

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sacred For Whom? Race Ideology and Reactions to January 6th

Angela Gutierrez¹ , Christine M. Slaughter² and Erik Hanson³

¹University of Texas at Austin, USA, ²Boston University, USA and ³University of Southern California, USA
Corresponding author: Angela Gutierrez; Email: angela.gutierrez@austin.utexas.edu

(Received 3 August 2024; revised 10 December 2024; accepted 20 January 2025; first published online 03 March 2025)

Abstract

The January 6th insurrection at the U.S. capital was an eye-opening moment for many Americans. With the 2024 election cycle in swing, members of the Democratic Party are using January 6th as a rallying call for the need to protect democracy. But were the events of January 6th viewed equally among liberals? We argue that the events of January 6th resonate for a particular demographic well-informed liberal White voters. We argue that liberal minority voters will feel the racial undertones of January 6th more than White liberals. Furthermore, we examine how voters of different races viewed the events of January 6th and how views on race relations impact their perceptions of January 6th. We find that White liberals are less angry about race relations in the aftermath of January 6th, and while they viewed January 6th as an insurrection and blamed Trump and Republicans in Congress for their role, they are less likely to say that racism and White Supremacy motivated the insurrectionists. This paper indicates that race plays a key role in political perceptions, even among those who hold similar political ideologies.

Keywords: public opinion; racial attitudes; liberals; ideology; emotions

Introduction

On January 6, 2021, the U.S. Capitol Building was attacked and occupied for approximately five hours by supporters of Donald J. Trump in an unprecedented invasion of a government building by a domestic group. During the occupation, approximately 2,000 participants invaded the Capitol. The Confederate flag was raised, hundreds of people were injured, there were multiple deaths and millions of dollars in damage. At no other time in American history had the Confederate flag—a symbol of rebellion and states' rights—been raised in the Capitol building. The 2021 Insurrection at the Capitol was more severe than the attack and occupation of government buildings by the British military in the War of 1812. While it paralleled the 2017 Venezuelan Parliament attack and the 2023 Brazilian Congress Attack, it is unprecedented in recent American history. Remarkably, this was done to protest the certification of the 2020 presidential election results. But, the attack, like Trump's

© The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Race, Ethnicity, and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

presidential campaign, had racial undertones. Not all who witnessed the attack on the Capitol viewed it as an attack on a sacred U.S. institution. In fact, only 37% had a strong negative emotional response to the riot at the Capitol (Gramlich, 2022). The attack was led by a White majority, similar to attacks on state capitals during the Reconstruction era and immediate post-Reconstruction era, such as attempted coups in Arkansas and Louisiana in 1874, and at the local level, a successful coup and massacre in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898. Despite clear parallels to racial mob violence of the past, Americans do not uniformly associate the 2021 Insurrection as a racist event.

Racist undertones of January 6th were not universally felt among all Americans. For some who witnessed the insurrection, the events of January 6th are a reminder that the United States has not progressed as much as they would like and, therefore, are angry about the state of race relations, while others may be hopeful that the racial hierarchy in the United States will continue on as it has in the past. While one might argue these feelings are only among conservatives, who are most likely to support Republicans, including Donald Trump, liberals can hold a diversity of emotions and attitudes about race and politics. When accounting for ideology and racial identity, we theorize that White liberals are distinct from Asian Black and Latino liberals in how race influences their opinions surrounding January 6th. White liberals still benefit from White supremacy, and even the most progressive of liberals can remain complicit in acts of racial discrimination and racial violence. However, liberals of color may view the attacks on the election results and political institutions as part of a longer history of violence in U.S. history. Most of the coups that occurred in the past at the state and local level were linked to attempts by a White majority to oppress Black citizens and politicians considered favorable to supporting Civil Rights (Zucchino, 2020). In this paper, we examine the perceptions of the attack on the Capitol on January 6th on the election results and political institutions among liberals. We focus on liberals for several reasons. Liberals share many political views but have different social identities that matter for their politics. Second, most liberals were less supportive of Trump compared to conservatives. Yet, differences in opinions surrounding January 6th may be less surprising when accounting for the role of race in shaping perspectives and opinions. We find that racial identity shapes how liberals interpret the events of January 6th, White liberals are less likely to associate the event of January 6th with White supremacy, are less likely to believe that Trump is to blame, and are less likely to believe that the Republican members of Congress trying to stop the certification were undermining democracy.

Our results demonstrate that there are racial differences in how liberals process political events. We find that liberals are similarly concerned about the January 6th insurrection, but they have different primary concerns about characterizing the events. The January 6th insurrection was perhaps less surprising to many non-White liberals because it has a long history in American politics, namely racist political actors attempting to block or overturn political gains made by people of color. Opposition to racial equality and the full political participation of people of color, particularly of Black Americans, has been endemic throughout the history of the United States. Accordingly, we argue that White liberals had a much stronger initial reaction to some aspects of the January 6th insurrection. Given the greater focus on

the institutional rather than racial character of the insurrection, they may be less likely to have their reactions affected by racial attitudes or to recognize the role of White supremacy in the event.

To investigate these differences, we use the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS) and examine to what extent racialized emotions and racial differences among liberals in the United States affect perceptions of the events at the Capitol. Our primary outcome measures are perceptions of January 6th, specifically the role of race in the events. We find that emotions toward the state of race relations shaped how Americans perceived the events of January 6th among liberals. We find that liberals, whom one might expect are the most likely to reject the insurrection, varied in their perception of the events. Racial differences between Blacks and Whites are large, even among those who identify as liberal. Similarly, Latinos and Asians view race to be a motivator of January 6th. These findings are important, as they demonstrate that different political stimuli, such as the anti-democratic occupation of the Capitol, can influence how Americans perceive and express concern for inter-group relations.

Racial Hierarchy, Racial Attitudes, and Racial Priming

Higher status in the racial hierarchy makes White Americans want to assert their national belonging and national attachments (Carter and Pérez, 2016). White Americans feel that they may lose access to the materials and symbolic privileges associated with Whiteness if their dominance in the racial hierarchy is threatened (Kinder and Sanders, 1997). For some, this threat is situated in their views toward outgroups, particularly those that they perceive as less deserving. Kinder and Sears' (1981) view of symbolic racism suggests that Whites' political ideology is less important than their racial identity in their policy positions. Whites having higher status lead them to want to protect such status, that is, oppose policies threatening their dominance. Thus, even while White liberals embrace progressive views, their position in the racial hierarchy promotes discrimination toward lower-status groups.

As it pertains to liberals of color, racial identity, to a greater extent than political ideology, shapes how they view matters of politics. Ideology remains a strong social identity for many Americans (Mason, 2018). However, ideological beliefs are less important, less relevant, or less divisive among Black Americans, Latinos, and Asians (Jefferson, 2020; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2012; Raychaudhuri, 2020). Asian Americans are less entrenched in partisan politics relative to Latinos and Black Americans. However, Latinos and Asian Americans, because of their newer immigrant status, are thought to be less politically socialized when compared to Black and White Americans (Hajnal and Lee, 2011). Among groups that are entrenched in liberalism, Black Americans strongly discern racial discrimination. The recent racialization of Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic and their response to the "Stop Asian Hate" movement may move Asian liberals to be more closely aligned with the views of Latinos and Black Americans on matters of racial discrimination. Since Black Americans harbor greater levels of mistrust and lack of political efficacy, we expect that this shapes how Black people view the causes of January 6th as a part of a longer list of racist attacks within the United States.

Weak partisan attachments and stronger racial identity suggest that for Asian Americans and Latinos, ideology has muted effects on racial attitudes compared to Black Americans.

The rhetoric surrounding January 6th contained both implicit and explicit racial primes; similar to other major political events, the event itself and the priming effect can significantly alter political attitudes (Parkinson, 2012; Enos *et al.*, 2019; Claassen, 2020; Wasow, 2020; Druke, 2021; Mulupi *et al.*, 2021). Events can cause racial priming through the intersection of the direct consequences of the event with the symbolism of its characteristics. Racial cues matter for political attitudes. (Tesler and Sears, 2010; Ehrlinger *et al.*, 2011; Mendelberg, 2001; Stout, 2020; Tesler, 2015; White, 2007). Race likely shapes these interpretations; some may have interpreted the events as a protest out of control, while others would have noticed that it was a largely White and angry mob. Similarly, the symbolism of mock executions of politicians, the flying of the Confederate flag within the U.S. Congressional building, and violence shown at times toward Black police officers (Montanaro, 2021) may have led to strongly different reactions related to the association of these images with preexisting racial views and knowledge.

Ideology and Racial Attitudes among Whites

In the United States, liberals have been almost uniformly allied with the Democratic Party since the 1960s (Levendusky, 2009). Traditionally, liberals have been most concerned with care for those in need, equality, and fairness as abstract principles, while showing less interest in principles of authority, tradition, or ingroup loyalty (Feldman and Johnston, 2014). However, there is some evidence that some aspects of this characterization are changing. Much of the contemporary Democratic Party advocacy is concerned with conserving the welfare state from attacks, maintaining labor and environmental regulations, and trying to preserve democratic norms that are under attack from the Republican Party, particularly former president Donald Trump (Krugman, 2019).

In the last few decades, liberals and conservatives have had less geographic and cultural overlap, with these groups often claiming entirely distinct social networks (Levendusky, 2009). In some cases, this is due to racial segregation, as a large number of liberals are people of color who reside in racially and ethnically segregated metropolitan areas. However, among White Americans, there is a strong geographic and social segregation between liberals and conservatives as well. Subsequently, we believe that these two groups have had different responses and political attitudes toward the January 6th insurrection, although not to the same extent as liberals and conservatives as a whole.

This separation is not only social and geographic but also applies to key self-conceptualization and policy attitudes as well. Non-White liberals, particularly Black Americans, often take more ideologically liberal policy positions than White liberals, particularly on the economic dimension of the ideology. Furthermore, people of color see their own race and identity as relevant to their ideology, while White liberals often do not view their White identity as important or relevant.

White conservatives have more negative views of minorities and score higher on racial resentment, while White liberals are more likely to have positive views toward

other racial groups. However, these positive views are not universal and sometimes are not accompanied by a true understanding of racial dynamics and other cultures (Taylor and Merino, 2011; Tesler, 2012; Yglesias, 2019; Jefferson et al., 2021; Rasmussen et al., 2022; Chudy, 2023; Hayes, 2023).

We have reason to believe that views toward January 6th are similarly racialized and polarized. Many scholars have characterized January 6th as a racial event, with most of the participants motivated by White supremacy (Katz, 2021; Jefferson, 2021; Jackson and Hinsz, 2022; Jefferson, 2022). It is believed that in part due to the desire to hold on to the White supremacist beliefs of Donald Trump, many participants were willing to discard democracy itself.

Many scholars have noted that White conservatives will likely view January 6th positively or deny its validity as a major event. White liberals are more likely to view it as a major negative political event, with many noting the racism expressed by the participants (Abramowitz and Webster, 2018; Udani et al., 2018; Svolik, 2020; van Noort, 2022; Kalmoe and Mason, 2022; Painter and Fernandes 2022; Krishnarajan, 2023). It is believed that at least part of the explanation may be motivated reasoning and extreme affective polarization, in which many voters loathe the other political party to the point of being willing to justify non-democratic modes of governance to achieve policy goals.

Attitudes Toward Race Relations, Racial Progress, and Political Institutions

The role of political cynicism and tempered expectations is crucial in how different racial and ethnic groups reacted to the insurrection. After the insurrection, many White voters shifted affiliation away from the Republican Party (Loving and Smith, 2022). However, non-White Republicans did not make a party switch at similar rates. This conjecture is tentative, but non-White Republicans may be more realistic about the authoritarian impulses of the modern Republican Party and the racist character of many of its policies. At the same time, relatively moderate White Republicans were more surprised by the attempts to overturn the election. Furthermore, non-White voters, and particularly Black voters, may have a longer history of attempts by political actors to affect the outcome of the election by suppressing their vote, throwing out votes, and employing extralegal tactics against them to deny their political voice (Gibson and Nelson, 2018; Phoenix, 2019).

Black and Latino individuals may have a perception of “push and pull” when it comes to racial progress in the United States, in which advancements in equality are met with political backlash, and may therefore feel more anger toward the state of race relations and less hope for the future of racial progress (Parker and Barreto, 2013). Therefore, for some, it is possible that January 6th was viewed as yet another example of racial backlash among the dominant White majority. Many January 6th participants specifically signaled out never-proven allegations of voter fraud among undocumented voters and fraudulent voting in majority and plurality Black cities, such as Detroit, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia (Eggers et al., 2021).

Black and Latino liberals may also be less disturbed by attacks on U.S. institutions because they have a mixed view of how helpful these institutions are in advancing justice (Banks, White and McKenzie, 2019). While many non-White groups participate at fairly similar rates, they may have a more instrumental view of voting

and participating in politics. In other words, these actions are taken out of necessity while simultaneously realizing that many institutions they interact with are biased against them. In contrast, White liberals are more likely to participate in politics out of civic obligation and sometimes patriotism, and there is generally greater faith in the ability of institutions to produce good public policy.

White liberals may be particularly disturbed by attacks on U.S. institutions because they see these institutions as a mode to advance justice. Unlike Black and Latino liberals, White liberals often view racial justice and other forms of social and economic progress as a constantly moving forward process and may therefore feel more hope toward the future of race relations and racial progress. In fact, for White Americans hope for racial progress is associated with their increased trust in political institutions (Wu *et al.*, 2022). In other words, even when the Supreme Court, President, or Congress makes a decision that advances racial justice, White liberals may view this as an example of the benevolent nature of these institutions. In contrast, liberals of other racial groups may view them as making a good decision despite their race-gendered nature (Eady *et al.*, 2023; Frye, 2023). But, hope has divergent effects compared to anger. White Americans that feel angry about politics are less likely to see racism as an important issue (Banks and Bell, 2013; Banks, 2014). For White Americans, hope and anger about race relations can vary as a result of their ideological views.

Hypotheses

We use racial group identity as a measure of status threat to explain why Black and Latino liberals view January 6th as a racist event to a greater extent than White and Asian American liberals. Establishing that racial attitudes are influenced by a group's position in the racial hierarchy and ideology can moderate Americans' racial attitudes, we examine how differences in perception of the events of January 6th emerge among those with the same liberal ideology. We expect that these differences are going to be driven by race. Whites' dominance in the racial hierarchy has influenced their racial attitudes, distancing White liberals from Black and Latino liberals on matters of race, but not from Asian American liberals. Therefore, White liberals are expected to be less angry about race relations in the aftermath of January 6th compared to liberals of color. We expect that Black and Latino Liberals are most likely to perceive the racial undertones of the January 6th insurrection relative to White liberals. We expect that a racial group's status shapes the order of discontent with the events of January 6th. White liberals are less angry about the state of race relations compared to Black and Latino liberals, and White liberals are more likely to assert that January 6th is not about race. This fills a gap in our understanding of race and ideology. Few studies examine how political ideology moderates racial group threat, and those that examine partisans find that threats to White Republicans and Democrats' status have political consequences (Brown *et al.*, 2022, Pérez *et al.*, 2024). We hypothesize that emotions toward the state of race relations can explain liberals' diverse in their views toward the insurrection.

How liberals experience race explains this divergence in perceptions of the insurrection. Position in the racial group hierarchy explains how liberals who share political views can come to different conclusions about political events. We expect

that emotions such as anger toward the state of race relations and hope toward the state of race relations influence how liberals evaluated the events of January 6th. But we don't expect liberals to be uniform in their views. In fact, White Americans are expected to be least angry and most hopeful about race because of their dominance in the racial hierarchy. Asian Americans have a newer American experience and have less history with socialization when compared to Black Americans and Latinos; thus, they may be closer to Whites in their views. However, it also might be the case that they have recently had a stronger racialization process and experienced discrimination during COVID-19, which might make them closer to Latinos and Blacks in their views of race relations. On the other hand, Latinos may be less hopeful about the state of relations but equally angered about race relations. Liberals of color have stronger feelings toward the state of relations relative to White liberals.

Hypothesis 1: Anger Toward Race Relations—Anger about the state of race relations is associated with thinking that January 6th was an insurrection, blaming Trump for the insurrection, believing that Republican Representatives are undermining democracy, and that the people involved in January 6th are motivated by race.

Hypothesis 2: Hope Toward Race Relations—Hope toward the state of race relations is associated with being less likely to think that January 6th was an insurrection, blaming Trump for the insurrection, believing that Republican Representatives are undermining democracy and that the people involved in January 6th are motivated by race.

Hypothesis 3: Race and January 6th—White Liberals, compared to Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans will be **3A)** less likely to view January 6th as an insurrection, **3B)** will be less likely to blame Trump for January 6th, **3C)** will be less likely to say Republicans in Congress who tried to stop the certification are responsible for undermining democracy, and **3D)** will be less likely to believe the insurrection is about race.

Data and Methods

To examine our theory and its subsequent hypotheses, we rely on the 2020 CMPS. The 2020 CMPS was an online survey conducted from April 2, 2021, to October 4, 2021. The survey consists of over 17,556 respondents, including oversamples of Afro-Latinos, Black Immigrants, Middle Eastern and North American/Muslim, American Indian, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders. Respondents are both registered and non-registered voters, as well as non-citizens. Given the large samples of racial groups, we can subset the data to only liberal respondents and examine perceptions toward January 6th by racial and ethnic groups. In total, there are over 5,000 liberals ($N = 5,327$) in our analysis. The data are weighted to fall within the margin of error of the adult population in the 2019 Census ACS 1-year data file for age, gender, education, nativity, and ancestry. We use the appropriate survey weights when reporting descriptive tables and figures and in our analysis.

Table 1. Question-wording for emotion—targeted items in 2020 CMPS

Emotion	Wording
Anger	Thinking back over the past year and the state of race relations in the country, are you feeling more angry or less angry Much more angry, somewhat more, neither more nor less, somewhat less much less
Hope	Thinking back over the past year and the state of race relations in the country, are you feeling more hopeful or less hopeful Much more hopeful, somewhat more, neither more nor less, somewhat less much less

Feelings about Race Relations

Our key independent variables are measures of race/ ethnicity and measures of attitudes toward race relations; anger, and hope. Race/ ethnicity is a categorical variable in which Asian American, Black, and Latino respondents are compared to the reference category of White. Table 1 displays the question wording for the emotion-targeted items. The 2020 CMPS measures examine anger and hope toward race relations, which we hypothesize can explain how Americans feel about the attack at the capital on January 6th (Hypothesis 1 & 2). We code measures between –1 and 1, with negative values indicating much less anger or hope and higher values indicating more anger or hope.

We expect that racial attitudes are configured by a group’s position in the racial hierarchy, producing a divergence in how individual group members are impacted by and perceive racism. Figure 1 displays levels of anger among liberals by race. Figure 1 shows that White liberals and Latinos are ambivalent in their anger (meaning they are neither more nor less angry about the state of race relations), with fewer respondents on the right side of the anger scale than other groups. Latino respondents appear to be less angry than other groups. Black respondents are more angry, with 50% of the respondents on the right side of the anger distribution. Asian Americans register the most amount of anger, with 56% of respondents on the right side of the anger scale. In Figure 2, we show the distributions for how hopeful liberal respondents are toward the state of race relations. Levels of hope are highest among White liberals, with 45% of White liberals stating they are hopeful about the state of relations, followed by 43% of Latinos, 42% of Black participants, and 40% of Asian Americans. If we take stock of each emotion and the differences across racial groups, White liberals are distinct from liberals of color in that White liberals are neither more nor less angry toward the state of race relations and exude more hope toward positive change. Liberals of color lack this ambivalence, and a majority are more angry but retain hope toward race relations.

Independent Variable: State of Race Relations

See Table 1, Figures 1 and 2.

Perceptions of the Capitol Attack on January 6th

We use four variables to examine perceptions of January 6th, and the centrality of race in the way liberals viewed January 6th (H3). We examine if liberals view

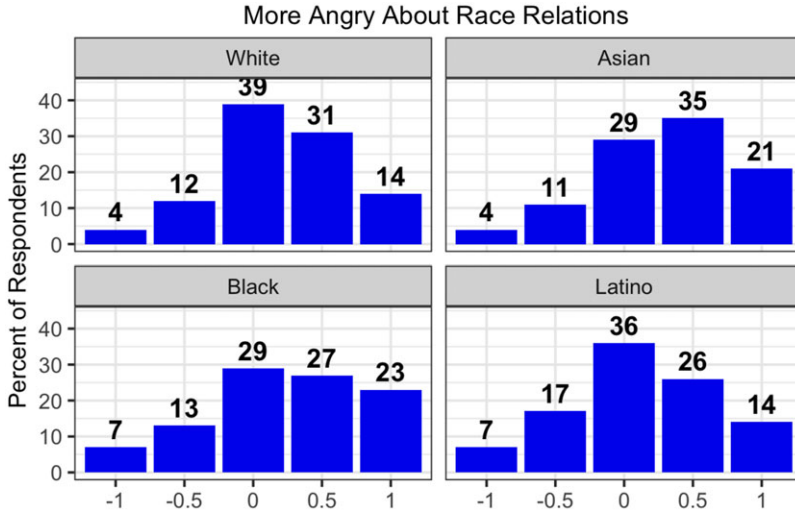


Figure 1. Angry of state of race relations by race.

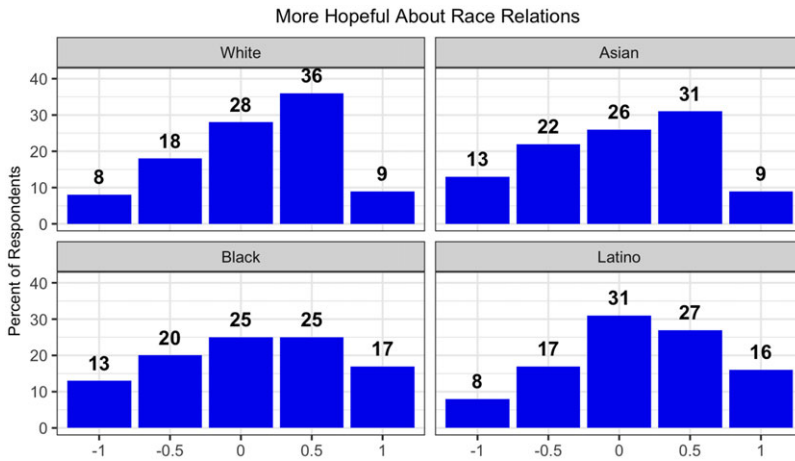


Figure 2. Hopeful of state of race relations by race.

(1) January 6th as an insurrection or a protest, (2) If they think Trump is culpable for January 6th, (3) whether members of Congress who attempted to stop the certification of the presidential election undermined democracy, and (4) if White supremacists and racism motivated the insurrection. The questions read “On January 6, 2021, the U.S. Congress was scheduled to meet and vote on the final certification of the state electoral college votes for the presidential election. A group of angry people who supported Donald Trump gathered in Washington, D.C., and attacked the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to stop Congress from voting to certify the final election results. “Based on what you saw or heard about this

incident, which comes closest to your view” responses are coded as mostly a protest that went too far (0) or a coordinated act of insurrection against the United States (1). The second question reads “some people have said that former President Donald Trump encouraged or incited the rioters to attack the U.S. Capitol, while other people have said Trump had no connection and the rioters did this on their own. Which comes closest to your own beliefs.” Responses are coded, Trump encouraged or incited the attack, he shares blame for what happened (1), Trump inspired the rioters, but he should not be blamed for encouraging them (0), and Trump had no connection to the rioters, he should not be blamed at all (0). The third question focuses on the motivations of Republican members of Congress and asks “do you think the Republican members of Congress who tried to stop the formal certification of Joe Biden’s victory in the 2020 presidential election were undermining democracy or protecting democracy”. Respondents who said they were undermining democracy are coded 1 those who say protecting democracy are coded 0. The last question we analyze focuses on racial elements of January 6th, “thinking about the people who attacked the U.S. Capitol, do you think.” Responses are coded many were White supremacists and racism was an underlying factor in their actions (1), some may have been White supremacists, but they were mostly upset about Biden winning (0), or They were not White supremacists, racism had nothing to do with their actions (0).

Analytic Approach

We use logistic regression to conduct our analyses. In each model, we control for the effects of generational status given the large Latino and Asian American populations who may be less socialized to U.S. politics (Hajnal and Lee, 2011). First-generation or second-generation indicators are displayed in the table, with third-gen plus as the reference group. We also control for generational age cohorts. We include indicator variables for members of the silent generation (age 76–93), the baby boomer generation (57–75), Gen X (41–56), millennials (25–40), and Gen Z (18–24). In our models, we use millennials, the largest category, as our reference group. We control for other standard demographic factors including age, gender, income, and education.

Finally, while our paper examines liberals in isolation; we know that not all liberals are Democrats. Research has also found that partisanship is less solidified among Latino and Asian Americans due to larger immigrant populations and less political socialization among both first and second-generation immigrants (Hajnal and Lee, 2011). To this end, we also include measures of partisanship, with Democrats serving as the reference category. We present predicted probabilities to interpret logistic regression coefficients best.

Results

First, we examine how emotions and racial attitudes influence the perceptions of January 6th and accountability for the actions of January 6th among liberals. In

Table 2. OLS regression on perceptions of January 6th among liberals

	J6 an insurrection	Blame Trump	Representatives undermine democ- racy	J6 motivated by race
Angry about race relations	.140 [*] (.061)	.222 ^{**} (.068)	.147 [*] (.064)	.255 ^{***} (.056)
Hopeful about race relations	-.245 ^{***} (.058)	-.118 (.065)	-.232 ^{***} (.061)	-.006 (.052)
Asian American	-.336 ^{**} (.124)	-.205 (.139)	-.387 ^{**} (.131)	.086 (.105)
Black	-.184 (.104)	-.275 [*] (.114)	-.080 (.108)	.191 [*] (.086)
Latino	-.323 ^{**} (.116)	-.141 (.129)	-.270 [*] (.121)	.228 [*] (.099)
First generation	-.320 ^{***} (.094)	-.090 (.107)	-.035 (.100)	.049 (.084)
Second generation	.098 (.100)	-.060 (.108)	.043 (.102)	-.164 (.087)
Age	.013 [*] (.006)	.022 ^{***} (.006)	.036 ^{***} (.006)	.003 (.005)
Silent generation	.362 (.397)	-.117 (.442)	.224 (.557)	-.025 (.322)
Boomer generation	.515 [*] (.220)	.527 [*] (.251)	-.155 (.234)	-.031 (.193)
Generation X	.210 (.131)	.080 (.146)	-.232 (.138)	-.095 (.117)
Female	.173 ^{**} (.065)	.314 ^{***} (.073)	.001 (.068)	.075 (.058)
Income	.021 (.011)	.004 (.012)	.042 ^{***} (.011)	.015 (.010)
Education	.145 ^{***} (.034)	.190 ^{***} (.038)	.223 ^{***} (.036)	.016 (.030)
Independent/other	-.335 ^{***} (.079)	-.549 ^{***} (.086)	-.519 ^{***} (.081)	-.427 ^{***} (.072)
Republican	-1.168 ^{***} (.123)	-2.039 ^{***} (.128)	-1.190 ^{***} (.124)	-.747 ^{***} (.118)
Constant	.146 (.198)	.104 (.217)	-.655 ^{**} (.204)	.073 (.177)
Observations	5,327	5,327	5,327	5,327

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2, we present the results, with attitudes toward January 6th as the primary dependent variable. These measures include perceiving January 6th as an insurrection (Column I) Trump blame (Column II), Congress' role in undermining democracy (Column III), and insurrections led by White supremacists (Column IV). Table 2 shows that anger and hope toward race relations are divergent among liberals. In line with hypothesis 1, generally, liberals that are angrier about the state of race relations have more negative perceptions of January 6th. Anger toward the state of race relations is positively associated with perceptions of January 6th as an insurrection ($p \leq .05$), blaming Trump for initiating the insurrection ($p \leq .01$), believing that Republicans were undermining democracy ($p \leq .05$) and that the insurrectionists were motivated by race ($p \leq .001$). We also find that feelings of hope about race relations are only associated with a statistically significant decrease in two out of our four January 6th models. Hope is statistically significant in explaining whether liberals perceived January 6th as an insurrection ($p \leq .001$) and that Republican members were trying to undermine democracy ($p \leq .001$). Given the lack of statistical significance in two of our models, the support for hypothesis 2 surrounding hope is not as robust though the direction of the association meets our expectations in each regression.

Additionally, the role of race is not as clear-cut among liberals. Looking at the first three columns, racial minorities are less likely to say January 6th is an insurrection, blame Trump, and feel that Republicans were undermining democracy relative to White liberals (though the statistical significance varies). However, when asked if the protesters involved in January 6th were motivated by White supremacy and racism, here is where we see an inverse relationship. Being a minority is positively correlated with being more likely to say that they were motivated by these factors relative to White liberals. Indicating that while we don't have support for hypotheses 3 A-C we do find support for hypothesis H4. In the following paragraphs, we will further explore the role of race in our models.

In Table 2, looking only at the first column that asked if January 6th was an insurrection, we find that people who are angrier about race relations and less hopeful are correlated with being more likely to say that January 6th was an insurrection and that both variables are statistically significant confirming H1 and H2. Asian Americans and Latinos are also less likely to say that January 6th was an insurrection compared to White liberals, while Black and White respondents are statistically similar in their responses which is contrary to what we expected for H3A. First-generation respondents, Independents, and Republicans are also correlated with being less likely to say January 6th was an insurrection. Those who are more likely to say January 6th was an insurrection are older respondents, baby boomers (compared to millennials), women, and those with higher levels of education.

The second column of Table 2 examines Trump blame, we find that people who are angry about race relations are more likely to blame Trump for January 6th (confirming H1). Here, we do not find a statistically significant relationship between hope and blaming Trump for January 6th (H2), though the estimate is in the direction we would expect. Interestingly, we find that Black liberals are less likely to blame Trump when compared to White liberals, but there are no statistically significant differences between Asian Americans or Latinos when compared to

White liberals, which is again contrary to what we expected to find for H3B. This may be because Black liberals view racism as playing a more prominent role than Trump himself. Again, older respondents, baby boomers, women, and those who are more educated are correlated with being more likely to say that Trump is to blame. Republicans and Independents are less likely to say that Trump is to blame when compared to Democrats.

The third column examines responses to Republican representatives undermining democracy. We find that those who are angry about race relations and those who are less hopeful about race relations are more likely to say that Republicans are undermining democracy confirming H1 and H2. Again, contrary to what we expected for H3C, Asian Americans and Latinos are correlated with being less likely to say that Republicans are undermining democracy compared to Whites. At the same time, Black and White respondents are statistically similar on this measure. We find that age, income, and education are all positively correlated with believing that Republicans are undermining democracy, while being Independent and Republican correlates with being less likely to say that Republicans are undermining democracy. Overall, we find that beliefs about undermining democracy vary across race and so too are emotions about the state of race relations.

Finally, in column 4 of Table 2 we examine whether or not January 6th was racially motivated. The results in column 4 confirm our first hypothesis. There is a strong relationship between liberals who are angry about the state of race relations and the belief that January 6th was racially motivated. On the other hand, hope is not statistically significant in this model. That is, being more hopeful about the state of race relations is not associated with the belief that the insurrection was racially motivated. In this model, we find support for Hypothesis 3D. Both Black and Latino liberals are correlated with being more likely to report that January 6th was racially motivated compared to White respondents. Asian Americans are not statistically different from White liberal respondents. We suspect that this may be because the racialized experiences that Latino and Black groups face in the United States is distinct from the Asian American experience.

Since logistic regression coefficients are not directly interpretable, we modeled the point estimates by race to better understand how different racial groups feel about January 6th. Figure 3 provides a clearer picture of the role of race in perceptions of January 6th. Looking at the first panel, where we asked respondents if they thought January 6th was an insurrection, we find that the predicted probability of saying yes is similar across all three groups, between .76 for Asian Americans (the lowest predicted probability) and .82 for White respondents (the highest predicted probability). Latinos have a predicted probability of .77, while Black respondents have a predicted probability of .85. When we ask if Trump was responsible for January 6th, again, we see the highest values for White respondents (.88) followed by Latinos (.86), Asians (.86), and Black respondents (.85). When asked if Republicans in Congress are undermining democracy, we find that White respondents have the highest predicted probability of saying yes (.85), followed by Black respondents (.84), Latino respondents (.82), and Asian respondents (.80). Up to this point, we have observed a fairly similar trend with White respondents having the largest predicted probability for each of these questions. In these three models, White liberals are associated with the highest predicted probability of saying yes to each

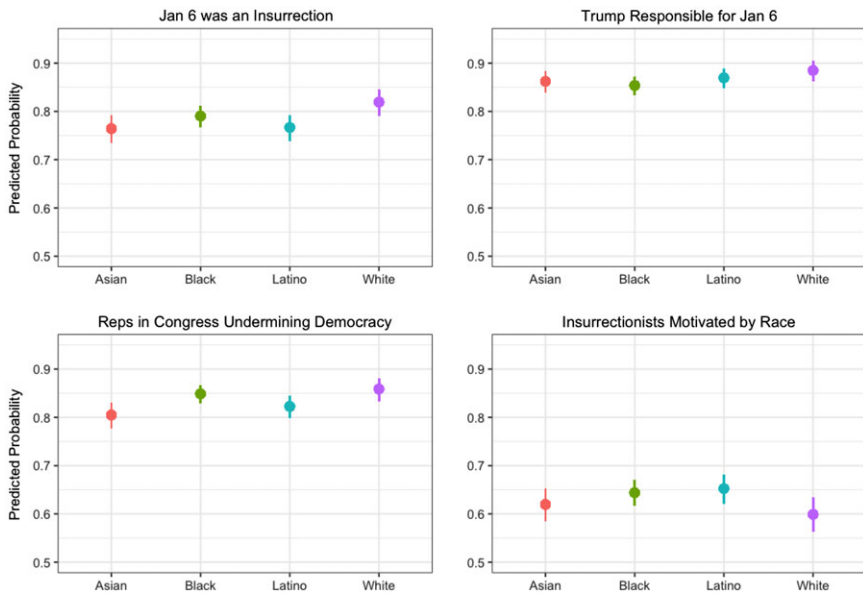


Figure 3. January 6th responses by race.

question. While other racial groups are not too far behind, we typically find slightly lower levels of agreement. This may be because, up to this point, the questions asked are about members of the out-group, insurrectionists, Trump, and Republicans in office.

However, we find a reversal in our trend when we look at the last panel in figure 3 which plots the predicted probability of responding that the insurrectionists were motivated by race. White respondents become the group least likely to say insurrectionists were motivated by race (.60), followed by Asian Americans (.62), Blacks (.64), and Latinos (.65). While these differences are substantively small, they are statistically significant. This is supportive of hypothesis 3D that White liberals are less likely to associate these events with racial events.

Discussion

In our analysis of the results, we found two major trends: White liberals reported greater initial concern about democratic institutions in the immediate aftermath of January 6th than other liberals of different races and ethnic groups. However, in contrast, White liberals reported feeling less anger and more hope about the state of race relations than Black and Asian American liberals. A key element of this trend may be that White liberals were significantly less likely to believe that White supremacy played a significant role in the motivations of the insurrectionists than liberals of all other races and ethnic groups. Therefore, in many cases, January 6th perhaps did not cause a similar re-evaluation for White liberals of the state of race in the United States as opposed to general concern for democratic institutions and free and fair elections.

Black liberals were less hopeful about the state of race relations and somewhat more angry. However, they were less likely to blame Trump for the insurrection when compared to White respondents and more likely to say that January 6th was a result of racism and White Supremacy. Given that Black Americans have experienced the highest levels of racialization and discrimination in the United States, it is not surprising that they blame racism more than the Republican Party for the events of January 6th. We find similar results with Latinos, though they report being less angry and are the most hopeful about the state of race relations. We conjecture that this is because Latinos have faced four years of racialized attacks from Donald Trump, and they are likely more hopeful that in 2021, race relations will improve, particularly for Latinos. We were somewhat surprised to find that Asian Americans were more angry and less hopeful than the reference group, but as mentioned earlier, we expect that the racialization of Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic led to many Asian American liberals feeling racially targeted in a way that they had not experienced in recent times.

Conclusion

Scholars and political observers debate how Americans' views about race relations spill over into their evaluations of politics. However, anti-democratic acts, which are largely participated in by White Americans, can demonstrate to People of Color that White Americans are not punished for their criminal acts. Whether this subsequently turns into a larger force in a decline of trust in government or a cynicism about the justice system or the political system more generally remains to be seen. However, it is clear that among White and non-White liberals, there were sharply different initial reactions. We believe that this was largely due to the racist character of the protest, which was viewed differently among different liberal groups. While White liberals viewed the attack as an assault on political institutions and norms, non-White liberals and particularly Black Liberals saw the attack as another in a long line of efforts by the White majority to maintain social and political supremacy. We view this dynamic to be intriguing and worthy of further study. What are other areas of political divergence between White and non-White liberals? Although many scholars rightly noted the significant acceptance among conservatives for White supremacist and anti-democratic violence at a fairly uniform level among conservatives of different demographic groups, is the "united front" of liberals as uniform? We have found some evidence that this is not the case, with significant implications for the ongoing struggle to obtain democracy and racial equality in the United States.

First, we demonstrated that White liberals were more ambivalent in their anger and fear, but not hope toward the state of race relations. This is unlike liberals of color, who felt, to a great extent, anger and fear about race relations in 2020. Overall, Blacks and Latinos were less hopeful compared to Whites, who were most hopeful about race. Knowing that position in the racial hierarchy can potentially shape racial attitudes, we find evidence that this continues in 2020 among groups—like liberals—that are most likely to embrace progressive social change. What are the downstream consequences of White liberals lacking anger and fear toward the state of race relations? Here, our research suggests that White liberals ignoring race

undermines their ability to discern how race fundamentally shapes American politics.

Second, our results highlight the importance of racial differences within political ideology. Members of the same ideological orientation may have vastly different political views when it comes to the role of race in American politics. Events as polarizing, violent, and disturbing as the January 6th insurrection may move liberals in different directions, conditional on how their racial groups benefit from partisan politics. Even among the progressive politics, in the progressive left, race is central to American politics. Our findings highlight that emotions about race—particularly hope and anger toward the state of race relations—are important in shaping perceptions of political events. Our results make clear that race still plays an important role in shaping how we view the world, even when people hold similar ideological beliefs.

Acknowledgments. We would like to thank Ben Gonzalez O'Brien and the JREP editorial team for putting this special issue together and for their generous feedback and diligent work during the review process. We would also like to thank the attendees of the January 6th paper symposium for their feedback and Matt Barreto, Lorrie Frasure, The UCLA Voting Rights Project, and The Ralph J. Bunche Center for organizing the paper symposium.

Funding Statement. This research did not receive any specific financial support.

References

- Abrajano M and Alvarez M** (2012) *New Faces, New Voices: The Hispanic Electorate in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Abramowitz AI and Webster SW** (2018) Negative partisanship: Why Americans dislike parties but behave like rabid partisans. *Political Psychology* 39(S1), 119–135. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111>
- Banks AJ** (2014) *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Banks AJ and Bell MA** (2013) Racialized campaign ads: The emotional content in implicit racial appeals primes white racial attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77, 549–560.
- Banks AJ, White IK and McKenzie BD** (2019) Black politics: How anger influences the political actions blacks pursue to reduce racial inequality. *Political Behavior* 41(4), 917–943.
- Brown X, Rucker JM and Richeson JA** (2022) Political ideology moderates White Americans' reactions to racial demographic change. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 25(3), 642–660.
- Carter NM and Pérez EO** (2016) Race and nation: How racial hierarchy shapes national attachments. *Political Psychology* 37(4), 497–513.
- Chudy J** (2023) Think structurally, act individually?: Racial sympathy and political behavior. *Polity* 55(1), 168–194.
- Claassen C** (2020) Does public support help democracy survive? *American Journal of Political Science* 64(1), 118–134.
- Druke G** (2021) *Why Trump's Second Impeachment will be a Political Test for Both Republicans and Democrats*. FiveThirtyEight. Available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/videos/why-trumpssecond-impeachment-will-be-a-political-test-for-both-parties/> (accessed 14 February 2024).
- Eady G, Hjorth F and Thisted Dinesen P** (2023) Do violent protests affect expressions of party identity? Evidence from the capitol insurrection. *American Political Science Review* 117(3), 1151–1157.
- Eggers AC, Garro H and Grimmer J** (2021) No evidence for systematic voter fraud: A guide to statistical claims about the 2020 election. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(45), e2103619118.
- Ehrlinger J, et al.** (2011) How Exposure to the Confederate Flag Affects Willingness to Vote for Barack Obama. *Political Psychology* 32(1), 131–146.
- Enos RD, Kaufman AR and Sands ML** (2019) Can violent protest change local policy support? Evidence from the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot. *American Political Science Review* 113(4), 1012–1028.

- Feldman S and Johnston C** (2014) Understanding the Determinants of Political Ideology: Implications of Structural Complexity. *Political Psychology* 35(3), 337–358. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/polb.12111>
- Frye T** (2023) Do violations of democratic norms change political attitudes? Evidence from the January 6th insurrection. *American Politics Research*, 52(2), 1532673X231221987.
- Gibson JL and Nelson M** (2018) *Black and Blue: How African Americans Judge the U.S. Legal System*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gramlich J** (2022) *A Look Back at Americans' Reactions to the Jan. 6 Riot at the U.S. Capitol*. Pew Research Center. Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/04/a-look-back-at-americans-reactions-to-the-jan-6-riot-at-the-u-s-capitol/> (accessed 05 December 2024).
- Hajnal ZL and Lee T** (2011) *Why Americans Don't Join the Party: Race, Immigration, and the Failure (of Political Parties) to Engage the Electorate*. Princeton University Press.
- Hayes C** (2023) To be woke, you must be awake: a critical response to white liberals. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 36(8), 1521–1525. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2022.2061741>
- Jackson JW and Hinsz VB** (2022) Group dynamics and the U.S. Capitol insurrection: An introduction to the special issue. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 26(3), 169–177.
- Jefferson H** (2020) The curious case of black conservatives: construct validity and the 7-point liberal-conservative scale. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3602209> or <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3602209>
- Jefferson H** (2021) *Storming The U.S. Capitol was about Maintaining White Power in America*. FiveThirtyEight. Available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/storming-the-u-s-capitol-was-about-maintaining-white-power-in-america/> (accessed 14 February 2024).
- Jefferson H** (2022) *White Backlash is a Type of Racial Reckoning, Too*. FiveThirtyEight. Available at <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/white-backlash-is-a-type-of-racial-reckoning-too/> (accessed 14 February 2024).
- Jefferson H, Neuner FG and Pasek J** (2021) Seeing blue in black and white: Race and perceptions of officer-involved shootings. *Perspectives on Politics* 19(4), 1165–1183.
- Kalmoe NP and Mason L** (2022) *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy*. Google-Books-ID: TkR3EAAQBAJ. University of Chicago Press, 223 pp.
- Katz A** (2021) Insurrection by any other name? Race, protest, and domestic military intervention. *Columbia Journal of Law & Social Problems* 55, 145.
- Kinder DR and Sanders LM** (1997) *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. American Politics and Political Economy Series. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 399 pp.
- Kinder DR and Sears DO** (1981) Prejudice and politics: Symbolic racism versus racial threats to the good life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40(3), 414–431.
- Krishnarajan S** (2023) Rationalizing democracy: The perceptual bias and (un)democratic behavior. *American Political Science Review* 117(2), 474–496.
- Krugman P** (2019) The conscience of a liberal. In *Ideals and Ideologies*, 11th ed. Num Pages: 6. Routledge.
- Levendusky M** (2009) *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. University of Chicago Press, 200 pp.
- Loving S and Smith DA** (2022) Riot in the party? Voter registrations in the aftermath of the January 6, 2021 capitol insurrection. *Party Politics* 30(2), 13540688221147666.
- Mason L** (2018) *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mendelberg T** (2001) *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Montanaro D** (2021) *Capitol Police Officer Testifies to the Racism He Faced During the Jan. 6 Riot*. NPR. Available at <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/27/1021197474/capitol-police-officertestifies-to-the-racism-he-faced-during-the-jan-6-riot> (accessed 10 December 2024).
- Mulupi D, et al.** (Aug. 2021) Riot on the hill: International coverage of a U.S. Insurrection attempt.
- Painter DL and Fernandes J** (2022) “The Big Lie”: How fact checking influences support for insurrection. *American Behavioral Scientist* 68(7), 00027642221103179.
- Parker CS and Barreto MA** (2013) *Change They Can't Believe in: The Tea Party and Reactionary Politics in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Parkinson J** (2012) *Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance*. Oxford University Press.

- Pérez E, et al.** (2024) Manifold threats to white identity and their political effects on White Partisans. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 15(5), 519–528.
- Phoenix DL** (2019) *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rasmussen R, et al.** (2022) White (but not black) Americans continue to see racism as a zero-sum game; white conservatives (but not moderates or liberals) see themselves as losing. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 17(6), 1800–1810.
- Raychaudhuri T** (2020) Socializing democrats: Examining Asian American vote choice with evidence from a national survey. *Electoral Studies* 63, 102114.
- Stout CT** (2020) *The Case for Identity Politics: Polarization, Demographic Change, and Racial Appeals*. Google-Books-ID: PGnaDwAAQBAJ. University of Virginia Press, 181 pp.
- Svolik MW** (2020) When polarization Trumps civic virtue: Partisan conflict and the subversion of democracy by incumbents. *QJPS* 15(1), 3–31.
- Taylor MC and Merino SM** (2011) Assessing the racial views of white conservative protestants: Who do we compare with whom? *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(4), 761–778.
- Tesler M** (2012) The return of old-fashioned racism to White Americans' Partisan preferences in the Early Obama Era. *The Journal of Politics* 75(1), 110–123.
- Tesler M** (2015) The conditions ripe for racial spillover effects. *Political Psychology* 36(S1), 101–117.
- Tesler M and Sears DO** (2010) *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America*. Google-Books-ID: geQxhys4rf8C. University of Chicago Press, 209 pp.
- Udani A, Kimball DC and Fogarty B** (2018) How local media coverage of voter fraud influences partisan perceptions in the United States. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 18(2), 193–210.
- van Noort, S** (Mar. 18, 2022). How strongly do American voters react to anti-democratic behavior by politicians? Natural Experimental Evidence from the January 6 Insurrection.
- Wasow O** (2020) Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting. *American Political Science Review* 114(3), 638–659.
- White IK** (2007) When race matters and when it doesn't: Racial group differences in response to racial cues. *American Political Science Review* 101(2), 339–354.
- Wu C, Wilkes R and Wilson DC** (2022) Race & political trust: Justice as a unifying influence on political trust. *Daedalus* 151(4), 177–199.
- Yglesias M** (2019) *White Liberals are Embracing Progressive Racial Politics and Transforming America*. Vox. Available at <https://www.vox.com/2019/3/22/18259865/great-awakening-whiteliberals-race-polling-trump-2020> (accessed 14 February 2024).
- Zucchino D** (2020) *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy*. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press.