On Fertile Ground: How Racial Resentment Primes White Americans to Believe Fraud Accusations

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White Americans face a democratic dilemma: do they remain committed to electoral democracy, beneficial as it has historically been for them? Or abandon it in the face of gains from nonwhite Americans? We argue that "fraud'' allows them a way out: they can reject specific democratic outcomes, while remaining committed to democracy as an ideal. We thus expect—and demonstrate—that fraud has a specifically racial valence. In three studies, we show that Black cities were at the epicenter of fraud dialog on Twitter; that electoral confidence deteriorated most for racially-resentful whites post-election in 2020; and, in an experimental context, that white Americans were more likely to believe accusations of fraud when Black election officials were in charge. At a time where America's multiracial democracy appears fragile, groups poised to lose power draw on rote narratives linking race and criminality to legitimize their own denial of free and fair elections.

Key Words: Voter Fraud, Racial Resentment, Social Identity, Misinformation, Experiment

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Introduction

Before a single vote had been cast—a month before Joe Biden was even formally named his opponent—Donald Trump was sowing doubt about the legitimacy of the 2020 election. In a July interview on Fox News Sunday, then-anchor Chris Wallace asked Trump whether he would accept the results if he lost. "I have to see," Trump replied. "Look, you—I have to see. No, I'm not going to just say yes. I'm not going to say no, and I didn't last time either" (Trump, 2020). As the campaign wore on, Trump's musings on the topic of fraud didn't remain evasive or nonspecific. Instead, they seemed to focus directly on American cities with many African American residents. For example, at a campaign stop in Pennsylvania a week before the election, Trump raised doubts about the validity of past vote counts in Philadelphia. Trump falsely complained that Mitt Romney had received "zero votes" in 2012 (Dale, 2020), insinuating that electoral malfeasance was likely to occur in that sort of place. Philadelphia is 40% Black and 34% white; those figures for the state are 11% and 75%, respectively.

After election day in 2020, states continued counting mail ballots cast by legal voters, resulting in a "blue shift." Since Democrats voted by mail at higher rates than Republicans, these late-counted returns disproportionately went to Biden in some key states. While this shift was widely anticipated (e.g., Graham, 2020), Trump supporters nonetheless used the late-counted ballots alongside other routine election practices to generate accusations that fraud had occurred. Like when Trump raised doubts about Philadelphia, many accusations were linked to tangible places. Cities continuing to count legally cast votes became the epicenter of the stolen election narrative.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was a favorite target.[1] One pro-Trump Twitter account summed up what became a shibboleth among conspiracy-theorists: "Trump just lost the lead after they dumped a trove of mail-ins from Milwaukee. 100k lead gone in an instant.

[1] Milwaukee is 38% non-Hispanic Black and 34% non-Hispanic white; those figures for the state of Wisconsin are 6% and 81%, respectively.

Why did it take hours for this to be released? I'm not buying it" (quoted in Hardee, 2020). In Detroit,[2] protesters reacted to the narrative and descended on counting facilities as Trump's lead waned (Witsil, 2020). In Atlanta,[3] Donald Trump's personal attorney Rudy Giuliani fueled the narrative using racist language to describe election workers as "passing around USB ports like they were vials of heroin or cocaine." He has since admitted in court that these accusations were false (Reily and Concepcion, 2023).

Why did Donald Trump and his allies focus on these sorts of places? What benefit did they anticipate from re-inscribing a connection between race and fraud? As Emily Badger (2020) at the *New York Times* explained, these were not the cities that cost Trump the election—but they have "long been targets of racialized charges of corruption." Meanwhile, largely white municipalities in these states like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (64% white) or Madison, Wisconsin (73% white), overwhelmingly supported Biden but saw far fewer accusations. We argue that racialized accusations of voter fraud allow white Americans a way out of a psychological bind. White Americans have incentives to believe electoral democracy in America represents a just system, since it has historically placed them at the top. They also have incentives to abandon electoral democracy if it threatens their favored status. Belief in fraud, it would seem, is one mechanism that allows them to remain rhetorically committed to democracy while rejecting specific unfavorable democratic outcomes.

Stories that insinuate fraud was perpetrated by racial minorities are buoyed by several factors. They are consistent with racial stereotypes about criminality, appeal to those harboring racial animus, and are psychologically convenient in that they allow whites to reject short term outcomes while maintaining confidence in a political system that has benefited them over time. By focusing accusations of fraud on Black individuals and municipalities, elites made their claims more believable to a white audience. White Americans were more susceptible to these narratives precisely because they leveraged manufactured associations between electoral malfeasance and race (Wilson and King-Meadows, 2016). Explicit appeals

[2]Detroit is 77% Black and 11% white, compared to 13% and 74% statewide in Michigan
[3]49% Black and 38% white, compared to 31% and 52% statewide in Georgia

to racial prejudice in service of limiting racial progress have become risky due to changes in social norms regarding racial equality (Mendelberg, 2001). Thus, in modern times, opponents of civil rights move onto new topics like "crime" or "stolen election" and use them to advance policy reforms that disproportionately harm Americans of color. Moreover, the links that have been established in white Americans' minds between Blackness and criminality lend credibility to these elite-led accusations. Such racialized accusations of fraud leading up to and especially following the 2020 election provided an avenue through which white Americans could reject *specific outcomes* of electoral politics even as they maintain the legitimacy of the *system as a whole*.

We test these theoretical arguments in three studies, using diverse data and analyses but linked by what they can tell us about the role of racial considerations in shaping beliefs about fraud and election integrity before and after the 2020 election. First, we explore what kind of municipalities were mentioned on Twitter alongside conversations about voter fraud. We show that discussion about fraud on this public platform was indeed centered on Black cities in 2020, especially in the post-election period. Aside from population, the Black share of a city's population was the only significant predictor of how frequently it was mentioned on Twitter alongside the phrase "voter fraud." Second, we leverage the panel structure of the 2020 Cooperative Election Study to demonstrate that racially resentful white respondents saw their confidence deteriorate most in the post-election period as accusations of fraud focused on racialized municipalities. After demonstrating that racially resentful white Americans were likely susceptible to these claims, we use a survey experiment to test the relationship between racialized narratives and fraud belief in a causal framework. Manipulating the majority racial group of a fictional city, and the race of the chief election official working there, we show that accusations of fraud were more credible among white Americans when they were levied against Black-led municipalities. In short, individual orientations like racial resentment intersect with elite rhetoric and stereotypes to undermine confidence among those theoretically most threatened by Black political power.

Identity, Group Position, and System Justification

Social identity theory (SIT) provides a framework to understand how groups react and relate to one another (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). SIT holds that people categorize others and self-categorize into groups to help make sense of the social world. From our groups, we enjoy psychological benefits like self-esteem and social benefits like assumed trust that help us go about life with less friction or strife. The benefits that flow from group identity and membership motivate us to to regard our own groups positively and vigilantly protect group status. Often, this positive view of our own group or social identity arrives by way of comparing the relative status of groups to which we do and do not belong (Tajfel, 1982). We look at and compare ourselves to others to assess how we are doing.

Few social categories have greater political significance in the United States than race. In America's racial hierarchy, whiteness enjoys the highest level of social prestige, with Black Americans at the bottom and other racial and ethnic groups falling somewhere in between (Dawson, 2001; Kim, 2003). This hierarchy does not occur or sustain itself by chance. Racialized social system theory, from Bonilla-Silva (2010), details how white Americans use coded colorblind language and other tools to maintain their position at the top of the social hierarchy. These attitudes and behaviors can be pointed outward, based in prejudicial belief or genuine antipathy toward racial and ethnic minorities (Wallsten et al., 2017). They may also point inward, focused on protecting the privileges enjoyed by the dominant group (Jardina, 2019). Even as white Americans are motivated to maintain their place at the top of the social hierarchy, powerful psychological mechanisms are at play to obscure this domination, even to themselves. That is, members of dominant groups construct ways to justify their place on the social ladder (Shuman et al., 2022). In general, people do this by denying inequality, distancing themselves from the cause of the inequality, or defending broader systems even if they perpetuate and ossify unequal outcomes.

The just world theory (e.g., Lerner, 1980) puts these sorts of coping behaviors into perspective. It describes how humans seek to "naturalize" their own dominance. Those at

the top of a social hierarchy are uncomfortable with the knowledge that social processes—processes based not in merit or hard work, but in systemic and human-produced power imbalances—explain their high status. People within dominant groups seek to render these outcomes natural and inevitable, the result of justice, not unfairness. Those at the top want to believe that they "earned" their privileges, and that individuals deserve both the benefits and ills they experience in life. Closely linked to just world theory is system justification theory (e.g., Jost, 2019): dominant groups face strong psychological pressures to justify not only the *outcomes* of these social processes, but also the processes themselves.

Although equal access to the ballot box has never characterized American democracy (Keyssar, 2009; Bentele and O'Brien, 2013), white Americans profess a deep connection to it as a pillar of democratic society. According to the 2017–2022 World Values Survey, more than half of white American participants called democracy "Absolutely important," a 10 out of 10 on the available scale. For Black Americans, just 1 in 3 were as bullish on democratic governance. Understood in the context of just world theory, this is not surprising: white Americans are motivated to justify the political system that has disproportionately accrued benefits to them. But what happens when this system no longer reliably produces disproportionate benefits for white in-group members?

After 2008, which saw the election of the nation's first Black president, white Americans were forced to face the reality that electoral politics might no longer result in political arrangements placing white Americans at the very top. In response, white Americans' enthusiasm for democracy is perhaps waning. In addition to highly-publicized events like the January 6th insurrection, academic scholarship documents where support for democracy is softest among this population. Jardina and Mickey (2022) argue that white Americans who recognize the "wages of whiteness" seek to protect those privileges and are more supportive of authoritarian leadership. Others point to a more general out-group antipathy as a source of democratic decline. Enders and Thornton (2022), for instance, show that racially-resentful white Republicans are more dissatisfied when their candidate loses than other Republicans.

Similarly, Miller and Davis (2021) argue that socially-prejudiced white Americans ascribe less importance to democratic principles, and Morris (2023) shows that state legislators representing regions where racial threat is most salient were the most active on voter restrictions in the aftermath of the 2020 election. More generally, when dominant groups feel that they no longer represent the nation, they are more likely to endorse people and policies that reinforce their dominant position (Bai and Federico, 2021; Danbold, Serrano-Careaga and Huo, 2023).

This scholarship implies antidemocratic thinking in the United States cannot be divided from race and considerations about group position. White Americans who profess the value of, and even participate in democracy may nonetheless be skeptical when democracy doesn't work for them. Faced with the reality of electoral loss, dominant groups must make sense of why the chips did not fall their way during the previous election. A recent survey from Monmouth University suggests that even years later, as many as two-thirds of Republicans still believe the 2020 election was decided by fraud (Poll, 2023). On a smaller scale, but more recently, entrance polls from the 2024 Iowa Republican caucus indicate nearly two-thirds of participants believe that Joe Biden was not the legitimate winner of the 2020 contest (LeVine, 2024). It would seem people are skeptical of the process not because they are revolutionaries or reformers—but because the outcome was inconsistent with beliefs about what results the system ought to have produced.

What rationale might allow white Americans to maintain a commitment to democracy while also rejecting specific electoral outcomes? One answer is that white Americans may think that America's electoral system was corrupted by the criminality of Black Americans. Many links between criminality and race grew directly out of increasing access to the franchise won by Black Americans in the mid-twentieth century. As a result, racially resentful whites believe Black Americans do not follow the "rules of the game;" or that they are "line cutters;" and they receive benefits they do not deserve (Russell Hochschild, 2016; Davis and Wilson, 2021). Such pejorative perceptions go on to inform beliefs about who is capable of fraud in

modern elections (Wilson, Brewer and Rosenbluth, 2014). Thus, white Americans should find it easier to believe that Black-led cheating and criminal activity coalesced to steal the in 2020 election. The alternative would be to more fully embrace electoral democracy and the pluralistic society it entails, or to abandon it and the justificatory processes it enables.

Historical Links between Race, Criminality, and Voting

The racially discriminatory nature of the American criminal legal system is well documented. Scholars like Michelle Alexander (2012) and Naomi Murakawa (2014) show this is no accident of history, but rather the consequence of systematic forces of white supremacy. A related strand of scholarship focuses on how the criminal legal system impacts Black citizens' access to the ballot box. Despite the ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments, which outlawed restrictions to the franchise "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," Black Americans were subjected to a century of disenfranchisement. The disenfranchising forces were marked in the early years by extreme violence, though other means like state constitutions and the criminal legal system eventually became the masthead for such efforts (Behrens, Uggen and Manza, 2003; Epperly et al., 2020).

The turn among lawmakers to revive incarceration-based disfranchisement in response to increased political opportunities among Black Americans in the mid-1960s can be placed in a larger process described by Vesla Weaver (2007) as "frontlash." Frontlash is an elite-driven project undertaken with intentional and strategic foresight. The goal is for losers in one political fight to advance to another policy domain, reframe the terms in which that domain is understood, and attempt to recoup past losses. In this interpretation, the increasingly liberal civil rights of the 1960s and the increasingly repressive—and racist—use of the carceral state in the 1970s are not independent of one another. Rather, the same elites who resisted the federal civil rights acts of the 1960s became the most vocal proponents of an emboldened and aggressive state the following decade. The conflation of Blackness and

crime by both elites and the media (e.g., Entman, 2006; Entman and Rojecki, 2010) was, according to Weaver, an intentional response to gains made in the realm of electoral politics.

Eubank and Fresh (2022) provide compelling evidence of how racially discriminatory disenfranchisement followed from the 1965 Voting Rights Act. In the aftermath of the passage of the VRA, jurisdictions which had previously relied on now-illegal devices to control the Black population's political power were suddenly stripped of these favored tools. In response to the new legal context, a substitution occurred: the states that previously disenfranchised their citizens to such an extent that they were covered under Section 5 of the VRA increased the rate at which they incarcerated Black—but not white—citizens. The authors conclude that their results "are most likely to derive from white reaction to the crumbling of the Jim Crow sociopolitical order" (803). Their conclusion is bolstered by systematic heterogeneity *within* states covered by Section 5: "incarceration varied systematically", they note, "in proportion to the electoral threat posed by Black voters" (791). When federal intervention (i.e., the VRA) increased the likelihood that Black political power might threaten a white-dominated status quo, elites turned to this alternative state apparatus to neuter the threat.

In short, it is no accident that the *political* content of crime in the United States is singularly racialized; since at least the 1960s, conservative elites have sought to tie Blackness to criminality in the public mind to justify policies undermining their electoral power. In this context, this link between race and crime motivates support for more strict voter ID laws (Wilson, Brewer and Rosenbluth, 2014), and may serve this function as a means for white Americans to punish less deserving groups (Chouhy, Lehmann and Singer, 2022). In other words, white Americans have been primed for decades to believe in the plausibility of accusations of crime levied against Black Americans, a link that was born out of struggles surrounding access to the franchise.

Fraud Narratives Resolve Whites' Democratic Dilemma

Narratives about the criminal nature of Black Americans—exactly the sort that sustain racial resentment—are linked closely with attitudes toward the electoral process. In fact, because the white superstructure has moved to paint electoral gains by Black Americans as ill-gotten or undeserved, racial concerns likely shape attitudes about the integrity of the process and the legitimacy of the outcomes. White Americans' association between Black criminality and elections helps to resolve the tension between commitments to democracy and the status threat of a politically muscular Black America. By believing in Black-instigated electoral malfeasance like fraud, white Americans who supported a losing candidate do not need to re-evaluate the popularity of their policy preferences or consider whether the candidate put forward by their party represented the interests of a wide enough set of the country. Further, if a poor showing was the result of malfeasance, they certainly don't need to consider whether their purported commitments to democracy are in tension with their skepticism of a racially progressive state. Rather, they can rely on old tropes casting Black Americans as cheaters and criminals. In this scenario, people can continue telling themselves they are committed to democracy; that they reject the 2020 election because it was not itself a democratic outcome. In short, racialized beliefs about fraud can also be identity protective. When a psychological need to refute electoral losses meets ongoing elite rhetoric pointing to plausible (i.e., non-white) scapegoats, racial considerations facilitate a lack of confidence in the electoral process. In service to our argument regarding the racialized nature of fraud claims, we engaged in three studies to understand the extent to which racial considerations structure the public's engagement with and belief in electoral malfeasance in 2020.

Data and Methods

Study 1: Analysis of Twitter Data

Journalists and activists have argued that accusations of fraud heavily target Black municipalities; however, to the best of our knowledge, this has not yet been thoroughly established. We evaluate the claim that accusations center on Black places with an analysis of Tweets collected in January, 2021. This corpus includes the 2.7 million Tweets that were A) Tweeted in 2020; B) publicly viewable in January, 2021; and C) contained the phrase "voter fraud." The `tm` package in `R` allows us to identify each Tweet that also mentions an American municipality with a population of at least 100,000. The list of cities comes from simplemaps,[4] which uses data from the US Census Bureau and US Geological Survey to create a list of cities' standardized names. This list is supplemented with common nicknames and abbreviations for these cities, such as "NYC" for "New York," "NOLA" for "New Orleans," and "Philly" for "Philadelphia." Some cities whose names are similar to other political concepts, individuals, or common English words—such as "Independence," "Elizabeth," and "Warren"—were removed.[5] For municipalities that share names, we assume that the target of the rhetoric applies to the largest one (thus dropping places like Portland, Maine, in deference to Portland, Oregon).

From this population of Tweets, approximately 95,000 include references to one of these large municipalities. We merge this information with a variety of sociopolitical indicators such as Biden vote share in 2020, population, and racial characteristics. Biden voteshare is calculated by using data from the Voting and Election Science Team[6] which publishes election results and shapefiles at the precinct-level. Municipal election results are estimated by aggregating up from all precincts whose centroid falls inside the munici-

[4] `https://simplemaps.com/data/us-cities`

[5] The set removed consists of: Bend, Brandon, Corona, Elizabeth, Enterprise, Hollywood, Independence, Lincoln, Logan, Lynn (a man named Robert Lynn was arrested for voter fraud in October, 2020 (Blackburne, 2020)) Mobile, Orange, Reading, Surprise, Warren, and York.

[6] `https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/electionscience`

pal boundaries according to Census Bureau designated "places," which generally conform to municipal boundaries. Other demographic data is taken from the 5-year ACS estimates ending in 2020, once again according to Census places. We test the relationship between the number of times a city was mentioned alongside fraud and its demographics sing ordinary least squares regressions. The Twitter data allow us to test the following expectation.

- **H1**: Other things being equal, cities where Black residents make up a larger share of the population will be more likely to appear in discussions of voter fraud.

Study 2: Survey Data

The 2020 Cooperative Election Study (CES) provides additional valuable information. The CES is a modular survey, in which teams ask 1,000 respondents each a set of questions in addition to the "common content" asked of all respondents. The CES is also a panel survey; respondents were surveyed before and after the 2020 election, allowing us to examine how some characteristics shifted in the weeks following November 3. Pre-election interviews occurred in September and October of 2020 and post-election interviews were fielded in November and December.

In 2020, 7 different teams asked respondents about their confidence in the election both before and after the election (the wording of these questions varied from team to team. The precise language used can be found in the Appendix). The different question wordings allow for different levels of granularity (depending on the instrument, respondents have 3, 4, or 5 possible levels of confidence to choose from) and we recode them such that responses on each item range from 0 to 1.

In addition to these questions about confidence in the election, we incorporate questions from the CES Common Content that are asked of all respondents regardless of which module they are assigned to. The most important of these questions for the project at hand are those asking which presidential candidate a respondent voted for (or, if they did not vote, which candidate they preferred), along with two questions from the symbolic racism or

classical racial resentment scale (Kinder and Sanders, 1996). The CES unfortunately asks respondents how strongly they agree with just 2 of the usual 4 statements (*Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors* and *Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class*). But despite this limitation, the paired-down scale from the CES has been used to reliably measure racial resentment in other academic studies (e.g., Nteta and Tarsi, 2016; Citrin, Levy and Wong, 2017; Garcia and Stout, 2020; Morris, 2023). Although the racial resentment questions are asked in the post-election wave—after potential exposure to what we argue is the "treatment" of racialized fraud rhetoric from Trump and others—recent experimental work indicates that racial resentment is a stable characteristic that is not influenced by racialized treatments (Albertson and Jessee, 2022). The panel structure of the questions allows us to test

- **H2**: Other things equal, post-election confidence in 2020 deteriorated most for white Americans high in racial resentment.

Study 3: Survey Experiment

While the CES data make it possible to test how real individuals' confidence in the election shifted over the course of the fall of 2020, it does not allow a *direct* test of the causal relationship at play: that white Americans found exposure to racialized claims of voter fraud particularly convincing. To directly test the causal effects of racialized accusations, we fielded a survey experiment in March, 2023. We contracted with Lucid to collect our sample, resulting in 1,274 completed surveys by self-identified white Americans. After removing participants who failed either an attention check or who sped through the survey instrument, we were left with 1082 participants for analysis [7]

[7]Substantive results remain when including these participants. Survey instrument is in our supplemental information. For a full description of the survey, treatment conditions, observation exclusions due to failed

After answering a series of political and racial attitude questions, participants were randomly assigned (with equal probability) to one of five conditions describing the fictional city of "Lancaster, Michigan." Our design was a 2×2 factorial, where the factors manipulated were the election official's race and the racial composition of the city being scrutinized. Participants in each of the four treatment conditions were exposed to a news-like vignette featuring a local election official rebutting accusations that fraud had occurred in the city he represented. The story makes clear that accusations of fraud have occurred and that local election officials are now rebutting them. We also included a control, in which participants did not receive any priming about elections or fraud. Instead, participants read an apolitical story about various tourist spots in and around Lancaster.

The election official was either white or Black. The municipality's racial composition was either majority Black or majority white. Information about the official's race was communicated through a photograph and through the official's name (Hakeem / Henry Green). The municipality's characteristics were communicated via a pie chart and text in the body of the news article where Lancaster is characterized as a "mostly Black" or "mostly white" city. The pie chart visually denoted whether white or Black Americans made up the majority of Lancaster, Michigan's population (68%). Beyond these manipulations, the formatting and text of the four racialized treatments were identical.

Conceptually, we want to capture beliefs regarding whether electoral malfeasance occurred in the fictional city of Lancaster, Michigan. Our primary dependent variables measure confidence in elections. Respondents were asked, "How likely was it that voter fraud occurred in Lancaster, Michigan during the 2020 presidential election?" and "How about the vote counting? How likely was it that votes in Lancaster, Michigan were counted incorrectly?" Response options were on a 5 point scale ranging "not at all likely" to "extremely likely." These two items were chosen to reflect the diversity of beliefs about the likely mechanisms behind electoral malfeasance. Some individuals may associate fraud with mass driven

attention checks or speeder behavior, and information about compensation and recruitment, please see the supplemental materials and our pre-registration link, included therein.

behavior like impersonation or voting twice. Others may think about manipulation of vote tallies after votes have been cast. By measuring both potential conceptualizations of fraud, we account for the possibility that different people think about it differently, as well as position ourselves to detect different effects of racialized accusations on belief in each.

Questions measuring the respondents' racial resentment scores were analyzed to measure any association with fraud or whether treatment effects were moderated by out-group animus. Two scales were used: both the classical symbolic racism questions (Kinder and Sanders, 1996) and a more recent index from Davis and Wilson (2021), "White Resentment Toward African-Americans." The inclusion of both scales provides for a test of continuity with the CES results reported in the first set of analyses, and also to leverage the greater theoretical transparency of the new questions (see Chapter 3 of Davis and Wilson (2021) for discussion of the improvements made in their index). In addition to these two measures of a racial resentment, work from Ashley Jardina (e.g., Jardina, 2019; Jardina and Mickey, 2022) indicates antidemocratic sentiment among white Americans might also be driven by in-group, status-protecting considerations; we therefore include this index as well (Collectively, we refer to the racial resentment and white ID indices as measures of racial antipathy). In the supplementary information (SI), we present tables showing that our randomization process was successful for both the surveyed population as a whole, as well as across those who pass our attention checks. The experimental data allow us to test the following hypotheses:

- Accusations will be more credible when levied against Black-represented (**H3**) and majority-Black (**H4**) municipalities.
- These treatment effects will be larger for individuals high in racial antipathy (classical racial resentment (**H5**), Davis and Wilson's racial resentment (**H6**), and white identity (**H7**).

Results

Study 1: Were Black Municipalities Discussed on Twitter?

We begin with a discussion of municipalities identified in Tweets that also included the phrase "voter fraud" during the year 2020. About 40% of these Tweets were posted on or before November 3, 2020; the remainder were posted between election day and the end of the year. Table 1 shows the 10 municipalities most frequently named (per 1,000 residents) alongside "voter fraud" in 2020 as well as the number pre- and post-election mentions.

Table 1: Most Frequently Mentioned Municipalities

City	State	Total Mentions	Pre-Election Mentions	Post-Election Mentions	Share Black
Washington	District of Columbia	12,060	5,067	6,993	44.5%
Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	10,446	2,334	8,112	40.1%
Detroit	Michigan	9,593	530	9,063	76.6%
New York	New York	7,442	3,534	3,908	21.4%
Los Angeles	California	5,750	2,978	2,772	8.4%
Houston	Texas	4,416	1,738	2,678	22.3%
Chicago	Illinois	2,570	1,302	1,268	28.8%
Milwaukee	Wisconsin	2,304	164	2,140	38.3%
Atlanta	Georgia	2,143	140	2,003	49.3%
Minneapolis	Minnesota	2,047	1,807	240	18.6%

The list includes municipalities most associated with Blackness and Black political power: Detroit, D.C., Philadelphia, and Atlanta all make the list, as do Montgomery, Alabama, and Milwaukee. The average Black share of these cities is just over 40%—far larger than the Black share of municipalities nationwide (6.8%) and even the set of large cities included in this analysis (16%).

The results of OLS models testing the relationship between city-level mentions and characteristics can be found in Table 2. Model 1 tests the relationship of a city's Blackness and the frequency with which it was mentioned for all of 2020; Model 2 restricts the timeline to the pre-election period. Finally, Model 3 tests whether these relationships shifted in the

Table 2: Twitter Municipal Regressions

	All Mentions	Pre-Election Mentions	Post-Election Mentions
Share Non-Hispanic Black	1093.175*	-50.701	1143.877**
	(466.206)	(161.204)	(353.871)
Share Non-Hispanic White	23.283	147.933	-124.650
	(498.842)	(172.489)	(378.643)
Biden Vote Share, 2020	-120.574	173.237	-293.811
	(491.226)	(169.855)	(372.862)
Median Age	14.264	3.019	11.245
	(11.553)	(3.995)	(8.769)
Median Income	-0.002	0.000	-0.002
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Share with Some College	1.160	-213.044	214.204
	(803.686)	(277.897)	(610.033)
Log(Population)	396.782***	145.812***	250.970***
	(49.993)	(17.287)	(37.947)
State Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Num.Obs.	451	451	451
R2	0.479	0.537	0.398
R2 Adj.	0.405	0.472	0.312

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

post-election period when the fraud rhetoric became much more widespread. By way of reminder, the unit of observation in Table 2 are the municipalities with a population of at least 100,000 according to the ACS 5-year sample ending with 2020.

The relationships uncovered in Table 2 provide strong support for the hypothesis that fraud rhetoric specifically centered on Black cities. In fact, with the exception of municipal population size, *no other covariates* are statistically-significantly related with the number of times Tweets mentioned a city using the phrase "voter fraud" except for share Black. Importantly, this relationship is strongest in the post-election period, when the fraud rhetoric had its highest valence. Net of other covariates, a 10 percentage point increase in the share of a city that was Black was associated with an additional 111 mentions of that city on Twitter. Given that the average large city was mentioned only a handful of times, this is substantial effect. As we show in the Appendix, these effects are substantively similar if the

dependent variable is the number of mentions per capita, and population is excluded as an independent variable.

It is important to note that not all these Tweets claim that voter fraud is occurring in these municipalities. In fact, many explicitly push back against this narrative. One such example of a quote-Tweet makes this abundantly clear: "Almost every single fake 'voter fraud' lawsuit is targeting black and POC votes! City, County , and States where this demographic exists. The only one we have seen so far was adding mostly white Dane County in with Milwaukee to make it look 'not racist' in WI."[8] This user clearly believes that voter fraud rhetoric is based in racism, and references to Dane County intend to balance out accusations against Milwaukee. The fact that some Tweets mention Black cities to decry racist rhetoric, however, does not undermine our results. On the contrary, this provides further evidence that observers acknowledged that fraud narratives were disproportionately lobbied against municipalities with large Black populations. Whether individuals participating in the conversation about voter fraud believed the narrative or not, the discourse disproportionately focused on Black municipalities. Having established that the mass public does tie Blackness to voter fraud, we can now explore how individuals' beliefs changed as the national context shifted from the pre- to post-election period.

Study 2: Did Racial Resentment Structure Election Confidence?

The previous section showed public rhetoric (as proxied by Twitter posts) associated voter fraud with Black municipalities. Given that public discussion about fraud and election insecurity were racialized, we expect that racially-resentful individuals were susceptible to this narrative. The Cooperative Election Study can tell us how individuals' confidence in the election shifted over the course of the 2020 election cycle. Seven CES teams asked respondents about their confidence in the election before and after November 3rd, yielding roughly 4,300 white respondents. The empirical set-up takes the form of a two-way fixed

[8]See `https://twitter.com/emtfr/status/1329641906230398978`.

effects model, with fixed effects for each respondent and for both time periods. The primary independent variables are a dummy measure of the post period and its interaction with respondents' racial resentment score. A negative coefficient on this interaction term points to greater post-election deterioration in confidence among those with high racial resentment.

Factors other than racial resentment might have driven changes in confidence in the elections in the days following November 3. More conservative respondents, for instance, might have suffered from the sore loser effect: Americans whose preferred candidate lose are generally less trusting of government (Anderson and LoTempio, 2002; Anderson and Guillory, 1997). Similarly, it seems possible that slight differences in question wording might be taken up differently in the pre- and post-election waves. The inclusion of dummy measures (interacted with the post-period dummy) indicating whether a respondent supported Trump and team-specific dummies address these potential confounders, as well as the measure of ideology (measured on a continuous 7-point scale). Finally, we account for whether a respondent watched Fox News in the 24 hours before being surveyed. Rupert Murdoch conceded that Fox News had "endorsed" lies about the election in the aftermath of November 3 (Folkenflik, 2023); as such, watching Fox News might have decreased electoral confidence in the post-election period.[9]

Table 3 presents the results of these regressions. Model 1 presents results for all respondents, while models 2 and 3 present those for Trump and non-Trump supporters alone. The table clarifies a number of things. Firstly, as expected, racial resentment is associated with lower confidence in the post-election period, even after accounting for ideology and candidate support (though confidence also deteriorated more for conservative respondents, and those who supported Trump). Model 2 shows that even when the analysis is limited only to those who supported Trump, racial resentment is associated with a decline in confidence relative to the pre-election period. It is worth noting that the coefficient on *Post* is non-significant in Model 2. This indicates that confidence in the election among Trump supporters

[9]Unfortunately, this question was asked only in the pre-election wave of the CES. Nevertheless, it remains the best proxy for election-lie media exposure available in the survey.

Table 3: Confidence in Election Results, 2020 CES

	All Respondents	Trump Supporters	Non-Trump Supporters
Post	0.358***	0.091	0.388***
	(0.019)	(0.057)	(0.021)
Post × Racial Resentment	-0.026***	-0.036***	-0.020**
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.008)
Post × Ideology	-0.021***	-0.024***	-0.021***
	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.005)
Post × Supported Trump	-0.282***		
	(0.017)		
Post × Watched Fox News	-0.017	-0.009	-0.044
	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.024)
Respondent Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Team Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Post × Team Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Num.Obs.	8552	3738	4814
R2	0.835	0.785	0.770
R2 Adj.	0.669	0.568	0.538

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

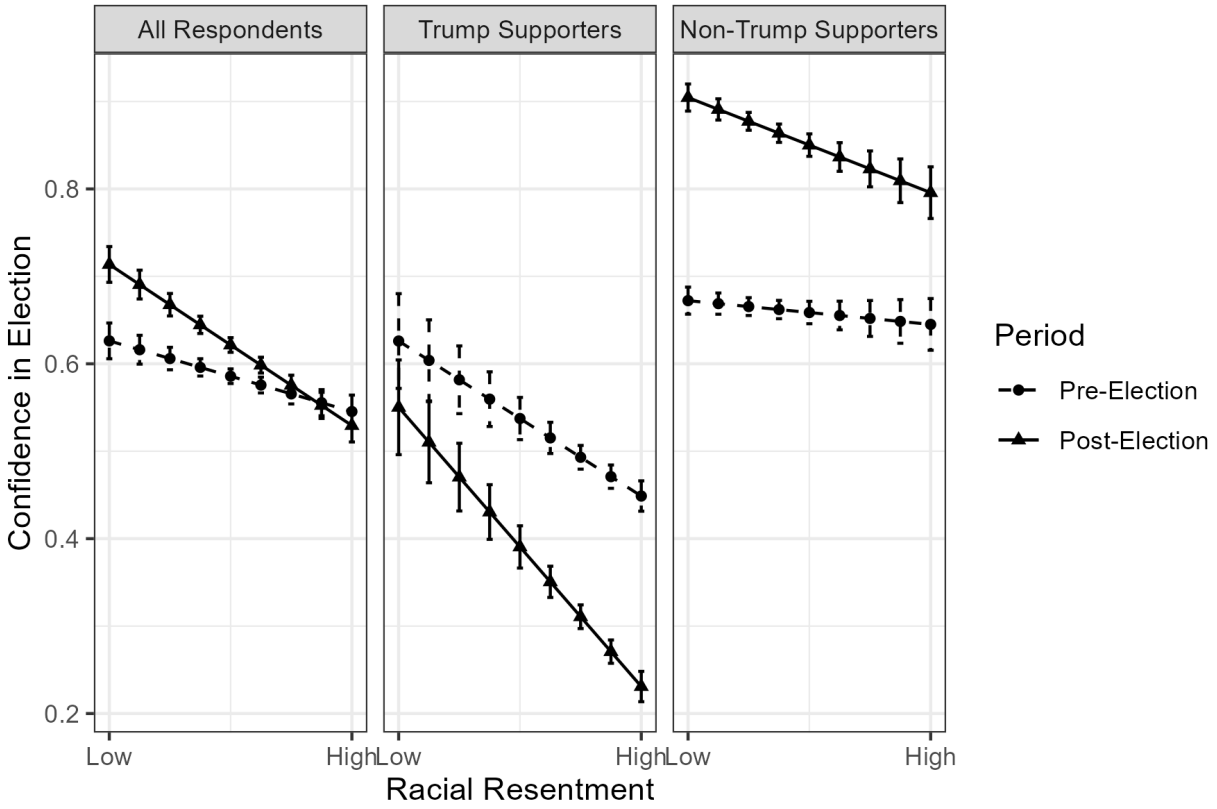
Robust standard errors clustered by respondent.

with low racial resentment did not shift from the pre- to post-election period.

Perhaps surprisingly, this relationship also holds for *non*-Trump supporters, albeit in weaker form. To be sure, non-Trump supporters with high racial resentment were more confident in the elections after November 3 than before. Of course, these individuals would not need psychological tools to help them "make sense" of a loss; nevertheless, these results track with those of Enders and Thornton (2022) and deserve greater scrutiny in future research. Substantively, however, the relationship between resentment and beliefs about fraud are far stronger among Trump supporters.

Regression tables can obscure the magnitude of these relationships. Figure 1 visually presents the relationships between racial resentment and confidence in the pre- and post-election periods for each group. All other covariates are held at their means. Figure 1 makes clear that—across respondents as a whole—racial resentment was related to confidence in

Figure 1: Racial Resentment and Confidence in the 2020 Election



the pre-election period. Put differently, those high in resentment were more likely to predict there would be fraud in the election before it was held. This relationship is, however, far stronger in the post-election period. In fact, the second panel shows that Trump supporters low in racial resentment had about as much confidence in the election after November 3 as they did beforehand. Those Trump supporters that were racially resentful, however, saw their confidence bottom out in November and December—after being bombarded by the racialized rhetoric about voter fraud. The CES data thus provide strong support for our first set of individual-level expectations. We hypothesized a negative relationship between racial resentment and change in electoral confidence. Table 3 and Figure 1 provide support for this hypothesis.

The panel nature of the CES data provide a nice test of how perceptions about election integrity shifted in the real world in the fall of 2020. By re-interviewing the same individuals

two or three months apart, the surveys allow us to examine broad shifts in the public. Nevertheless, the treatment is imprecise. We cannot know for sure that all CES participants were exposed to equal rhetoric; it is possible that the racially resentful individuals were exposed to more fraud accusations and thus would have seen their confidence deteriorate, whether or not these accusations were racialized. Our third test of the relationship between race and election confidence uses an experiment understand whether the relationship detailed above is causal.

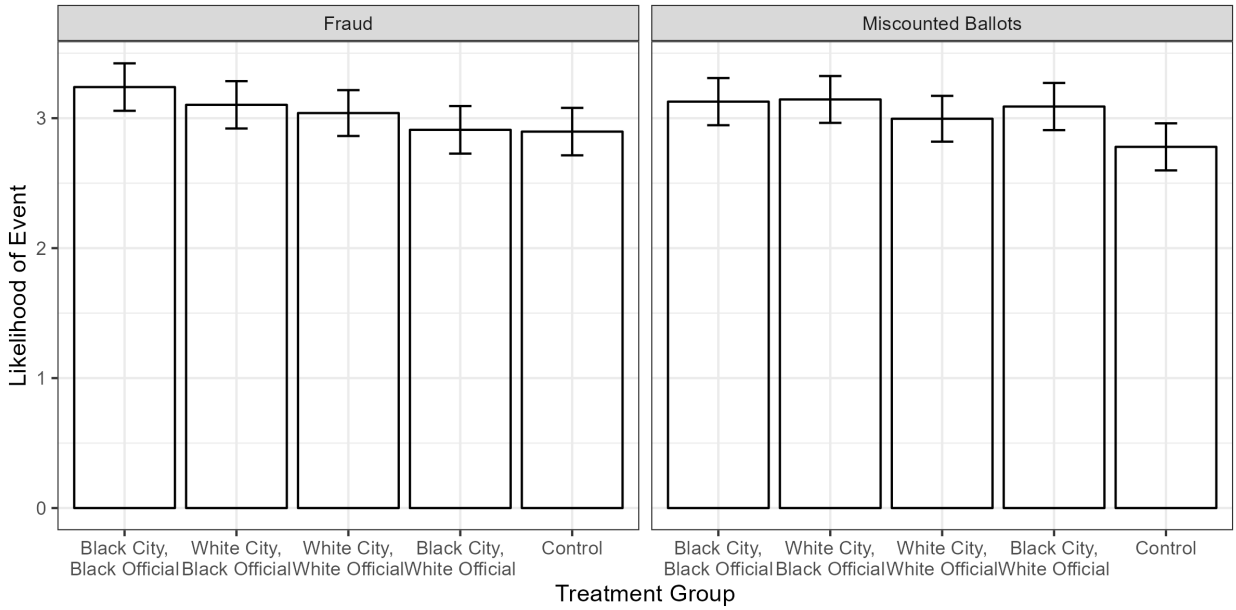
Study 3: Did Racial Cues Increase Belief in Electoral Malfeasance?

In our experiment, we tested whether racial cues attached to accusations of fraud influence white Americans' perceptions of whether wrongdoing occurred. We expected respondents would find accusations about election malfeasance more credible when targeted at Black municipalities and places with Black election officials.

We begin by presenting the average likelihood that either voter fraud or ballot miscounting occurred as estimated by the white respondents in each of the treatment arms. Unsurprisingly, respondents assigned to the control group—in which they were presented with no accusations of fraud—were the least likely to believe fraud had occurred. For both dependent variables, respondents assigned to a treatment condition with a Black official found the accusations more credible than those respondents who saw a white official. The regression tables for these models can be found in the SI.

We refrain from over-interpreting the municipal distinctions, however, as manipulation checks indicate that the "municipality" treatment was administered less effectively than the "official" one. While 89% of non-control respondents correctly identified the race of the official by whom they were treated, just 69% of individuals correctly reported the racial composition of the Lancaster. Due to this noncompliance, we report models in the SI in which the treatment condition reported is instrumented by the group to which respondents were assigned. In other words, we use intention to treat as an instrument for the treatment

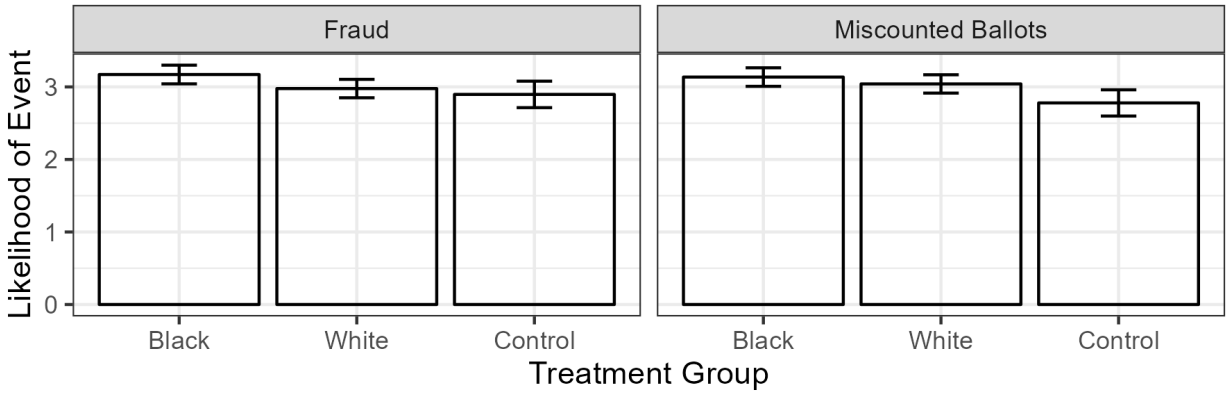
Figure 2: Reported Likelihood of Illegal Activity



actually received (this was not a foreseen problem and thus the instrumental variables regressions were not pre-registered). Because of this noncompliance in the "city demographics" treatment, the remainder of this section focuses on results arising from the experimental manipulation of the official's race.

Figure 3 presents the results of the "official" treatment. In these, all respondents assigned to the "Black Official" arm are included in the "Black" treatment group, regardless of which "city" group they were assigned to (the same is true for those in the "White" group). Here, we see small treatment effects largely concentrated among respondents exposed to the Black official. These respondents reported a likelihood of fraud or miscounted ballots that was roughly 9 or 13 percent higher than controls, respectively. Both of these effects were significant at the 95% confidence level. While the individuals exposed to the white official were no more likely to believe fraud had occurred than the controls, they did report a likelihood of miscounted ballots that was about 9% higher than controls ($p < 0.05$). Importantly, the individuals exposed to a Black official were statistically significantly more likely to believe that voter fraud had occurred than those exposed to the white official. We take this as support

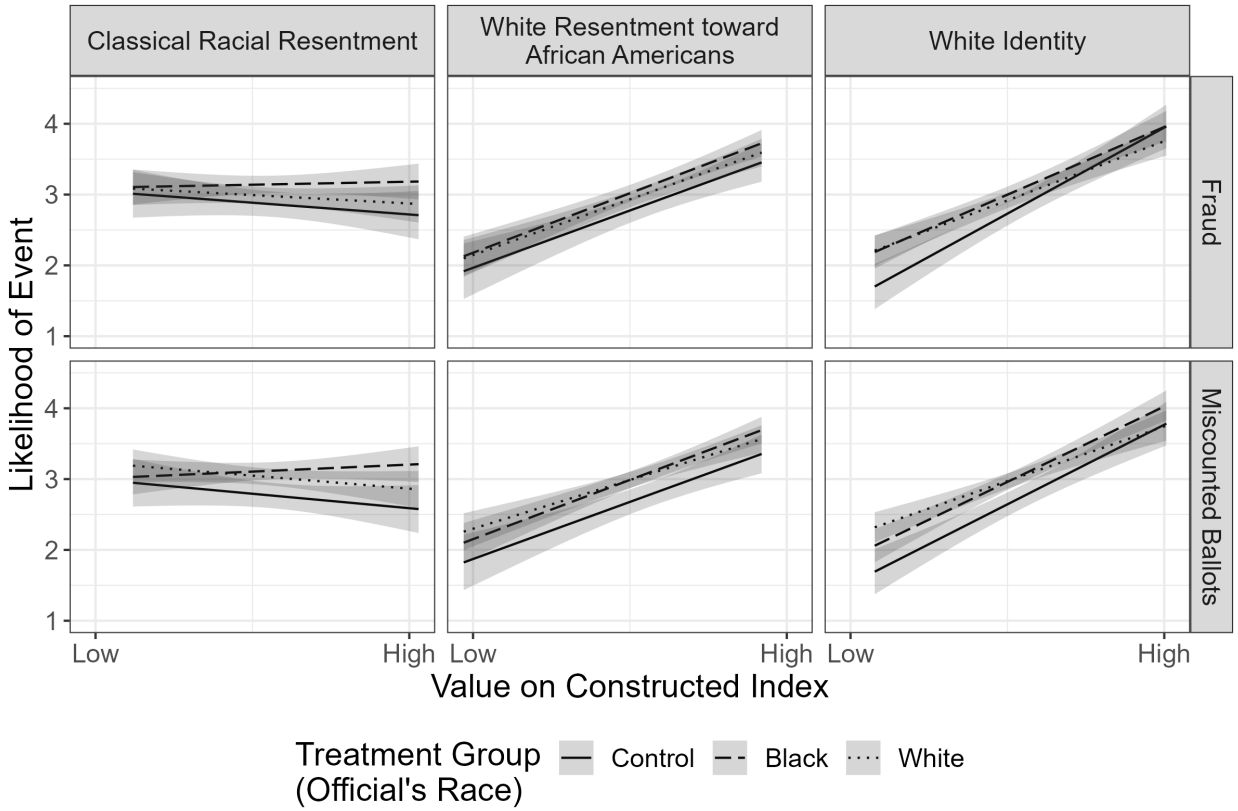
Figure 3: Reported Likelihood of Illegal Activity (Pooled)



for H3. That the effects are concentrated when the dependent variable is voter fraud, rather than for malfeasance on the part of the official, is consistent with the theoretical mechanisms linking Black criminality at the mass level to electoral considerations.

Finally, we explore whether the treatment effects are moderated by antipathetic social characteristics (like racial resentment and white identification). Figure 4 indicates that the treatment effects are not moderated by these characteristics (by way of reminder, we hypothesized that the credibility gap between the "white official" and "Black official" respondents would be largest for the most antipathetic respondents). Respondents were just as suspicious of fraud in a Black-led city irrespective of their orientation toward racial questions. Figure 4 thus fails to provide support for H5–H7, but it nevertheless corroborates a finding from the CES results: white Americans high in White Resentment Toward African-Americans and high in white identification were vastly more likely to believe that voter fraud or official malfeasance had occurred. Further, these imply that white individuals need not score highly on these racial antipathy items to be influenced by racialized talk about voter fraud.

Figure 4: Reported Likelihood of Illegal Activity (By Racial Antipathy)



Covariates include municipal treatment status; self-reported turnout in 2020 and 2022; reported support for Trump over Biden; social and government trust; gender; collegiate education; income; age; party identification (7-points); ideology (7-points).

Discussion

In the aftermath of the 2020 election, many grass-roots organizers, pundits, and journalists called attention to the racialized nature of the Big Lie: the most prevalent accusations of fraud, it seemed, centered on Black municipalities, and cast Black Americans as the most frequent perpetrators of election crime. This paper shows that the public narratives about voter fraud were indeed centered on Black municipalities—and that race and racial antipathy play an important role in how those accusations are received and incorporated into beliefs about election security. Three distinct approaches support this conclusion: an analysis of the geographical content of Tweets talking about voter fraud; an examination of individual whites' beliefs about election security before and after the 2020 presidential election; and a

survey experiment testing the effect of racialized fraud claims on white Americans' electoral confidence.

The first study shows that when specific municipalities were mentioned alongside "voter fraud" on Twitter in 2020, these municipalities were often Black ones. In fact, the only other municipal characteristic associated with how frequently a city's name was mentioned was the population, with larger municipalities being mentioned more frequently. Importantly, not even Biden's vote share in 2020 was associated with the role a city played in the national conversation on this topic; nor, for that matter, did the share white. But the larger the Black share of a municipality, the more frequently it was mentioned in the same breath as voter fraud.

To be sure, this study has limitations, and future work should continue to explore the precise contours of this public narrative. Firstly, of course, the view from Twitter might not be representative of the narrative experienced and created by the American public more broadly. Secondly, within the Twitter data, future work should explore the different ways in which this narrative was expressed. For the purposes of this study, establishing that Black cities played an out-sized role in the national conversation about fraud was sufficient. And yet, a fuller accounting of the breakdown between those *promoting* accusations of fraud versus those *contesting* them would be helpful. So, too, would an analysis of the narrative being generated in these posts, versus amplified by them (either by liking / re-Tweeting, or by sharing news articles and written work produced off of Twitter). Finally, sentiment analysis of these Tweets could provide richer data on whether the ways in which Black municipalities are tied to voter fraud rhetoric varies, in addition to simple frequencies.

After establishing that voter fraud rhetoric was centered on Black cities in 2020—particularly in the post-election period—we analyzed changes in white Americans' views of election security over the period in which the Big Lie was the most active. While these data are not causal in nature, the panel structure of the Cooperative Election Study makes it possible to hold individual-level characteristics constant across the fall of 2020 to look at attitudinal shifts.

White Trump supporters high in racial resentment should have been the most threatened by the outcome of the presidential election that fall. Did they trust the security of the election less as a way of coping with this loss?

The results corroborate these expectations. There was a much stronger relationship between racial resentment and election confidence in the post-election period, after Americans were subjected to widespread (and, as the Twitter data shows, racialized) claims about voter fraud. These results held even after accounting for the possibility that more conservative white Americans might have seen their confidence decline more as a "sore-loser" outcome; similarly, the analyses allowed that Fox News viewers might have a different shift from the pre- to post-election period. That this should hold even for non-Trump supporters is somewhat surprising; although all non-Trump supporters saw their confidence increase in the post-election period, those with high levels of racial resentment harbored more doubts than those lower in resentment. Future work should explore these individuals more deeply: what psychological mechanisms undermine confidence for those with high resentment whose preferred candidate won? Or are these Trump supporters who were unwilling to voice their electoral preferences to a survey taker?

The first two empirical sections of this paper established that A) public narratives about fraud were centered in Black municipalities in the post-election period, and B) that racial resentment was negatively related to electoral confidence, especially in the post-election period. But is there a *causal* relationship here? Are white Americans more susceptible to false accusations of fraud when levied against Black and Black-led municipalities? And is this moderated by individual-level racial antipathetic measures? While the first sections cannot answer these questions causally, the survey experiment provides some supportive evidence.

When white Americans are exposed to a Black official refuting accusations of electoral fraud, they express more worry about election insecurity. The accusations of fraud might be compelling when levied against Black-dominant municipalities relative to white cities, but the manipulation checks indicate that this treatment was administered poorly and the

results only approach traditional measures of significance ($0.05 < p < 0.1$). Future work must investigate whether the racial composition is, in fact, a significant driver of how accusations of fraud are received under better experimental conditions, or if the race of the official (or other non-white leadership) carries the bulk of the power. Of course, it seems possible that accusations of fraud are considered more likely *because of* the national dialogue that centered Black cities like Detroit, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia. Untangling whether the underlying beliefs structure the public conversation, or the conversation drives the skepticism of Black cities—and the role of elite rhetoric in these processes—will be a challenging but necessary endeavor for future work. We encourage others to investigate how implicit or explicit racial primes help decrease confidence in elections.

Taken as a whole, the results paint a dismal—if unsurprising—picture of the central role of anti-Blackness in public discourse and belief-formation about election insecurity in the contemporary United States. Racial concerns fully imbue the rhetoric of and receptiveness to fraud narratives. Black cities are over-represented in the conversation and white individuals find fraud accusations made against cities represented by Black officials more credible. And, although the "credibility gap" between white and Black officials was present for all white respondents, we find that white Americans high in resentment were far more suspicious of fraud—even when assigned to the control condition in which fraud was not mentioned.

Black-white racial cleavages are at the center of American politics. The American social hierarchy places white Americans at the very top, and centuries of "democratic" practices have rendered the socially-constructed nature of this arrangement invisible to white Americans. Recent years have seen that system challenged, and some of its uglier truths made explicit. Often, these advances have been made within the formal bounds of electoral politics, through the obvious example of Barack Obama's presidency, but also through other displays of Black political power in races like Georgia's recent Senate contests (January 5th 2021). It is perhaps symbolic that the very next day, a mostly white crowed decried an American election with violence and anger. That white voters should undermine this

political strength of Black and nonwhite Americans with appeals to criminality is nothing new; as scholars like Weaver (2007) and others have shown, pivots—or "frontlashes"—to focus on the purported criminality of Black America in response to increased access to the franchise is a well-established feint. Recognizing the role that these patterns continue to play in fights over the ballot box is of signal importance as the felt threat of diminished power for white Americans continues to grow in the coming decades.

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Appendix: On Fertile Ground

1 Wording of CES Module Questions

- Module: YLS
  - Pre-Election Question: "In your view, how likely is it that the following [Voters are counted fairly] will occur in the November election?"
  - Post-Election Question: "In your view, how often did the following [Voters are counted fairly] will [*sic*] occur in the November election?"
- Module: UTB
  - Pre-Election Question: "How confident are you that your vote will be counted as you intended if you vote in the November 2020 General Election?"
  - Post-Election Question: "How confident are you that your vote in the 2020 General Election was counted as you intended?" *or* "If you would have voted in the 2020 General Election, how confident are you that your vote would have been counted as you intended?"
- Module: UGA
  - Pre-Election Question: "For the **upcoming** presidential election, how confident are you that votes nationwide will be counted as voters intend?"
  - Post-Election Question: "For the presidential election that occurred in November, how confident are you that votes nationwide were counted as voters intended?"

- Module: UCR
  - Pre-Election Questions (Averaged): "In the elections this November, how accurately do you think the votes from the following [Traditional polling places; Mail-in-ballots] will be counted?"
  - Post-Election Questions (Averaged): "In the elections this November, how accurately do you think the votes from the following [Traditional polling places; Mail-in-ballots] were counted?"
- Module: RCO
  - Pre-Election Question: "How confident are you that votes *nationwide* will be counted as voters intend?" *or* "I am confident that votes *nationwide* will be counted as intended."
  - Post-Election Question: "Think about vote counting throughout the country. How confident are you that votes **nationwide** were counted as voters intended?" *or* "I am confident that votes **nationwide** were counted as intended."
- Module: MCS
  - Pre-Election Question: "How confident are you that votes **nationwide** will be counted as voters intend?"
  - Post-Election Question: "Finally, think about vote counting throughout the country. How confident are you that votes **nationwide** were counted as voters intended?"
- Module: LSU
  - Pre-Election Question: "When it comes to the 2020 election, how much confidence do you have that all votes will be counted accurately?"

- Post-Election Question: "How much confidence do you have that all votes were counted accurately?"

2 Experiment Details

We contracted with Lucid to collect a nationally representative sample of White, U.S. Adults. At the end of data collection (March 15–16 2023), we had collected 1,274 completed responses. Respondents were paid $2.25 for participation. Due to rising concerns about respondent attentiveness and overall data quality, (Aronow et al., 2020; Ternovski and Orr, 2022), we looked at several measures of data quality. This included attention checks, speeders, straight liners, and those who provided long or patterned gibberish into open response questions. On the advice of the articles above, we removed those who failed the attention check and the speeders. After removing DQ's we were left with 1082 respondents. For our pre-registered design, hypotheses, and data quality checks, the following URL links to the anonymous OSF registry : `https://osf.io/rfjg2/?view_only=5b140c28316b48d2860aa6678c4b014d`

2.1 Participant Contact and Compensation

Participants were contacted through the market research firm Lucid. Lucid works with their hundreds of suppliers to recruit participants for opt-in surveys. They gather participants for a variety of academic and industry research by sending them emails asking them if they would like to participate in a survey opportunity. Regarding payment to participants, those contacted are provided with information about compensation before engaging with Lucid's partners beyond the reception of an email or engaging in any way with our survey. Per Lucid's methodology page: "Lucid manages relationships with suppliers who handle incentives to participants directly. Researchers pay Lucid a cost per completed interview (CPI) and Lucid pays suppliers who then provide a portion of those earnings to participants

in the form of cash, gift cards, or loyalty reward points. Lucid does not directly handle incentives to research participants and does not control the payment amount or type."[1]

Participants were compensated for their participation. While we did not have direct control over participant compensation, we paid Lucid $ 2.25 per complete with the understanding that this funds their ability to pay suppliers who are directly responsible for compensating participants for time and labor. It is also our understanding that Lucid has supplied data through this method for research projects published in quality journals like the American Political Science Review in the time period since the journal updated their principles and guidance for human Subjects Research (Goldfien, Joseph and Mcmanus, 2023). In general, participants paid around 1 dollar for taking a 10 minute survey (longer than ours) report a relatively high level of satisfaction.[2] Forthright Panel, a competitor operates similarly (researchers do not directly pay participants) and charges $3 per complete. Again these sort of data collection procedures and compensation pipelines have been used in high quality journals like the American Journal of Political Science (Dias and Lelkes, 2022).

2.2 Consent and Potential Presence of Deception

Through an email request, participants opted to participate and were screened beforehand to ensure they were U.S. adults, living in the U.S., and self-identified as white. After passing these screeners, participants were given a link to our Qualtrics survey. Before beginning the survey, participants were asked to give consent and told that they were about to take part in an academic study approved by The City University of New York IRB. They were told the nature of the study and that their participation was voluntary. Informed consent was given in the affirmative on the first page participants interacted with in our survey.

A small amount of what could be considered deception was used in the experimental vignette. Participants read a story that alleged election malfeasance occurred in a fictional city. Because we wanted to understand the effect of such accusations in places with different

[1] https://luc.id/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Lucid-IRB-Methodology.pdf

[2] https://www.verasight.io/post/do-your-survey-respondents-feel-they-are-compensated-fairly

racial valence, we needed to emulate the assertions made by elites and bad actors, even though the evidence of such broad claims is scarce. This story around a fake municipality was read by participants in March of 2023, relatively far removed from major state and federal elections. As a result, it is unlikely participation interfered with the political process in tangible or enduring ways. That said, we are cognizant of the fact that repeated rhetoric of this nature has the potential to erode electoral confidence, especially when repeated by high profile political leaders (Clayton et al., 2021). We took steps the end of our survey to mitigate lasting effects of this nature.

Participants were debriefed at the end of the survey to clarify that any information they read about the prevalence of voter fraud did not reflect the true state of the world. That language is below. "Thank you for your participation in our survey. You may have been asked to read a story about voter fraud in the 2020 Presidential election. The best available evidence suggests that both voter and election fraud are extremely rare in the United States. The agencies in the Trump Administration concluded that the 2020 presidential election was the most secure election in the country's history."

2.3 Experimental Vignettes

2.3.1 Vignette Language

After the 2020 election, reports of election irregularities have raised calls for audits and a hardening of anti-fraud measures. The mostly Black (White) city of Lancaster, Michigan is receiving national attention with politicians and some media groups saying the election there was a mess. New accusations and stories include, ballots being collected by unknown third-parties, voting machines changing some votes, and citizen poll watchers being restricted from observing the official count.

A spokesperson for the Lancaster board of elections, Hakeem (Henry) Green (D), tried to refute the accusations made earlier this week saying, "These unfounded accusations are just false. No systemic fraud took place in our city." Green went on, "That couldn't

Figure 1: Black Official Vignette

Figure 2: White Official Vignette

be further from the truth. Nothing criminal took place. This was the most secure and fair election conducted in recent memory."

2.4 Randomization Check

Table 1 and 2 show that the randomization process was successful.

Figure 3: White City Vignette

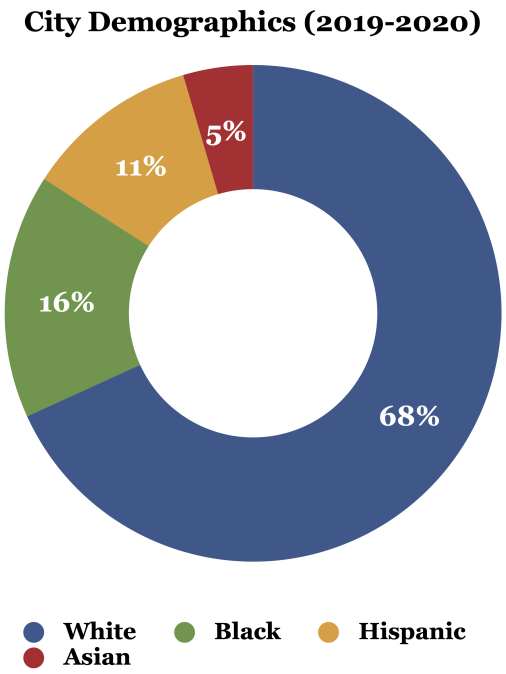

Figure 4: Black City Vignette

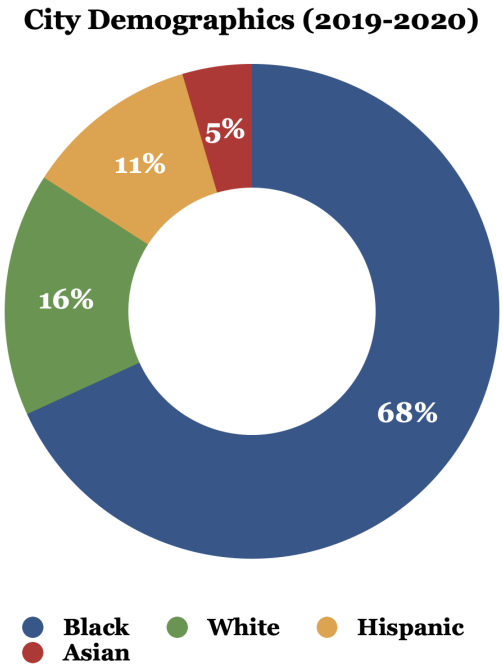

Table 1: Demographics by Treatment Condition, Quality Respondents

Variable	Control	Black City, Black Official	Black City, White Official	White City, Black Official	White City, White Official
Voted in 2020	70.9%	82.1%*	71.6%	78.0%	74.7%
Voted in 2022	62.0%	71.1%*	63.5%	70.6%	69.4%
Supported Trump in 2020	45.5%	44.6%	46.9%	43.5%	41.5%
Social Trust	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.1
Government Trust	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0
Male	41.3%	48.6%	42.5%	43.3%	42.8%
Some College or More	63.8%	72.8%*	67.9%	70.2%	67.7%
Income	$60,991	$65,166	$58,491	$63,256	$61,921
Davis & Wilson Racial Resentment	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Classical Racial Resentment	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	-0.1
White Identity	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Age	43.5	45.0	46.1	47.2*	46.0
Party ID	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.6
Ideology	4.0	4.1	4.2	3.9	3.9
n	213.0	213.0	212.0	215.0	229.0

Note:

* T-test different than control group ($p < 0.05$).

† Dissimilar from controls according to Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2: Demographics by Treatment Condition, All Respondents

Variable	Control	Black City, Black Official	Black City, White Official	White City, Black Official	White City, White Official
Voted in 2020	67.0%	79.5%*	69.6%	76.7%*	73.6%
Voted in 2022	59.4%	68.9%*	62.6%	68.2%*	67.7%*
Supported Trump in 2020	42.9%	46.3%	43.6%	43.3%	42.5%
Social Trust	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.1
Government Trust	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.0
Male	42.9%	48.0%	46.5%	45.9%	44.1%
Some College or More	63.2%	72.5%*	66.7%	69.9%	66.5%
Income	$61,423	$64,545	$58,101	$63,821	$61,811
Davis & Wilson Racial Resentment	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Classical Racial Resentment	0.0	0.0	-0.1	0.1	0.0
White Identity	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0
Age	41.7	43.1	44.3	45.4*	45.2*
Party ID	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.6
Ideology	3.8	4.1	4.2*	3.9	3.9
n	261.0	255.0	258.0	246.0	254.0

Note:

* T-test different than control group ($p < 0.05$).

† Dissimilar from controls according to Kolmogorov–Smirnov test ($p < 0.05$).

3 Regression Tables for Experimental Models

Table 3 presents the results of the regression models testing all 4 experimental arms against the control. In each case, the "control" group is the reference category, excluded from the table. Although the figures presented in the body of the manuscript do not include covariate adjustment because of the randomization, we here present models with and without covariate adjustment. Note that in every case, respondents exposed to a Black official representing a Black city were more concerned about fraud and administrative malfeasance ($p < 0.01$) than controls; meanwhile, in only one case were those exposed to a white official representing a white city more suspicious than the controls.

Table 3: Belief in Malfesiance, by Treatment

	Fraud		Miscounted Ballots	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Black Official, Black City	0.343**	0.315**	0.348**	0.340**
	(0.132)	(0.122)	(0.131)	(0.122)
Black Official, White City	0.206	0.221	0.365**	0.377**
	(0.131)	(0.121)	(0.130)	(0.121)
White Official, Black City	0.014	0.058	0.310*	0.337**
	(0.132)	(0.121)	(0.131)	(0.121)
White Official, White City	0.143	0.175	0.216	0.244*
	(0.129)	(0.118)	(0.129)	(0.118)
Supported Trump in 2020		0.408***		0.408***
		(0.104)		(0.104)
Social Trust		0.218***		0.245***
		(0.044)		(0.044)
Government Trust		-0.186***		-0.186***
		(0.038)		(0.038)
Male		0.302***		0.248**
		(0.082)		(0.082)
College Graduate		0.002		0.067
		(0.091)		(0.091)
Income		0.000***		0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)
Age		-0.022***		-0.019***
		(0.002)		(0.002)
7-Point Party ID		-0.009		-0.027
		(0.029)		(0.029)
7-Point Ideology		0.057*		0.098***
		(0.026)		(0.026)
Intercept	2.897***	2.866***	2.779***	2.509***
	(0.093)	(0.200)	(0.092)	(0.199)
Num.Obs.	1080	1039	1077	1037
R2	0.009	0.203	0.010	0.193
R2 Adj.	0.005	0.192	0.006	0.181

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In Table 4 we present the pooled results for all respondents in each of the "official's race" treatment conditions. As discussed in the body of the manuscript, there is some reason to be concerned about the delivery of the treatment, according to our manipulation checks. Here, in addition to OLS models where the *intended* treatment is used as the principal independent variable, we include instrumental variables regressions in which the intent-to-treat group is used as an instrument for the condition the respondent reported being in. If a respondent did not know the race of the official to which they were exposed, they are considered to be in the control group. Table 4 makes a few things clear. Firstly, in all instances respondents exposed to a Black official were more concerned about widespread ballot fraud than controls; in no case were those exposed to a white official more concerned. Secondly, while respondents exposed to white or Black officials were more concerned about administrative malfeasance than controls, the Black official was consistently more worrisome (though not to a statistically degree). Table 5 presents the similar results, but for the municipality characteristics treatments. Here, we see little evidence of treatment effects on beliefs in fraud, but we do see that respondents are concerned about official malfeasance in Black (and, to a lesser extent, white) cities than control respondents. Observation counts differ across the regressions due to missing data from some respondents.

Table 4: Belief in Malfesiance, by Treatment

	Fraud				Miscounted Ballots			
	OLS		IV		OLS		IV	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Black Official	0.274*	0.268*	0.315*	0.303**	0.356**	0.359***	0.391**	0.391***
	(0.114)	(0.105)	(0.127)	(0.117)	(0.113)	(0.105)	(0.125)	(0.116)
White Official	0.081	0.119	0.080	0.127	0.262*	0.289**	0.287*	0.318**
	(0.113)	(0.104)	(0.129)	(0.117)	(0.112)	(0.104)	(0.127)	(0.116)
Supported Trump in 2020		0.406***		0.401***		0.409***		0.404***
		(0.104)		(0.104)		(0.104)		(0.103)
Social Trust		0.219***		0.220***		0.244***		0.243***
		(0.044)		(0.044)		(0.044)		(0.044)
Government Trust		-0.188***		-0.188***		-0.184***		-0.186***
		(0.038)		(0.038)		(0.038)		(0.038)
Male		0.303***		0.305***		0.247**		0.248**
		(0.082)		(0.082)		(0.082)		(0.082)
College Graduate		0.001		-0.011		0.068		0.054
		(0.091)		(0.091)		(0.091)		(0.091)
Income		0.000***		0.000***		0.000***		0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Age		-0.022***		-0.022***		-0.019***		-0.019***
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)
7-Point Party ID		-0.010		-0.009		-0.026		-0.026
		(0.029)		(0.029)		(0.029)		(0.028)
7-Point Ideology		0.057*		0.056*		0.098***		0.099***
		(0.026)		(0.026)		(0.026)		(0.026)
Intercept	2.897***	2.871***	2.897***	2.879***	2.779***	2.506***	2.779***	2.518***
	(0.093)	(0.200)	(0.093)	(0.199)	(0.092)	(0.199)	(0.092)	(0.197)
Num.Obs.	1080	1039	1080	1039	1077	1037	1077	1037
R2	0.007	0.202	-0.001	0.201	0.009	0.192	0.012	0.198
R2 Adj.	0.005	0.192	-0.002	0.190	0.007	0.182	0.010	0.188

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5: Belief in Malfesiance, by Treatment

	Fraud				Miscounted Ballots			
	OLS		IV		OLS		IV	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Black City	0.179	0.165	0.211	0.209	0.329**	0.338**	0.409*	0.414**
	(0.114)	(0.098)	(0.165)	(0.152)	(0.113)	(0.105)	(0.163)	(0.151)
White City	0.173	0.368***	0.206	0.241	0.289*	0.308**	0.330*	0.361**
	(0.113)	(0.093)	(0.153)	(0.139)	(0.112)	(0.104)	(0.151)	(0.139)
Supported Trump in 2020		0.406***		0.403***		0.408***		0.405***
		(0.104)		(0.104)		(0.104)		(0.104)
Social Trust		0.204***		0.213***		0.245***		0.238***
		(0.044)		(0.045)		(0.044)		(0.045)
Government Trust		-0.193***		-0.191***		-0.184***		-0.190***
		(0.038)		(0.038)		(0.038)		(0.038)
Male		0.291***		0.294***		0.246**		0.234**
		(0.082)		(0.082)		(0.082)		(0.082)
College Graduate		-0.009		-0.010		0.067		0.048
		(0.091)		(0.091)		(0.091)		(0.091)
Income		0.000***		0.000***		0.000***		0.000***
		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)
Age		-0.022***		-0.022***		-0.019***		-0.019***
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)
7-Point Party ID		-0.009		-0.008		-0.025		-0.027
		(0.029)		(0.029)		(0.029)		(0.029)
7-Point Ideology		0.059*		0.057*		0.098***		0.100***
		(0.026)		(0.026)		(0.026)		(0.026)
Intercept	2.897***	2.899***	2.897***	2.911***	2.779***	2.501***	2.779***	2.584***
	(0.093)	(0.191)	(0.093)	(0.193)	(0.092)	(0.199)	(0.092)	(0.193)
Num.Obs.	1080	1039	1080	1039	1077	1037	1077	1037
R2	0.003	0.209	0.010	0.206	0.008	0.192	0.013	0.194
R2 Adj.	0.001	0.199	0.008	0.196	0.007	0.182	0.011	0.184

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Finally, we present the regression tables for the models in the manuscript exploring the relationships between treatment, antipathetic characteristics, and belief in malfeasance in Table 6.

Table 6: Moderating Effects of Social Identities

	Fraud			Miscounted Ballots		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Black Official	0.278*	0.248*	0.238*	0.348**	0.314**	0.310**
	(0.114)	(0.107)	(0.104)	(0.113)	(0.107)	(0.104)
White Official	0.114	0.155	0.143	0.258*	0.296**	0.287**
	(0.112)	(0.106)	(0.103)	(0.112)	(0.106)	(0.102)
Racial Resentment	-0.099			-0.121		
	(0.096)			(0.095)		
Black Official × Racial Resentment	0.124			0.180		
	(0.113)			(0.113)		
White Official × Racial Resentment	0.028			0.012		
	(0.114)			(0.113)		
Resentment Toward African Americans		0.480***			0.479***	
		(0.090)			(0.090)	
Black Official × Resentment Toward African Americans		0.019			0.018	
		(0.107)			(0.108)	
White Official × Resentment Toward African Americans		-0.013			-0.070	
		(0.107)			(0.107)	
White ID			0.722***			0.668***
			(0.087)			(0.087)
Black Official × White ID			-0.154			-0.035
			(0.106)			(0.106)
White Official × White ID			-0.225*			-0.209*
			(0.104)			(0.104)
Supported Trump in 2020	0.424***	0.201*	0.271**	0.424***	0.211*	0.263**
	(0.105)	(0.100)	(0.096)	(0.105)	(0.101)	(0.096)
Social Trust	0.218***	0.160***	0.142***	0.243***	0.191***	0.163***
	(0.045)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.041)
Government Trust	-0.189***	-0.174***	-0.183***	-0.185***	-0.173***	-0.181***
	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.035)
Male	0.313***	0.210**	0.229**	0.260**	0.156*	0.171*
	(0.083)	(0.078)	(0.076)	(0.082)	(0.078)	(0.076)
College Graduate	0.000	0.076	0.096	0.069	0.137	0.170*
	(0.092)	(0.087)	(0.084)	(0.091)	(0.087)	(0.084)
Income	0.000***	0.000**	0.000**	0.000***	0.000**	0.000**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Age	-0.022***	-0.021***	-0.019***	-0.019***	-0.018***	-0.015***
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
7-Point Party ID	-0.010	-0.005	0.002	-0.025	-0.022	-0.014
	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.026)
7-Point Ideology	0.062*	-0.002	0.022	0.104***	0.044	0.062*
	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.025)	(0.024)
Intercept	2.864***	3.390***	3.227***	2.489***	2.999***	2.880***
	(0.203)	(0.195)	(0.186)	(0.203)	(0.195)	(0.186)
Num.Obs.	1032	1035	1031	1030	1033	1029
R2	0.205	0.289	0.337	0.198	0.273	0.327
R2 Adj.	0.192	0.277	0.326	0.185	0.261	0.315
F	15.407	24.291	30.328			

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

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Consent Page

INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

Title of Research Study: Race and Elections

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a non-Hispanic white citizen of the United States who is over the age of 18 and does not live abroad. The purpose of this research study is to understand how important partisan identity is when deciding how to vote for candidates in American elections. We encourage you to take this survey in a quiet private location of your choosing.

• If you agree to participate, we will ask you to take a survey lasting about 10 minutes. You will answer questions about yourself and respond to written information.

• Your participation is a prerequisite to assign research participants by chance to one of two or more groups. It is used to ensure that results would not be influenced by the selection of participants in one group as compared to another. In this research, you have a 25% chance of being assigned to one of the following groups: control, or one of four treatment groups. Each treatment group will read a different news story about voter fraud in the 2020 elections.

• You will answer questions about your age, income, education, ZIP code, and other information. You will provide no directly identifiable information like name, address, or email address, and we are following best practices for data security.

• If at any point during the procedure you become uncomfortable or wish to end the survey, you may do so. Note: if you exit the survey prior to completion, you will not receive compensation.

• Your participation in this survey will help researchers learn whether beliefs in voter fraud influence confidence in American elections.

• Upon completing the survey, you will be compensated at the rate to which you agreed before arriving on this page.

• The information we collect from you as part of this study will not be used or distributed for future research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you have any questions, you can contact RICHARD W. BARKER. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you can contact RUTGERS Research Compliance Administrator at 848-932-0150 or HRPP@orsp.rutgers.edu.

☐ I agree
☐ I do not agree

pretest

We will start with a few questions about your political engagement and views toward government.

Please tell us if you participated in any of the last couple elections

	Yes	No
Legislative Elections (Senate and Congressional Elections)	○	○
Presidential Elections	○	○

Whether you voted or not in 2020, was there a candidate you supported more than the other?

☐ I supported Biden over Trump
☐ I supported Trump over Biden
☐ I did not support anyone

Speaking generally, How often can you trust other people?

☐ Always
☐ Most of the time
☐ About half the time
☐ Some of the time
☐ Never

How often can you trust the officials who oversee elections?

☐ Always
☐ Most of the time
☐ About half the time
☐ Some of the time
☐ Never

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

☐ Agree strongly
☐ Agree somewhat
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree somewhat
☐ Disagree strongly

Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

☐ Agree strongly
☐ Agree somewhat
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree somewhat
☐ Disagree strongly

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.

☐ Agree strongly
☐ Agree somewhat
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree somewhat
☐ Disagree strongly

Next, we would like to ask you a few questions about firearms.

Do you own a gun or revolver?

☐ Yes
☐ No

The right to own and carry a gun is very important to me.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

There should be rules against carrying firearms in sensitive places such as polling places.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

African Americans do not need any special considerations because racism is a thing of the past.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

For African Americans to succeed they need to stop using past racism and slavery as excuses.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

Special considerations for African Americans place me at an unfair disadvantage because I have done nothing wrong.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

African Americans bring up race only when they need to make an excuse for their failure.

☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

WCBM

Warren G. Harding was the 29th President of the United States (1920-1923). Harding ignored an Ainedale farmer named Isabelle Bay.' Laddie Boy attended cabinet meetings and even had his own chair. Please select 'Ainedale' below to show you are paying attention.

☐ Bexcor
☐ Ainedale

Please read the following press release and then continue answering some questions.

The City of Lancaster Responds to Accusations of Fraud
By Associated Press Staff
December 17,2020

After the 2020 election, reports of election irregularities have raised calls for audits and a hardening of anti-fraud measures. The mostly White city of Lancaster, Michigan is receiving national attention with politicians and some media groups saying the election there was a mess. New accusations and stories include, ballots being collected by unknown third-parties, voting machines changing some votes, and citizen poll workers being restricted from observing the official count.

A spokesperson for the Lancaster board of elections, Hakeem Green (D), tried to refute the accusations made earlier this week saying, "These unfounded accusations are just false. No systemic fraud took place in our city." Green wrote, "That couldn't be further from the truth. Nothing criminal took place. This was the most secure and fair election conducted in recent memory."

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Now we would like to ask a few questions about what you just read.

What was the racial split of the city in the press release?

☐ It was a majority White city
☐ It was a majority Black city
☐ I can't recall

Would you say Mr. Green, the city Spokesperson, was Black, or was he White?

☐ He was White
☐ He was Black
☐ I can't recall

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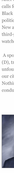

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BCWM

Warren G. Harding was the 29th President of the United States (1921-1923). Harding owned an Airedale Terrier named "Laddie Boy." Laddie Boy attended cabinet meetings and even had his own chair. Please select 'Airedale' below to show you are paying attention.

- Boxer
- Airedale

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- I can't recall

control

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- Boxer
- Airedale

Please read the following excerpt from the city of Lancaster's website and then answer a few questions.

The Sights of Lancaster

Lancaster Michigan has multiple important landmarks. A few of the important landmarks of Lancaster and Cheboygan County are Lake Lancaster to the north, the locks at Leslie, Brownwell Cemetery, Rock Mill, Elmwood Cemetery, the Brickwood Memorial, the William Rose house (commonly referred to as the "Rose-Peters house" and currently the "Arts Center of Michigan"), the S. R. Macrracken home (The Georgian), the Thomas Ewing home, the Mannagh Memorial, St. John's Episcopal Church, and St. Peter's Lutheran Church.

Post-Test

Please answer the next few questions about Lancaster Michigan, the city you read about.

How likely was it that voter fraud occurred in Lancaster, Michigan during the 2020 presidential election?

- Extremely
- Very
- Moderately
- A little
- Not at all

How about the vote counting? How likely was it that votes in Lancaster, Michigan were counted incorrectly?

- Extremely
- Very
- Moderately
- A little
- Not at all

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the 2020 Presidential election in general?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am confident my vote was counted as intended					
I am confident votes in my county or state were counted fairly					
I am confident the votes nationally were counted fairly					
I am confident the votes in other states were counted fairly					

How about for the more recent 2022 Midterm Elections?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am confident the votes in Lancaster Michigan were counted fairly					
I am confident my vote was counted as intended					
I am confident the votes in my county or state were counted as intended					
I am confident the votes in my state were counted as intended					
I am confident the votes in other states were counted as intended					

Various election reforms have been proposed and enacted in the last few years. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly disagree
Digital votes should be automatically registered to vote					
Voter ID laws make it more difficult to vote					
Mail-in votes should be kept, even after learning they are susceptible to fraud					
Voting should be easier than it is now, even if that would increase the risk of fraud in person					
Felon voting rights are sacred to truly win back society's trust					

Since the 1950s, do you think American culture and our way of life has mostly changed for the better, or has it mostly changed for the worse?

- Mostly changed for the better
- Mostly changed for the worse

Take a minute to write a short response. What sorts of electoral fraud might have occurred in Lancaster, Michigan, during the 2020 Presidential Election? Your answers are anonymous.

demographics

You are almost done! Just a few more question about yourself.

What is your age?

What gender do you identify with? If you choose other, you may fill in how you identify.

- Male
- Female
- X
- Other

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school credential
- High school graduate - High school diploma or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- Some college, but no degree
- 2 year degree
- 4 year degree
- Masters degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Professional school degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD)
- PhD

What is your home ZIP code?

How would you classify your household's pre-tax income? Please use your best guess and choose one.

- Below $20,000
- $20,000 to $40,000
- $40,001 to $60,000
- $60,001 to $80,000
- $80,001 to $100,000
- $100,001 to $120,000
- Over $120,000

Generally speaking, which of these party labels best describes you?

- Strong Democrat
- Democrat
- Independent, but lean Democrat
- Independent
- Independent, but lean Republican
- Republican
- Strong Republican

Where would you place yourself on the following scale regarding your political ideology?

- Strong liberal
- Liberal
- Not so strong liberal
- Moderate
- Not so strong conservative
- Conservative
- Strong conservative

How important is being white to your identity?

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- A little important
- Not at all important

How important is it for whites to work together to change laws that are unfair to whites?

- Extremely
- Very
- Moderately
- A little
- Not at all

How likely is it that many whites are unable to find a job because employers are hiring minorities instead?

- Extremely
- Very
- Moderately
- A little
- Not at all

Today, how much discrimination happens to white people in the United States?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Debriel

Thank you for your participation in our survey. You may have been asked to read a story about voter fraud in the 2020 Presidential election. The best available evidence suggests that Lancaster, and all election fraud are extremely rare in the United States. The agencies in the Trump Administration concluded that the 2020 presidential election was the most secure election in the country's history.

OSF Pre-registration Information

Fraud, Cities, and Race

Version for Peer-Review Submission. Edited for grammar and spelling. Original version on OSF. Link to Public Registration Overview : https://osf.io/zsymn?view_only=None

Sections flagged with Updated were made by Mar 26, 2023

Reason for update:
We began this registration in January when we were developing the design of the project. We have now (March) finished the design, got approval from IRB, and are running the Survey. The data have come in. Before looking at the data and analyzing it, we want to commit to our plan for flagging inattentive/speeder participants. We want to have our criteria in writing to keep ourselves accountable and also to show Lucid our reasoning when we are requesting DQ of severely inattentive respondents.

Study Information
Hypotheses

Mere Information Hypothesis 1: Relative to a control condition, participants will think voter fraud more likely when reading a story about electoral fraud.

Mere Information Hypothesis 2: Relative to a control condition, participants will think vote counting more fraudulent when reading a story about electoral fraud

Racial City Hypothesis: Participants will think accusations of voter fraud (incorrect vote counting) are more likely in majority black cities, relative to majority white cities and relative to the control condition.

Racial Leadership Hypothesis: Participants will think accusations of voter fraud (incorrect vote counting) are more likely when denied by a black public official, relative to a white public official or a control condition.

Clear Signal Hypothesis: Participants will think accusations of voter fraud (incorrect vote counting) are more likely when the city is majority black AND the public official denying the accusation is black, relative to a white cities with public officials. When there is no racial ambiguity, radicalized belief in fraud will be greatest.

.

Design Plan

For one study in this project, we use a survey experiment. The experiment is a 2x2 factorial design, with one additional condition as a control. The vignette presented to participants is a news story attributed to the Associated Press but created by the researchers. In the story, participants are told about a city with multiple accusations of voter/election fraud following the 2020 Presidential Election. The city then rebuts these accusations with an official statement. This is consistent across all conditions. We manipulate the racial demographics of the city. The city is either 68% White or 68% Black. A visual pie chart makes this manipulation clear to the participants reading the story. We also manipulate the race of the public official who rebuts the accusation. This manipulation is also a prominent image of the public official who is portrayed as either a White man or a Black man. The control condition presents participants with a short paragraph about the same city (Lancaster, Michigan). But this story simply lists made up landmarks someone could visit while in Lancaster and the surrounding area.

Randomization

Simple randomization into one of five group. A single true control, and the conditions that make up the 2x2 factorial.

Updated We used Qualtrics built in survey flow options to randomly assign participants to conditions to with equal probability.

Sampling Plan

The data used do not already exist. We will collect the a sample of 1000-1200 American adults.

Updated Edit: March 23 9:30 EST. I am updating this. We have the data, but have not analyzed it. We ran some tabulations to look at demographics (mean party, education, age, income). We also looked at attention and manipulation checks. Also looked at whether selection into conditions was evenly distributed.

Data collection procedures

We will recruit from the population of Adults in the United States. We do not anticipate any other inclusion/exclusion criteria. However we may land on excluding non-whites since most studies of racial backlash and counter-mobilization in the U.S. are centered on the behavior of Whites. We will recruit through a market research group like Lucid, Qualtrics, or Forthright panels. We plan to pay each participant roughly $1.50 for their participation in our survey (~ 5 min).

Updated EDIT: Our hypotheses ended up being theoretically centered on white Americans. Because we wanted only whites, we had to use a project manager with Lucid and could not simply use Lucid Theorem. This raised the price to 2.25 per complete. After completing the survey instrument, we had the link checked by the project manager on Tuesday, March 14th. We did a soft launch the next day. I flagged concerns about attentiveness to the project manage. In an email they told me to keep a detailed list of respondent IDs and the reasons for disqualification. I have a numbers file for this.

Sample size

1000-1200 U.S. Adults

Updated EDIT: March 23. We ended up deciding on 1250 White U.S. Adults. 250 per condition.

Sample size rationale

Used "pwr" package in R to determine sample size to estimate med-medsmall sized effect.

Stopping rule

Data collection will end between the time that 1000-1200 participants are reached and our market research partner closes access to our survey.

Updated EDIT: March 23. Data collection stops after we reach 1250, there will be some spill over since some respondents will finish an in progress survey before the project manage closes our link.

Variables
Manipulated variables

Demographics of the city read about (Majority White/Majority Black)

Race of the public official denying the fraud accusations (White/Black).

Measured variables

How likely fraud (5pt liker scale, strongly agree-strongly disagree) Confidence that votes were counted accurately (5pt liker scale, strongly agree-strongly disagree) Racial Resentment Scale (Kinder and Sears) White's Resentment Towards Blacks (Davis and Wilson) Trust in Government and Social Trust (5pt Scales) Partisanship and Ideology (Standard 7pt liker scales) Demographics (e.g., age, income, gender, race, education)

Indices

Traditional racial resentment and Davis/Wilson Racial resentment are used. We are coding these as higher values is more of the attitude (i.e.,, higher racial resentment). Same for our measures of white identity/solidarity.

Analysis Plan
Statistical models

ANOVA will be used to test for difference in means across experimental conditions. We will also use covariates as moderators that we believe with increase of decrease the average treatment effect. Multiple regression will be used to better understand the correlates of belief in voter fraud in the mass public. We have an attention checks that ask what the news story was about. We also have manipulation checks that asks about the race of the public official who denied the fraud accusations.

Data Quality Checks (Post Data Collection)

After the first round of data was collected, Author looked at a few measures of attentiveness (manipulation/attention checks). These were lacking at a rate we were not comfortable with. There were also many completed that lasted much less than the 10 minutes the survey was roughly designed to take. The main reason for this round of pre-registration edits was to communicate our plan to check data and request DQs from Lucid.

The following are the criteria we are flagging for survey quality.

(1) Speeders: Time = Median / 2
(2) Incorrect Attention Check
(3) Incorrect Manipulation Checks (There are two)
(4) Within open response: Gibberish, broken English sentences, foreign symbols. Things like DK and NA were taken into account if other red flags occurred.
(5) Inconsistency in Answers. Examples: A 20 year old making more than 120 thousand. A Strong Republican/Strong Liberal (not sufficient, but a consideration) . Racial Resentment straight lining.
(6) Straight Lining For Multiple Pages/grids.
(7) Patterned responses for multiple pages/grids.
(8) Taking Multiple Minutes on the experimental vignette (Not alone sufficient to flag respondent)

Updated EDIT: We ended up only removing attention check failures and speeders. This was done because these exclusions are recommended by Aronow et al., 2020 and Ternovski and Orr, 2022. These were removed after some analysis had been done. These exclusions did not alter the main treatment effect of city official on the outcome variables.

Data Quality Assurance Process:

Collection of data was completed late Wednesday Match 15th. The next day, Author downloaded 1274 responses from Qualtrics. /Before looking at the data, Author removed the dependent variable columns from the .csv in the numbers application. Author imported the data into STATA and sorted by Duration (in seconds). Author took mean response time and divided it by 2. Then Author looked more closely at all responses that fell under 193 seconds. On Friday March 17th Author had completed looking at participants with less than 193 seconds. Data quality was not improving by a lot. Decided to expand search until 15 respondents in a row did not violate 3 or more of the criteria above.

Author's note : This process ended up revealing issues like attention and compliance. Author opted to keep most observations for analysis. This process had no impact on sample beyond flagging attention check failures, and speeders.