Anger (Mis)Management? Racial Differences in the Emotional Foundations of Political Action[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Abstract**

Extant scholarship posits that anger is an emotional state that propels people to action when receiving a cue of policy threat. I argue that although intuitive and empirically sound, this theorem has been broadly misapplied across the American public. Existing work exploring the linkage of emotion and behavior has not fully contended with the influential role played by race in determining how individuals respond to cues of policy threat in the political environment. This project aims to fill that gap in the literature. Drawing upon the framework provided by cognitive appraisal theory, which asserts that emotional responses to phenomena emanate in tandem with cognitive assessments of one’s goals, resources and capacity within a given environment, I make the argument that the unique racial lens employed by African Americans to interpret their political environment results in a distinct emotional and behavior response to cues of policy threat. Anger engendered among blacks should not have the same mobilizing effects demonstrated for whites, as blacks’ anger is dampened by a longstanding sense of resignation stemming from their perception of blacks as collectively marginalized players in the political system. I present and discuss findings from an experiment conducted in the Detroit metro area, which reveals anger to translate to action much more effectively for white subjects exposed to a relevant local policy threat than black subjects exposed to the same threat.

**Introduction**

“I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!” This quote from the classic 1976 satire film *Network* continues to hold iconic status in mainstream American discourse. While often invoked in tongue-in-cheek fashion, it undeniably primes an image that resonates within the American narrative—one of everyday people, fueled by indignation stemming from failed expectations, rising up to challenge a system plagued by governmental injustice and bureaucratic inefficiency. This image of the American body politic being stirred to action by a sense of indignation also resonates with an emergent body of empirical work in political behavior.

A number of studies have revealed a linkage between facing a threat of material or political loss and increased political action (see Campbell 2003; Miller and Krosnick 2004). Additionally, work by Valentino, Gregorowicz and Groenendyk (2009) and Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, and Hutchings (2011) provides evidence that anger is the emotional state translating perception of threat to increased political action. Among people facing the prospect of the un-favored partisan winning the presidential election, those who respond with anger are generally more likely to take up political action than those who express other emotions—notably fear.

These studies employ various operationalizations of the threats in the political environment that motivate increased citizen action. These operationalizations fall under the umbrella term of *policy threats*: the prospect of changes to the policy environment that carry the risk of restricting or denying a valued political good to a relevant population.[[2]](#footnote-2) Policy threats, which emphasize the potential loss of political goods, carry the potential to motivate people to take up political action. And such policy threats are a common feature of the political discourse.

But what if being “mad as hell” when threatened with the loss of valued political goods does not stir all groups to action? A number of historical and contemporary examples point to African Americans generally not responding to relevant policy threats with increased political action—even in instances in which whites are apparently being mobilized by the imposition of the same threat.

For example, Dawson (2011, p. 7) characterizes the George. W. Bush presidency as one rife with relevant policy threats for African Americans, summarizing the ways in which the political climate since the turn of the century has been inimical to black interests:

In the first several years of the 21st century, African Americans became increasingly despondent about the potential for achieving racial justice in the nation as they saw their views on the country’s central issues—such as the 2000 presidential election, the Iraq War, the legitimacy of anti-war protest, and their evaluation of the Katrina disaster—overwhelmingly rejected, ridiculed and demonized by white Americans.

Prevailing scholarship predicts that the general collective response of blacks to the deluge of policy threats in this period would be greater mobilization and activism. Yet, Dawson (2011) notes that self-reports by African Americans of membership in organizations working on black issues declined by a substantial amount between 2005 and 2008. In fact, the percentage decline during this four-year period was a greater magnitude than the percentage decline in the entire decade between 1990 and 2000. Despite the ample and increasing heterogeneity of attitudes and beliefs among African Americans, blacks remain generally likely to view their race as a critical determinant of their life outcomes. Thus, the decline in membership in black organizations cannot be explained away with the notion that blacks are by and large choosing other outlets for advancing their interests in the face of relevant policy threats.

Taking a closer look at the political action among blacks in the post-recession period beginning in 2009 paints a more finely tuned image of African Americans responding to relevant policy threats in a manner distinct from their white counterparts. For many rank and file citizens, frustrations with a stagnant economy, rampant unemployment, and rising income inequality seemed to reach their breaking point. During this time. If any one group was to lead the charge of people *mad as hell* about the present economic and political system, one should expect it to be African Americans.

There is no shortage of indicators that in the aftermath of the recession and housing collapse, African Americans generally faced a uniquely threatening economic outlook, relative both to whites during this time, and to African Americans in the time period preceding the collapse.[[3]](#footnote-3)Yet, despite being disproportionately vulnerable to potential loss of political goods such as job security and sufficient income, African Americans were not leading the charge to rail against the economic and political system that rendered them vulnerable. On the contrary, blacks were virtually absent from many of the public domains of activism responding to the economic climate. This absence is perhaps most dramatized by the Occupy Movement. Despite comprising about 12% of the population, blacks only made up 1.6% of the Occupy ranks nationally (Patton 2011).[[4]](#footnote-4)

What is the significance of these instances of apparent black inaction during times in which when relevant political goods are threatened by the policy landscape?[[5]](#footnote-5) The apparent dichotomy between the extensive history of African Americans political activism across a range of activities (see McAdam 1982; Dawson 2001; Lee 2002) and their reticence to mobilize in direct response to policy threats raises questions that challenge the broad applicability of conventional wisdom on the motivating impact of policy threats on citizen behavior.

The following passage, taken from a 2011 commentary by Stacy Patton of *The Washington Post* titled “Why Blacks Aren’t Embracing Occupy Wall Street,” provides an indication of how African Americans may be responding to policy threats very differently from whites:

Blacks have historically suffered the income inequality and job scarcity that the Wall Street protesters are now railing against. Perhaps black America’s absence is sending a message to the Occupiers: “We told you so! Nothing will change. We’ve been here already. It’s hopeless.

This passage invokes a narrative familiar to African Americans, one that emphasizes the historical unresponsiveness of the political environment to black demands. The entrenched vulnerability of blacks to a myriad of political and economic forces throughout U.S. history has conditioned them to view impending threats to their political goods not as temporary departures from a satisfactory norm, but rather, as the norm itself. Thus, calls to action to defend such goods against the latest threat to them emanating from the policy environment are likely to be ignored by many African Americans, even as they stimulate many whites to action.

In this paper, I integrate literatures on emotion and behavior with literature on black political identity and beliefs to introduce a framework for understanding how the respective racialized perspectives of whites and blacks condition them to process policy threats in systematically distinct ways. Specifically, I argue that the adherence of African Americans to a racialized ideological worldview—either consciously or unconsciously—prevents the manifestation of their anger over policy threats from translating to increased political action in response to the threat. In sum, I seek to provide a theoretical lens that facilitates understanding of: (1) the instances in which policy threat cues simultaneously mobilize whites while exhibiting no apparent mobilizing effects on blacks, and (2) how emotion states such as anger are inextricably tied to individuals’ fundamental perceptions of themselves and the relevant social groups to which they belong.

In support of my argument, I present and discuss findings from an experiment conducted in the Detroit metro area from May 2013 to May 2014. The notable finding from the experiment is the significant racial difference in how anger translates to direct action for subjects in the policy threat condition. Among white subjects, there is a strong, positive association between reporting anger and taking up direct action on the threat. In contrast, among black subjects, there is a null association between reported anger and direct action. I close with brief discussion of the implications of the experimental findings for our understanding of the influence of race and perception on emotion and behavior.

**Literature Review & Theoretical Claims**

Why is anger generally expected to translate to action more effectively than other emotion states? Two key components of anger distinguish it conceptually from other negative emotions. One, anger is a strong feeling of displeasure or belligerence. Two, this feeling is aroused by a perceived wrong or slight. Thus, anger is distinct from affective states such as frustration, which may either be a mild expression or may not be tied to a sense of injustice. Anger is also distinct from disappointment, which is more closely tied to an affective state of sadness over unintended and un-favored outcomes.

When in a state of anger, people possess a clear sense of agency regarding how to deal with the source frustrating one’s desired ends. Further, in a state of anger, people will rely less on acquired information in determining their preferred course of action, going so far as to downplay the risks associated with those actions (Huddy, Feldman and Cassese 2007). For these reasons, anger is believed to be a state of action. Indeed the work of Valentino et al (2009, 2011) presents empirical evidence that expressing feelings of anger is positively correlated with taking political action for people threatened with an unfavorable policy outcome.

Why might anger operate differently for blacks than whites? Approaches that explore the interaction of cognition and affect lay the groundwork for answering this question. Cognitive appraisal theory (Lerner and Keltner 2000; 2001) focuses on the distinct environmental origins of various emotions, and the manner in which individuals cognitively process those emotions in a way that informs their subsequent course of action. The essential premise of appraisal theory is articulated by Scherer (2003, in Spezio and Adolphs p. 82): “people evaluate events in terms of the perceived relevance for their current needs and goals, including their ability to cope with consequences and the compatibility of the underlying actions with social norms and self-ideals.”

This synopsis emphasizes the interaction of micro and macro-level forces that influences how an individual perceives prospective changes to her environment. Therefore, racial differences in how people respond emotionally and behaviorally to cues of policy threat must originate in differences in their cognitive assessments of the environment. Whereas whites generally view the political environment through interpretive lenses that augment their sense of control, blacks view the environment through lenses that emphasize their incapacity to affect change.

By identifying the distinct ideological narratives drawn upon by whites and blacks to interpret their political environment and their respective roles within it, I acknowledge the influential role played by individuals’ deeply engrained beliefs regarding the political system’s responsiveness and fairness when processing cues of policy change. By failing to account for the impact of these worldviews on individual reactions to potential policy changes, current scholarship cannot provide an accurate framework for understanding how African Americans face a unique set of considerations and calculations when facing the prospect of threat in their policy environment.

The wide gulf separating the opinions of blacks and whites across the full spectrum of political issues is no artifact of past generations divided by segregation. Nor is it attributable simply to partisan differences. As Hutchings (2009) demonstrates, significant rifts in opinion are present even among black and white liberals, as well as among blacks and whites from the millennial age cohort. This significant divide reflects fundamental differences in how blacks and whites perceive their sociopolitical environment. For instance, Dawson (2011, p. xv) argues whites and blacks have cultivated distinct worldviews that flow from divergent patterns of interpreting events in the world around them. His examination of the dissimilar reactions of blacks and whites to Hurricane Katrina highlights the divergent narratives drawn upon by white and blacks in making sense of political and cultural phenomena:

Was it a tragic event in which a large number of citizens proved unexpectedly vulnerable to a freak accident? Or was this business as usual? That is to say, proof, once again that some Americans count for more than others, and that skin color provides a brutally direct indication of who does count and who does not.

The underlying notion here is that the respective placement of whites and blacks in the sociopolitical environment consequently shapes the meaning both groups attach to significant political phenomena. This constitutes a fundamental premise of cognitive sociology, as stated by Zerubavel (1997; in Young 2004, p. 134); “not only does our social environment affect how we perceive the world; it also helps determine what actually ‘enters’ our minds in the first place.”

From these explorations of the racial divide begin to emerge blacks’ and whites’ distinct, racialized patterns of interpretation. When viewing political phenomena that are disproportionately detrimental to minority populations, whites tend to perceive the events as abnormal deviations from a system that normally operates justly. They by and large attribute little to no significance to racial factors.

In contrast, blacks view these same phenomena as further evidence of racial bias in the political system. Blacks generally view these events not as deviations, but rather as continuations of a systemic pattern of racial subjugation. In other words, when blacks see these phenomena, the concept of race as a means to order groups in society and systematically disadvantage blacks enters their minds “first,” thus shaping their interpretation. Evidence of these racialized patterns of interpretation is abundant in Gallup surveys, which consistently reveal significantly higher proportions of black respondents than white respondents attributing racial disparities in employment, income and housing to discriminatory treatment.

Interpreting cues of policy threat through the lens of black subjugation should engender for African Americans a distinct emotional response than whites, who generally employ a wholly different lens of interpreting political phenomena. This distinction can manifest either in the emotions that emerge and are consciously felt by African Americans, or in the translation of those emergent emotions to behavior. I now address each of these possibilities.

Although African Americans have been empirically demonstrated to *not* suffer from lower senses of self-esteem or self-worth despite their marginalized status in the U.S. (see Rosenberg 1979; Crocker and Major 1989), they nonetheless exhibit lower levels of efficacy and political trust relative to whites (see Aberbach and Walker 1970, Pierce and Carey Jr. 1971). These disparities reflect blacks’ general perceptions that they have fewer resources at their disposal to respond to changes in the policy environment, and less agency to influence the political environment generally. Interpreting policy threat cues via a heuristic that emphasizes blacks’ collective lack of agency within the American political system could cause individual African Americans to be more likely to express anxiety or despondency than anger in response to the threat. This expectation is consistent with cognitive appraisal theory, which posits that whether one responds to a threat with anger or anxiety is determined by whether she possess senses of attribution and control relative to the threat.

Alternately, the heuristic of black subjugation could cause individual blacks to be no less likely than whites to feel anger in response to the threat; yet the type of anger that emerges for African Americans could fail to associate with increased action to counteract the threat. Public health research indicates that—likely due to African Americans’ cultivation of support networks that provide them with outlets for expressing their anguish over racial discrimination—blacks report being *less* adversely impacted by race-related stressors relative to whites, despite encountering such stressors at a higher rate (Williams, Yu, Jackson and Anderson 1997). This work suggests the mechanisms blacks develop to alleviate feelings of vulnerability and distress in the face of duress prevent them from feeling emotions conveying powerless when encountering policy threats. These mechanism, therefore, can preempt the emergence of anxiety or sadness in response to policy threats.

But why would these mechanism not embolden African Americans to feel a sense of action-inducing anger in response? Blacks are confident in their capacity to effectively meet the challenges to their personal and collective senses of self-worth that come from a racially stratified sociopolitical system. Yet when threatened, they remain skeptical about their capacity to mount effective challenges to that political system itself. Given the prevalence of policy threats to African Americans in the political environment, they constantly weigh the choice between maintaining a level of detachment from the political system, so as to preserve a positive self-concept, or taking on political action that they are conditioned to believe carries a high risk of failure to meet its achieved objectives. The risk for blacks extends beyond failure to achieve the desired action; they risk diminishing their self-concept.

Crocker and Knight (2005, p. 200) assert “people want to believe that they are worthy and valuable human beings, and this desire drives their behavior.” If black Americans’ interactions with the political environment consistently serve as a reminder of their marginalized status within the state, then for the sake of their sense of personal worth, they will ultimately choose a course of refraining from further interaction. By and large, many of the relevant policy threats that emerge in blacks’ political environment are simply added to their long-running script on the subjugation of black interests. These threats are consistent with African Americans’ internalized beliefs about what they must contend with as members of a marginalized group in the U.S. They represent not what blacks must face in the environment, but more fundamentally what it means to be black in said environment. Blacks’ cognitive contextualizing of the policy threat as part of the cost of being black causes them to form an emotional response that is constrained in large part by an ever-present sense of *resignation*.

Resignation is defined as acceptance of something perceived to be both undesirable and inevitable. I conceptualize it not as an affective state itself, but more as as a longstanding cognitive predisposition—one that is primed by the threat cue even as the individual engenders an emotional response to the threat. It is therefore the presence of resignation among African Americans—emanating from their racialized lens of interpreting the political system—that dampens the potential mobilizing impact of anger on blacks’ political activity.

While the experiment I designed and conducted does not allow me to test whether a race-specific sense of resignation is the precise mechanism through which anger exerts differential effects on the action-taking of black and white subjects under threat, it does provide evidence corroborating my claim that anger that arises in response to policy threats operate very differently for white and blacks. In the following sections, I describe the experiment and present and discuss the major findings.

**Experiment Design and Expectations**

I conducted an experiment on a sample of adults living in the Detroit metro area from May 2013 through May 2014. In total, 139 whites and 148 blacks are included in the sample. The experiment exposes white and black subjects to treatments designed to be cues of either policy threat or opportunity, then invites them to take a variety of actions in response to the cue. Additionally, the experiment measures subjects’ affective responses to the cue, and their beliefs about the responsiveness of the local political elites to their opinions on the issue.

Survey recruitment included sending invitations to mailing lists of registered voters, advertising in local newspapers, and entering local area churches, universities and workplaces with invitations to take the survey. Working through the challenges of attaining a convenience sample from an area marked by extreme racial segregation, economic hardship and an overwhelming sense of political fatigue ultimately yielded a sample of African American subjects that was significantly older, more religious, more attentive to local news and more politically trusting and efficacious than the white sample.

Nevertheless, empirical tests reveal that black and white subjects’ reported emotions and actions across the treatment conditions remain virtually unchanged upon inclusion of the demographic variables as controls. The robustness of the treatment effects to the inclusion of the demographic and social characteristics indicates that the experimental treatments are indeed influencing subjects’ attitudes, feelings, and behavioral stances, independent of the social characteristics that vary from whites to blacks in the sample.

The treatment takes the form of a political flyer (believed to be authentic by the subjects) addressing a proposed plan to privatize the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD). As of the time of the experiment, the privatization plan was actually being deliberated publically. Proponents of the plan asserted that privatization would reduce longstanding inefficiencies, which would better streamline water service and lower rates. Opponents, on the other hand, decried privatization as a job-killer for local workers, and argued such a move would lead to lax standards that would make water less safe.[[6]](#footnote-6)

I followed the example of Miller and Krosnick (2004) in making the treatments address an issue of potential relevance to the subjects that is actually being deliberated in their policy environment. With actual political goods at stake, ranging from the safety of subjects’ water and its cost to their concerns over government efficiency and local employment, subjects were expected to elicit authentic emotional responses to the flyers, and make decisions regarding what political action they would realistically take on the issue. This method strikes me as yielding more credible responses form subjects than a design that asks them to produce reactions to a hypothetical situation.

The pre- and post-test questionnaire consists almost entirely of close ended questions with five-response categories adapted from the text of the ANES and the 2001-2003 National Survey of American Life. To stem the risk for acquiescence bias, I avoided using the *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* response items, opting instead for *not at all likely* to *extremely likely* where relevant. The pre-test questions ask about subjects’ general senses of external efficacy and political trust, as well as their senses of system blame and how fairly they believe American society has treated people from their background.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Two questions from the post-test questionnaire invite subjects to take immediate action on the DWSD privatization. They are invited to add their name to a letter either favoring or opposing the privatization, which they are told will be sent to the state legislature. This represents the type of direct immediate action expected by conventional literature to be associated with anger over the issue. Additionally, subjects are invited to provide an email or mailing address to receive more information on the privatization from a non-partisan group. This is an example of the information seeking action typically associated with anxiety.

Subjects are also asked to report the degree to which they felt the following emotions, ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*: angry, anxious, concerned, delighted, distressed, enthusiastic, frustrated, hopeful, motivated, optimistic, outraged, relieved, and worried. In addition, questions are posed gauging subjects’ senses of efficacy related to the particular issue of the DWSD privatization (e.g. *how likely it is that politicians care about what people like you think about this issue?)*. Finally, subjects are asked a standard battery of demographic and social characteristic questions, ranging from frequency of church attendance to education level. In total there are 33 questions, taking most subjects around 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Based on the argument laid out in the preceding section, there are two potential ways that white and black subjects could differ in their emotional and participatory responses to the policy threat treatments. On the one hand, whites could generally respond to the threat with anger, whereas blacks generally respond with anxiety. On the other hand, the racial difference could be found not in what emotions are engendered among subjects, but how those emotions translate to action. Specifically, whites’ reported anger should increase their likelihood of taking up direct action on privatization, whereas blacks reported anger should *not* increase their likelihood of action. Because I contend the presence of a race-specific resignation dampens the impact of anger on blacks’ political activity, my expectations are aligned with the second possibility:

*Exposure to the policy threat condition should make both white and black subjects report anger. Anger should have a positive association with direct action taking among white subjects, and a null effect on direct action taking among black subjects.*

**Experiment Findings**

I begin with the results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) categorizing the multiple emotion variables into five proposed constructs. I originally proposed constructs relating to the core emotion states designated in conventional literature: *angry,* composed of the items angry, frustrated and outraged; *anxious*, composed of the items anxious, distressed, concerned, and worried; *satisfied,* composed of the items delighted, enthusiastic and relieved; and finally *hopeful,* comprising optimistic and hopeful.

Table 4.1 below presents the factor loadings from CFA with varimax rotation. Component loadings for three of the four originally proposed constructs far exceed the conservative cut-off point of 0.40. The items for *angry* and *satisfied* in particular load very strongly, indicated high validity for each of proposed constructs. In contrast, the components of *hopeful* load considerably weaker.

Table : Emotion Variables—Obliquely rotated component loadings and communalities based on principal components analysis with varimax rotation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *COMPONENT* | ANGRY | ANXIOUS | CONCERNED | SATISFIED | OPTIMISTIC |
| Outraged | 0.82 |  |  |  |  |
| Frustrated | 0.80 |  |  |  |  |
| Angry | 0.79 |  |  |  |  |
| Anxious |  | 0.58 | 0.39 |  |  |
| Distressed |  | 0.57 | 0.37 |  |  |
| Concerned |  | 0.39 | 0.57 |  |  |
| Worried |  | 0.38 | 0.57 |  |  |
| Delighted |  |  |  | 0.78 | 0.23 |
| Enthusiastic |  |  |  | 0.74 | 0.23 |
| Relieved |  |  |  | 0.68 | 0.21 |
| Optimistic |  |  |  | 0.54 | 0.43 |
| Hopeful |  |  |  | 0.34 | 0.40 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| n | 352 | 344 | 344 | 337 | 337 |
| Eigenvalues | 1.92 | 1.82 | 0.07 | 2.41 | 0.11 |
| % of total variance | 1.15 | 1.19 | 0.05 | 0.95 | 0.23 |
| No. of test measures | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |

Of significant interest is the emergence of another negative emotion construct—one composed of items that were expected to load onto *anxious*, yet appear to be empirically distinct from that emotion state. This construct is labeled *concerned,* composed of the items concerned and worried. As subsequent analyses show, this emotion influences the activity of black subjects in unanticipated and intriguing ways.

The first set of figures, presented below, illustrate the mean emotion levels across threat and control conditions, for black and whites respectively. As indicated by Figure 1, black subjects appear to show no hesitation to report anger in the threat condition. They also appear to express a great deal of anxiety and concern in the threat condition, compared to their white subject counterparts.

Figure 1: Black Subjects’ Mean Emotion Levels across Conditions

Figure 2: White Subjects’ Mean Emotion Levels across Conditions

Observing these mean comparisons suggest that any racial difference that emerges will manifest not in the translation of the threat treatment to anger, but rather, the translation of anger to action. Accordingly, the next set of figures (see next page) display the respective mean rates of adding one’s name to the letter for black and white subjects whose reported emotion falls below the midpoint, and those whose reported emotion falls above the midpoint on the respective emotion scales. This display allows me to ascertain whether an increase in each respective emotion appears to be positively or negatively associated with the direct immediate form of participation. It also allows me to speculate on the relative influence of the respective emotions on subjects’ likelihood of taking up immediate action on the policy threat.

Figure 3: Black Subjects’ Mean Rates of Letter Signing across Emotions

Figure 4: White Subjects’ Mean Rates of Letter Signing across Emotions

The figures suggest that—contrary to my expectation—anger exerts a stronger mobilizing effect on direct action among black subjects relative to white subjects. But these apparent differences are statistically indistinguishable from zero, limiting their instructiveness. To effectively discern the influence of subjects’ reported emotions on their political activity requires regression analysis.

I propose structural equation models that estimate the direct and indirect effects of the threat treatment, as well as the direct effects of the reported emotions, on subjects’ action taking. I present first the direct effects of each treatment on subjects’ reported emotions. I proceed to show the direct effects of the threat cue and respective emotions on subjects’ actions, followed by the indirect and total effects of threat on subjects’ actions for each emotion state.

The first model specification includes no control variables, isolating the direct and indirect treatment effects on subjects’ reported emotions and actions. Table 2 below displays the direct effects of the threat and opportunity treatments on subjects’ reported emotions.

Table 2: Structural Model Parameters: Direct Effects of Threat Condition on Reported Emotions by Race, No Controls

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***ANGRY*** | | ***ANXIOUS*** | | ***CONCERNED*** | | ***SATISFIED*** | | ***HOPEFUL*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | |  | |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *THREAT* | 0.18\*\*\*  (0.05) | 0.14\*\*\*  (0.04) | 0.11\*\*  (0.04) | 0.08\*  (0.04) | 0.10\*  (0.05) | 0.11\*\*  (0.04) | -0.07\*  (0.03) | -0.11\*\*  (0.04) | -0.05  (0.05) | -0.11\*\*  (0.04) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The threat treatment in this model influences all emotions in the expected direction, and with the exception of hopefulness for black subjects, its influence on reported emotions is significant at the 0.05 alpha level. Consistent with observation of the means, the association between threat and reported anger appears to be just slightly stronger for blacks than whites, indicated by the difference of 0.04 points in their respective coefficients. Again, black subjects exhibit no hesitation to report anger in response to the threat of DWSD privatization, relative to whites.

Table 3 below displays the direct effects both of the threat treatment and each reported emotion on subjects’ likelihood of adding their name to the advocacy letter on DWSD (the direct immediate action) and signing up to receive more information on DWSD (immediate information seeking).

Table 3: Structural Model Parameters—Direct Effects of Threat and Opportunity Conditions on Reported Emotions by Race, No Controls

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***LETTER***  ***SIGNING*** | | ***SEEKING***  ***INFORMATION*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *THREAT* | 0.01  (0.10) | 0.15^  (0.09) | 0.07  (0.10) | 0.04  (0.06) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANGRY* | 0.46  (0.34) | 0.69\*  (0.33) | -0.57^  (0.33) | 0.02  (0.24) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANXIOUS* | -0.24  (0.32) | -0.31  (0.32) | 0.32  (0.32) | -0.06  (0.23) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *CONCERNED* | 0.42^  (0.24) | -0.29  (0.23) | 0.72\*\*  (0.23) | -0.11  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *SATISFIED* | 0.72\*  (0.31) | 0.37  (0.27) | -0.15  (0.31) | 0.21  (0.19) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *HOPEFUL* | -0.06  (0.23) | 0.27  (0.22) | 0.28  (0.23) | 0.17  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *N* | 109 | 125 | 109 | 125 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| χ2 | 217.73  p=0.00 | 239.15  p=0.00 | 217.73  p=0.00 | 239.15  p=0.00 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *RMSEA* | 0.44 | 0.43 | 0.44 | 0.43 |

The direct effect of the threat treatment on letter signing for white subjects has a marginally positive coefficient (p=0.09). This is the only instance in which the treatment condition exhibits a direct effect on subject participation that approaches empirical verifiability. In contrast, the coefficient on the direct of threat for black subjects is a fraction of its standard error. Comparing the respective direct effects of the threat cue on white and black subjects’ willingness to take up direct immediate action on DWSD is noteworthy because it provides suggestive evidence of whites conforming to the expectations of conventional literature, while giving no indication that African Americans also comport in the same manner.

The direct effects of reported emotions on subjects’ actions further illuminate racial differences. For whites, anger is the only emotion that exhibits a significant association with signing the letter, and the magnitude of the coefficient on anger is substantively large. Meanwhile for African Americans, the effect of anger on signing the letter is null. For this group, concern exhibits a marginally positive effect on letter signing (p=0.07). But it is satisfaction that has the strongest positive association with anger for blacks. The coefficient of 0.72 on satisfaction is on par with the effect of anger for whites in the sample, suggesting this positive affective state is as mobilizing for African Americans as is anger—the emotion conventionally associated with political activism—for whites.

Turning to the domain of information seeking, there is among black subjects a marginally negative association between reporting anger and signing up for more information (p=0.09). This result constitutes one instance suggestive of African Americans conforming with expectations, as the affective state of anger makes people more confident and less reliant on others for information. Among blacks, reporting concern is strongly associated with seeking information. Thus, among African Americans, concern exhibits influences on participation that make it akin to both anger (stimulating direct immediate action) and anxiety (stimulating information seeking). Finally, no emotions exhibit empirically discernible influences on information seeking among whites.

Table 4, below, presents the total and indirect effects of exposure to the threat treatment on subjects’ participation, across each respective emotion. All effects are null (or marginal in the case of the indirect effect of threat on stimulating blacks’ information seeking through making them more concerned) with one notable exception. Between its marginal direct effect on white participation and its indirect effect through increasing whites’ anger, the threat treatment boasts a strong total effect on white subjects’ likelihood of adding their name to the letter. This effects confirms again the conformity of white subjects to the expectations laid out by conventional literature. Meanwhile, the null findings for black subjects illustrate the need to revise the existing literature to consider the impact of race on the association between emotion and behavior.

Table 4: Structural Model Parameters—Total and Indirect Effects of Threat Condition on Participation across Emotions & Race, No Controls

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SIGN LETTER** | ***ANGRY*** | | ***ANXIOUS*** | | ***CONCERNED*** | | ***SATISFIED*** | | ***HOPEFUL*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | 0.10  (0.10) | 0.24\*  (0.09) | -0.01  (0.10) | 0.13  (0.09) | 0.06  (0.10) | 0.12  (0.09) | -0.04  (0.10) | 0.11  (0.09) | 0.02  (0.10) | 0.12  (0.00) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indirect | 0.08  (0.06) | 0.09^  (0.05) | -0.03  (0.04) | -0.02  (0.03) | 0.04  (0.03) | -0.03  (0.03) | -0.05  (0.03) | -0.04  (0.03) | 0.00  (0.01) | -0.03  (0.03) |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **SEEK INFO** | ***ANGRY*** | | ***ANXIOUS*** | | ***CONCERNED*** | | ***SATISFIED*** | | ***HOPEFUL*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total | -0.03  (0.10) | 0.04  (0.06) | 0.10  (0.10) | 0.04  (0.07) | 0.14  (0.11) | 0.03  (0.07) | 0.07  (0.09) | 0.02  (0.06) | 0.05  (0.10) | 0.02  (0.06) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indirect | **-**0.10  (0.07) | 0.00  (0.03) | 0.04  (0.04) | -0.00  (0.02) | 0.08^  (0.04) | -0.01  (0.02) | 0.01  (0.02) | -0.02  (0.02) | -0.02  (0.02) | -0.02  (0.02) |

Figures 5 and 6 on the following pages illustrate the significant and marginally significant direct and indirect effects of the threat treatment and emotions on the participation of black and white subjects, respectively. These figures display the stark contrast in the emotions serving as the major pathways translating receipt of the policy change cue to action—anger for whites, and satisfaction (and to a lesser extent, concern) for blacks.

Figure : Path Diagram–Direct & Indirect Effects of Threat on Action among Black Subjects, No Controls

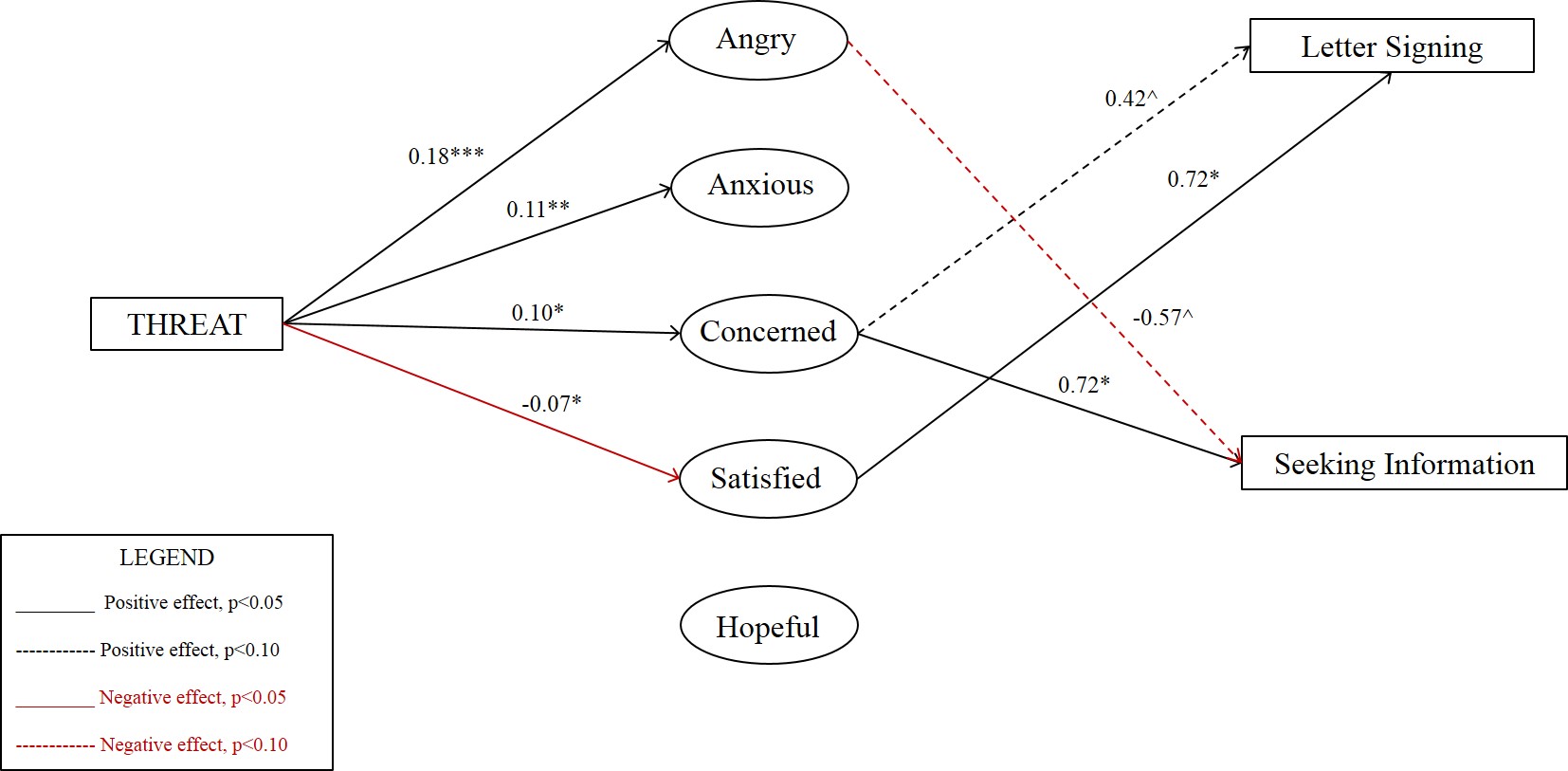
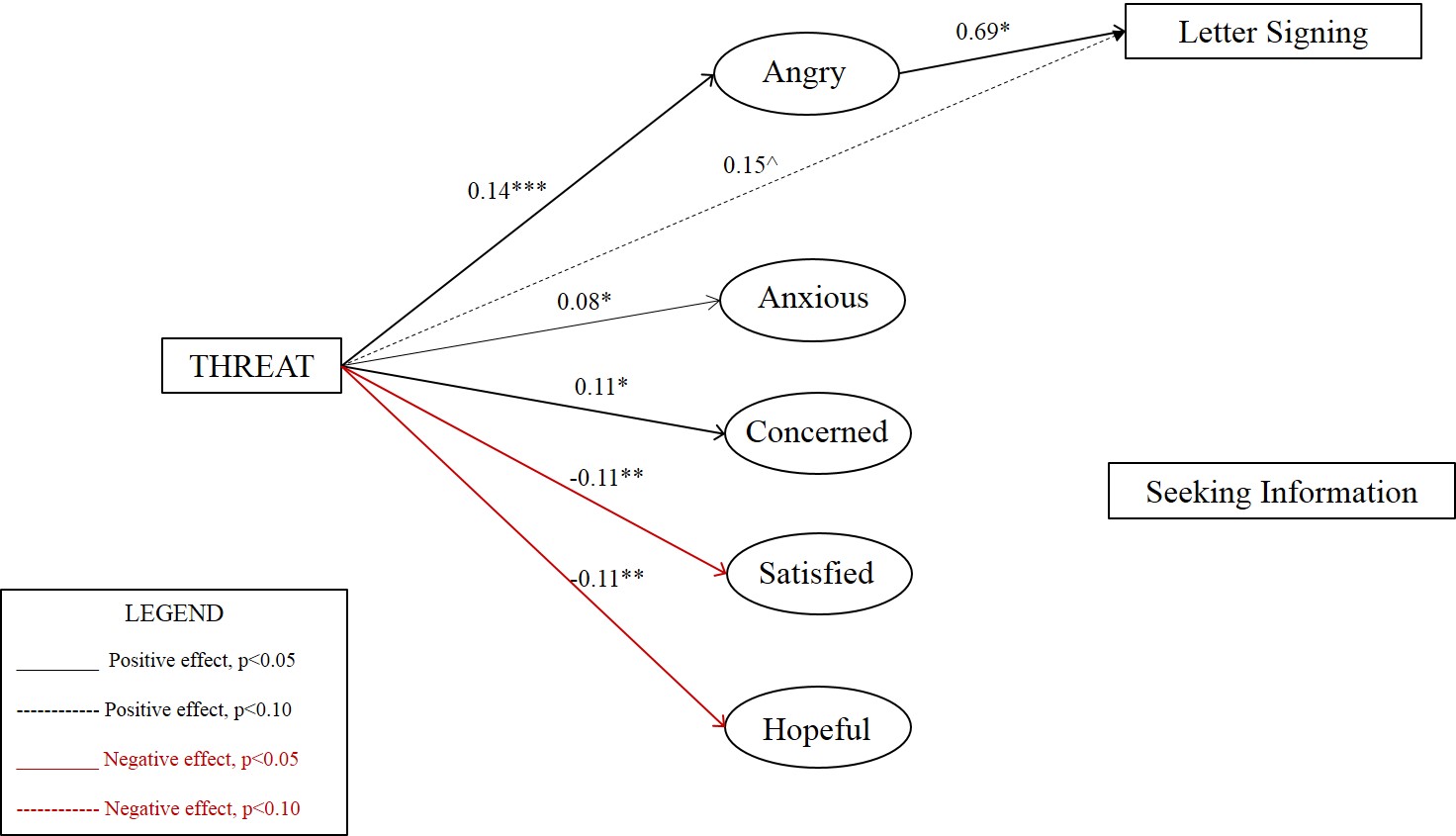


Figure 6: Path Diagram–Direct & Indirect Effects of Threat on Action among White Subjects, No Controls



In the absence of any control variables, clear racially distinct patterns emerged. But as indicated earlier, the black and white samples vary from one another in many key dimensions. To ensure the racial differences uncovered here are not artifacts of the uniqueness of the samples, I re-specified the structural model with a host of demographic control variables included.[[8]](#footnote-8) The racial differences prove largely robust to the inclusion of these controls, an encouraging sign that these analyses are uncovering a genuine phenomenon rather than a series of quirks limited to a wonky sample. Table 5 below displays the direct effects of threat and emotion on subjects’ participation.

Table : Structural Model Parameters—Direct Effects of Threat Condition and Emotions on Subjects’ Participation, Demographic Controls Included

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***LETTER***  ***SIGNING*** | | ***SEEKING***  ***INFORMATION*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *THREAT* | 0.07  (0.10) | 0.09  (0.10) | 0.09  (0.10) | 0.04  (0.07) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANGRY* | 0.54  (0.36) | 0.62^  (0.33) | -0.20  (0.35) | 0.16  (0.24) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANXIOUS* | -0.43  (0.33) | -0.09  (0.33) | 0.04  (0.33) | -0.06  (0.23) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *CONCERNED* | 0.44^  (0.23) | -0.30  (0.24) | 0.55\*  (0.23) | -0.11  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *SATISFIED* | 0.72\*  (0.33) | 0.42  (0.28) | 0.00  (0.34) | 0.21  (0.19) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *HOPEFUL* | -0.12  (0.18) | 0.33  (0.23) | 0.38  (0.26) | 0.19  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *FAVOR DWSD CHANGE* | -0.02  (0.18) | -0.31^  (0.23) | 0.01  (0.18) | 0.07  (0.13) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *EDUCATION* | -0.16  (0.23) | *-0.46*  (0.26) | 0.54\*  (0.23) | 0.17  (0.18) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *CHURCH ATTEND.* | 0.09  (0.17) | -0.11  (0.13) | -0.05  (0.17) | -0.16^  (0.09) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *CIVIC ORGS.* | 0.09  (0.15) | -0.07  (0.14) | -0.07  (0.14) | 0.11  (0.09) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *HOME OWNER* | -0.26\*  (0.12) | 0.02  (0.13) | 0.05  (0.12) | 0.12  (0.09) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *PARTY ID* | -0.06  (0.17) | -0.05  (0.15) | -0.22  (0.17) | 0.14  (0.10) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *LOCAL NEWS* | -0.23  (0.16) | -0.03  (0.15) | 0.10  (0.16) | -0.04  (0.10) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *AGE* | 0.62^  (0.35) | *0.85*  (0.47) | 0.29  (0.35) | 0.00  (0.34) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *FEMALE* | 0.22\*  (0.10) | 0.19\*  (0.09) | 0.14  (0.10) | 0.02  (0.06) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *PAPER* | 0.09  (0.12) | 0.12  (0.09) | 0.08  (0.13) | 0.04  (0.07) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *N* | 99 | 119 | 99 | 119 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| χ2 | 301.17  p=0.00 | 239.15  p=0.00 | 301.72  p=0.00 | 308.50  p=0.00 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *RMSEA* | 0.20 | 0.43 | 0.20 | 0.19 |

In the presence of the demographic controls, exposure to the threat condition now has a null effect on letter signing among white subjects. Similarly, the positive effect for anger on whites’ direct immediate action falls just short of two-tailed significance (p=0.06).

For black subjects on the other hand, the emotion effects remain unchanged in the face of this set of controls. Concern remains marginally related to letter signing while satisfaction remains strongly related to this domain of action. Further, the coefficient on satisfaction is unchanged with demographic controls added. In sum, controlling for the life stage variables weakens the associations between threat, anger and direct action for whites, but does not erase them entirely. Including these variables has no effect on the noted association between satisfaction and direct immediate action among African Americans.

In the domain of information seeking, direct effects remain largely unchanged by inclusion of the controls. Again, no emotion states are associated with signing up for more information on DWSD among whites. Among blacks, the positive effect on concern is identical to its effect in the model sans controls. Meanwhile the marginally negative effect of anger on African Americans’ information seeking has dissipated into a null result.

These findings show that inclusion of demographic factors weakens the impacts of the threat cue and the state of anger on whites’ direct immediate action, while having no impact on the relationships between satisfaction, concern and action among blacks. The stark racial differences remain just as apparent in the presence of this set of controls as it does in their absence. Are these racial differences similarly robust to the inclusion of variables measuring subjects’ broader political attitudes and sense of efficacy on the DWSD issue?

Table 6, presented on the following page, reveals the direct effects of the threat treatment and emotions on subject participation in the presence of a battery of variables measuring subjects’ attitudes and senses of efficacy on the issue of DWSD privatization.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Table 6: Structural Model Parameters—Direct Effects of Threat Condition and Emotions on Subjects’ Participation, Attitude & Engagement Controls Included

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***LETTER***  ***SIGNING*** | | ***SEEKING***  ***INFORMATION*** | |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  | *BLACK* | *WHITE* | *BLACK* | *WHITE* |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *THREAT* | -0.05  (0.11) | 0.06  (0.09) | -0.02  (0.10) | 0.04  (0.06) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANGRY* | 0.74^  (0.38) | 0.61\*  (0.31) | -0.41  (0.35) | -0.03  (0.22) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *ANXIOUS* | -0.40  (0.34) | -0.22  (0.30) | 0.25  (0.32) | -0.02  (0.21) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *CONCERNED* | 0.22  (0.27) | -0.75\*  (0.22) | 0.50\*  (0.25) | -0.17  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *SATISFIED* | 0.60^  (0.34) | 0.10  (0.26) | -0.26  (0.31) | 0.11  (0.18) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *HOPEFUL* | -0.17  (0.25) | 0.45\*  (0.21) | 0.18  (0.24) | 0.03  (0.15) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *FAVOR DWSD CHANGE* | -0.01  (0.19) | -0.28^  (0.17) | -0.12  (0.18) | 0.04  (0.12) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *TRUST IN GOVT* | 0.42  (0.27) | 0.44\*  (0.26) | 0.20  (0.25) | -0.38\*\*  (0.14) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *SAY IN GOVT* | -0.18  (0.24) | 0.05  (0.17) | 0.06  (0.22) | 0.37\*\*  (0.12) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *DWSD IMPORTANT* | 0.19  (0.19) | 0.76\*\*\*  (0.18) | 0.49\*  (0.18) | 0.35\*\*  (0.09) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *DWSD—OFF’LS CARE* | -0.02  (0.27) | -0.72\*\*\*  (0.21) | 0.03  (0.25) | 0.19  (0.15) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *DWSD—LOCAL INFL.* | 0.00  (0.24) | -0.09  (0.21) | 0.08  (0.22) | -0.09  (0.15) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *DWSD—MY INFL* | 0.13  (0.28) | 0.28  (0.22) | -0.11  (0.25) | 0.00  (0.16) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *DWSD OUTCOME* | 0.04  (0.27) | 0.27  (0.20) | 0.33  (0.25) | 0.11  (0.15) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *PAPER* | 0.02  (0.10) | 0.06  (0.08) | -0.09  (0.09) | 0.03  (0.05) |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *N* | 104 | 121 | 104 | 121 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| χ2 | 325.42  p=0.00 | 329.96  p=0.00 | 325.42  p=0.00 | 329.96  p=0.00 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *RMSEA* | 0.22 | 0.20 | 0.22 | 0.20 |

Anger retains its positive and significant effect on white subjects’ direct immediate action. But anger also exhibits a positive effect on black subjects’ participation that falls ever so short of two-tailed significance (p=0.053). Furthermore, the positive effect of satisfaction on black subjects’ direct action has been weakened to be only marginally positive (p=0.07). And the magnitude of this coefficient is lower than the coefficient on anger. When controlling for subjects’ senses of efficacy on the DWSD issue, the clear racial differences in the association between anger and action become much less evident.

It should come as no surprise that efficacy variables exert a partial mediating effect on the association between subjects’ reported emotions and their participation. After all, efficacy is capturing individuals’ assessments of their capacity to participate effectively in politics and extract responsiveness from government elites. I have essentially argued that African Americans’ assessment of the diminished collective efficacy of the group is what dampens the association between anger over policy threats and action. Accordingly, inclusion of efficacy variables should account in part for a portion of the demobilizing effect of that collective assessment.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Overall, the experiment yielded findings that illuminate the central role of race in determining individuals’ affective and behavioral responses to policy change cues. These findings also raise critical questions that inform and motivate future work. Consistent with my overarching expectations, exposure to the threat cue effectively produced anger among both white and black subjects. Yet, the association between anger and direct action was always statistically stronger for whites than for blacks, for whom anger only produce a near-significant positive effect in the presence of attitude and efficacy measures.

The stark disparity in the affective motivators of action across race cannot be overstated. The negative emotion of anger was shown to boost direct action taking among whites, making the threat cue an effective mobilizer of white action. But the positive emotion of satisfaction was shown to often boost direct action among African Americans, suggesting black subjects were responsive to an entirely different type of political messaging than their white counterparts. Inclusion of attitude and efficacy variables distorted this pattern, indicating the need to explore further the degree to which such measures are tapping into the fundamentally distinct racial lenses employed by blacks and whites respectively to interpret their political environments.

The experiment was not without its limitations. Chief among them are a lack of variation in the targets of subjects’ emotions, a limited range of actions available to take on the relevant issue, and the inability to properly measure resignation and racial group consciousness among subjects. Actions that can address these limitations in future iterations of the study include: expanding and diversifying the targets of subjects’ emotions (i.e. alternating whether an issue or an actor such as a candidate for office is threatening) and the types of actions available for them to take (i.e. including electoral, governmental, and counter-institutional activities); adding an emotion induction component; extending the questionnaire to further probe subjects’ senses of skepticism over the prospect of losing out on the policy change (thus measuring resignation); and including a battery of group consciousness questions.

By suggesting these modifications, I acknowledge that for the valuable insight gleaned from the findings attained from this experiment, many key questions remain unanswered. Exploring these questions and the possible ways to answer them constitutes the necessary first step in building on the research agenda established by this project and making greater contributions to our understanding of how race conditions the manner through which individuals process and formulate emotional and behavioral responses to policy change cues.

This project uncovers a significant role played by race in affecting the translation of emotions—particularly anger—to various forms of political action. Previous work exploring the relationship between emotion and behavior has not accounted for this difference, painting only a partial picture. Whereas prior work has found the activation of particular emotions and their influence on political behavior to be affected by individuals’ perceptions of out-group members (e.g. Banks and Valentino 2012; Brader and Valentino 2007; Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008), I find evidence indicating the influence of emotions on behavior to be affected by individuals’ *in-group* perceptions.

This project adds further insight to our understanding of how race influences political behavior*.* Here, the influence of race extends beyond serving as a proxy for possession of the material and immaterial resources known to promote political action. On the contrary, race plays the role of a heuristic, consciously and unconsciously filtering policy messages received by the individual, conditioning her to respond in a distinct way to the messaging both emotionally, and behaviorally. The evidence for this heuristic effect can be found in the general robustness of the racial difference to the inclusion of resource variables. It is not disparity of resources between the groups that leads to the observed differences; rather, it is the differences in the groups’ perceptions of the political environment and their respective roles within it.

By providing a framework for understanding racial differences in how people interpret and formulate responses to cues of policy threat, I believe this project adds to an ongoing conversation about how changes in the political environment provide people with varying motivation to take up political action. Indeed, one critical element of this project concurs with previous work in the area; anger is an affective state that carries unique potential to be harnessed to fuel political action. A better understanding of how this emotion is managed or *mismanaged* in attempts to mobilize African Americans can pave the way for identifying the conditions that propel African Americans into the frontlines of political action in the policy sphere, and the conditions that keep them on the sidelines.

[Appendix with treatments and questionnaire on following pages]



[CONTROL TREATMENT]



[THREAT TREATMENT]



[OPPORTUNITY TREATMENT]

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this brief (about 15 min) survey. The results from this study will be used in my dissertation. My goal is to learn how people react to issues that arise in local issues. If at any point you would like to skip a question, please feel free to do so. Thank you once again for your cooperation!

1. Please answer the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Age: |  |
| Zip code of residence: | |  |

2. Please check the boxes to indicate the following:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Never | A little of  the time | About half  The time | A lot | All of  The time | | How often do you think public officials care about what people like you think? |  |  |  |  |  | | How often do people like you have a say in how government handles important issues? |  |  |  |  |  | | How often do you trust government to make fair decisions on important issues? |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |

3. How fairly would you say American society has dealt with people from your background?

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

4. How big of a problem is it if some people have more of a chance in life than others?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all  a problem | A small  problem | A moderate  problem | Very much  a problem | An extreme  problem |

5. If people don’t do well in life, how much are they to blame themselves?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Not at all  to blame | A little  To blame | Moderately  to blame | Very much  to blame | Extremely  To blame |

Before answering the remaining questions, I’d like you to view flyer on a local issue on the following page. The specific flyer you see was drawn at random from a group of flyers focusing on local issues. Again, if at any point you would like to skip a question, please feel free to do so.

1. Please indicate whether you support or oppose the DWSD restructuring plan.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Oppose  strongly | Oppose  Somewhat | Neither oppose  Nor favor | Favor  Somewhat | Favor  Strongly |

2. Different groups are writing letters signed by state residents that will be sent to the Michigan legislature asking members to either support or oppose the DWSD restructuring. Please indicate whether you would be willing to add your name to either of these letters.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| YES, I would add my name to the letter **opposing** the DWSD restructuring | YES, I would add my name to the letter **supporting** the DWSD restructuring | NO, do not add my name to **either** letter. |

3. Would you like to provide an email or mailing address to receive more information on the DWSD restructuring from the independent, non-partisan group Midwestern Commission on Water?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes (please do so in  space provided here) | No, thank  you. |

4. Please check the boxes to indicate your likelihood of taking the following actions:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NOT AT ALL  LIKELY | A LITTLE LIKELY | MODERATELY  LIKELY | VERY LIKELY | EXTREMELY  LIKELY |
| Discussing the DWSD plan with others |  |  |  |  |  |
| Attending a meeting or forum on DWSD |  |  |  |  |  |
| Contacting a public official about DWSD |  |  |  |  |  |

5. How important is the DWSD restructuring issue to you?

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

6. Please mark the boxes that indicate the following:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NOT AT ALL  LIKELY | A LITTLE LIKELY | MODERATELY  LIKELY | VERY LIKELY | EXTREMELY  LIKELY |
| In your opinion, how likely is that the DWSD issue will turn out the way you want it to? |  |  |  |  |  |
| How likely is it that politicians care about what people like you think about this issue? |  |  |  |  |  |
| How likely is it that people from your community are able to influence politicians on issues like this? |  |  |  |  |  |
| How likely is it that YOU are able to influence politicians on issues like this? |  |  |  |  |  |

7. How did you feel when reading the flyer about this issue? Please mark with an “X” how much you felt each of the following emotions while viewing the flyer:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | NOT AT ALL | A LITTLE | MODERATELY | VERY MUCH | EXTREMELY |
| Angry |  |  |  |  |  |
| Anxious |  |  |  |  |  |
| Concerned |  |  |  |  |  |
| Delighted |  |  |  |  |  |
| Distressed |  |  |  |  |  |
| Enthusiastic |  |  |  |  |  |
| Frustrated |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hopeful |  |  |  |  |  |
| Motivated |  |  |  |  |  |
| Optimistic |  |  |  |  |  |
| Outraged |  |  |  |  |  |
| Relieved |  |  |  |  |  |
| Worried |  |  |  |  |  |

8. Without looking back at the flyer, would you be able to answer the following?

1. What is the racial make-up of the people shown on the flyer?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No  photo | All  white | Mostly  white | Racially  diverse | Mostly  black | All  black | No people  in photo |

1. Which geographic region of Michigan is covered by DWSD?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| East | Southeast | Northeastern | Southwestern | Entire state |

1. Did the flyer support the DWSD restructuring, oppose it, or neither?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Support | Oppose | Neither |

1. What is the name of the organization on the flyer?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Michigan Urban  Water Watch | Michigan  Water Watch | Michigan  Commission on Water | Michigan Suburban  Water Watch | Eastern Michigan  Water Watch |

9. Please answer the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Gender: | Male Female |
| Race or ethnic group(s) that best describe you: |  |
| What best describes your current marital status: | Never married Divorced  Widowed Married/Live-in partner |
| Do you have any children, step-children, or grand-children that live at home with you? | Yes No |
| Are you a homeowner? | Yes No |

10. Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Grade/middle school | Completed high school/GED | Some college | Four-year college degree | Post-graduate degree |

11. How many days during a typical week do you watch, listen to, or read the local news from any source (whether it is television, radio, the Internet or a newspaper)?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| None | 1 Day | 2 Days | 3 Days | 4 Days | 5 Days | 6 Days | 7 Days |

12. Please indicate the party label that best reflects you:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Strong  Democrat | Not so strong  Democrat | Independent,  Leaning Democrat | Independent | Independent,  Leaning Republican | Not so strong  Republican | Strong Republican | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

13. How often would you say you attend a church or religious service?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Never | A few times a year | Once or twice a month | Nearly every week | Once or more  per week |

14. Please indicate how many groups or associations you belong to. This includes everything from labor unions to fraternal groups, to hobby clubs or sports teams, community and school groups, and groups working on political issues:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Zero | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 or more |

15. Please select the income group that includes the income your entire household had in 2012, before taxes:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Less than $20,000 | $20,000-  29,999 | $30,000-39,999 | $40,000-49,999 | $50,000-59,999 | $60,000-69,9999 | $70,000  or more |

**This completes the study. Again, thank you so much for your participation!**

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1. This paper is culled from my dissertation. Hopefully the portions of the theory and experiment chapters presented here provide enough of a picture of the broader project to be sensible. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Policy threats are to be distinguished from other types of threats—particularly threats to life and limb. The risk of suffering physical harm at the hands of an entity (regardless of whether that entity is sanctioned by or affiliated with the state, i.e. police and military officers, or outside the bounds of the state, i.e. terrorism) carries a different type of visceral resonance and set of calculations than the risk of suffering loss to a political good (see Gadarian 2010 for examination of how terror threat influences citizen political thinking). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, from 2005 to 2009, the median net worth of black households decreased by more than half, from $12,124 to $5,677. Meanwhile, the decline in white median wealth during this same time period was only from $134,992 to $113,149. During this year the percentage of blacks living under the federal poverty line was 25.8%, compared to just 9.4% of non-Hispanic whites. Additionally, the percentage of blacks without health insurance reached 21% in 2009, whereas the percentage of whites without health insurance reached only 12% (Kochhar, Fry and Taylor 2011). Finally, during the summer of 2011—just before the Occupy movement began—the black unemployment rate reached 16.1%, double the white unemployment rate of 8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lest one mistakenly believe that the post-recession period (or the decade of the 2000s generally) was simply a time marked by black political dormancy, consider that among whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians, African Americans were the only racial or ethnic group to *increase* its turnout rate from the 2006 to 2010 midterm elections (Lopez 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. These instances become especially striking when contrasted with instances of intensified black activism when the distinct threat of loss of black life and limb is made salient (evidenced by the “Black Lives Matter” movement in response to police violence in the fall of 2014, and national marches and sit-ins in response to the Trayvon Martin slaying in 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The experiment included *policy threat* and *policy opportunity* treatments, but I focus only on the threat treatments in this paper. Examples of the treatments can be found in the Appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The entire questionnaire is presented in the appendix. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The demographic control variables included are: highest education attained, frequency of religious service attendance, number of voluntary, civic, social, or labor organizations involved with, home owner status, party identification (coded Republican to Democrat), frequency of viewing/reading local news, age and gender. Also included in this and the subsequent model specification with attitude and efficacy controls are the following: scale measure indicating whether the subject opposes or favors the DWSD privatization (coded “strongly oppose” to “strongly favor”), and a dichotomous variable indicating whether the subject took the survey online or via pen and paper (1 =via pen and paper). All variables are coded 0 to 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The attitude and efficacy variables are: trust in government to do the right thing; belief that people like the subject have a say in government, how important the subject thinks the DWSD privatization is; how much the subject believes public officials care what people like her think about the DWSD privatization; how much influence people from the subject’s community have on the DWSD issue; how much influence the subject herself has on the DWSD issue; and how likely the subject believes it is the issue will turn out how the subject wants it to. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)