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To cite this article: Timothy E. Lewis & S. J. Nelson (2021): Insulated Blackness: the cause for fracture in Black political identity, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, DOI: [10.1080/21565503.2021.1892783](https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2021.1892783)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2021.1892783>



Published online: 04 Mar 2021.



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Insulated Blackness: the cause for fracture in Black political identity

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ABSTRACT

The Black Political Identity is often treated as a monolith in American politics, with interest groups and political parties employing blanket policy solutions to appease and engage African Americans. However, observations and scholarship show that Black Americans are not monolithic, possessing divergent views about social policies, so much so that some Black Americans can hold political positions that are oppositional to collective Black advancement. Therefore, this work theorizes the concept of insulated Blackness – the extent to which self-identified African Americans oppose pro-Black remedial policies and/or disagree with commonly held ideologies about the Black condition, as a result of an existence insulated from frequent experiences of racial discrimination. This analysis will use the 2016 American National Election Study to assess experientially constructed political Blackness in terms of policies and ideologies considered synonymous with Blackness. The analysis also presents predicted probability models that demonstrate that political Blackness is rooted in the heightened racial discrimination experiences. We conclude that self-identified Blacks may exist outside of the identity of political Blackness because they perceive they are insulated from racial discrimination.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 1 June 2020
Accepted 18 January 2021

KEYWORDS

African American; political Blackness; identity; racial discrimination; affirmative action

Introduction

On April 4, 2019, American actor Isaiah Washington voiced that he believed that “President Trump had done more for Black people than Obama” (Atwell 2019).¹ This statement contradicted public opinion for most Americans (Horowitz, Brown, and Cox 2019) and was not consistent with the dismally low approval rating President Trump had garnered with African Americans. Washington’s divergence from the Black political position is also seen in political activist Candace Amber Owens, who opposes the methods of protestors in response to the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, calling Blacks “chimpanzees” for their protest and civil unrest. These and similar observations prompt a simple question: how can persons identify as African American, presumably because of shared biological features, yet find themselves oppositional to political Blackness as an identity?

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A draft of this paper was presented at the Northeastern Political Science Association (NPSA) Meeting, 2019, in Philadelphia, PA.

Scholars have studied these racial identities as a political and social construct overlooking that the current social constructs are based on biological differences (Dobzhansky 1941). More importantly, race is often studied monolithically, particularly when studying African Americans. Dawson (1994), Lewis (2003), King (2010), and Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2017) all study African American sociopolitical action in the collective. Furthermore, while these studies provide impactful insight into social and political thought and behavior, Shelton, Bryant, and Brown (2016) assert, studying intra-group variations of Blackness provides new insights into the limits of Blacks' commitment to the sense of peoplehood. This Black personhood, or Blackness, is directly akin to political identity because it signals what African Americans intrinsically value.

So, why would phenotype African Americans – meaning they self-identify as Black based on shared skin color and other genetic factors – oppose pro-Black policy and commonly held Black political ideologies? This paper affords that phenotypical (biological) Blackness and political Blackness differ. As drawn from DuBoisian theory, phenotypical Blackness is self-affirmed identification as Black solely based on biological similarities, which include no commitment to Black people's issues as a political group. On the other hand, political Blackness is the championing of pro-Black remedial policies due to shared biology, experiences, and effects shaped by a system of disadvantage (DuBois 1903). Building on DuBois' conceptualization of political Blackness, this study assesses the theory of insulated Blackness – the extent to which self-identified African Americans oppose pro-Black remedial policies and/or disagree with commonly held ideologies about the Black condition, as a result of an existence insulated from frequent experiences of racial discrimination.

This study explains an intra-Black minority and provides more clarity on Blackness as an identity. The article argues in the theme of Nancy Whittier (2017) and Khalilah Brown-Dean (2019) that common shared experiences define political identity and those without the experiences, or perceive they exist in a sphere absent the experiences, exist outside the collective identity. Thus, a person can be biologically Black, possessing genetic differences in tyrosinase, resulting in darker skin, an enlarged and round nasal cavity, and a distinctive eye orbit (Wills 1994); yet hold positions on policies that are oppositional of Black people as a political group. We anticipate a statistically significant and positive relationship between select pro-Black policies and Black respondents. However, we also anticipate that the observed relationship between those who self-identify as Black and select pro-Black policies is nullified when there is no racial discrimination experience.

The next section will look at prior works on the sociopolitical positions of African Americans across a host of issues – a literature review to demonstrate how this study is situated in a broader context of Black studies. The following section will explain the theoretical framework of insulated Blackness, including current literature affirming that common experiences shape identity. We then present data, models, and predictions, followed by findings. This study ends with a discussion and concluding summary.

Prior works on Black sociopolitical attitudes

Literature that attempts to understand support or opposition of specific policies and political opinions through a racial lens consists of assessing the policies and opinions from a

White–Black dynamic. Literature traditionally frames these academic studies as one racial group majorly supports, while the other majorly opposes; and the majority support is strongly implied to characterize the respective racial group holistically. This lens of studying political phenomena from a White–Black lens is evident on a range of topics: affirmative action (Jacobson 1985; Federico and Sidanius 2002); reparations (Ya Azibo 2008); voting (Washington 2006; Lewis 2019); even opinions on same-sex relationships (Lewis 2003; Ward 2005). All these studies share a conclusion that rests upon the notion that Blacks and Whites are oppositional in policies and political opinions. Literature has, by default, made opposition to certain policies and opinions a measure of anti-Blackness, which may be a causal explanation for a demographic of racist non-Blacks; but, as a sole explanation, anti-Blackness dismisses those that self-identify as Black. The approach of understanding racial group thought and behavior uniformly dismisses important understandings about how actual racial political works and ignores the possibilities of intragroup minorities.

Cathy Cohen (2006) gets at this notion of a Black minority in her qualitative study of HIV/AIDS in the Black community. She affords a notion of advanced marginalization, where the Black majority, policed by Black political elites, ignores and dismisses the issue of the minority because it does not contribute to the majority's notion of Blackness. This shaped every facet of the Black community, including “membership,” or measures of Blackness. According to Cohen, these efforts by Black elites to shape political Blackness even serve as a gatekeeper to academic studies, deeming any study that does not promote the opinions of the Black majority as “trashing” the Black community (Cohen 2006, x). Thus, literature continues to persist in assessing political thought and behavior on a White–Black paradigm. This study contributes to literature because it breaks that *de facto* rule and assesses differences within the African American demographic by showing there is an intragroup Black political minority that has fractured from mainstream political Blackness because their Blackness is shaped by different experiences.

In regard to the impact of discrimination on a self-identified racial category, not all scholars believe that there is an impact. The 2019 study by Hopkins et al. looks at the influence of perceived racial discrimination on race-immigrant minorities. These scholars conclude that “group-target discrimination [does] not shape political partisanship or several related measures of attitudes” for immigrant minorities (Hopkins et al., 2019, 14). However, reputable scholars of African American history and politics – Marx (1998); Simien (2004); Toland (2006); Harper (2012); Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2017), Lewis (2019) – have for decades affirmed that the degree of entrenched, enduring, and institutionalized racism toward African Americans is cognitive-shaping. Evelyn Simien (2004) discusses the impact of racism and race-consciousness in her intersectional discussion of African American females. She concludes that racism is so salient that Black women have created the “black feminist consciousness,” which prompts them to see the feminist agenda through the lens of race first, or lack of racial infusion – essentially creating an identity hierarchy. Simply, the entrenched and systematic nature of racial discrimination for African Americans far transcends any experimental discrimination enacted on race-immigrant groups, whose political attitudes were already shaped in their native country where they were likely not the racial minority, as is the experimental design in the Hopkins et al. study. Conclusively, literature supports

studying intra-race political thought and assessing that thought in light of discrimination as a cognitive-shaping experience for African Americans.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Understanding racial categorization helps understand the theoretical underpinnings of the article – identifying as Black as a racial category is different than political Blackness. Race is often seen as a social construct, as Anthony Marx evokes states “enforced racial distinctions” (1998, 2). But, the distinctions were based on visible biological differences, “defined largely by skin color, facial features, and other visual cues” (Obasogie 2010, 585). This produced Black as a racial group where disadvantage was based on the “color line” (DuBois 1903). Once states constructed race based on biology, the experiences of these categories gave these groups sociopolitical identities. This is what Dawson (1994) calls a race group identity. Understanding how biological differences were the basis for the social constructs of race, two queries present themselves. First, can a person have the biological components that would prompt them to self-identify with a race, but not have the necessary experiences to identity with the race politically? Secondly, what experiences shape Blackness as a political identity?

Nancy Whittier (2017) and Khalilah Brown-Dean (2019) both affirm that common experiences shape collective identity. Thus, we theorize that when the necessary identity-shaping experiences are absent, affirmation with the political identity is also absent. Thus, when Isaiah Washington made his claim that President Trump had done more to advance the African American status than President Obama, he, though biologically Black, existed in a sphere outside of political Blackness. Dr Sherice Nelson’s response to Washington was: “Those of us insulated enough from the system speaking ... personal truths that in no way reflect the experiences of our people as a whole.”² Therefore, when this paper references political Blackness, it is referring to the common conditions, experiences, and realities that the majority of self-identified African Americans face. For, it was these experiences, or the lack thereof according to Nelson that shapes the attitudes of self-identifying Blacks like Washington, Owens, and others. If experiences and consciousness shape Blackness, what particular experience is likely to construct more of Blackness? What phenomenon is at the core of political Blackness?

This paper affirms that racial discrimination is the experience at the core of Blackness for African Americans. First, this is a data-driven assertion, as data from the American National Election Study (ANES) demonstrate that of frequently occurring experiences, African Americans experience racism more than other experiences and more than non-Black racial groups (see Table 1). But beyond its frequent occurring, Lucius Barker et al. (1998) straightforwardly states, “Blacks’ self-awareness as a discriminated and disadvantaged group in society leads them to be more politically active than other disadvantage groups who lack a comparable collective identity” (238). Blacks historically have faced racial discrimination at the hands of individuals, systemically, and structurally through policies codified in institutions since the origination of the slave trade. However, even with the abolition of slavery, legal structures were created to ensure hyper-racial institutions were embedded in American culture and delivered through law at the federal and state level (Toland 2005). And, although civil rights efforts removed explicit

Table 1. Comparison of Black – Non-Black Associations, 2016.**Table 1a. Frequencies of education**

Education	Non-Black	Black	Total
<i>No bachelor's degree</i>	59.74%	73.05%	61.23%
<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>	40.26%	26.95%	38.78%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1b. Frequencies of income

Income	Non-Black	Black	Total
<i>Less than \$75,000</i>	60.06%	80.97%	62.40%
<i>\$75,000 or More</i>	39.94%	19.03%	37.60%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1c. Frequencies of religious importance

Religion importance in life	Non-Black	Black	Total
<i>Important</i>	63.65%	80.69%	65.54%
<i>Not important</i>	36.35%	19.31%	34.46%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1d. Frequencies of racial discrimination

Racial discrimination	Non-Black	Black	Total
<i>Never experienced</i>	49.25%	8.93%	53.86%
<i>Experienced</i>	50.75%	91.07%	46.14%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: ANES (2016).

racist policies, implicit one still exists covertly, which Dr King refers to as laws that on their face appear just but are “unjust in [their] application” (King 1963). Ibram Kendi says, “Every policy in every institution in every community ... is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups” (Kendi 2019, 18). Thus, data of self-reported experiences, historical context, and current systemic inequity all point to racial discrimination as the central identity-shaping experience when assessing Blackness.

This salience of racial discrimination is an underlying implication of Lauren Davenport’s (2016) study – though Davenport’s primary focus is to see if a “biracial” racial designation impacts contemporary political issues, the study reveals that an experience can shape political thought (2016, 59). Davenport (2016) discovers that only when looking at “explicitly racial” issues, such as the saliency of racism, increased racial understanding, or support for race-based affirmative action is there an increased likelihood of support from racial minorities.

Drawing from Whittier (2017) and Brown-Dean (2019) on how experiences shape identity, while simultaneously drawing from Barker et al. (1998), Kendi (2019), and Davenport (2016) as to how the specific experience of racial discrimination shapes identity for African Americans, this study theorizes that if an experience with a common racial occurrence can shape political thought and behavior, then the absence of that experience impacts thoughts and behavior as well. Thus, when specifically attempting to understand the attitudes and behaviors of those who self-identify as Black, yet divert from majorly held opinion, this paper theorizes that the experiences of those African Americans differ from the common experiences, because of no, or infrequent, encounters with racial discrimination – the concept termed here as insulated Blackness. This study defines Insulated Blackness as the extent to which self-identified African Americans oppose pro-Black remedial policies and or disagree with commonly held

ideologies about the Black condition, as a result of an existence insulated from frequent Black experiences, such as racial discrimination.

To test this theory we have developed hypotheses using two common pro-Black remedial policies – affirmative action in colleges/universities and the preferential hiring of Blacks – and two common ideologies of the Black condition – past slavery makes it difficult for Black currently and police treatment differs by the race of the suspect.³ For each of the policies and ideologies, this study hypothesizes a conditional effect; that self-identifying Blacks’ opposition or disapproval of the policies and policy positions is contingent on the perceived frequency of racial discrimination. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: In a comparison of positions on the pro-Black policy of affirmative action in colleges and universities, persons who self-identify as Black will oppose the policy if they perceive they have no experience or infrequent experiences with racial discrimination.

H2: In a comparison of positions on the pro-Black policy of the preferential hiring of Blacks, persons who self-identify as Black will oppose the policy if they perceive they have no experience or infrequent experiences with racial discrimination.

H3: In a comparison of positions on the ideology that past slavery makes it difficult for Black currently, persons who self-identify as Black will oppose the policy if they perceive they have no experience or infrequent experiences with racial discrimination.

H4: In a comparison of positions on the ideology that police treatment differs depending on the race of the suspect, persons who self-identify as Black will oppose the policy if they perceive they have no experience or infrequent experiences with racial discrimination.

Data, model, and predictions

To accurately assess the conditional effect of racial discrimination on self-identified Blacks, we use the 2016 American National Election Survey (ANES), as it not only asks if the respondent has experienced racial discrimination but also frames the question to ascertain frequencies of the experience.⁴ We employ ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions using interactive models, as explained by Brambor, Clark, and Golder (2006) and Kellstedt and Whitten (2009). “Analysts should include interaction terms whenever they have conditional hypotheses” (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006, 64). In addition, scholars who study varying outcomes for racial minorities that are dependent on context, such as the Green et al. (2020) study on political participation, rely upon interaction models. Therefore, we represent our statistical model in the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{pro-Black policy/cognition} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{self-identified Black}) + \beta_2(\text{racial discrimination}) \\ & + \beta_3(\text{self-identified Black} * \text{racial discrimination}) \\ & + \beta_x(\text{control variables}) + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

The model presented in the above equation captures the intuition of our hypothesis, as it informs the context conditionality – that the changes in support or opposition of the select pro-Black policies and cognitions are not solely determined by racially identifying as Black, but conditioned by the frequency of racial discrimination. We operationalize

OLS regressions for each of the selected dependent variables: affirmative action, the preferential hiring of Blacks, ideology that past slavery makes it more difficult for Blacks, and ideology on police treatment of Blacks vs. Whites. These variables were recoded to eliminate missing responses, unknown responses, or refusal to answer. Additionally, these variables were recoded so that higher values represent attitudes that are more consistent with the majority sentiments of Black respondents, or would be considered more racially progressive.⁵

On the right side of the equation, we include the variables that we affirm are theoretically pertinent, self-identifying as Black and racial discrimination – the experience-shaping component of political Blackness. We recode the general race variable to create the variable for self-identifying as Black (1 = Black, 0 = non-Black). Racial discrimination is coded so that higher values note greater, or greater frequency of discrimination (1 = No experience, 2 = A Little, 3 = Moderate, 4 = A Lot or A Great Deal). For control variables, education, income, and religious importance are used. Discrete/continuous variables, like education and income, were recoded into category variables, and all control variables were also recoded to eliminate missing responses, unknown responses, or refusal to answers.⁶

We expect a statistically significant and positive relationship for the interaction variable, where racial discrimination conditions the impact of self-reported Blackness on select policies and cognitions. For the policies and cognitions that demonstrate a positive and significant relationship, we operationalize predicted probability models using the CLARIFY package in STATA, as used by Moffett and Rice (2018).

Findings

Before we present findings in support of our theoretical assumption, it is important to reaffirm that political identities are constructed, at least in part, by common experiences. [Table 1](#) shows that there are differences in the sociopolitical experiences of Blacks, compared to non-Blacks. Racial discrimination is the most frequent experience for Black respondents, and also the experience that most distinguished Black from non-Blacks, with 91% of Black experiencing racial discrimination and only 51% of non-Blacks. Additionally, [Table 2](#) gives justification for selecting these policies and cognitions, as we see that a majority of Blacks support affirmative action, the preferential hiring of Blacks, agree that past slavery trauma impact current realities, and agree that Whites are treated better by the police compared to Black citizens. These differences between Black and non-Black respondents are statistically significant, giving merit to name these as pro-Black policies and cognitions. In addition, [Table 2](#) is consistent with DuBois (1903) and Dawson's (1994) assertions that political Blackness is rooted in championing a collective consciousness evinced by policy positions.

[Tables 1](#) and [2](#) provide two clear data observations – Blacks experience with racial discrimination is frequent, salient, and significant compared to non-Black persons and there exist policies and attitudes supported by a majority of Blacks. Thus, we expect these findings to inductively evince our theoretical assumption, which connects these two observations.

As expected, the model shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between several of the variables and support or opposition for the provided policies and issues. The central evidence in supporting this study is that the provided measure

Table 2. Tabulation of Black support for remedial policies, 2016.**Table 2a. Support/opposition of affirmative action in education by Black – Non-Black Association**

	<i>Non-Black</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Support a great deal</i>	5.48%	29.16%	8.11%
<i>Support moderately</i>	7.86%	10.58%	8.16%
<i>Support a little</i>	1.97%	3.02%	2.09%
<i>Neither support or oppose</i>	36.92%	36.29%	36.85%
<i>Oppose a little</i>	4.02%	1.73%	3.77%
<i>Oppose moderately</i>	15.83%	7.78%	14.93%
<i>Oppose a great deal</i>	27.92%	11.45%	26.09%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

N – 4166

Person's Chi-squared – 356.73

p-value – 0.00

Table 2b. Support/opposition of preferential hiring on Blacks

	<i>Non-Black</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Strong support</i>	8.32%	47.40%	12.60%
<i>Not strong support</i>	10.92%	19.01%	11.80%
<i>Not strong opposition</i>	23.02%	15.36%	22.18%
<i>Strong opposition</i>	57.75%	18.23%	53.42%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

N – 3508

Person's Chi-squared – 542.34

p-value – 0.00

Table 2c. Agreement/disagreement on present effects of past slavery

	<i>Non-Black</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Agree strongly</i>	14.48%	43.39%	17.71%
<i>Agree somewhat</i>	27.18%	26.43%	27.10%
<i>Neither</i>	13.92%	14.46%	13.98%
<i>Disagree somewhat</i>	21.00%	7.48%	19.49%
<i>Disagree strongly</i>	23.42%	8.23%	21.72%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

N – 3591

Person's Chi-squared – 239.48

p-value – 0.00

Table 2d. Racial treatment by police officer

	<i>Non-Black</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Treat Whites better</i>	53.67%	85.28%	57.19%
<i>Treated the same</i>	44.80%	13.20%	41.28%
<i>Treat Blacks better</i>	1.53%	1.52%	1.53%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

N – 3539

Person's Chi-squared – 145.87

p-value – 0.00

of political Blackness, an interaction of self-identified Blackness and racial discrimination, is positive and statistically significant when assessing affirmative action in education, the preferential hiring of Blacks, and asserting that past slavery has made it difficult for Blacks presently. This shows that as persons who self-identify as Black, assumingly based on biological similitudes, become more supportive of pro-Black policies and hold supportive positions on pro-Black attitudes as their experiences with racial discrimination become greater. In anticipation of skepticism and to show that findings are not sensitive to model choice, we operationalize ordered logit regressions finding the same results and use those ordered logit regression to compute predicted probabilities (Table 3).

Table 3. OLS regression output for pro-Black remedial policies and ideologies.

Variables	Affirmative action in higher education Coefficients	Preferential hiring of Blacks Coefficients	Past slavery makes it harder for Blacks Coefficients	Black-White suspect police treatment Coefficients
Self-identified Blackness	0.79* (0.36)	0.84* (0.20)	0.58* (0.27)	0.25* (0.10)
Racial discrimination	0.02 (0.04)	0.10* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03* (0.01)
Political Blackness (interaction of self- identified Blackness and racial discrimination)	0.25* (0.12)	0.14* (0.06)	0.23* (0.09)	0.06 (0.03)
Education	0.06* (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	0.17* (0.02)	0.05* (0.01)
Income	-0.19* (0.08)	-0.11* (0.04)	-0.04 (0.06)	0.01 (0.02)
Religious importance	-0.36* (0.07)	-0.23* (0.04)	-0.03* (0.06)	-0.18* (0.02)
	<i>N</i> – 2420	<i>N</i> – 2396	<i>N</i> – 2421	<i>N</i> – 2409
	<i>R</i> -squared – 0.0803	<i>R</i> -squared – 0.1867	<i>R</i> -squared – 0.1225	<i>R</i> -squared – 0.0998
	Adjusted <i>R</i> -Squared – 0.0780	Adjusted <i>R</i> -squared – 0.1896	Adjusted <i>R</i> -squared – 0.1203	Adjusted <i>R</i> -squared – 0.0975

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis

Source: 2016 American National Election Study.

* $p < 0.05$.

Focusing on our measure of political Blackness, we display predicted probability models of political Blackness for affirmative action, the preferential hiring of Blacks, and attitudes around slavery making it harder for Black presently. Figure 1 displays the change in the predicted probabilities for each policy mentioned above as an assessment of political Blackness. Each 1-unit increase in political Blackness, which measures an increase in racial discrimination for self-identifying Blacks, is associated with an increase in support of affirmative action of 0.309 points. To contextualize this effect, an increase in political Blackness from the mean to one standard deviation above the mean can translate into an attitudinal shift on affirmative action. To demonstrate the increased likelihood of support or opposition for affirmative action, we increase political Blackness from “no experience” to a “moderate” experience and such resulted in decreases in the predicted probabilities that one strongly disagrees by 14%, disagrees moderately by 6%, and disagrees a little by 1%. However, the same increase in political Blackness was associated with increases in the predicted probabilities that one neither supports or opposed by 6%, supports a little by 15%, supports moderately by 6%, and supports strongly by 8%.

However, the effects of political Blackness on the preferential hiring of Blacks and past slavery make it harder for Blacks go beyond those of affirmative action. A 1-unit increase in political Blackness is associated with an increase in support of preferential hiring by 0.384 points and an increase in agreement that past slavery makes it harder for Blacks by 0.454 points. When shifting political Blackness from “no experience” to a “moderate” experience, there were decreases in the predicted probabilities that one strongly opposes preferential hiring by 28%. The same increases in political Blackness were associated with increases in the opposition of preferential hiring little by 5%, support a little by 10%, and strong support by 12%. The predicted probabilities of whether past slavery makes it

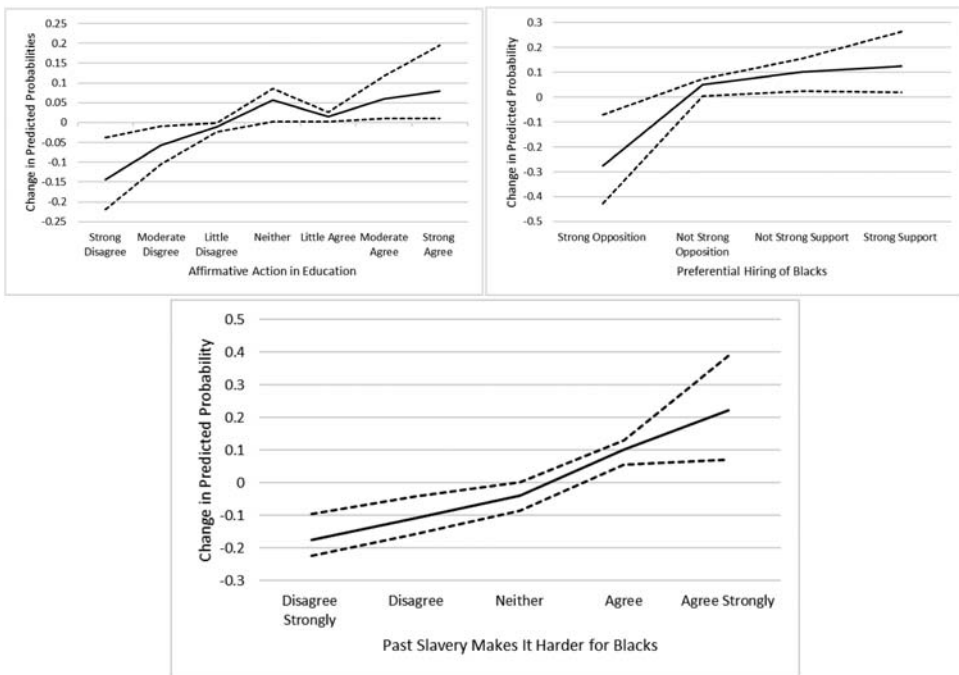


Figure 1. Effects of political Blackness on affirmative action, preferential hiring of Blacks, and cognition that past slavery makes it harder to Blacks. Note: To compute each change in predicted probability, we hold the value of all binary variables at zero, the value of racial discrimination at 1 (no experience), education at 4 (Associate’s Degree), income at 1 (less than 75,000 a year), religion at 1 (Not Important), and our interactive variable of political Blackness at 0 (not Black and no experience where shifting to 1 would be Black with no experience of racial discrimination). In these models we shift our measure of political Blackness from 0 (not Black and no experience) to 3 (Black and moderate experience). The solid line is the mean change in predicted probability of persuading others, while the dashed lines are the 95% confidence interval surrounding this predicted change.

harder for Black seems to draw clear delineation as predicted probabilities demonstrate shifts in political Blackness decreases strong disagreement by 18%, some disagreement by 11%, and neither agreement or disagreement by 4%. However, the same increase in political Blackness was associated with increases in predicted probabilities of some agree-ment by 10% and strong agreement by 22%.

Discussion and conclusion

Affirmative action and the preferential hiring of Blacks are considered remedial policies, policies that combat discrimination through racial considerations toward diversity (Kuk-linski et al. 1997); and the residual effects of slavery and police mistreatment based on race are common ideologies held by Blacks. However, there are those who identify as African American, yet they oppose these remedial policies and dismiss ideologies accepted by those of their race. Even though these persons identify as African Americans; they do not identify with African Americans because they have no collective Black political identity. In every visible way, these persons are Black, sharing the biology of persons

who identify with the “nationalities or ethnic groups originating in any of the Black racial groups of Africa,” as outlined by the U.S. Census, but they do not have a Black sociopolitical identity.

There are many things that shape thought and identity, but shared experiences shape consciousness toward a collective identity, as explained by Whittier (2017) and Brown-Dean (2019). And, this study affirms that no experience impacts the identity of African Americans to the degree that entrenched and frequent racial discrimination does. This study measured political Blackness by interacting race and an experience with racial discrimination. For self-identified Blacks, it provides evidence that support for affirmative action, the preferential hiring of Blacks, and the belief that past slavery makes life more difficult for Black Americans are contingent on the frequent experiences of racial discrimination. Whereas, Blacks with no experience of racial discrimination, or infrequent experiences, did not show that same significant relationship in support of these policies. We logically deduce that this intra-group minority fractures from the Black political identity because they do not have the necessary discriminatory experiences. When those who self-identify as Black, because of visible shared biological cues, lack frequent discriminatory experiences, or the perception of those experiences, they fracture from the Black political identity in both policy and ideology.

Implications of this study go well beyond a few policies and attitudes. The collective Black identity, and the behaviors that identity affords, are largely shaped around racial discrimination, a traumatic negative experience. Racial trauma shapes Blackness! The small intra-group that fractures from this identity rooted in trauma does so because they perceive they do not experience racism. Whether racial minorities can actually exist absent racism is debatable, as the systems and institutions of American society sustain and perpetuate racism (Kendi 2019). However, if the structures and institutions of American society can improve the experiences of Black America and ever move to a post-racial society, not only that can America make claims of restorative justice, but also that remedy would re-shape the African American sociopolitical identity. Thus, when a society can shift the majority experiences of a population they can shift the identity of the population as well.

Notes

1. The terms “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in this study.
2. Dr Nelson responded to Washington on Twitter’s social media platform and response can be found at <https://twitter.com/drjanaye/status/1115392202169970690?s=21>.
3. Affirmative action and the preferential hiring of Blacks, which fundamentally mirrors affirmative action, are remedial policies because as Kuklinski et al. (1997) describes affirmative action policies, they are efforts to combat discrimination through policy mandates that allow for the use of race as a part of a set of considerations.
4. In the 2016 ANES study, Blacks were undersampled as they were only 398 Black respondents of the 4271 participants or 9% of the respondents (DeBell et al, 2018). The undersampling of Blacks is further justification for this study’s methodological approach of using an interaction model; as an additive model of only Black respondents could not be used in generalizing to the entire Black population because of undersampling.
5. Policies and cognitions used were coded as follows: affirmative action (1 = Oppose a Great Deal, 2 = Oppose Moderately, 3 = Oppose a Little, 4 = Neither, 5 = Favor a Little, 6 = Favor Moderately, and 7 = Favor A Great Deal); preferential hiring of Blacks (1 = Strong

- Opposition, 2 = Not Strong Opposition, 3 = Not Strong Support, 4 = Strong Support); past slavery makes it more difficult for Blacks (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree Somewhat, 3 = Neither, 4 = Agree Somewhat, 5 = Strongly Agree); and, police treatment – Whites v Blacks (1 = Blacks are Treated Better, 2 = Treated the Same, 3 = Whites are Treated Better).
6. Education was recoded (1 = No HS Diploma, 2 = HS Diploma, 3 = Some College, 4 = Associate Degree, 5 = BA/BS, 6 = Master's Degree, and 7 = Professional or Doctorate). Income was recoded using \$75,000 as a benchmark (1 = below \$75,000 yearly and 2 = \$75,000 or more yearly).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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