

Black Men, White Women, and Demands from the State:

How Race and Gender Jointly Shape Protest

Expectations and Legitimate State Response¹

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In the second term of the Obama presidency, a new era of American protest politics began to emerge. Extrajudicial violence incidents resulting in the deaths of black men and boys at the hands of both private citizens and police were met with a series of protests and the formation of a new black social justice organization, Black Lives Matter. As Obama's era drew to a close, a 2016 presidential campaign laced with race and gender politics forewarned a new political activism from women—particularly white women. The election of Donald Trump brought a massive demonstration of women in coordinated Women's March protests across the country—likely the largest single-day protest activity in U.S. history (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017). As protests and activism against President Trump and his policy agenda continue, some polls suggest that progressive women are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to be participating.²

Juxtaposed against each other, these two strains of protest have produced sharp contrasts the response of the public and the response of the state. Protests populated by mostly black Americans and focused on the fate of black men have been marked by strong police response—from heavy presence of militarized police to use of force on protesters. Yet, the Women's March on

¹ Paper prepared for presentation at the 2017 meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology.

² Edwards-Levy, Ariel. "Progressive Activism Has Surged Since Donald Trump Took Office" *Huffington Post*. March 30, 2017.

D.C.—though so massive that it spilled well beyond its approved route—met a very different police response: no riot gear, no arrests, and the ability to take friendly photos with members of the force present. In a similar vein of contrast lies the public’s approval of the two movements. Pew data from mid-2016 put approval for Black Lives Matter at just 43%—and approval among white Americans slightly lower at 40%.³ A January 2017 *Washington Post* poll put approval for the Women’s Marches significantly higher: overall support was 60%, with whites also registering a bit less approval at 53%.⁴ I ask in this paper a general version of the question others have asked about these particular comparisons: do the salient race-gender identity features of protesters, themselves, shape expectations of and responses to public protest? Do they shape public perceptions of the legitimacy of the demanders and the issues they raise? I seek to offer a direct assessment of such an effect—one that attends to the distinct information conveyed by political identities defined by both gender and race.

Public sentiment about protest matters not simply for the opportunity to influence public opinion on a policy issue, but much more fundamentally because public support of the act of protest, itself, can shape the likelihood of the repression of activists by the state. Delegitimizing the action of protesting is one way in which the state can justify the use of force to suppress protest activity, rather than face continued pressure to respond with policy concessions. Work on the effectiveness of non-violent over violent protest (Stephan Chenoweth 2008; Wasow 2017) maintains essentially this argument: non-violent protest is more likely to secure effectiveness because its non-violent nature reduces the state’s capacity to evade a public backlash response to protest repression.

³ Horowitz, Juliana Menasce and Gretchen Livingston. July 8, 2016. “How Americans view the Black Lives Matter movement.” Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/08/how-americans-view-the-black-lives-matter-movement/>

⁴ “Washington Post Poll - Reaction To Women's March” - January 25-29, 2017. (Published February 1, 2017) “Would you say you support the women's marches, you oppose the women's marches, or that you neither support nor oppose them? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat? (IF NEITHER) Would you say you lean toward supporting or opposing the women’s marches?”

Yet, it is clear that the state may increase its capacity for repression—such as that witnessed in response to Black Lives Matter protests—by forwarding a narrative of *likely* violence even from non-violent protesters. To the degree that such narratives are resonant, the state’s capacity for repression of non-violent protest movements should grow. If public support for the act of protest and the public’s expectations about likely violence from protesters should matter in states’ calculations about repression, understanding how protesters’ social/political identities might facilitate or constrain these evaluations is important to understanding cycles of protest and repression.

Other work on support for protesters and their causes also points to a role for protesters’ social identities. Feinberg, Miller and Kovacheff (2017) demonstrate that extremist tactics can depress public approval by creating a greater sense of social distance between protesters and the spectating public. The role of proximity in shaping public support (Andrews, Beyerlein, Farnum 2016; Branton et al. 2014) also suggests a social identity mechanism, where local connections enable a viewing public to better appreciate the protesters’ cause. More directly, Davenport, Soule and Armstrong’s (2011) analysis of the role of the race of protesters in over 15,000 protest events in the U.S between 1960 and 1990 in generating a police response found that, all else equal, the state was more likely to respond with police force when African Americans participated in the protest activity. The authors argue this is consistent with the response being conditioned by perceived threat, where the perception is driven by notions held by police that blacks are more likely criminal and perpetrators of violence (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Schuman et al. 1997). Moving this logic from police response to citizen response yields a straightforward expectation: that public response to protest should also be conditioned by protester identities that signal threat of violence, delegitimizing and decreasing public sentiment in favor of the protesters. And extending the logic further yields the prediction that public response should also be conditioned by protester identities if

they somehow signal a decided *lack* of threat—that the legitimacy of claim to public space for the airing of demands from the state should be highest when violence expectations are lowest.

I thus extend Davenport, Soule, and Armstrong’s idea about response to protest driven by political identity by pushing into the realm of public sentiment, and by considering how both race *and* gender matter in the perception of protestors as likely to be violent. I highlight that the dominant racial narratives that likely drive violence attributions are marked by juxtapositions of black men and white women, where black men’s violence is conjured against white women’s moral purity. I offer an experiment to demonstrate that white Americans indeed make this race-gendered distinction in violence attributions, marking black men and white women as antithetical in perceived violence tendencies. I then offer a second experiment to demonstrate that these particular race-gender categories cause divergence in white Americans’ violence expectations and approval of protest activity. Finally, I analyze approval of the protest organization Black Lives Matter, demonstrating that the stereotype of black men as particularly violent indeed predicts lesser support.

Gender and Race Differentiation in American Political Narrative—From Present to Past

Recent years in American politics have been marked by a new awareness of the distinct position in American life of black men. If protests such as those organized via the network of Black Lives Matter have accomplished nothing else, they have certainly helped to provoke national discourse around the particular life threats faced by black men. While Black Lives Matter’s official mission statement specifically asserts a broad agenda that “goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes,”⁵ their emergence was clearly marked by association with protests surrounding a discourse of presumption of criminal guilt of black men and the use of force against them. This surge in political discourse follows an earlier media trend that while making some note of

⁵ “About the Black Lives Matter Network.” <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/> Retrieved April 3, 2017.

a tide of “black women rising”—trends of increasing educational and career attainment among black women—more often focused on accounts of the “endangered black male”—a narrative that highlighted, among other things, high rates of unemployment and incarceration among black men.⁶

Yet, the renewed discourse is importantly part of a long American history of vilification of black men for political purpose. And across this history, not only have the common scripts been ones that portray the threat of black men, in particular, but also ones that venerate white women in moral terms. In the early Republic, the joint narratives of black men’s bestiality and white women’s (sexual) purity was used as justification for the enslavement of blacks (e.g., Sommerville 1995). Post-Emancipation a new narrative of black men’s sexual violence—their proclivity to rape white women—was forwarded to reinstate white male social and economic power and to (fictitiously) justify lynching practices (Gilmore 1996; Novkov 2002; Holder 2008; Wells 1895). In contemporary information streams, oft-repeated crime statistics and local news coverage point to the peculiar representation of black men in the criminal justice system (Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon and Wright 1996; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000), but also simultaneously fixate on white women as ideally sympathetic victims of violent crime (Stabile 2006). In short, the American discourse of race has consistently used “opposing” and antithetical embodiments of black men and white women to mark who is threatening to the interest of whites and who holds the greatest “good” of the in-group. In considering the differential response to protests that center black men versus those overrun by white women, the long-historied discourse of violence versus sympathetic victimhood seems particularly relevant. It becomes clear that venerated white womanhood may be just as powerful of a political identity tool for influencing public support as the vilified black man in shaping public opposition.

⁶ See, e.g., “From Schools to Jobs, Black Women Are Rising Much Faster Than Black Men; What It Means for Work, Family and Race Relations.” *Newsweek*, February 23, 2003. The endangered black male notion has endured for several decades, and has received some attention from scholars. See, e.g., Wayne M. Blake and Carol A. Darling “The Dilemmas of the Black Male” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Jun., 1994), pp. 402-415.

To be sure, the social information used to construct race is not entirely about the black-men/white women dynamic. The vast literature on the role of white Americans' resentment of blacks as a group suggests that notions of laziness and therefore undeservingness carry broad weight for blacks generally (Kinder and Sears 1981, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Tesler 2016). Moreover, there is work, such as Hancock's (2004) study of the politics of the Welfare Queen, that has demonstrated particular moments or contexts when another race-gender identity was the central political construct. Nonetheless, the centrality of the black-men–violent, white-women-good narrative to the arc of American political discourse across a long historical timeframe suggests a particular stickiness and power, and one that carries with it relevant social information about violence expectations. Thus, the empirical task is to operationalize this argument, to measure the sub-group sentiment and assess what unique effect these race-gender sub-group specific categories of black men and white women have.^{7 8}

Assessing Race and Gender Differentiation

To assess whether the race-gendered discursive narrative of violence maps onto white Americans' understanding of racial differentiation, I turn to stereotypes of groups defined by both race and gender and compare them to stereotypes of groups defined by just one of those identity categories. I concentrate on stereotypes because of their demonstrated function as central constructs in the psychological schemas about groups that individuals bring to bear in their political decision-making and social interactions (e.g., Lodge and Stroh 1993; Lau 1986), but also because of the

⁷ I am, admittedly, only taking up a piece of what comes from the large and growing literature on “intersectionality” and related concepts of multiple and “interlocking” political identities. For an excellent overview of the landscape we do not address, see Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. 2011. “Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality.” *Political Research Quarterly* 64(1): 230-243.

⁸ For other racial groups, I expect that the process is more politically complicated, and thus leave that work for a future project. For example, for blacks, the central question would be what gender subgrouping complicates our understanding of the construction and relevance of black group interest.

potential for uncovering unmediated connection to specific bodies. That is, unlike attitudinal measures like racial resentment or hostile and benevolent sexism, which may add layers of attitudes about propriety of behavior or ideological thinking (Schuman 2000, Wilson and Davis 2011), trait stereotype measures include only ideas about characteristics attached to an identity group.

If I am correct about the political processes at work in the construction of racial group categories and race-gender group categories, then white Americans should have meaningful distinctive cognitive content about race-gender subgroups. I have several specific expectations to be tested. First, that whites hold uniquely violent stereotypic notions of black men. Second, that whites' uniquely positive assessments of white women, driven by association with feminine morality and compassion, will manifest in stereotypes of white women as uniquely non-violent. Third, that because the distinctions white Americans make between these groups are simultaneously defined by race and gender, measurements of the meta-group (race or gender) trait stereotypes are not simply averages of the sub-group attitudes—that there is, indeed, a specific and unique narrative that makes the distinctions something more than what we could consistently capture via simple multiplicative interaction terms.

The Subgrouping Experiment

To assess Americans' cognitive content about race, gender, and race-gender categories, I fielded a stereotype measurement experiment in the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES).⁹ Respondents were randomly assigned to receive either a battery of stereotype questions about “blacks,” “whites,” “men,” and “women,” or a battery of the same stereotype items about the

⁹ Study details for the CCES are available at: <http://cces.gov.harvard.edu/>. Our measures were part of the George Washington University's Team Content, which contains 1,000 respondents. We conducted similar experiments in the 2008 and 2009 CCES surveys and on student samples in 2010 and 2011. In these studies we have examined other traits as well, including: promiscuity, laziness, trustworthiness, ambitiousness, compassion, irresponsibility, kindness, rudeness, and selfishness.

groups “black men,” “white men,” “black women,” and “white women.” Included in this battery was the trait “violent.” While stereotype questions used in many other political science applications, including the American National Election Study (ANES), provide a scale that presumes categorical thinking about groups and asks respondents to place each group along a continuum from low to high levels of a given trait, I designed a question to measure how widespread respondents think a trait is among members of a group. Each question asked whether a particular trait described “almost none, a few, some, many, or almost all” of the members of the group. This enables assessment of how common truly categorical thinking about a group on a given trait is by examining how common the responses at the tail ends of the response categories are.

The full battery was designed to capture not only violence, but other traits connected to the antithetical black-men/white-women political discourse described above. It includes a second item to capture the sort of pejorative stereotypes of black men implied by that narrative: aggressive. A third item was included to capture the dimension of white women’s distinct feminine veneration: nurturing. A fourth item represents those more commonly used in the racial politics literature as example of a trait on which whites distinguish themselves from blacks as a group: intelligent.¹⁰

This design enables analysis of which ways the race/gender subcategories are different from the larger meta-categories of race and gender without concern that respondents are artificially anchoring their related group notions to each other as a result of being asked about both the meta-categories and the relevant race-gender subgroups. In other words, the design provides no cue for sub-group anchoring for the meta-categories of race and gender (or vice versa). Yet it still provides insight on what representations of the meta-category are being conjured when people respond to

¹⁰ Note that although the race literature has focused on traits that signal pejorative sentiments, the gender literature has suggested that traits that do politically important differentiating work might have positive or pejorative meaning—because even “positive” stereotypic notions about women (their pacifism, their nurturing nature) have been used as the basis of unequal treatment and political rights. See Eagly.

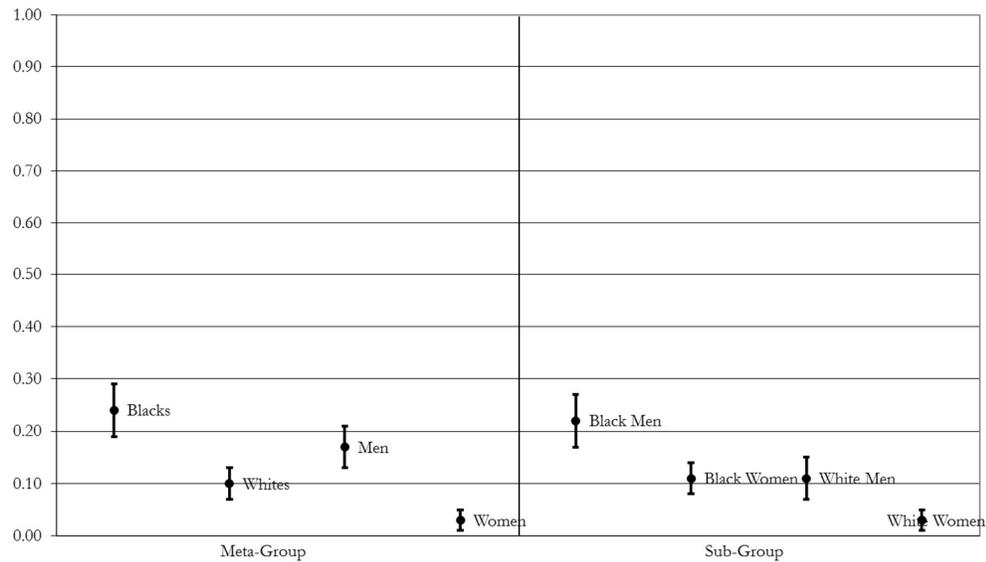
these questions—in particular, comparisons across the question types can suggest whether people tend to think of a particular sub-group when they answer the meta-category item. That is, I gain some leverage over whether when people say, for example, that blacks are violent, they are likely thinking about blacks in general (or randomly about black men or black women), or they are actually consistently thinking about a particular subset of blacks, such as black men.

CCES provides a diverse sample of 1,000 American adults; I use only the 616 that identified as white. This was an online study, where participants read and responded to the stereotype items via computer. The samples are not random, but are nationally representative on a range of demographic dimensions. Despite its non-random nature, for this type of experimental research, involving simple question wording and manipulation of political stimuli, the CCES is ideal. It provides a large, diverse subject pool—much more diverse than normally achieved either in political communication laboratories or geographically concentrated field experiments—and it does this at a reasonable cost to the researcher. For my purposes, this offers some sense of the possible extent of race-gender sub-grouping among white Americans, coupled with strong leverage on the question of the difference between the subgroups and meta-categories in people’s minds.

The central results of the stereotype question wording experiment are presented in Figures 1 through 4. Each point in the figures indicates the percentage of respondents who were willing to say that many or almost all members of the indicated group are described by that trait, and the band around that point is the corresponding 95 percent confidence interval. The left side of each figure displays the results for subjects in the meta-category or “traditional wording” condition; the right side displays the results for subjects in the subgroup wording condition.¹¹

¹¹ The meta-category items were asked of 317 white respondents and the subgroup items were asked of 299 white respondents. Effective cell sizes (due to item non-responses) range from 293-316.

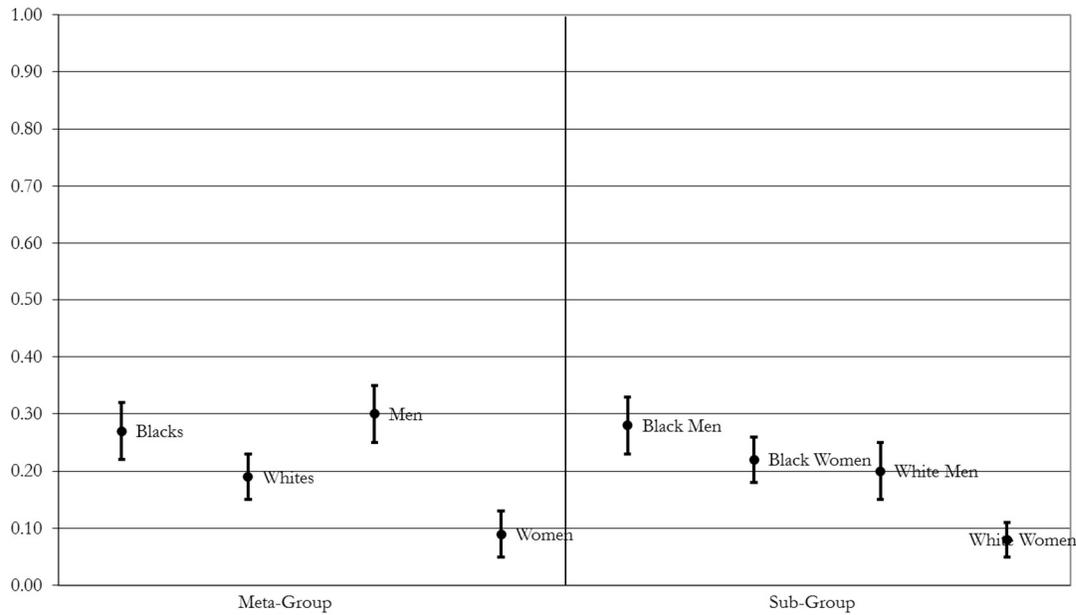
Figure 1. Violence Attribution Among White Americans, 2016 CCES



First, I take up expectations on the violence trait. The results on the sub-group measures are clearly supportive of both the expectation that black men are uniquely seen as violent, and that white women—as particularly morally venerated—are uniquely exempt from being ascribed violent tendencies. As can be seen in the right panel of Figure 1, black men are deemed by whites as particularly violent, with 22 percent of white respondents indicating that they believe many or almost all black men to be violent, while only 11 percent said the same of black women as a group, 11 percent said the same of white men, and almost no one—just 3 percent of respondents—could say the same of white women. Comparing across the panels reveals how important the sub-grouping is in Americans’ understanding of racial difference. “Blacks” as a group are clearly the most likely of the “meta” groups to be seen as violent—at a rate indistinguishable to that for black men. Despite comprising half of the relevant population to be described, black women’s significantly lesser tendencies to incur the violence stereotype appears to play no role in defining a violence expectation of blacks as a group from whites. Similarly, though whites clearly delineated between black and white women on the subgroup measures, the meta-category “women” does not reflect that

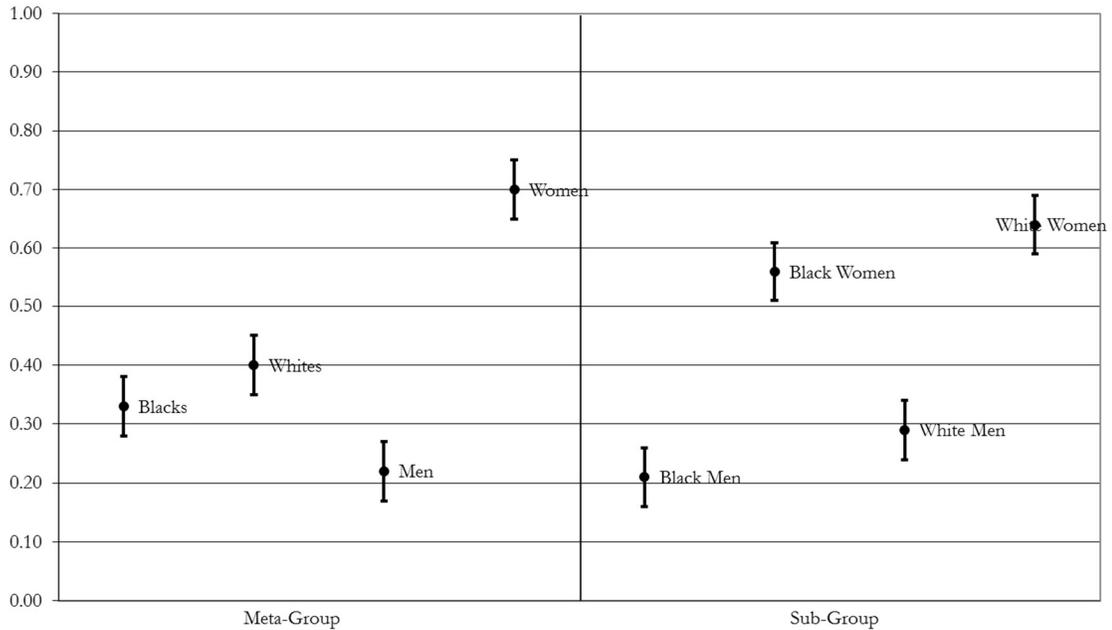
differentiation. There is unique cognitive content about the subgroups on the violence trait, and it is not entirely recoverable from the meta-category measures.

Figure 2. Aggression Attribution Among White Americans, 2016 CCES



As a similar trait to violence, aggression performs similarly in its patterns of attribution by whites. Black men are once again significantly more likely to be categorically assigned the trait, with nearly 30 percent of respondents saying that many or almost all black men are aggressive. Black women and white men are also once again seen as nearly identical in their aggressive proclivities, with 22 and 20 percent, respectively, ascribing the trait to many or almost all in each group. And once again, white women are uniquely able to escape expectations of aggressive tendencies, with 8 percent of whites ascribing the trait broadly to the group. Also replicated is the pattern of overlap between ascriptions to blacks as a group and black men, suggesting a lack of “averaging” across men and women in assessments about blacks as a group. And once again, “women” are ascribed the trait at a nearly identical rate as white women.

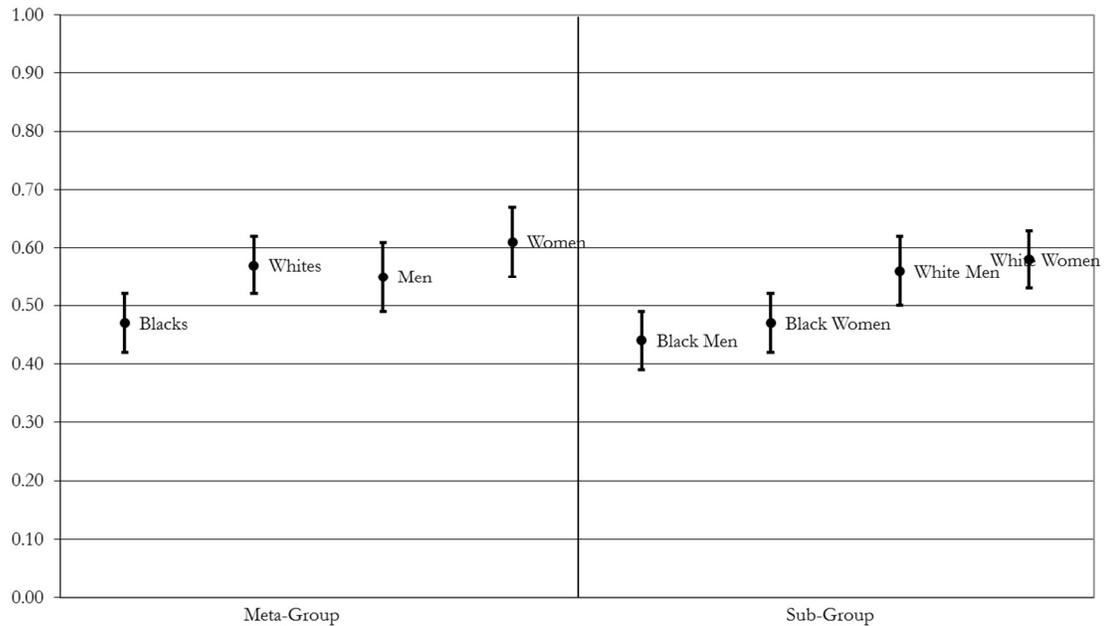
Figure 3. Nurturing Attribution Among White Americans, 2016 CCES



Turning to the positively valenced trait of nurturing in Figure 3, the expectations are essentially the inverse of the previous two traits: this is the trait meant to capture white women’s unique “good” nature. Once again, the results are consistent with expectations. The right panel shows white women to be incredibly likely to be categorically described as nurturing: 64 percent of our respondents said many or almost all white women are, indeed, nurturing. While many also saw black women as nurturing, the ascription was not as overwhelming: just 56 percent said that they would describe most of the group that way. Once again, black men were the most pejoratively viewed category, with just 21 percent saying the nurturing trait applied broadly to them, while nearly 30 percent said the trait described many or almost all white men. Also once again, the comparisons across the panels support the argument that the meta-category measures mask important intersectional differences. Most importantly on this trait: “women” invokes greater application of the nurturing stereotype than even “white women” had, with fully 70 percent applying the trait to women as a group, but this is statistically indistinguishable from white women, while easily

distinguishable from black women. Women are nurturing—likely because whites’ cognitive representation of women is entirely white.

Figure 4. Intelligence Attribution Among White Americans, 2016 CCES



Finally, I provide the comparison of a trait not directly tied to the black-man/white-woman political discourse: intelligence. Here, the expectations are quite different. If black men are painted as a unique threat, that threat has not been expressed in terms of superior intellect. Quite the opposite, of course, comes in another, importantly distinct, script used to justify blacks’ position in American society: blacks’ inherent inferiority. Those scripts are far less likely to carry gender modifiers, and thus unlike the traits of violence, aggression, and nurturing, I expect white Americans don’t have distinct cognitive content to reliably bring to bear in making race-gender sub-group distinctions. That expectation is borne out by the data, as shown in Figure 4. This time the right hand panel displays a pattern of divergence in stereotypes only by race: white women and men are both deemed a mostly intelligent group by nearly 60 percent of whites, while just under half say the same about either black men or black women. The left panel displays the familiar pattern of the racial politics

literature of lower ascription of the intelligence trait to blacks than whites, at rates indistinguishable from the averages of the constituent subgroups on the right. This, in other words, is a trait that reflects the tools of the traditional approach to thinking about how whites make decisions using racial considerations: by comparing the entirety of the in-group to the entirety of the out-group. It performs in a way that justifies a lack of sub-group differentiation. But it is exceptional in that regard among the traits tested here.

Protest Beyond Black and White

With evidence about the unique distinctions white Americans make about black men and white women in the realms of threat and social good, I return to the questions about how the identities of protesters, themselves, can shape expectations of and support for public political activism. I tie the findings about the race-gendered traits of threat and veneration to what meaning protesters' race-gender identities might convey about the potential for violence and therefore the acceptance of state action to repress the protest. My expectation is that bodies more associated with threatening traits are more likely to invoke an expectation of violence even when the protest action itself is entirely peaceful. Thus, a peaceful protest by black men should be most likely to generate expectations of violence, and white women protesters least likely to do so. If identity can drive violence expectations, then it should also drive observers' evaluations of how appropriate it is for a particular group to be demonstrating in its interests: peaceful protest, itself, would be deemed less appropriate for those expected to violate the non-violence norm and more appropriate for those deemed particularly unlikely to choose such a moral wrong. Relatedly, the policy concerns expressed may find less support. And finally, the legitimacy of the state reacting with any form of repression of protest should also be affected by the violent expectations: if protesters' identities signal

commitment to peaceful protest, state repression action should be undermined, while repression is more tolerated even for the peaceful protest of those whose bodies signal greater threat.

The Demand Experiment

Given the goal of identifying the effect that the race-gender identity of protesters, itself, has in shaping the public's response to the action I designed the *demand experiment*. It is a simple vignette experiment that varies only the race-gender identity of protesters calling “for more state government involvement in creating education and job opportunities for young people.” The vignette describes the protesters as “mostly {white women, black women, black men, or white men}.” (The full vignette is displayed below as Figure 5.) The wording and issue information choices were made to make the description of the action taken and sentiments expressed by the protesters read as authentically plausible by each of the four included race-gender subgroups. Given the goal of isolating the causal relationship between protesters' race-gender identities and the public's assessment of violence tendencies, the issue was chosen as one for which public protest is plausible, but that is unlikely to itself activate notions of violence—unlike a protest about crime, criminal justice, or drug policies, for example. Given the expectation that public sentiment about protest should matter as restraint on state repression, the vignette also includes a state response, so that subjects can evaluate the propriety of state's actions: protesters are “met with police ready to disperse the crowd. Several protesters were arrested for obstruction of the Capitol steps.” This choice was also made to keep actual violence out of the treatment; the response of the state is itself non-violent, but still repressive rather than conciliatory.

Figure 5. Demand Experiment Wording

Next we would like you to carefully read a short description of a recent political protest. We will then ask you about your thoughts on the event.

Hundreds of protesters organized by the group Save Our Youth held a demonstration in Indianapolis last week. Protesters called for more state government involvement in creating education and job opportunities for young people.

Many in the crowd of mostly {white women, black women, black men, white men} expressed frustration and disappointment with the state's lawmakers for neglect of young people. One {woman, man} told reporters that lawmakers needed to "come here to work with us to address these issues."

As the protesters converged on the Indiana State House, they were met with police ready to disperse the crowd. Several protesters were arrested for obstruction of the Capitol steps.

The experiment appeared in a nationally representative sample survey of registered voters, 600 of whom identified as white and are the respondents I analyze here. The survey was conducted September 1 through 15, 2016 by Nielsen Scarborough Company on behalf of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.¹² The instrument included items to measure respondents' reaction to both the protesters and the police response. The central expectations are about distinct responses to black men and white women protesters. Given the unique level of attribution of the violence and aggression traits to black men by whites in the CCES data, I expect (white) subjects in the condition where protesters are described as black men will be most likely to deem the protest likely to have turned violent without police intervention. And given the rarity of attribution of violent and aggressive traits to white women, I expect respondents in the condition that describes protesters as white women to be least likely to expect eventual violence. Similarly, I expect the protest, itself, to be most legitimate when white women are the activists and least so when black men are doing the protesting. I consider the possibility that the legitimacy of protest shaped in this way may spill over

¹² The respondents come from the Nielsen Scarborough panel of over 2000,000 American adults. Sampling for panel respondents is via a random probability selection process that includes both random-digit-dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling. <http://jointcenter.org/content/voter-2016-survey-methodology>

into expressed support of the actual content of the protest grievance with a question that asks subjects whether or not they agree with the protesters' concerns, again expecting the least support for the protesters' concerns when they are black men and most when they are white women. Finally, I employ a measure of assessments of the state response, asking whether the few arrests made for obstruction of the state capitol's steps constituted too harsh of a response by police, expecting that the arrest of white women will be uniquely criticized and the arrest of black men of least concern.

I begin the analysis by looking for these effects across race-gender identity conditions for all subjects. I then look for evidence that response to protest demands, like so many other political phenomena in a polarized era, may work differently across party lines. Finally, I look to whether or not movement on the outcome measures comes at the extreme ends of the response distributions, addressing whether identities might provide more intensity of support or disapproval of the protesters and their demands. In the end, I indeed find that the greatest divides that the race/gender identity conditions generated were between those who saw the protesters described as black men and those who saw the protest as being one of white women.

The aggregate analysis, summarized in the top section of Table 1, produces a pattern of results largely consistent with expectations. Cells in the table gives the percent of respondents who: believed the protest would turn violent without the actions of the police, thought that the protest was an appropriate way for the group to express its concerns, agreed with the concerns expressed by the protesters, and thought the response of the police was too harsh. On the item most directly related to the violence trait stereotyping we demonstrated in the previous section—the violence expectation of the protesters—the evidence is particularly clear. Nearly 70 percent believed a peaceful protest of black men would turn violent, but less than half expected the same from white women. As on the violence stereotype trait, itself, expectations of white men and black women fell in between—and were statistically indistinguishable from each other. In this analysis, division on the

appropriateness of protest as a means of expressing the group's political concerns, however, is marked more by a distinction between black and white—suggesting propriety may not be linked to the race-gender dynamic of violence and moral suasion. On agreement with the actual demands of the protesters, the only significant difference is once again between those who saw protesters described as black men versus those who read that they were white women, with white women generating more agreement with their cause. And, once again, the black-men, white-women divide replicates in sentiment about the police response, with close to 40 percent expressing concern about the arrests of white women being too harsh, but just 30 percent expressing similar concern for black men protesters.

Table 1. Response to Outcome Measures by Treatment Condition

	Black Men	Black Women	White Men	White Women
All Whites				
Would be violent	0.67 [.60,.73]	0.58 [.51,.65]	0.62 [.55,.69]	0.47 [.39,.54]
Protest appropriate	0.64 [.57,.71]	0.66 [.60,.73]	0.74 [.68,.81]	0.74 [.68,.80]
Agree with protesters	0.67 [.60,.73]	0.74 [.67,.79]	0.7 [.64,.77]	0.75 [.69,.79]
Police response too harsh	0.3 [.23,.36]	0.34 [.27,.41]	0.31 [.24,.37]	0.38 [.31,.45]
N	205	201	186	196
White Democrats				
Would be violent	0.48 [.38,.59]	0.4 [.29,.51]	0.51 [.39,.63]	0.34 [.24,.44]
Protest appropriate	0.82 [.74,.90]	0.81 [.73,.89]	0.91 [.84,.97]	0.85 [.77,.92]
Agree with protesters	0.82 [.74,.90]	0.89 [.83,.96]	0.86 [.76,.94]	0.87 [.80,.94]
Police response too harsh	0.44 [.33,.54]	0.48 [.37,.59]	0.45 [.33,.56]	0.48 [.39,.59]
N	89	85	76	92
White Republicans				
Would be violent	0.88 [.80,.95]	0.78 [.68,.87]	0.7 [.59,.81]	0.65 [.53,.77]

Protest appropriate	0.41 [.31,.53]	0.47 [.35,.58]	0.63 [.51,.74]	0.55 [.42,.68]
Agree with protesters	0.53 [.42,.64]	0.51 [.39,.62]	0.54 [.42,.66]	0.57 [.44,.69]
Police response too harsh	0.11 [.04,.18]	0.18 [.09,.27]	0.19 [.09,.28]	0.2 [.09,.30]
N	81	77	70	60
White Independents				
Would be violent	0.65 [.49,.82]	0.56 [.40,.73]	0.7 [.55,.85]	0.5 [.35,.65]
Protest appropriate	0.68 [.52,.85]	0.72 [.64,.90]	0.63 [.47,.78]	0.77 [.64,.90]
Agree with protesters	0.6 [.43,.78]	0.85 [.73,.96]	0.68 [.73,.96]	0.75 [.62,.88]
Police response too harsh	0.37 [.20,.54]	0.36 [.20,.51]	0.25 [.11,.39]	0.41 [.26,.56]
N	35	39	40	44

Comparisons across the next panels of Table 1 reveal most strikingly that partisans are well-sorted on attitudes about protest, with significantly less support across all cells expressed by Republicans than Democrats. There is some suggestive evidence that partisanship may be doing some work to moderate responses to the race-gender identities of the protesters. While Democrats and Republicans generally exhibited the same pattern of decreased support for the protesters when they are described as black men and increased support when they are described as white women, Republicans appeared to demonstrate a slightly greater proclivity to differentiate between black men and black women, particularly on the questions assessing the likelihood that the protest would turn

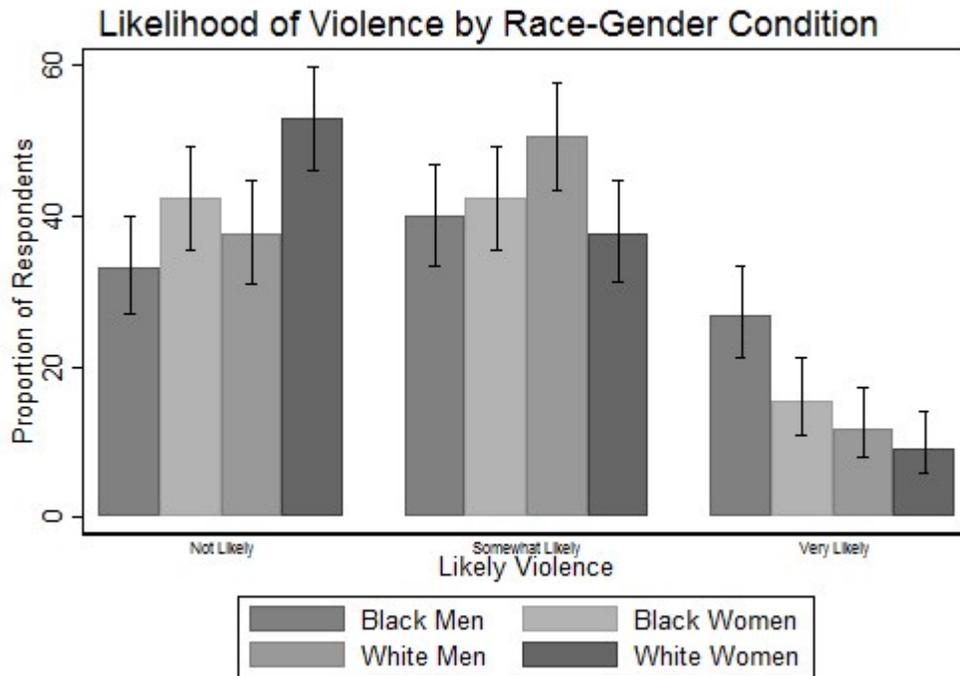
violent and appropriateness of the protest. The black men/white women gap in the belief that the protest would turn violent question is about 9 percentage points greater for Republicans than for Democrats and the black men/white women gap in belief that the protest was appropriate is about 11 percentage points greater for Republicans than for Democrats.¹³ The table also reveals one unexpected result for both Democrats and Republicans (but not Independents): both groups of partisans appear to see white men protesting as more appropriate than other race-gender groups. While not predicted by our race-gender stereotyping, this result could be indicative of a different dimension of what generates white male privilege in U.S. politics, where white men's concerns are given greater weight in political discourse (e.g., Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014).

Lastly, I consider whether the protesters' identities might elicit more intensity of support or disapproval. To test this expectation, I simply look at the full range of responses to each of the outcome measures by treatment condition, examining whether or not movement across the experimental conditions on the outcome measures comes at the extreme ends of the response distributions. On subjects' assessments of whether or not the protest would have turned violent without the actions of the police there is once again strong evidence that whites readily differentiate between black male protesters and white female protesters and that this dynamic has its greatest effect on driving divergence on certainty about the expectation. As Figure 6 reveals, white respondents were significantly more likely to think that it was "very likely" that the protest would have turned violent when the protesters were described as black men than when they were described as white women ($p=0.0$). In fact, respondents in this condition more likely to think that it was "very likely" that the protest would have turned violent than those in any of the other race/gender conditions (white men, $p=0.0$; black women, $p=0.0$). Similarly, respondents were also significantly

¹³ We also note that the results for Independents display less consistency than those of partisans, consistent with the idea that party identification is a process that includes attentiveness to American racial politics. With fewer Independents, however, there is insufficient power to test any meaningful pattern.

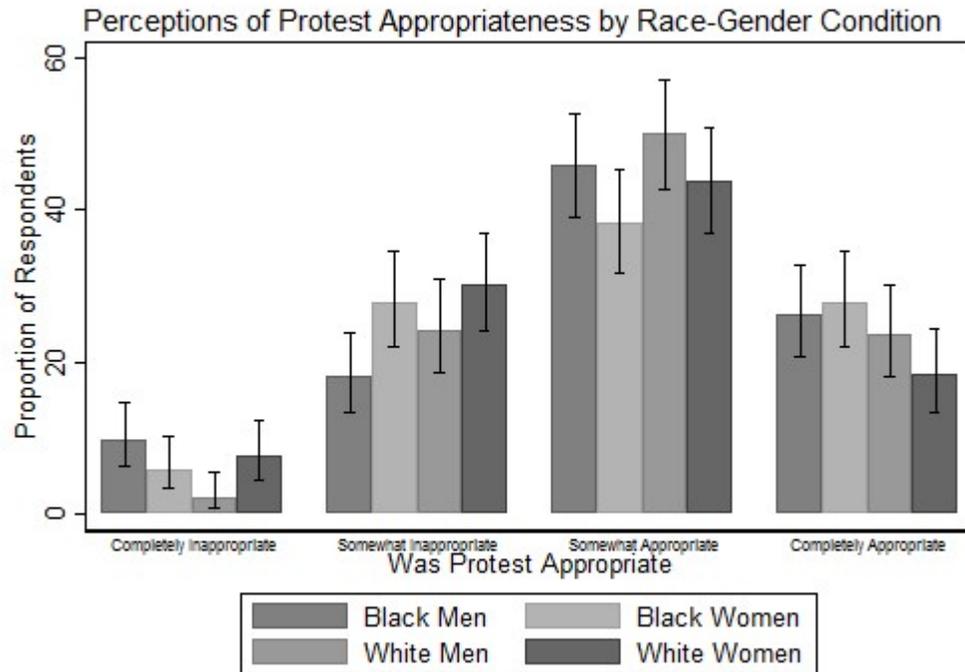
more likely to say that it was “not at all likely” that the protest would have turned violent when the protesters were described as white women. Again, not only was the percentage of respondents who said that it was “not at all likely” that the protest would have turned violent greater in this condition than in the black men condition (black men, $p=0.0$) but this percentage was also significantly greater than that in all of the other race/gender conditions (black women, $p=.03$; white men, $p=.00$).

Figure 6



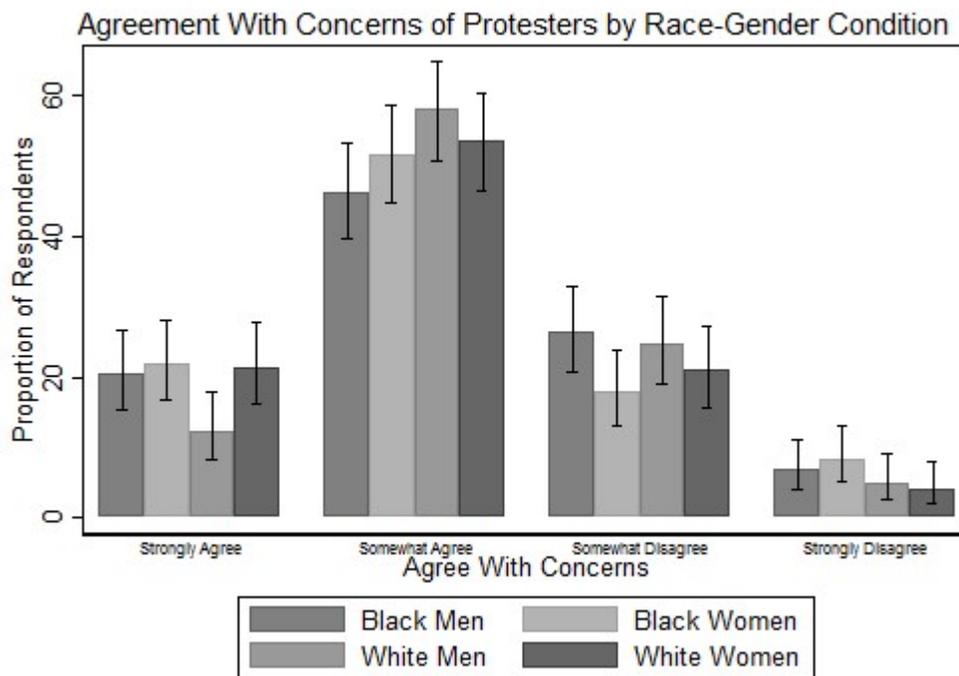
Turning next to the question that asks the respondents to assess the appropriateness of the protest, the expected pattern of divergence between support for black men protesters and white women is evident. Figure 7 highlights that the percent of respondents who deemed the protest a “completely appropriate” way of expressing concerns was lowest in the black men treatment condition. It also shows that the divide is greatest between those who read that the protesters were black men and those who saw them as white women ($p=.00$).

Figure 7



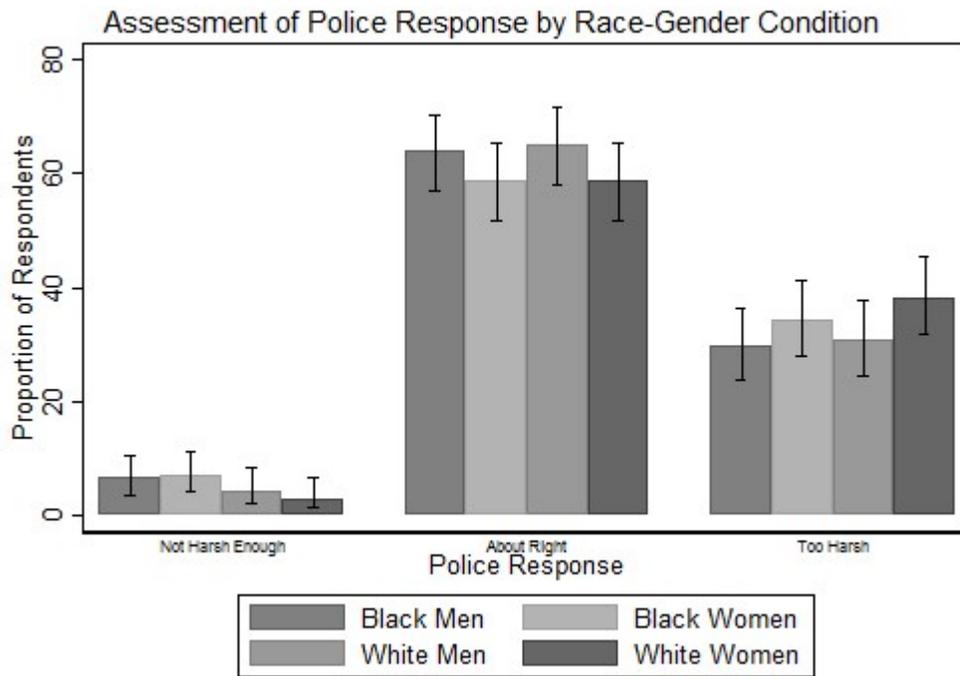
On our measure assessing the respondents' level of agreement with the protesters' cause, Figure 8 replicates the main finding in Table 1. In contrast to subjects' assessments about the protest action, itself, the race-gender of protesters produced little in the way of treatment effects across conditions, even in the extreme response categories. Again, this finding is not inconsistent with work on political discussion that has found that identity matters to consideration of the concerns of speakers, where to be given a voice is not necessarily to be given a real place at the table. Our finding that white women are not more likely to have their (non-threatening) concerns elicit support despite having their protest action being more likely to be deemed legitimate implies that perhaps it is also true the to be given a place in the public square is not necessarily to be given policy concessions.

Figure 8



Finally, on the item that asked respondents to assess the propriety of the response from the state—the arrest of several protesters for nothing more than obstruction of the state capitol’s steps—Figure 9 highlights that the main disagreement across all conditions was whether the response was too harsh or just right, as very few thought obstruction of steps required a greater penalty, no matter the protesters’ identities. Here again is the unique exoneration of white women, who were the most likely to elicit the too harsh response (difference from black men, $p=.07$). This suggests that the American public’s approval of state action in regard to protest is not simply a function of the protest’s content or activists’ behavior, but also of whose bodies legitimate or undermine justifications of repression of public speech.

Figure 9



Black Lives Matter as a Protest for Black Men?

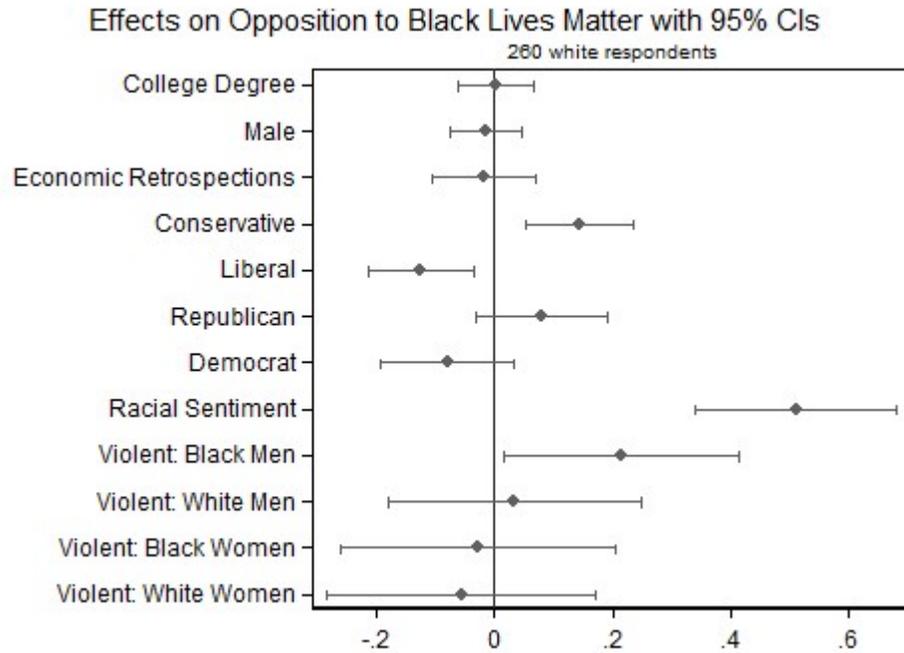
Though useful for demonstrating the potential causal effect of the race-gender identities of protesters on public sentiment about protest activity, the experiment presented above leaves open the question of whether the effect generalizes into perceptions about real-world contentious politics. To answer that question, I turn to data on support for Black Lives Matter from the same CCES survey module as the violence stereotype experiment I presented in the first section of the paper. If Black Lives Matter, despite its foundation by the efforts of black women organizers, has become viewed as a movement for black men—against police violence, highlighted through sensational cases including Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and Alton Sterling—then white Americans’ unique ideas about black men on the trait of violence should replicate the findings of the demand experiment above.

To test this hypothesis, I build a simple model of support for Black Lives Matter. The dependent variable is a five-point scale, ranging from strong support to strong opposition. The

violence stereotypes described in the subgroup experiment will test the central hypothesis that violence expectations of black men should depress public support of the protest movement. I include controls for party, ideology, education, economic perceptions, and the sex of the respondent. To account for the reality that the Black Lives Matter movement was articulating demands surrounding racial justice in addition to being associated with the protest actions of black men, I include a measure of sentiment about American racial politics—an index of 3 items from the FIRE measures offered by DeSante and Watts (2017). All variables are scaled to run 0 to 1.

The results of the model, displayed in Figure 10, are consistent both with expectations and with the results of the demand experiment. General racial sentiment is important in determining support or opposition to Black Lives Matter; those holding views that deny the existence of racism in the U.S. are profoundly less supportive of a protest movement making the fundamentally opposite claim. Yet the specific political identity associated with the protest has its own significant effect above and beyond that, depressing public support even further. That Black Lives Matter is about black men, associated in the minds of white Americans with violence, has consequence: among the stereotype measures only stereotypes of black men are significant predictors of opposition to the protest movement. The estimated effect (.21) is nearly as large as the estimated polarization between self-identified liberals and conservatives (.27)

Figure 10



Conclusion

Finding consistent patterns of both unique distinctions in the violence attributions white Americans' make about race-gender subgroups and responses to protests carried out by those groups, particularly across the antithetical categories of black men and white women, I return to the questions many have raised about how differently protests of Black Lives Matter activists and demonstrations like the Women's March have been received. In the demand experiment, I was able to separate the role of identity from the messiness of other factors that can simultaneously vary in real time: media framing, the severity of police response, and the actual incidence of violence. Consistent with critiques of public voices comparing the two strains of protest, I indeed find that race-gender identity matters on its own. I further found in observational data evidence that the image of Black Lives Matters as a protest movement including many black men (and organized around concern about them) does do its own work in shaping public support. Taken together, these findings support the argument that the race-gender identities of protesters do the work of inspiring

expectations of violence and thereby justifications of repressive response by the state—that the response of Black Lives Matter protests was about its association with black men. Extrapolating from these findings to the Women’s March demonstrations, dominated as they were with white women’s presence, suggests that fact likely garnered it special treatment. Particularly given how similar the protesters’ violation in the demand experiment presented here was to the actual Women’s March deviation from its approved route, my finding is supportive of the argument that those (mostly white) women marchers were indeed spared police response at least in part because of their race-gender identities.¹⁴

And yet I also note that one potential relationship between the race-gender identities of protesters was not borne out in the findings: the protest privilege of white women did not include special power of persuasion. If identity, itself, did any work in this context, it seemed most likely to reinforce existing structures of power in American politics that vest more import to the voices of white men. Given, however, both the experimental treatment’s fairly vague articulation of the protesters’ demands and the suggestive nature of the differences observe on this outcome, this question is ripe for future research.

¹⁴ These results also suggest that black women may be more effective in claiming public space than black men, a consideration I think important for strategic protest action by social justice and black rights advocates.

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