted in the spread of voter ID laws have proliferated, with the National Conference of State Legislatures documenting that 36 states have enacted such laws by 2024, despite evidence showing that voter fraud is extremely rare (Levitt 2007; Minnite 2007), and that these laws disproportionately burden racial and ethnic minorities (Fraga and Miller 2022; Hajnal, Kuk and Lajevardi 2018; Hajnal, Lajevardi and Nielson 2017; Kuk, Hajnal and Lajevardi 2022) because they are less likely to

hold photo identification (Barreto, Sanchez and Walker 2022; Barreto et al. 2019; Grimmer and Yoder 2022).

2 See: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act>

3 <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/voter-purges>

4 <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/vote-suppression/myth-voter-fraud>

5 <https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/block-the-vote-voter-suppression-in-2020>

6 It is important to note that racial civic pride is distinct from national pride, and that both of these are distinct from national identity. National pride is the pride found in one's nation or country, such as its institutions, values, and achievements, and often a result of national identity (Smith and Jarkko 1998). This pride typically enhances political participation, activating a civic dimension (Kim and Lee 2021). Scholars have sought to understand national pride in the United States and found that it has two dimensions—patriotism and nationalism de Figueiredo Jr and Elkins (2003); Huddy and Khatib (2007); McDaniel, Nooruddin and Shortle (2016). Patriotism is a positive, often devoted attachment to the nation, its well-being, and its normative values, or a “love for one's country.” (Nathanson 1993). Patriots often express their devotion through civic participation driven by an awareness that they have a moral obligation to their country to promote its well-being (Acton 1948). Nationalism includes a positive attachment to the nation, much like patriotism, but also an often perverse sense of national superiority (Conover and Feldman 1987; Feshbach 1994). National civic pride, then, is a sense of pride in one's nation, encompassing its institutions and symbols, which can instill a belief in the nation's superiority and inspire civic actions such as voting or protesting. (Grossberg, Struwig and Pillay 2006). Research finds that national pride is not ideological in nature (Huddy and Khatib 2007), and a sense of pride or attachment to one's nation is common among citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, or party. National identity, meanwhile, is a social identity with a sense of belonging to the nation and other citizens (Huddy and Khatib 2007; Lajevardi and Oskooii 2024; Theiss-Morse 2009).

7 The question wording for all three versions is presented in CMPS Question Wording section of the Appendix.

8 After asking each question from the racial civic pride measure, we ask the following question: “Thinking about the question you just answered, exactly what things went through your mind? Please type your response below” Kam and Burge (2018) use this method to understand how survey respondents perceive the racial resentment measure

9 We also present the results from models that replace the FIRE battery with the racial resentment measure in Table A4.

10 Appendix Table A8 also controls for ethnocentrism for the White, Latino, and Black subsamples. We constructed a relative ethnocentrism measure where respondents' evaluations of the average of the two other outgroups are subtracted from respondents' evaluations of their own ingroup. As such, higher values indicate that respondents view their own group as more peaceful compared to other groups. However, because the measures were not asked about Asians, we do not control for ethnocentrism in our main analyses.

11 Full results can be found in Table A5.

12 Even though studies have found that racial resentment batteries share similar measurement properties between White and Black Americans (Kam and Burge 2018 2019), other research suggests excluding racial resentment variables for Black Americans (Davis and Wilson 2021). As such, we present the results from regression models that exclude racial resentment variables for Black Americans in Table A6.

13 In Table A5, national civic pride was significantly associated with belief in voter fraud only among White and Asian respondents. Moreover, when we exclude racial resentment for Black respondents in Table A6, the coefficient for national civic pride also becomes statistically significant.

14 See Table A10 for the full regression models.

15 See the Appendix for a detailed description of the variables employed here.

16 Note that model 9 includes likely Trump voters or voters for some other candidate in 2024, and that model 10 is limited to likely Biden 2024 voters or those who indicate they would support some other candidate.

17 The Cronbach's Alpha for the racial civic pride measure in the CloudResearch dataset is 0.85.

18 Note that each of the models controls for (race in model 1), gender, income, education, ideology, partisanship, and age.

19 Recall these measures were constructed similar to the CMPS measure using the following questions: 1) RCP News: How much pride would you say you feel when you view news or think about protests on issues that are important for [insert racial group] Americans? 2) RCP Milestone: How much pride would you say you feel when you see a(n) [insert racial group] individual accomplishing a major milestone? 3) RCP Elected Office: How much pride would you say you feel when you see a(n) [insert racial group] individual holding elected office?

20 <https://blog.ap.org/behind-the-news/calling-the-2020-presidential-race-state-by-state>

21 The Associated Press, for instance, conducted an investigation in 2021 and found minimal voter fraud in swing states (Yoon 2023). Their efforts found fewer than 475 occurrences of confirmed voter fraud across 300 local election offices in 6 battleground states, a minimal amount compared to the magnitude required to alter the results of a presidential election outcome. Moreover, this review found that the culprits include both registered Democrats and Republicans, and that they were almost always caught before the fraudulent ballot was counted (Yoon 2023).

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