

Perceptions of racial discrimination and democratic satisfaction*

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Much of democracy's appeal rests on the guarantee that governing authorities will treat citizens fairly and equally with respect to the exercise of state power. What happens to democratic satisfaction, however, when expectations regarding fair treatment are violated? This manuscript investigates the link between perceptions of racial (institutional) discrimination and democratic attitudes. In Study 1, we explore 2016 ANES Time-Series survey data. Using factor analysis, we first parse attitudes regarding perceived institutional discrimination toward African Americans from overt racial prejudice. We then show that individuals who perceive the existence of such discrimination are as equally dissatisfied with democracy as garden-variety racists. Next, in Study 2, we analyze Voter Study Group panel data and find that changes in perceived discrimination from 2011 to 2016 translate into negative affect toward democracy. We probe these findings in Study 3, where we test experimentally whether exposure to information about discrimination degrades support for democracy. We uncover modest evidence that satisfaction with democracy decreases when individuals are exposed to stories regarding protests over racial inequalities. Taken together, these findings illustrate that dissatisfaction with democracy is responsive to contemporaneous evaluations of institutional failures to meet the broad demands of procedural fairness.

Keywords: discrimination, democratic satisfaction

Introduction

Although American democracy was founded upon the promise that the common man would enjoy lofty, wide-ranging liberties, it has only haltingly embraced equal civic membership for nonwhite citizens. In fact, despite landmark policies that enfranchised minorities in the mid-20th Century, racial inequalities remain painstakingly persistent across a number of economic, social, and legal domains. The legacies of institutionalized discrimination, for example, spill into matters of public policy (Peffley and Hurwitz 2010), policing (Legewie 2016), wage earnings (Carruthers and Wanamaker 2017) and political participation (Fraga 2015). While it is true that democracy does not guarantee egalitarian outcomes, these inequalities nevertheless seem to undercut some of the core principles of equal treatment upon which democracy rests. How, then, do perceptions that African Americans face unique, institutionalized challenges affect satisfaction with democracy?

This manuscript explores the connection between such racial attitudes and democracy. In Study 1, we investigate 2016 ANES Time-Series survey data. Using factor analysis, we first parse attitudes regarding perceived institutional discrimination toward African Americans from overt prejudice toward these persons. We then show that individuals who perceive the existence of such discrimination are as equally dissatisfied with democracy as garden-variety racists. Next, in Study 2, we analyze Voter Study Group panel data and find that changes in perceived discrimination from

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2011 to 2016 translate into negative affect toward democracy. We probe these findings in Study 3, where we test experimentally whether exposure to information about discrimination degrades support for democracy. We uncover modest evidence that satisfaction with democracy decreases when individuals are exposed to stories regarding protests over racial discrimination.

These findings contribute to the growing literature regarding Americans' attitudes toward democracy – a critical subject during a time of unique political instability. While others have recently explored how individuals who *who are prejudiced* assess democracy (Drutman, Diamond, and Lee 2018; Miller and Davis n.d.), little research has taken the opposite approach to assess whether individuals *who perceive such discrimination* are satisfied with it. The evidence presented here suggests that the recognition of systemic racial inequalities undercuts positive affect toward democracy. Given that democratic satisfaction can spill into whether individuals value and support democratic institutions (Teixeira et al. 2014), coupled with the reality that these persistent inequalities are deeply entrenched within the United States, these findings are worrisome. In some sense, the performance of American democracy dissatisfies both the racist and those citizens who recognize this discrimination. The result is an awkward *détente* that may have lasting reverberations – particularly in a political moment in which democratic values are under siege.

Evaluations of democracy

The most common framework used to understand attitudes regarding democracy draws on Easton's (1965, 1975) classic distinction between diffuse versus specific support. Whereas diffuse support is emblematic of ingrained attachments to a given political system and its values, specific support concerns the performance of an institution and its actors. Regarding attitudes toward democracy, Linde and Ekman (2003, pg. 393) write that this distinction "...is made in order to account for the difference between support for 'democracy' as a principle or an ideal (i.e., as the best form of government) and attitudes towards the way democracy works in practise in a particular country at a given point in time." Put simply, if diffuse support constitutes belief in the idea that democratic self-governance is valued, specific support encapsulates a form of performance review.

Practically, democratic stability requires a wellspring of support for the principles of democracy. "Full" democracy is unlikely to persist when individuals are willing to suppress the rights of others, engage in violence, and restrict access to political representation.¹ Hence, in most developed democracies, support for a variety of democratic principles (e.g. free speech, civil liberties) and a rejection of features of authoritarian regimes (e.g. army rule) underscore the persistence of democratic institutions.

The extent to which citizens are satisfied with government, however, is also central to democratic functioning. Responsive democratic institutions are those that sufficiently address public expectations for fair treatment. For example, individuals should not feel coerced by authorities, they should possess agency to influence electoral outcomes, and the integrity of elections should be sufficiently high to foreclose pernicious outside influences. In no small part, a democratic regime's legitimacy resides in its ability to deliver these goods to its citizens. When a democracy

¹This qualifier takes on additional meaning at present. Although the American public thinks generously of democracy (Davis 2018), the history of democracy in America involves a persistent racial authoritarianism. Hence, "partial" democracy seems sustainable even in the face of undemocratic state behavior.

reneges on its responsibilities to its citizens, then legitimacy and, by extension, core support for democratic institutions will wane, potentially affecting regime stability (Teixeira et al. 2014).

To date, while the correlates of satisfaction with democracy are well-studied in the comparative context, they often focus on how electoral losses (e.g. Anderson and Guillory 1997) and various regime outputs like government effectiveness shape satisfaction with democracy (Magalhães 2014). Yet, to fully appreciate the contours of democratic satisfaction requires wrestling with democracy's core obligations to citizens. First, democracy commonly involves citizens selecting their political representatives via free and fair elections. Second, it involves the equal protection of certain rights regardless of race, religion, or economic status. Third, it involves a rule of law, *rooted upon values and principles established by consensus and upheld and applied equally to all citizens*. In sum, democracy ostensibly places a premium on egalitarianism, if in theory and not practice.

When institutions or state actors undercut rights, liberties, and access, then democracy fails to meet its obligations to citizens. Given democracy's special emphasis on the protection of minority opinion and, by practical extension, groups, reneging on these responsibilities is a gross violation of its obligations. When this happens, a regime's performance is poor. In response, satisfaction with democracy ought to decrease. While low satisfaction would not necessarily communicate that citizens are prepared to jettison democracy in favor of nondemocratic alternatives, low levels of this form of specific support nevertheless communicate a serious breach of public trust in governing institutions.

Linking perceptions of racial discrimination to democratic satisfaction

In the American context, democracy has struggled to live up to heady guarantees regarding equal treatment. In particular, given the United States' unique and violent institutionalization of chattel slavery, this discrimination is inexorably tied to race and manifests in disparate social, health, and educational outcomes for African Americans. It is well-documented, for example, that black citizens are denied access to home mortgages at different rates than whites, even controlling for identical incomes (Pew 2017). In health care, people of color do not receive the same quality of care (Artiga et al. 2015); in industry, audit studies reliably demonstrate that black-sounding names receive fewer callbacks than white-sounding ones (Quillian et al. 2017).

Taken together, these examples are all pernicious forms of institutional discrimination that might sour individuals' affect toward the system in which they live. Yet, these inequalities – at least from a surface-level vantage point – occur somewhat independent of state actors. Laws passed by authorities may well bolster and maintain economic or health disparities among whites and blacks, but the state, itself, is more indirectly responsible for this unequal treatment. Of course, this distinction is thin; Supreme Court rulings and policy absolutely contribute to these outcomes, but, for the average citizen, logical connections across these domains are likely uncommon. What is neither rare nor obscure, however, is the way in which the American justice system interacts with nonwhites. Here, we see the full, legal exercise of power by state authorities brought to bear on citizens of color that generates grave, if not deadly inequalities.

First, consider that while African American citizens make up only 13% of the United States' population, they constitute a disturbingly disproportionate percentage of all arrestees (roughly 27%; see 2016 UCR, Table 21A). By extension, blacks also comprise a much larger share of wrongful convictions. A 2016 report from the National Registry of Exonerations reveals that blacks

persons comprise 47% of all exonerations (Gross, Possley, and Stephens 2017). This is due, in no small part, to the justice system's disproportional incarceration of African Americans. Black citizens are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of White Americans (Nellis 2016), which generates further inequalities regarding access to voting rights because felons are disenfranchised in many states. One in every 13 African Americans cannot vote due to felony convictions, which results in a disenfranchisement rate that is four times as great as white Americans (Uggen, Larson, and Shannon 2016).

Third, consider the relationship between police organizations and minorities. Stop-and-frisk policies have been shown to be fraught with racial biases, where African American pedestrians are stopped more frequently than whites (Gelman, Fagan, and Kiss 2007).² Finally, according to the FBI's 2012 Supplementary Homicide Report, black citizens comprised a disproportionate share of police killing victims at roughly 30 percent.³ In addition to these discrepancies, there is also the high-profile nature of these killings to reckon with. Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Laquan McDonald, and Tamir Rice were all killed at the hands of police officers in 2014; Alton Sterling and Philando Castile were fatally shot by police in 2016. In each of these cases, media attention regarding these killings was immense, with much attention paid to the role of race in shaping these outcomes.

One way in which to view how individuals connect the state's failure to extend guarantees of equal treatment in these contexts to assessments of democracy is through the lens of procedural fairness. Procedural fairness implies that individuals are more likely to comply with and support authorities when their treatment is perceived to follow the appropriate rules governing such experiences. While a defendant may not like her case's outcome, for example, she might still respect the overarching legal system if she was provided appropriate counsel. In this way, procedural justice constitutes a set of practices that authorities can utilize when trying to establish legitimacy, compel voluntary deference to authority, motivate compliance with the law, and maintain social order (Tyler 2017).

Institutional discrimination, however, is a failure of procedural justice on two accounts. First, discrimination literally implies that a person was treated in ways that violate expectations regarding fair or situationally-appropriate conduct. For example, stop-and-frisk policies disproportionately affect minorities, implying that they are treated differently than whites regarding the criteria used to justify such stops. If this sort of systematic bias is mechanistically tied to public policy, then autonomy and individuality are disregarded in favor of an ecological fallacy. This stripping of autonomy is deeply antithetical to the core civil liberties that give democracy its meaning.

Second, more generally, each of the examples outlined above involve scenarios in which *outcomes* are disproportionately skewed on the basis of race. Although research regarding procedural fairness notes that egalitarian treatment can bolster evaluations of authorities irrespective of outcomes (Tyler and Lind 1992), social, economic, or legal outcomes that cannot be explained by any feature other than race would sensibly degrade support for authorities as individuals became aware of extreme inequalities. If institutional discrimination constitutes a failure of the democratic state to extend equal access and treatment to citizens, then these negative outputs should

²And, yet, there appears to be little discernible evidence that such stops either a) yielded greater contraband among black persons or b) resulted in "safer" outcomes

³This is probably a lowball estimate insofar as precincts vary widely in the reporting details they supply regarding use of force scenarios.

absolutely shape how individuals regard it.

There is some basis for the connection between perceptions of procedural fairness and democracy throughout the literature. Tyler et al. (1989) and Miller and Listhaug (1999) found that diffuse support hinges on perceptions of procedural justice. More recently, Erlingsson, Linde and Ohrvall (2014) and Magalhães (2016) find that procedural fairness structures democratic affect across a number of European country contexts. However, to our knowledge, there is no literature in either the American or cross-national context that explores the relationship between perceived discrimination of minorities – *institutional discrimination* – and satisfaction with democracy. Yet, given that satisfaction with democracy encompasses summary judgments regarding such outputs, discrimination and democratic satisfaction seem likely to be closely related. We hypothesize that persons who perceive the existence of this discrimination or are exposed to it should be less likely to be satisfied with democracy.

Hypothesis 1: *Perceiving that discrimination against racial minorities is real should decrease satisfaction with democracy.*

Study 1: Perceived discrimination and satisfaction with democracy

To assess how individuals connect perceived discrimination to democracy, we begin with an analysis of recent survey data from the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) Time-Series survey.

Measures

Our primary outcome of interest is *satisfaction with democracy*, which is an important bellwether regarding popular support for institutional outputs. Should this satisfaction dip to perilously low levels, then it is likely that such negatively will spill into thicker support for democracy, which is deeply problematic for democracy sustainability.

Satisfaction with democracy is usually measured via some sort of Likert scale. Here, the ANES queried respondents whether they were not at all (1), not very (2), fairly (3), or very satisfied with democracy (4). The distribution of the extent to which respondents conveyed they were satisfied with democracy is illustrated in the first panel in Figure 1, which reveals that a nontrivial percentage of respondents are not satisfied with democracy (30%).

Next, within the literature regarding Americans' attitudes toward race, the structure of these beliefs has received enormous attention (e.g. Kinder and Sears 1981; Henry and Sears 2008; Feldman and Huddy 2010). Commonly this research distinguishes between explicit or overt prejudice and symbolic racism. First, overt prejudice involves the endorsement of negative feelings or stereotypes. These sentiments explicitly portray African Americans as biologically or intellectually inferior to whites, like insinuating that they are lazy or violent. While such "old-fashioned" racism has generally decreased over time, these sentiments made an ignoble "comeback" in strength over the course of the Obama presidency (Tessler 2012). Certainly, given the prevailing political moment, we have little reason to expect they have disappeared.

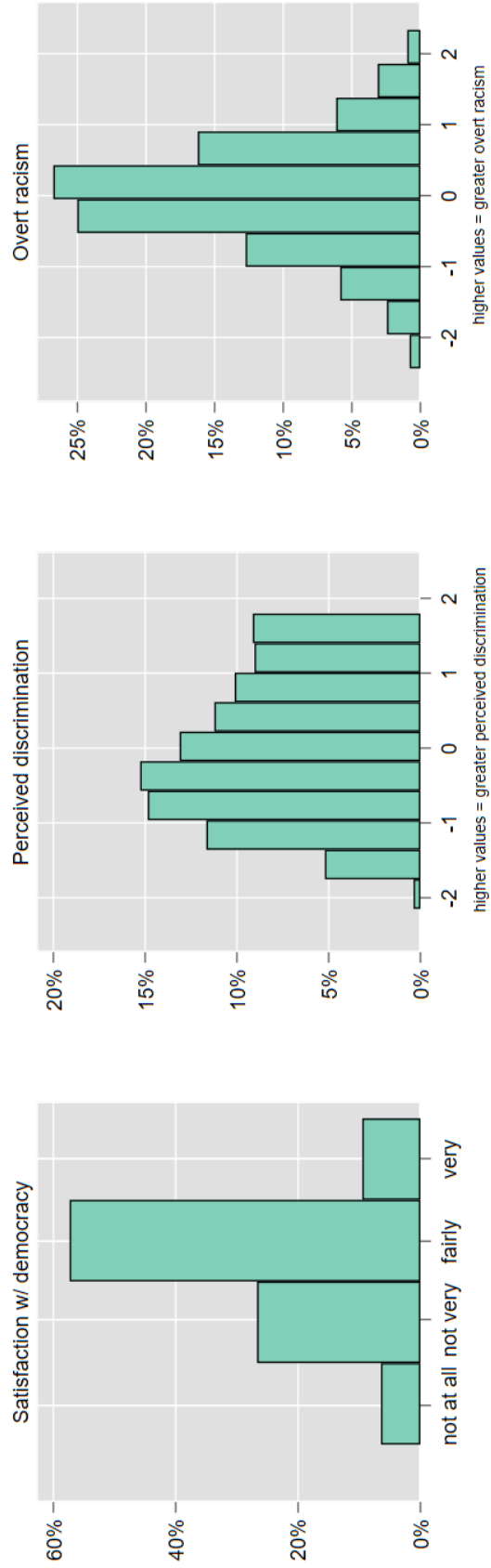


Figure 1: Distribution of key covariates. Scores on *perceived discrimination* and *over racism* scales have been binned into deciles.

In contrast to these attitudes, symbolic racism involves opposition to blacks' social or economic demands and resentment towards their perceived treatment (e.g. Kinder and Sanders 1996). It involves a thin veneer of social acceptability grounded in libertarian ideas that individuals are responsible for their own lives, and that, as such, institutional discrimination plays a small role in unequal social and economic outcomes. In an unpublished paper, Feldman and Huddy (2010) find that a number of the items used in traditional "symbolic racism" scales load onto a factor that they describe as "discrimination." To our knowledge this sort of framing has received little attention in the intervening years regarding measurement of racial attitudes – a development that is puzzling given the substantial scholarly interest in measuring the structure of racial attitudes. Nevertheless, for the first time in 2016, the ANES Time-Series survey included an expanded inventory of items that queried respondents about their perceptions of state-sponsored discrimination, or what we view as emblematic of perceptions of institutionalized racial discrimination. We analyze these alongside a number of other items traditionally included within the symbolic racism bailiwick.

With these distinctions in mind, we attempt to parcel out these attitudes from overt prejudice. We identify nine items in the ANES that are suitable for this task: (1) a question regarding the discrimination that blacks face, whether the (2) federal government or (3) police discriminate against blacks, (4) the extent to which blacks have political influence, (5) whether slavery made life in the present more difficult for blacks, (6) opinions regarding whether blacks get less than they deserve or (7) should try harder, and, finally, whether respondents think that blacks are (8) violent or (9) lazy. Whereas the first seven items all seem to tap into the extent to which African Americans face unique social, economic, and political challenges, items eight and nine regard trait-based characteristics that individuals might ascribe to black persons. In other words, these items seem emblematic of rote, overt prejudice.

	Factor 1 "Perceived discrimination"	Factor 2 "Overt racism"
(1) Discrimination against blacks	0.63	0.10
(2) Federal government discriminates against blacks	0.69	0.00
(3) Police discriminate against blacks	0.70	0.07
(4) Blacks don't have enough political influence	0.61	-0.03
(5) Slavery makes life more difficult for blacks	0.73	0.08
(6) Blacks get less than they deserve	0.77	0.15
(7) Blacks should try harder	-0.63	-0.23
(8) Blacks are violent	-0.21	0.65
(9) Blacks are lazy	-0.28	0.62

Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis of attitudes toward African Americans with oblimin rotation. Latent factors correlate at $r=-0.08$. Factor 1 Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$. Factor 2 Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$

To explore the structure of these attitudes, we subject these items to factor analysis and rotate the factor solution via oblimin rotation. Oblimin rotation is appropriate here given that these two constructs might well be correlated, where the absence of overt racism conceivably translates into awareness of discrimination. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1. The first seven items we list all cleanly load onto a common factor; because each survey instrument taps into perceptions of the extent to which African Americans are treated with economic, social, or institutional parity, we feel comfortable labeling this factor *perceived discrimination*. The final two items also load cleanly onto a second factor. Given the stereotypic nature of these evaluations

and their relationship to old-fashioned racism, we label this factor *overt racism*. The second and third panels in Table 1 illustrate the distribution of scores on both factors, which are only weakly correlated with each other ($r=-0.08$).

Finally, in addition to these variables, we control for a common series of respondent characteristics. *Religiosity* is a composite index of church attendance, born-again status, and belief in the inerrancy of scripture. *Income* is an ordinal item that varies from less than \$10,000 dollars in annual income (1) to more than a million dollars (28). *Political sophistication* comprises correctly placing the Democratic Party to the left of the Republican Party on a series of policy placements, along with whether individuals could name various political figures. We average correct answers across all the input items such that answering all items incorrectly is coded (0) and correctly answering all items is coded (1). *Political interest* is a four-category item that varies from not at all interested (0) to very interested (3). *Ideology* varies from extremely liberal (1) to extremely conservative (7). A *retrospective economic assessment* ranges from gotten worse (1) to stayed the same (2) to gotten better (3). *Education* is an ordinal variable ranging from less than first grade education (1) to advanced degree (16). Self-identifying as *black*, *white*, *Hispanic*, or *Asian* is coded (1) and otherwise (0). Finally, to the extent that democratic attitudes are related to *trust in government*, we control for such attitudes using a trust scale that ranges from low (1) to high levels of trust (5).

Results

Given the ordinal nature of our dependent variable, our analysis utilizes ordered logistic regression. The odds-ratios that such models produce are often not readily intuitive, so we opt for a visual presentation of the relationship between racial attitudes and democratic satisfaction (regression output is available in the appendix, however). Figure 2 displays four panes, one for each of the response categories associated with assessments of democratic satisfaction. The pair of point estimates plotted in each panel indicate the predicted marginal effect associated with transitioning from minimum to maximum values on a given independent variable on the probability of selecting the given response category of democratic satisfaction. Thus, substantively, a point estimate reveals the marginal effect of exhibiting maximum overt racism or perceiving maximal levels of discrimination on satisfaction with democracy. If the 95% confidence intervals associated with these estimates cross the dotted threshold, then they are indistinguishable from 0.

Two features of these results are noteworthy. First, the relationship between perceiving that the government discriminates against black Americans and democratic satisfaction is negative and robust in magnitude. The coefficient for perceived discrimination is negatively-associated with conveying that a person is “fairly” or “very” satisfied with democracy; in contrast, perceived discrimination increases the likelihood that an individual will convey that they are “not at all” or “not very” satisfied with democracy. The magnitude of this relationship is equivalent to about a half a standard deviation change in the dependent variable.

Second, the effects of perceived discrimination and overt racism mirror each other. The valence and magnitude of the relationship between these racial attitudes and democratic satisfaction are very similar. As such, the nature of these estimates appears countervailing – if one senses that blacks face severe levels of institutional discrimination, then they ought likely *not* be in possession of overly racist attitudes. Yet recall that the two dimensions are only weakly, albeit negatively correlated. Not only do a nontrivial proportion of respondents ascribe negative stereotypes to blacks,

but many also perceive that African Americans experience institutional discrimination. Ironically, these two seeming contradictions are occasionally, in fact, compatible, and the combination of these attitudes appears to be oddly corrosive to satisfaction with democracy.

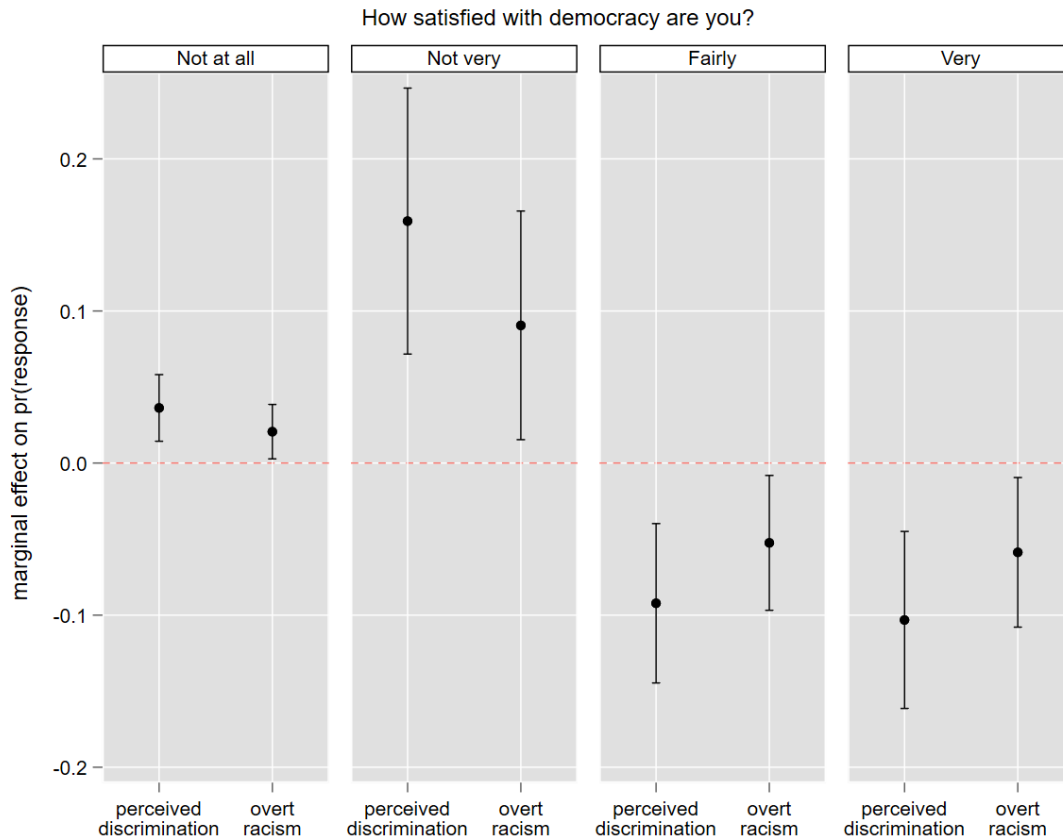


Figure 2: The effect of perceived institutional discrimination on satisfaction with democracy. Point estimates derived from ordered logistic regression and convey marginal effect of moving from min to max values on covariate on the probability of choosing given response category. Solid bands convey 95% confidence intervals.

Discussion

Recent research has focused on the relationship between white grievances and attitudes toward democracy. While persons who exhibit low levels of prejudice are not dissatisfied with democracy, socially intolerant persons devalue it (e.g. Miller and Davis, n.d.; Drutman, Diamond and Lee, 2018). What these analyses omit, however, is that the *lack* of prejudice does not necessarily preclude that individuals still feel that democracy is failing to meet its obligations. We find that individuals who are sensitive to social and political discrimination against minorities are less likely to exhibit satisfaction with democracy – a relationship that is effectively indistinguishable in magnitude and valence to high levels of overt racial prejudice. Put bluntly, these results imply that persons who ascribe negative stereotypes to blacks *and* those who perceive systematic racial injustice are about as equally likely to be dissatisfied with democracy – albeit for completely different

existential reasons. Thus, satisfaction with democracy is straining under the weight of callous, intolerant persons *and* those persons who believe that political, economic, and social systems generate pervasive racial inequalities.

Study 2: Do changes in perceived discrimination affect democratic affect?

The previous analysis parsed individuals' perceptions of discrimination from overt racism and, subsequently, evaluated the relationship between these attitudes and satisfaction with democracy. To what extent do *changes* in perceived discrimination, however, shape democratic affect? To answer that question, we turn to Voter Study Group (VSG) panel data. Comparing responses collected from their baseline survey in 2011 and the more recent 2016 wave, we can assess 1) whether individuals who perceived the existence of racial discrimination in 2011 were more likely to be less satisfied with democracy in 2016, and 2) whether *changes* in perceived discrimination from 2011 to 2016 predict attitudes toward democracy

Measures

In this study, our primary measure of attitudes regarding democracy differs from Study 1. In this case, the VSG did not, unfortunately, include satisfaction with democracy in its 2016 wave. It did, however, provide an item that assessed whether respondents were "proud" of democracy. While not a perfect one-to-one match, pride can be conceptualized as an affective reaction to a target object. For example, one feels pride regarding a target object when that object is associated with positive features (Williams and DeSteno 2008). In this application, *pride in democracy* is intimately connected to democratic outputs insofar as respondents are asked whether they are not at all proud (1), not very proud (2), don't have an opinion either way (3), are somewhat proud (4), or very proud (5) regarding the way that democracy *works* in America. In this sense, pride in democracy, like satisfaction, appears to be a contextual or specific evaluation regarding temporal outputs. As such, we would expect individuals who see discrimination to exhibit less pride in democracy relative to those persons who see little discrimination.

Our measures of perceived racial discrimination are also subtly different than the measure constructed from the ANES data due to differences in the instruments included on the two surveys. Nevertheless, there is significant overlap among the core items that comprised the scale in Study 1. Here, individuals were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements at both 2011 and 2016 waves:

1. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
2. Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve
3. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites
4. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

We recoded these items individually so that higher values on the five-category response sets would convey sensitivity to the existence of institutional discrimination. These items were then

factor analyzed to validate our assumption that they comprise a general latent disposition toward the existence of institutional discrimination. In both waves, factor loadings across all four items exceed 0.70; the reliability scores range from 0.87 in 2011 to 0.91 in 2016. For purposes of comparability across waves, we compute respondents mean value across all four items and treat this as our measure of perceived institutional discrimination at each respective wave.

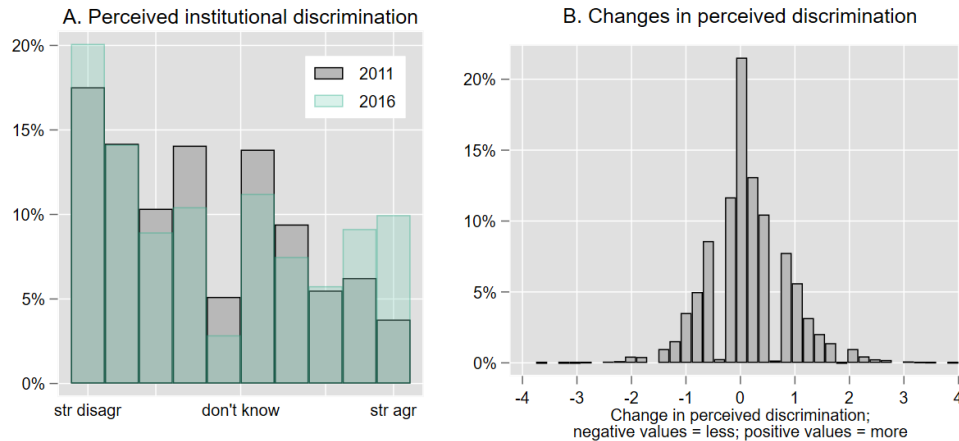


Figure 3: Distribution of perceived discrimination in 2011 and 2016 Voter Study Group waves. Responses in Panel A have been binned into deciles.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of responses at waves 1 and 2 (Panel A) and the change in these attitudes over time (Panel B). Although mean values of perceived discrimination in 2011 (M: 2.55, SD: 1.10) is slightly lower than 2016 (M: 2.68, SD: 1.28), Panel A illustrates that responses more or less polarize over time. In 2016, a greater percentage of individuals conveyed that they saw no discrimination; meanwhile about 10 percent of respondents shifted into the 9th and 10th deciles of recognition of discrimination. Panel B illustrates a simple difference between panel respondents' attitudes in 2011 from 2016. Positive values convey a pivot toward recognizing institutional discrimination; negative values convey that individuals became less likely to profess the existence of discrimination.

Finally, in addition to these variables, we include a standard battery of controls collected at the 2016 wave. *Ideology* is a five-category item that ranges from very liberal (0) to very conservative (4). Education ranges from no high school (1) to post-graduate degree (6). *White*, *African American*, or *Hispanic* self-identification is coded (1) for identifiers and otherwise (0). *News interest* ranges from (1) to (4), with higher values conveying greater interest in news and current events. The variables *economy worse* and *wrong track* are dichotomous instruments that convey that individuals perceived the economy was worse (1) or that the country was on the wrong track (1) or otherwise (0), respectively. *Age* is the birth year of a respondent. Finally, a *knowledge index* combining ten items from the baseline survey were summed into an additive index that ranges from no right answers (0) to all 10 items answered correctly (10).

Results

Model 1 in Table 2 portrays pride in democracy in 2016 as a function of perceived discrimination at 2011 and a series of control variables.⁴ As the coefficient estimate associated with perceived discrimination indicates, individuals who perceive that African Americans face systematic inequalities in 2011 were almost three-quarters of standard deviation ($b = -0.87$, $s.e. = 5.10$) *less* proud of democracy in 2016 than individuals who conveyed that African Americans face no such challenges. Moreover, the magnitude of this effect is not only comparatively larger than ideology, which is also scaled to range from 0 to 1, but exceeds the magnitude of the other coefficient estimates associated with covariates that might plausibly be related to pride in democracy. Although we are unable to control for democratic pride in 2011, which would allow us to compute a true “cross-lagged” panel model, these results nevertheless imply that perceptions of discrimination contribute to downstream dissatisfaction with democracy.

	Model (1)		Model (2)	
Perc discrim (2011)	-0.87	**	(5.10)	
Change in perc discrim			-0.08	*
Education	0.05	*	(2.42)	0.03
White	0.01		(0.06)	0.00
Black	-0.02		(0.15)	-0.21
Hispanic	0.14		(1.05)	0.11
Male	0.11		(1.73)	0.09
News interest	0.13	**	(2.77)	0.13
Economy worse	-0.21	**	(3.06)	-0.22
Wrong track	-0.25	**	(4.47)	-0.23
Age	-0.01	**	(4.62)	-0.01
Ideology	0.78	**	(5.89)	1.04
Knowledge index	0.34	**	(2.63)	0.29
Constant	21.38	**	(5.31)	20.18
R2	0.14			0.13
N	7,831			7,802

Table 2: The effect of perceived discrimination (Model 1) and changes in perceived discrimination on pride in democracy (Model 2). *Source:* Voter Study Group, 2011 and 2016 waves.

Exploring this relationship from a different angle, Model 2 in Table 2 depicts pride in democracy as a function of the *change* in perceived discrimination from 2011 to 2016. Here, there is modest evidence that a shift in perceived discrimination contributes to decreased affect toward democracy. To contextualize the magnitude of this effect, Figure 4 illustrates estimated pride across a range of values associated with the independent variable. We overlay the distribution of changes in perceived discrimination onto these estimates for context. These attitudes are normally distributed across the range of values implying that many individuals’ attitudes toward racial discrimination changed minimally from 2011 to 2016. However, among those persons whose attitudes shifted toward seeing greater institutional discrimination (i.e. positive values), we observe a modest decrease in pride in democracy of about half a standard deviation.

⁴For interpretive purposes, OLS models are presented here. However, the results are robust to ordered logistic regression. Those accompanying models are available in the supplementary materials.

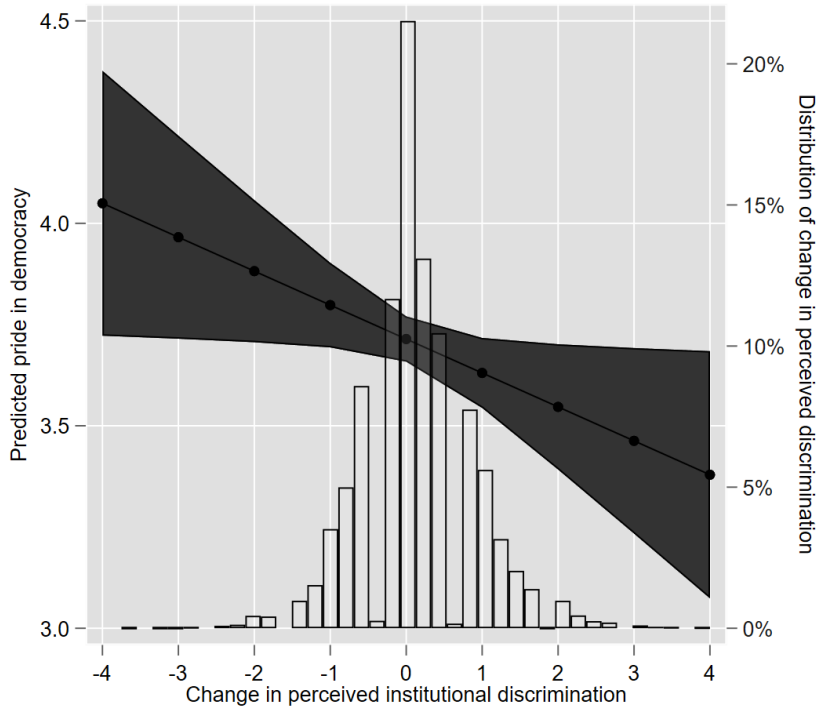


Figure 4: Predicted pride in democracy by change in perceived discrimination from 2011 to 2016. Shaded bands convey 95% confidence intervals around pride estimates. Bars convey distribution of change in discrimination scores. Higher values on x-axis convey change toward seeing more discrimination.

Discussion

The value of this analysis of the Voter Group Study panel data is that it provides us some leverage over the question of temporality. In this case, it does seem like perceived discrimination degrades affect for democracy.⁵ Individuals who perceived that African Americans faced significant social and economic challenges in the baseline wave (2011) exhibited less pride in democracy in 2016. Moreover, we uncover some modest evidence that *changes* in these attitudes contribute to less positive democratic affect. Bearing in mind that our dependent variable is slightly different from Study 1, it appears that the relationship between specific democratic support and perceived institutional discrimination is robust.

Study 3: Experimentally manipulating discrimination

Having established a link between attitudes regarding race and those involving democracy, one lingering question remains: can exposure to discrimination be *causally* linked to a decrease in satisfaction with democracy? To explore this question, we conducted a survey experiment at a large, southwestern university in the Spring of 2017. Our sample is comprised of undergraduate

⁵However, because we have no measure of democratic pride from the 2011 wave, it is not possible for us to rule out the possibility that, say, a lack of pride in democracy at Wave 1 causes a change in perceived discrimination at Wave 2 (2016).

college students who were offered extra credit for their participation in various tasks offered by an on-campus research laboratory (n = 95).⁶

Design

Our experimental design involves a series of conditions that exposed subjects to stories of protests regarding institutional discrimination. Figure 5 illustrates the template for our short vignettes, which involved stories regarding white or black college football players kneeling during the national anthem to protest racial injustice. These stories were chosen purposefully. In August, 2016, professional NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick began sitting during the national anthem, which is conventionally played before the start of every game. This quiet act of protest took on a life of its own: not only did other NFL players join him in such protests, but they trickled down into amateur college and high school sporting contests.

Although such demonstrations caught the ire of then-candidate Donald Trump, who sharply reproached such behavior as being “unpatriotic,” Kaepernick and his colleagues took great pains to couch their protests in terms of peaceful demonstration against institutionalized racism, generally, and police brutality, specifically.⁷ Because the language included in the vignette makes explicit that the protests are about racial (institutional) discrimination, these treatments provide a clear test for whether exposure to this information degrades democratic affect.

As we note above, our two treatments vary only in the race of the players depicted in the story. In addition to a treatment involving black players (Figure 5), we manipulated the skin tone and names of the players portrayed in a second treatment to appear as white rather than black athletes (see Figure A1 in the Appendix). This design allowed us to test whether activism by white players would trigger the same sort of dissatisfaction with democracy as protests by African Americans. Finally, the remainder of subjects were assigned to a control condition that outlined the results of an economic study linking commute times to life satisfaction (Figure A3).⁸

Subjects took a short pre-test survey measuring attitudes regarding symbolic racism, social monitoring, and authoritarianism. They were then randomly assigned to one of four conditions detailed above: 1) a story about anthem protests with black players kneeling (n = 24); 2) a story about anthem protests with white players kneeling (n = 30); 3) a placebo research summary of the effect of commute times on life satisfaction (n = 20). Subjects concluded by completing a short post-test survey that assessed satisfaction with democracy, among other questions.

Measures

Again, our primary outcome of interest is *democratic satisfaction*. Subjects were asked “How satisfied are you in the way that democracy functions in the United States today?” Responses ranged from extremely satisfied (1) to extremely dissatisfied (7). We then recoded the variable so that positive responses took larger values and negative ones, lower values.

⁶Full descriptive statistics associated with these subjects is available in Table A6 in the Appendix.

⁷Mr. Trump, in fact, went so far as to “disinvite” the Philadelphia Eagles from the traditional White House visit that is given to Super Bowl winning teams over the perceived slight of players kneeling.

⁸In a fourth condition, excluded from analysis here, we supplied subjects with a brief summary of an audit study that found evidence of hiring discrimination based on whether resumes contained “black” or “white-sounding” names. In contrast to the first two treatments, this factual presentation of discrimination had no effect on democratic satisfaction. See Figure A2 in Appendix.

Jake Smidt for CITY.com Monday 25 Sept 2017 9:40 am

Anthem protests trickle down to college football



In early 2016, Colin Kaepernick, then-quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, began kneeling during the National Anthem as a form of peaceful protest against what he called systemic institutional discrimination against black Americans. Although no longer a player in the National Football League, his protests have had enormous reach.

In fact, recently, college football players from teams across the country have begun taking a knee during the National Anthem to speak out against racial discrimination.

Jamal Lewis, an African American defensive end at Division II Southwest California State University, is one of four black players who took a knee during this weekend's games. We caught up with him after the game, and this is what he said. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.

Read more: <http://city.com/2017/09/25/why-more-players-are-kneeling-and-what-it-means>

Figure 5: Sample treatment condition: Black football players kneeling during anthem

Aside from satisfaction with democracy, we also collected additional information from subjects, in part to test the robustness of the interventions, but also to check for balance across conditions. Importantly, we surveyed individuals' attitudes on discrimination in the pre-test survey. Subjects were asked "How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today?" Responses ranged from none at all (1), a little (2), a moderate amount (3), a lot (4), a great deal (5). We find no significant differences in the character of these attitudes across conditions.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of a Kruskal-Wallis (KW) test for the entire sample. The KW test is a non-parametric comparison of medians test that is useful for assessing whether or not the median values of outcomes across conditions are statistically distinguishable. Here, the null hypothesis is that the median for democratic satisfaction for all four conditions is the same. Table 1 implies that there are significant differences in satisfaction across the various conditions.

Condition	Obs	Rank sum	Mean (SD)
Control	20	1,109.00	4.1 (1.68)
White kneelers	30	1,367.00	3.47 (1.80)
Black kneelers	24	823.50	2.71 (1.57)

$\chi^2 = 11.605$
 $p > \chi^2 = 0.009$

Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis test results and mean values of democratic satisfaction. Standard deviation in parentheses.

First, we observe that, relative to the control group, individuals in the white-players condition are modestly less dissatisfied with democracy. However, while subjects in this condition are less positive in their assessments regarding democracy, those differences are not distinguishable from the control group ($M_{diff} = -0.63$, $p < 0.11$). However, for subjects assigned to the treatment involving black players protesting racial discrimination, satisfaction with democracy is much lower relative to the other groups, as the second column in Table x indicates ($M_{diff} = -1.39$, $p < 0.003$).

We plot the effect of the treatments on satisfaction with democracy in Figure 6. Although the confidence interval bands for the point estimate of exposure to the black protesters slightly overlaps with the point estimate of satisfaction for persons assigned to the white player protest condition, a difference in means tests implies that these estimates are distinguishable at the $p < 0.10$ level. Further analysis controlling for pre-test perceptions of discrimination increases the precision of those estimates, although we note that, given the small sample sizes across conditions, our ability to pursue additional statistical analysis is relatively limited.

Discussion

In this final study, we endeavored to test whether or not portrayals of information regarding discrimination would affect satisfaction with democracy. Given the small sample sizes and uniqueness of the sample population (college-age students), our ability to extrapolate these results beyond their immediate context is limited by the conventional caveats that accompany experimental research with convenience samples. However, in concert with the other evidence presented in this manuscript, we believe that the underlying mechanism is sound. Given that pre-test scores on racial animus were not appreciably different across conditions, combined with the negative, though insignificant relationship between exposure to white players protesting discrimination, we are doubtful that the effect of exposure to *black* players – who have symbolic stake in these issues – can be chalked up to the intervention triggering antiblack animus. Instead, when powerful, symbolic symbols are paired with information regarding intense, state-directed discrimination, satisfaction with democracy decreases.

General discussion and conclusion

This manuscript explored the relationship between democratic satisfaction and racial attitudes. Given renewed interest in how Americans think about democracy (Sides et al. 2018; Davis, Gad-

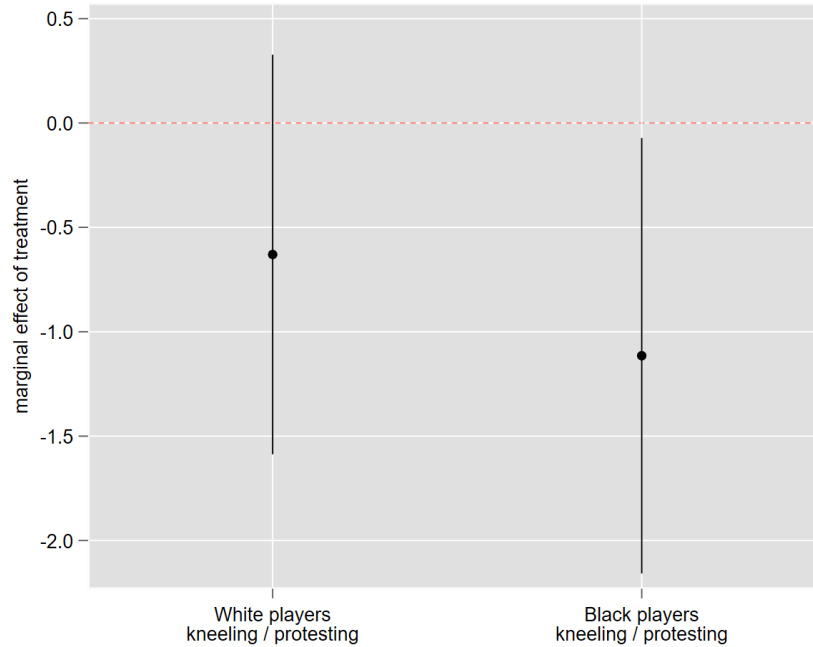


Figure 6: Marginal effect of treatment on satisfaction with democracy. Point estimates bracketed by 95% confidence intervals.

die and Goidel 2018; Miller and Davis n.d.), our findings offer two timely insights. First, corresponding with other research regarding the increasing racialization of Americans’ policy attitudes (Tessler 2012; Valentino, Neuner, and Vandenbroek 2018), racial attitudes spill into evaluations of democracy. Given the United States’ complicated history regarding slavery and the deeply entrenched nature of institutional discrimination that followed in its wake, it is not surprising that perceptions of racial discrimination would spill into evaluations of democracy. What is more troublesome is that this relationship does not manifest, for example, in connection to Congressional approval or even trust in government (see Tables A3 and A4 in the Appendix). Instead, perceptions of discrimination seem uniquely associated with democratic satisfaction. When coupled with the results of the experiment, exposure to such discrimination causes more negative ratings of democracy, with the caveat that we observe this effect primarily in the condition involving black player-protestors.

Second, this research offers some insights into why satisfaction with democracy in the aggregate appears to have dipped over time (e.g. Foa and Mounk 2016). Our findings imply that individuals who harbor overt racist views of minorities possess about an equally likely propensity to be dissatisfied with democracy as those who perceive the presence of institutional discrimination, all else equal. As we noted above, the racist and the person sensitive to racial discrimination each look at democracy and are dissatisfied with how it operates. For the racist, democracy equalizes access and opportunity to levels of political power, enfranchising individuals with whom they do not value or approve. For the person sensitive to institutional discrimination, they see a system that systematically generate inequalities via a state apparatus that does not treat minorities fairly.

These perspectives are each troubling for different reasons. On the one hand, a nontrivial proportion of American citizens are socially-intolerant, which undercuts the shared posture of

grace necessary to endure differences in the context of a multicultural society. On the other hand, a significant number of citizens sense that the state plays a role in maintaining serious racial inequalities. It is not abundantly clear that old-fashioned racism shows any signs of abating – particularly during an administration that has done its best to stoke white grievances, often turning to a vernacular of dehumanization. Yet, given the number of respondents who voice dissatisfaction over failures of democracy to equalize treatment, it is unclear what the long-term repercussions of these attitudes similarly imply. For now, we might hope that the wellspring of diffuse support that Americans feel toward democracy will endure these short-term perturbations in dissatisfaction. Further research is essential, however, to ascertain citizens' breaking point.

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Appendix

Study 1: 2016 ANES Time-Series

Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Democratic satisfaction	1526	2.79	0.70	1 4
Political trust	1532	3.54	0.88	1 5
Congressional approval	1496	3.26	0.96	1 4
Perceived discrimination	1533	-0.08	0.91	-2.15 1.77
Overt racism	1533	-0.02	0.76	-2.43 2.34
Religiosity	1533	-0.02	0.74	-1.62 1.06
Income	1533	16.93	7.92	1 28
Sophistication	1533	0.70	0.24	0 1
Male	1533	0.48	0.50	0 1
Political interest	1533	1.95	0.78	0 3
Economic assessment	1533	2.08	0.75	1 3
Ideology	1533	4.51	1.51	1 7
White	1533	0.71	0.45	0 1
Black	1533	0.09	0.29	0 1
Hispanice	1533	0.12	0.32	0 1
Asian	1533	0.02	0.15	0 1
Education	1533	11.14	2.37	2 16

Table A1: Descriptive statistics associated with variables used in analysis of 2016 ANES Time-Series data; data comprises only individuals who appear in analysis of democratic satisfaction.

	b	s.e.
Perceived discrimination	-0.98	(0.28) **
Symbolic racism	-0.56	(0.24)
Religiosity	0.14	(0.08)
Income	0.01	(0.01)
Sophistication	0.72	(0.25) **
Male	0.05	(0.10)
Political interest	0.12	(0.07)
Ideology	0.06	(0.04)
White	-0.03	(0.24)
Black	-0.33	(0.29)
Hispanic	0.11	(0.28)
Asian	0.02	(0.39)
Education	-0.03	(0.02)
<i>Cut point 1</i>	-3.46	(0.48)
<i>Cut point 2</i>	-1.08	(0.47)
<i>Cut point 3</i>	1.90	(0.47)
Obs.	1534.00	
Pseudo R2	0.02	

Table A2: Ordered Logistic Regression estimates for correlates of democratic satisfaction. *Source:* ANES Time-Series. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

	b	s.e.	
Perceived discrimination	-0.19	(0.12)	
Overt racism	0.36	(0.13)	**
Religiosity	-0.03	(0.03)	
Income	0.00	(0.00)	
Sophistication	0.32	(0.10)	**
Male	-0.02	(0.04)	
Political interest	-0.01	(0.03)	
Economic assessment	0.19	(0.03)	**
Ideology	0.10	(0.02)	**
White	0.16	(0.10)	
Black	-0.06	(0.12)	
Hispanic	-0.15	(0.11)	
Asian	-0.18	(0.17)	
Education	0.01	(0.01)	
Constant	2.18	(0.21)	**
N	1,532		
Pseudo R ²	0.14		

Table A3: Effect of perceived discrimination on trust in government. *Source:* ANES Time-Series. *p<0.05, **p<0.01

	b	s.e.	
Perceived discrimination	-0.20	(0.30)	
Overt racism	0.55	(0.34)	
Religiosity	0.09	(0.08)	
Income	0.01	(0.01)	
Sophistication	1.71	(0.25)	**
Male	0.14	(0.11)	
Political interest	0.26	(0.07)	**
Economic assessment	-0.04	(0.08)	
Ideology	-0.10	(0.05)	*
White	0.07	(0.25)	
Black	0.05	(0.31)	
Hispanic	-0.61	(0.28)	*
Asian	-0.82	(0.39)	*
Education	0.01	(0.03)	
Constant			
<i>Cut point 1</i>	-1.30	(0.52)	
<i>Cut point 2</i>	0.41	(0.51)	
<i>Cut point 3</i>	1.39	(0.52)	
N	1,496		
Pseudo R ²	0.046		

Table A4: Ordered logistic regression coefficient estimates for correlates of Congressional approval. *Source:* ANES Time-Series. *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Study 2: Voter Study Group

Ancillary models to test for robustness in Ordinary Least Squares regression used in main body of text. Estimates below are derived from Ordered logistic regression, using same dependent variable and same independent variables.

	Model 1		Model 2	
Inst. Discrimination 2011	-1.59**	(5.90)		
Change in perc discrim			-0.13*	(1.97)
Education	0.06*	(2.06)	0.02	(0.79)
White	0.01	(0.06)	-0.00	(0.01)
Black	0.09	(0.42)	-0.26	(1.22)
Hispanic	0.32	(1.49)	0.26	(1.21)
Male	0.18	(1.91)	0.17	(1.75)
News interest	0.27**	(3.89)	0.27**	(3.99)
Economy worse	-0.31**	(2.87)	-0.31**	(2.89)
Wrong track	-0.34**	(3.88)	-0.29**	(3.26)
Age	-0.01**	(4.45)	-0.01**	(4.19)
Ideology	1.35**	(6.32)	1.81**	(8.87)
Knowledge index	0.57**	(2.78)	0.45*	(2.25)
1st Cut-point	-30.60**	(4.62)	-28.40**	(4.28)
2nd Cut-point	-29.08**	(4.38)	-26.87**	(4.05)
3rd Cut-point	-28.64**	(4.32)	-26.44**	(3.99)
4th Cut-point	-26.77**	(4.04)	-24.61**	(3.71)
χ^2	293.60		252.48	
Pseudo R ²	0.0608		0.0539	
N	7,831		7,802	

Table A5: Ordered logistic regression of connection between perceived discrimination and pride in democracy. *Source:* Voter Study Group, 2011 & 2016 waves. *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Study 3: Experimental design details

The sample utilized in Study 3 is comprised of undergraduate college students from a large, southwestern university. Students were recruited on a voluntary basis through their participation in political science courses. In return for their inclusion in the study they were offered nominal extra credit for the completion of the full study. All subjects first took a short pre-test survey; next, they were assigned randomly to various conditions including: (1) a control group, where they read about a new academic study linking work commuted times to happiness and satisfaction, or conditions where they read about either (2) the results of an audit study detailing racial biases regarding interview offers, or (3) a protest regarding racial discrimination led by white football players, or (4) a protest regarding racial discrimination championed by African American football players.

Variable	Control			Hiring discrimination			White-kneeler			Black-kneeler		
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
demsatis	20	4.10	1.68	21	4.38	1.50	30	3.47	1.80	24	2.71	1.57
white	20	0.55	0.51	21	0.57	0.51	30	0.37	0.49	25	0.56	0.51
latino	20	0.40	0.50	21	0.24	0.44	30	0.37	0.49	25	0.16	0.37
asain	20	0.05	0.22	21	0.10	0.30	30	0.23	0.43	25	0.04	0.20
black	20	0.00	0.00	21	0.05	0.22	30	0.00	0.00	25	0.00	0.00
symb racism	20	2.50	1.76	21	2.61	1.69	30	2.30	1.60	24	2.38	1.52
social monitoring	20	2.38	0.78	21	2.40	0.70	30	2.40	0.61	24	2.44	0.65
perceived discrim	20	3.85	0.99	21	3.57	0.87	30	3.93	0.91	25	3.92	1.06
ideology (7)	20	3.45	1.57	21	4.05	1.66	30	3.43	1.59	25	3.12	1.33

Table A6: Descriptive statistics of key covariates across conditions. *Source:* Original data collection.

Jake Smidt for CITY.com Monday 25 Sept 2017 9:40 am

Anthem protests trickle down to college football



In early 2016, Colin Kaepernick, then-quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, began kneeling during the National Anthem as a form of peaceful protest against what he called systemic institutional discrimination against black Americans. Although no longer a player in the National Football League, his protests have had enormous reach.

In fact, recently, college football players from teams across the country have begun taking a knee during the National Anthem to speak out against racial discrimination.

Greg Lewis, a white defensive end at Southwest California State University, is one of four white players who took a knee during this weekend's games. We caught up with him after the game, and this is what he said. "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football, and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.

Read more: <http://city.com/2017/09/25/why-more-players-are-kneeling-and-what-it-means>

Figure A1: Anthem protests with white players kneeling. Text is identical to treatment condition using black players. Names of players have been altered to reflect stereotypic naming conventions of respective racial group (n = 30).

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Research Summary

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An economist at Smith College designed an experimental study to explore hiring procedures. He began by constructing a fictional resume that described a "well-educated person with a strong business background" (p. 6). The researcher then sent 1,000 copies of this application to different openings advertised on a large, popular hiring agency website. The researcher then waited to see whether or not a company contacted them to inquire about a phone interview.

The catch? The economist randomly varied the name of the person sending the resume. Some companies were sent applications from individuals with "Caucasian-Sounding" names, such as Greg or Emily. Some companies were sent applications from individuals with "African-American-Sounding" names, such as Jamal or Lakisha. The economists discovered that "applicants with Caucasian-sounding names were 10 times more likely to receive call-backs than the applicants with African-American-sounding names" (p. 16).

In the conclusion to the piece, the author described the results as a clear case of *white privilege*. Simply put, although race wasn't mentioned on the application material, applicants with Caucasian-sounding names were more likely to receive a call-back.

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Figure A2: White privilege condition. Text describes results of a common form of audit study where fake resumes that randomly assign black- or white-sounding names to prospective employees ($n = 21$).

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Research Summary

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An economist at Smith College designed an experimental study to explore how the length of one's home-to-work commute affects life satisfaction. He began by constructing a fictional scenario that described "a situation in which one was to imagine a typical drive to a place of employment" (p. 6). The researcher then sent 1,000 copies of this scenario (along with a brief survey) to employees at several large firms. The researcher then waited for participants to return the form.

The catch? The economist randomly varied the length of time described in the commute. Some people were sent scenarios involving "unusually long commutes." Some people were sent scenarios describing "unusually short commutes." The researcher discovered that "employees who were asked to envision long commutes were 10 times more likely to report a high probability of experiencing psychological and social distress" (p. 16).

In the conclusion to the piece, the author described the results as a clear case of *conditional life satisfaction*. Simply put, although the researcher did not actually manipulate actual commute times, the very consideration produced stress.

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Figure A3: Control condition. Text describes results of academic study exploring the effect of commute times on life satisfaction. Visual presentation and length are similar to discrimination study presented in Figure 5 (n = 20).