

Measuring Carceral Political Discussion and Its Political Consequences*

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Abstract

The conventional measure of political discussion in American politics represents one domain of political topics (government and elections). This domain is rooted in the liberal-democratic “first face” of the state and neglects the “second face” of the state that operates through coercion and surveillance (Soss and Weaver [2017](#)). This paper addresses this gap by exploring *carceral political discussion* (i.e., discussion about topics like policing and the criminal justice system). How does participation in liberal-democratic (i.e., conventional) and carceral discussion vary by race? Do liberal-democratic and carceral discussion differently impact political efficacy and engagement? How does carceral discussion *content* impact these outcomes? In other words, what comprises important political discussion and for whom? Drawing on original survey data, **Study 1** shows that Black Americans are more likely to engage in carceral discussion than whites, but less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion. **Study 2** shows that carceral discussion has explanatory power on political outcomes over and above liberal-democratic discussion. This study also shows that positive and negative carceral discussion differently correlate with efficacy and engagement for Black and white Americans. **Study 3** extends the analysis to discussion about the immigration system and shows that measuring this domain of carceral discussion closes the white-Latino gap in political discussion. **Study 4** shows that liberal-democratic and immigration system discussion have distinct political correlates and that positive and negative carceral discussion differently correlate with political outcomes for Latinos and whites. Substantively, these studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the multiple ways in which different groups of citizens talk about the state. Methodologically, the paper presents a novel approach of using real-world conversation data to measure political discussion content.

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1 Introduction

Political discussion between citizens is central to research in political behavior. Decades of research demonstrate the impact of political discussion on important political behaviors and attitudes, including political knowledge (Eveland 2004; Eveland and Thomson 2006; Eveland and Hively 2009), candidate preferences (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004), policy positions (Sinclair 2012), political and civic engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Sokhey and McClurg 2012; Klofstad 2007; Klofstad 2010; Searing et al. 2007), and tolerance and civic mindedness (Mutz 2006; Pattie and Johnston 2008).

In these and other survey-based studies of political discussion, respondents are usually asked if and with whom they discuss “politics,” “political matters,” or “government or elections.”¹ This approach, however, is fundamentally limited in its understanding of political discussion. Specifically, these questions focus on what Soss and Weaver (2017) describe as the liberal-democratic or “first face” of the state—i.e., on a view of politics that focuses on electoral-representative processes, citizen opinion and participation, and the rules, people, and parties in national government. These questions, in other words, do not do a good job of capturing discussions of the carceral or “second face” of the state that focuses on surveillance, criminalization, and punishment (Soss and Weaver 2017), and that exercises power through institutions responsible for policing and punishment, including the police, court systems, jails, prisons, and immigration enforcement. This paper thus departs from previous research on political discussion by focusing on what I term, *carceral political discussion*—i.e., informal discussion between citizens about topics like policing and the criminal justice system.

¹ Prominent examples include the American National Election Studies (ANES), which asks, “Do you ever discuss *politics* with your family or friends?” (ANES Time Series Cumulative Data File, 1948–2020, italics added), and Diana Mutz’s study of cross-cutting political discourse, which asked, “From time to time, people discuss *government, elections, and politics* with other people. We’d like to know the first names or just the initials of people you talk with about these matters.” (Mutz 2006, italics added). Some studies also ask about “important matters,” including the General Social Survey (GSS). Research suggests that this prompt generates similar responses to explicitly political prompts (Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe 2009).

Drawing on research on the liberal-democratic and carceral arms of the state, I argue that we have reasons to anticipate variation in these two domains of political discussion. First, contact with the criminal justice system is racially disparate and highest among Black Americans (Pettit and Western [2004](#); Goel, Rao, and Shroff [2016](#); Baumgartner, Epp, and Shoub [2018](#); Pierson et al. [2020](#)). These disparities are salient even in the absence of direct contact with the criminal justice system, due in part to the spread of images of police violence against Black Americans and the response of movements like Black Lives Matter. Consequently, Black Americans may be more likely to engage in carceral discussion than white Americans, thus reversing established patterns of whites talking more about politics (Leighley and Matsubayashi [2009](#); Verba, Burns, and Schlozman [2003](#); Wong et al. [2011](#); Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla [2019](#)). Moreover, Black Americans may be more likely to engage in negative than positive discussion about the police and criminal justice system.

Second, carceral political discussion may have important consequences for political attitudes and behaviors, even when we account for engagement in conventional political discussion. For instance, research shows that contact with the criminal justice system can depress efficacy and participation (White [2019](#); White [2022](#); Weaver and Lerman [2010](#); Burch [2011](#); McDonough, Enamorado, and Mendelberg [2022](#); Branton, Carey, and Martinez-Ebers [2021](#)). Even without direct carceral contact, talking and knowing about the carceral state may yield a view of government as unfair and coercive and depress political efficacy and engagement. This impact may be most likely among Black Americans, for whom the exercise of carceral power is most repressive, and departs from the assumption that underpins most research on political discussion: namely, that more political discussion is better and capable of generating the political knowledge and engagement that leads to political voice and influence (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Klofstad [2007](#); Searing et al. [2007](#)).

However, there are also reasons to expect carceral political discussion to generate political mobilization. These expectations build on research that attributes a mobilizing effect to *proximal* carceral contact (i.e., contact with the criminal justice system via friends or family)

and *community* carceral contact (i.e., contact via community incidents, word of mouth, or media), whereby individuals come to understand the carceral state as unjust and are mobilized to action (Lee, Porter, and Comfort [2014](#); Walker and García-Castañón [2017](#); Walker [2014](#); Walker [2020](#); Anoll and Israel-Trummel [2019](#); Morris and Shoub [2024](#); Williamson, Trump, and Einstein [2018](#); Ang and Tebes [2024](#)). Like proximal and community carceral contact, carceral political discussion could provide opportunities for the identification of perceived injustices and catalyze political engagement.²

In this paper, I examine these expectations by measuring carceral political discussion with original survey data from the United States. My first survey measure adapts existing questions about political discussion to measure participation in carceral discussion, carceral discussion frequency, and number of carceral discussion partners. My second measure captures the *content* of carceral political discussion by measuring different topics of discussion about the carceral state. To construct this measure, I used “analytic listening”—i.e., “listening to the way people talk about public affairs, ideally in the venues they normally inhabit and with the people with whom they normally spend time” (Cramer [2024](#), 194)—to analyze recorded small-group conversations on Fora, a conversation platform created by the MIT Center for Constructive Communication and affiliated nonprofit Cortico.³

Using these measures, I conduct four related analyses of carceral political discussion. **Study 1** focuses on the prevalence of liberal-democratic (i.e., conventional) political discussion and carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system among Black and white Americans. This study shows that Black Americans are more likely to engage

² This expectation makes no assumption about the direction or goal of mobilization: carceral political discussion could generate support for less punitive criminal justice policies or could yield a reactionary or conservative response (e.g., Engelhardt [2021](#); Drakulich and Denver [2022](#)).

³ Created by Kathy Cramer, Deb Roy, and colleagues at the Center for Constructive Communication and Cortico, Fora brings together small groups of community members for discussions facilitated by a community member. All conversations are recorded, transcribed, and uploaded to Fora. The platform launched in 2018 and contains over 1,500 in-person and virtual conversations among over 8,000 people.

in carceral discussion than whites, but less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion. This finding reverses established patterns of whites talking more about politics (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman [2003](#); Wong et al. [2011](#); Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla [2019](#)) and suggests that race moderates engagement in different domains of political discussion.

Study 2 shows that carceral and liberal-democratic discussion have distinct political correlates: for example, Americans who engage in carceral political discussion assign more importance to campaigns and protests, while Americans who engage in liberal-democratic discussion assign more importance to voting. This study also shows that positive and negative carceral discussion have racially distinct correlates: negative carceral discussion correlates with linked fate and depressed external efficacy for Blacks, for instance, while whites who negatively discuss the carceral state do not differ from others in linked fate or external efficacy. Together, these findings suggest that race also moderates the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of carceral discussion. Moreover, these findings complicate the longheld assumption that more political discussion is necessarily better and capable of generating political engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Klofstad [2007](#); Searing et al. [2007](#)).

The next section extends the analysis to another dimension of the carceral state: the immigration system. Although most work on the carceral state in political science focuses on policing, political scientists have called for and started to explore immigration enforcement as a component of the carceral machine (Harris, Walker, and Eckhouse [2020](#); Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#); Maltby et al. [2020](#); Gottschalk [2015](#)), alongside other institutions like punitive welfare agencies (Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston [2022](#); Soss, Fording, and Schram [2011](#); Katzenstein and Waller [2015](#)). This section draws on a second national survey to examine carceral discussion about the immigration system and liberal-democratic discussion among whites and Latinos. **Study 3** shows that although Latinos discuss government and elections less than whites, they are no less likely to discuss the immigration system (i.e., that the white-Latino political discussion gap closes for this domain of political discussion). **Study 4** shows that these discussion domains have distinct political correlates: discussion

about the immigration system, for instance, correlates with protesting but not voting, while liberal-democratic discussion more consistently correlates with voting. Moreover, positive and negative discussion about the immigration system have racially distinct correlates: for example, negative discussion correlates with linked fate for Latinos but not whites. These findings suggest that discussion about the immigration system represents another important domain of political discussion that is obscured by conventional measures, and add further complexity to longstanding assumptions about the role of political discussion.

Taken together, these studies have important implications for understanding who participates in political discussion and how these discussions matter for political outcomes. First, mainstream research on American politics has until recently ignored the carceral or “second face” of the state (Soss and Weaver 2017). This imbalance is being corrected by research on how the carceral state impacts outcomes like participation (e.g., White 2019; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Walker, Roman, and Barreto 2020), candidate preferences (Burch 2012), political knowledge (Cohen and Luttig 2020), and political socialization (Anoll, Engelhardt, and Israel-Trummel 2022). However, the carceral state has remained absent from the study of political discussion with the exception of Weaver, Prowse, and colleagues, who analyze conversations about policing in highly policed neighborhoods (e.g., Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019).⁴ This paper presents the first nationally representative analysis of carceral discussion to address this oversight and shows that paying attention to the carceral state stands to meaningfully shift our understanding of political discussion and its consequences.

Second, my findings complicate longstanding assumptions about the meaning and role of political discussion. The assumptions that underpins most research on political discussion is that political discussion concerns the “first face” of the state and that more discussion is

⁴ Weaver and colleagues use a new technology, Portals, to collect and analyze conversations about policing among residents of highly policed neighborhoods in five cities in the U.S. (Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019; Prowse, Weaver, and Meares 2020; Chaudhary, Prowse, and Weaver 2021). I will return to this point in the next section, but in short, the present paper aims to complement this work by examining broader, generalizable patterns and correlations of carceral political discussion with nationally representative data.

better than less. This understanding comports with the prevailing model of citizenship in the study of American politics: that government is about electoral-representative politics and that more citizen involvement with government is better. But this model is not the experience of all, and varies, perhaps most markedly, by race (Rosenthal [2023](#); Soss and Weaver [2017](#); White, Nathan, and Faller [2015](#); Einstein and Glick [2017](#); Butler and Broockman [2011](#); Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston [2022](#)). This paper takes an in-depth look at racial variation in one experience of citizenship—political discussion—and draws attention to its multiple and sometimes countervailing roles across racial groups. In so doing, the paper helps to remedy the incomplete portrait of political discussion in the study of American politics.

Third, my findings extend a recent literature on how key concepts in the study of American politics operate differently for racial and ethnic groups. This literature shows how concepts like political knowledge (Cohen and Luttig [2020](#)), political efficacy (Phoenix and Chan [2022](#)), political trust (Chudy and Engelhardt [2023](#)), norms of political participation (Anoll [2018](#)), punitive attitudes (Jefferson [2023](#)), and ideological identification (Jefferson [2024](#)) can look and matter differently for whites and racial minorities. Rather than generalizing from carceral discussion patterns among whites to other groups, this paper explicitly anticipates racial variation and finds meaningful racial differences in (a) patterns of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion and (b) the content of carceral discussion.

Fourth, and methodologically, the paper demonstrates the value of combining usually distinct methods in the study of political discussion: survey methods (e.g., Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Mutz [2006](#)) and ethnographic or listening methods (e.g., Cramer [2016](#); Weaver, Prowse, and Piston [2020](#); Harris-Lacewell [2004](#)). Most studies of political discussion operate at the level of analysis associated with either method: survey studies, for instance, usually focus on broad patterns of discussion participation rather than discussion content, while listening studies tend to draw out concepts or implications from discussion in specific communities.⁵ By making use of newly available real-world conversation data from Fora,

⁵ See, for instance, the depiction of the concept of “rural consciousness” with informal group conversations

this study aims to combine the benefits of both methods: listening methods to find patterns we might not know to look for (here, topics of carceral discussion), and surveys to investigate patterns at scale (in this case, the patterns and correlates of positive and negative carceral discussion). In so doing, the paper joins a nascent literature that highlights the advantages of using qualitative and ethnographic methods to refine survey research (Thachil [2018](#); Thachil [2020](#); Auerbach and Thachil [2023](#); Verghese [2020](#); Verghese [2024](#); Bell-Martin [2022](#)).

Overall, my findings suggest that scholars should expand their conception of political discussion to include the carceral or “second face” of the state. The American state is broader than liberal-democratic processes, and yet these processes are the focus of existing measures of political discussion in American politics. This paper aims to show that understanding the political experiences of citizens—particularly those of racial minorities—requires that we expand our concepts of political discussion to get at the multiple ways in which different groups of citizens talk about the state and government.

2 Political Discussion and the Carceral State

Scholarship on political discussion in the United States has a long history. Political theorists have long associated political talk among citizens with a healthy democracy (Thompson [1970](#); Habermas [1989](#); Mansbridge [2007](#); Dryzek [2002](#); Gutmann and Thompson [1996](#)). Moreover, empirical research in the social sciences links political discussion to a range of important political attitudes and behaviors, including political knowledge (Eveland and Thomson [2006](#); Eveland and Hively [2009](#)), political and civic engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Searing et al. [2007](#)), and tolerance (Mutz [2006](#); Pattie and Johnston [2008](#)).

This empirical research tradition defines political discussion as “spontaneous, unstructured face-to-face conversation between citizens that deals with political matters” (Conover and Miller [2018](#)). Some survey-based measures of this concept ask if and with whom respondents in Wisconsin (Cramer [2016](#)), and the revisiting of the concept of political knowledge with conversations from highly policed neighborhoods (Weaver, Prowse, and Piston [2019](#)).

dents discuss “politics” or “political matters.” For instance, the American National Election Studies (ANES) includes the question, “Do you ever discuss politics with your family or friends?” Other measures focus on a variant of “government or elections.” For example, Mutz’s study of cross-cutting political discourse asked, “From time to time, people discuss government, elections, and politics with other people. We’d like to know the first names or just the initials of people you talk with about these matters” (Mutz 2002; Mutz 2006).⁶

Alongside these general measures, scholars have also asked more targeted questions about political discussion. For instance, Huckfeldt and Sprague’s South Bend study asked, “We are interested in the sort of *political information and opinions* people get from each other. Can you give me the first names of the three people you talked with most about the events of the *past election year*?” (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, italics added). Other scholars have asked about “local politics or community issues” (Kwak et al. 2005), “local community politics or local community affairs” and “national politics or national affairs” (Scheufele 2002), and “elections, politicians and candidates, and the performance of local, state, and national government” (Eveland and Appiah 2019).

Both these targeted and more general questions, however, focus on what Soss and Weaver (2017) describe as the liberal-democratic or “first face” of the state that operates through elections and national branches of government. These measures, in other words, do not do a good job of capturing discussions about the carceral or “second face” of the state that exercises social control through coercion, repression, and violence. This face of the state operates through police and criminal justice institutions and shapes the political experiences of marginalized communities of color, who most often encounter the government through its “second face”—i.e., through police, jails, courts, bail offices, parole agencies, and prisons (Roberts 2004; Western 2006; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Gottschalk 2008).

How might incorporating the carceral state impact our understanding of political discussion and its consequences? First, I expect that focusing on carceral political discussion

⁶ For more on the measurement of political discussion, see Klofstad, McClurg, and Rolfe (2009).

will change the assumed patterns of political discussion across racial groups. Most scholarship shows that white Americans talk more about politics and have larger political discussion networks (Leighley and Matsubayashi [2009](#); Verba, Burns, and Schlozman [2003](#); Wong et al. [2011](#); Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla [2019](#)). However, criminal justice contact is highest among Black Americans, as evidenced by racial disparities in outcomes like incarceration (Pettit and Western [2004](#)), police killings (Streeter [2019](#)), and traffic stops (Baumgartner, Epp, and Shoub [2018](#)). Moreover, due to the spread of images of police violence against Black Americans and movements like Black Lives Matter, these disparities are apparent without direct carceral contact. Consequently, I expect (1) carceral discussion to be more prevalent among Black than white Americans, thus reversing established patterns of whites talking more about politics. I also expect (2) Black Americans to be more likely to engage in negative than positive discussion about the carceral state.

Second, I expect (3) carceral and conventional (i.e., liberal-democratic) political discussion to have distinct attitudinal and behavioral correlates. For instance, because white and Black Americans are treated differently by the carceral state, I expect talking about policing and criminal justice to increase feelings of linked fate more than liberal-democratic discussion. I also expect (4) the correlates of positive and negative carceral discussion to differ by race. For example, because the carceral state is more punitive for Black Americans, I expect talking and learning about this arm of the state to yield a view of government as coercive and depress external efficacy among Black more than white Americans. This expectation builds on Lerman and Weaver's (2014) "custodial citizenship" theory, which describes how learning about and experiencing the carceral state can create the perception of an unresponsive government. Importantly, this expectation departs from the assumption that underpins most research on political discussion: namely, that more political discussion is better than less. On this view, political discussion generates tolerance, political knowledge, and political and civic engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Klofstad [2007](#); Searing et al. [2007](#)). In turn, those who know about and engage government enjoy greater political

voice and influence, whereas more detached citizens are excluded and underserved.

However, I also expect negative carceral discussion to mobilize protest among Black Americans by providing opportunities for the identification of injustice. This expectation builds on research that attributes a mobilizing effect to proximal carceral contact, whereby indirect contact catalyzes participation by exposing individuals to perceived injustice (Lee, Porter, and Comfort [2014](#); Walker [2014](#); Walker and García-Castañón [2017](#); Williamson, Trump, and Einstein [2018](#); Ang and Tebes [2024](#)). According to this research, proximal carceral contact is more likely to mobilize nonvoting activities because contact yields a view of government as unresponsive and political activities like protesting offer a more immediate outlet for frustrations (Lee, Porter, and Comfort [2014](#); Walker [2020](#); Gillion [2013](#)).

Third, I expect these broad patterns to extend to other dimensions of the carceral state. The immigration system, in particular, has been a recent focus of research on the carceral state as political scientists take a more expanded view of the carceral machine (Harris, Walker, and Eckhouse [2020](#); Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#); Maltby et al. [2020](#)). Because the immigration system is more salient and repressive for Latinos, I expect (5) carceral discussion about immigration authorities and the immigration system to be more prevalent among Latinos than white Americans. Building on recent work on the impact of impact of immigration enforcement on political behavior, I also expect (6) discussion about the immigration system and liberal-democratic political discussion to have distinct political correlates. For instance, research shows that proximal contact with the immigration system motivates nontraditional forms of participation like protest (Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#); Street, Jones-Correa, and Zepeda-Millán [2017](#)). As such, I expect discussion about the immigration system to more consistently correlate with protesting than voting. Moreover, because punitive enforcement policies contribute to feelings of linked fate among Latinos (Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez [2017](#); Maltby et al. [2020](#)), I expect discussion about the immigration system (and, in particular, negative discussion about the immigration system) to more strongly correlate with linked fate for Latinos than white Americans.

In sum, this study aims to demonstrate that carceral discussion is an important component of the political experience and socialization of Americans, and one that has been overlooked by existing scholarship on political discussion. The study thus aims to complement recent work by Weaver, Prowse, and colleagues, who develop a new method, Portals, to collect and analyze conversations about policing in highly policed neighborhoods in five cities in the U.S. (e.g., Weaver, Prowse, and Piston [2019](#); Prowse, Weaver, and Meares [2020](#)). This series of papers represent the richest and most serious treatment of political discussion about policing in political science, and draw important lessons about the experience of race-class subjugated communities.⁷ The present study aims to complement this work by approaching carceral discussion from a higher vantage point: in exchange for rich conversation data from highly policed race-class subjugated communities, this project draws broader lessons about carceral discussion with nationally representative data and an expanded set of carceral topics that includes both policing and immigration enforcement.

3 Measuring Carceral Political Discussion

3.1 Data and Variables

To measure carceral political discussion—and to compare this domain of discussion to the conventional (i.e., liberal-democratic) measure of political discussion—I draw on survey data collected in Spring 2024. The survey is a nationally diverse sample of 1,268 white and Black American adults and was administered on the online survey platform, Prolific.⁸ The first set of survey questions adapts existing measures of political discussion to measure participation in carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. The questions are presented below.

⁷ An example: although much research finds that carceral contact is demobilizing, Weaver, Prowse, and Piston ([2020](#)) identify how police encounters can be constructive of political thought and action when members of race-class subjugated communities respond by building and investing in community power.

⁸ Table A1 in the Appendix presents descriptive statistics for this sample.

All respondents received both sets of political discussion questions.⁹

1. Binary measure of discussion: “During the past year, did you talk with anyone about [the police or criminal justice system/government or elections] or did you not do this during the past year?” Responses coded 0 (No) or 1 (Yes).
2. Frequency of discussion: During the past year, how often did you discuss [the police or criminal justice system/government or elections]?” Responses coded 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), or 5 (Very Often).
3. Number of discussion partners: “With roughly how many different people did you talk about [the police or criminal justice system/government or elections] during the past year?” Responses coded 1 (Zero), 2 (1-2), 3 (3-5), 4 (6-9), or 5 (10 or more).

To more closely investigate the *content* of political discussion, I also collected a nine-item survey battery about different topics of carceral political discussion. To develop this measure, I used “analytic listening” to examine small-group conversations on Fora, a platform created by the MIT Center for Constructive Communication and the affiliated nonprofit Cortico. Analytic listening entails “listening to the way people talk about public affairs, ideally in the venues they normally inhabit and with the people with whom they normally spend time” (Cramer [2024](#), 194).¹⁰ This method is well-suited to uncovering information that we do not know to look for (in this case, topics of carceral political discussion).

Fora brings together community members for small group discussions about their communities. The platform launched in 2018 and contains over 1,500 in-person and virtual conversations about issues like community civic engagement, local economic opportunities, and neighborhood climate solutions. To examine these data for patterns and topics of carceral

⁹ The survey randomized the order of the blocks of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion questions.

¹⁰ For applications, see Cramer Walsh ([2004](#)), Cramer Walsh ([2007](#)), and Cramer ([2016](#)). Cramer (2016, 26-44) provides a more extended discussion of the method in the context of a particular study.

discussion, I began by closely listening to and reading the 18 collections that focused on some aspect the criminal justice system. These collections contained 44 conversations in total (mostly 1–1.5 hours long) and are listed in Section 2 of the Appendix.¹¹

My analysis of these conversations involved several rounds of qualitative coding (Saldaña 2015). I started by listening to and reading the 18 collections and taking preliminary jottings about potential topics of carceral discussion (Saldaña 2015, 20-21). After developing an initial list of topics, I conducted a round of structural coding of these collections to identify and revise my topic list. Structural coding involves the application of a conceptual phrase to a segment of data to categorize the data corpus (Saldaña 2015, 84-97). In this context, structural coding involved categorizing segments of conversations into one or more topics of carceral discussion (for instance, I coded excerpts in which participants criticized or lamented racial disparities in incarceration rates as part of the broader topic, “how the police or criminal justice system treat Black people unfairly”).

After this round of structural coding, I searched the Fora platform for keywords related to policing and criminal justice and read selections of the associated conversation transcripts.¹² For each keyword, I categorized the relevant sections into existing or new topics of carceral political discussion. I continued this exercise for each keyword until all new data could be categorized into existing topics. The resulting survey measure is designed to be indicative of carceral political discussion rather than exhaustive.

Table 1 presents the nine carceral discussion topics with illustrative conversation excerpts from Fora. Section 3 of the Appendix includes additional conversation excerpts for

¹¹ Examples include the “City of Madison Police and Fire Commission Conversations” (seven conversations about law enforcement among 48 residents of Madison, Wisconsin) and the “Mott Haven Branch Conversation on Criminal Justice” (a conversation among Mott Haven residents hosted by the New York Public Library).

¹² I used keywords from the “Topics” function of Fora. This function uses the conversation data to automatically identify and categorize keywords into different topics. Keywords for the topic of “criminal justice” include police, policing, criminal justice, jail, law enforcement, arrest, incarceration, gun violence, public safety, probation, prison, and parole.

each discussion topic. In the survey, the measure begins with the question, “How often, if at all, did you talk about the following topics during the past year?” before presenting the nine topics in randomized order. For each topic, responses are coded “Never” (0), “Once” (1), “A few times (2-3)” (2), or “Several times (4+)” (3).

In **Study 1**, I use these two measures to examine racial variation in participation in carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion and patterns of positive and negative carceral political discussion. In **Study 2**, I use these measures to examine the political correlates of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion and the political correlates of positive and negative carceral political discussion.

3.2 Study 1: Racial Variation in Carceral Political Discussion

Due to the fundamental differences in how Black Americans experience the carceral state, I have argued that (1) focusing on carceral discussion should reverse the assumed pattern of whites talking more about politics, and (2) that we should expect racial differences in the content of carceral discussion. This study examines these expectations with descriptive analyses of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. To ensure representativeness in these analyses, I built and applied a survey weight using the American Community Survey (in addition to quota sampling on the front-end). I constructed this weight using population estimates on dimensions of gender, age, education, and income. Because of some missing cases on weight dimensions, my final sample size for these analyses is 1,221.¹³

The first analysis examines the racial differences in carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. Turning first to carceral discussion, Table 2 reports the weighted means for the three measures of carceral discussion for white and Black respondents: the binary measure of carceral discussion in the past year (Binary), frequency of carceral discussion in the past year (Frequency), and number of carceral discussion partners in the past year (Count). Significant differences between Black and white respondents were determined through a two-

¹³ This final sample excludes respondents who failed an attention check.

Table 1: Carceral Discussion Topics and Illustrative Examples

1. About police killings or police brutality	<i>“We are constantly living in a system that doesn’t value us...that is in fact designed to injure us in some way, both emotionally and economically. Sometimes it manifests in the case of police violence...right?”</i>
<hr/>	
2. About how the police often use more force than necessary	<i>“...people are getting tired of police shootings. They’re getting tired of turning—you go on your phone. You look at a video. You see cops beating up people. For what?”</i>
<hr/>	
3. About how the police or criminal justice system treat Black people unfairly	<i>“Anyone can pull up the annual report, it is very clear that police officers here in Madison will arrest if you’re a black teenager, I think the odds, it’s like insane. You’re like twice as likely.”</i>
<hr/>	
4. About a negative interaction with the police or criminal justice system	<i>“...she arrested me, and she threw me in the back of her car. It was over 80 degrees outside...And she put me back there with the windows completely rolled up... And you wouldn’t do that to a dog, right?”</i>
<hr/>	
5. About how the police are necessary for public safety	<i>“What’s going to happen if we defund the police? I mean, are we going to go back to Wild West days?”</i>
<hr/>	
6. About how the police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly	<i>“Yeah, my experience with officers in the schools is that they do everything they can not to arrest kids. They’re extremely kind and very, very positive role models for kids in the schools.”</i>
<hr/>	
7. About how the police are often viewed unfairly	<i>“But this total hatred towards all policemen, I think I should be corrected. You can’t hate them all, you’ve got to trust some of them.”</i>
<hr/>	
8. About how the police should be allowed to use force because policing is dangerous	<i>“...the only way to stop somebody that has a gun is with a gun.”</i>
<hr/>	
9. About a positive interaction with the police or criminal justice system	<i>“...our police officers here are trained in mental health. And the way they deescalated my son and our whole family situation was fantastic”</i>

tailed t-test and indicated with an *a* in the second column. These results are robust in a regression model that includes gender, age, education, income, and political affiliation.¹⁴

As expected, this table shows that Black Americans are significantly more likely to engage in carceral political discussion than white Americans. Starting with the binary measure, Table 2 shows that Black respondents are (6%, $p < 0.05$) more likely to discussed the carceral state in the past year than white respondents. The frequency of discussion measure shows that the difference in the frequency of discussion between Blacks and whites is 0.46 ($p < 0.01$). This difference represents a 0.46 standard deviation change in the frequency measure. Finally, the difference in the number of discussion partners between Blacks and whites is 0.26 ($p < 0.01$). This difference represents a 0.26 standard deviation change. Together, these results indicate that Black Americans are, as expected, more likely to engage in political discussion about the carceral state than white Americans.

Table 2: Racial Variation in Carceral Political Discussion

	Black	White
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.77	0.71 ^{<i>a</i>}
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	2.89	2.43 ^{<i>a</i>}
Carceral Discussion Partners (Count)	2.59	2.33 ^{<i>a</i>}
N	551	670

Notes: Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

¹⁴ Tables A2 and A3 in the Appendix present these regression models for carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. I present means in Tables 2 and 3 because including demographic controls when interpreting racial coefficients arguably essentializes race and misses the constitutive elements that make race what it is (King and Zeng [2006](#); Sen and Wasow [2016](#)).

Turning next to liberal-democratic political discussion, Table 3 reports the weighted means for each measure of political discussion for white and Black respondents. Significant differences were determined using a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites and are indicated with an *a* in Column 2. This table shows that unlike carceral discussion, and in line with existing research, Black Americans are significantly less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than white Americans for all measures of political discussion.

Table 3: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Political Discussion

	Black	White
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Binary)	0.85	0.93 ^{<i>a</i>}
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Frequency)	3.09	3.23 ^{<i>a</i>}
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Count)	2.74	2.98 ^{<i>a</i>}
N	551	670

Notes: Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

Taken together, these results suggest that Black and white Americans engage in carceral and liberal-democratic discussion somewhat differently. Rather than a racially uniform pattern of political discussion, racial group membership appears to moderate engagement in different domains of political discussion. Specifically, given that the carceral arm of the state is more pervasive and repressive for Black Americans, I hypothesized that Black Americans would be more likely to talk about policing and criminal justice than white Americans. The results support this expectation: Black Americans are indeed more likely to engage in political discussion about the carceral state. These results depart from the established pattern of white Americans talking more about politics (Leighley and Matsubayashi 2009; Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 2003; Wong et al. 2011; Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla 2019), and show that focusing only on the conventional measure of political discussion leads to an incomplete assessment of political discussion among Black Americans.¹⁵

¹⁵ Readers interested in the amount of overlap between carceral and liberal-democratic discussion should

This analysis, however, does not tell us about the *content* of carceral discussion. Using the nine-item measure of carceral discussion content, Table 4 presents the weighted means for positive and negative carceral discussion among white and Black Americans. To measure these means, I created binary measures of positive and negative carceral discussion. The positive measure is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive topic at least once in the past year. The negative measure is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any negative topics at least once in the past year.¹⁶ Table A8 presents these results in a regression model that includes gender, age, education, income, and political affiliation.¹⁷

As expected, Table 4 shows meaningful racial differences in the content of carceral discussion. Starting with the measure of negative carceral discussion, Table 4 shows that Black respondents are (11%, $p < 0.01$) more likely to have engaged in a negative discussion about policing and criminal justice in the past year than white respondents. This difference represents a 0.31 standard deviation change in the discussion measure and coheres with the greater repressiveness of the carceral state for Black Americans. Consistent with this greater

consult Section 5 of the Appendix. Table A4 in this section presents weighted Pearson’s R correlations between carceral and liberal-democratic discussion. These analyses show limited overlap in participation in the two domains of discussion: for example, the correlations coefficients for the binary discussion measure are 0.39 for Black respondents and 0.27 for white respondents. This suggests that people who discuss policing and criminal justice do not necessarily discuss government and elections, while people who discuss government and elections do not necessarily talk about policing and the criminal justice system.

¹⁶ Positive topics are (1) how the police are necessary for public safety, (2) how the police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly, (3) how the police are often viewed unfairly, (4) how the police should be allowed to use force because policing is dangerous, (5) a positive interaction with the police or criminal justice system. Negative topics are discussion about (1) police killings or police brutality, (2) how the police often use more force than necessary, (3) how the police or criminal justice system treat Black people unfairly, (4) a negative interaction with the police or criminal justice system.

¹⁷ The results in Table 4 are robust to alternative content measures coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic a few times (2-3) or several times (4+), and “0” otherwise. Table A9 presents descriptive means using this alternative measure for positive and negative carceral discussion. Table A10 presents the separate t-test results for each individual positive and negative topic.

repressiveness, Table 4 also shows that Black respondents are also (7%, $p < 0.01$) more likely to have had a negative than positive discussion about the carceral state.

Table 4: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Black	White
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.83	0.78 ^a
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.90 ^b	0.79 ^a
N	551	670

Notes: Carceral discussion coded positive/negative if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic at least once in past year. Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites indicated with an *a* in second column. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) between positive and negative discussion indicated with a *b* in second row.

More surprisingly, Table 4 shows that Black respondents are (4%, $p < 0.05$) more likely to *positively* discuss policing and criminal justice than white respondents. Research on Black Americans’ support for the criminal justice system offers several explanations for this finding. First, Jefferson (2023) finds that Black Americans who embrace the *politics of respectability*—a view that emphasizes “reform of individual behavior and attitudes as a goal” and “strategy for reform” of race relations (Higginbotham 1993)—are more likely to view police shootings of Black Americans as justified and adopt punitive positions on three strike laws, sentences for drug law violations, and the death penalty. On this view, Black Americans who subscribe to the politics of respectability may be more likely to positively discuss policing and criminal justice. Second, Black Americans are disproportionately the victims of crime (Tate 2010), which may motivate support for punitiveness (Costelloe, Chiricos, and Gertz 2009) and increase the likelihood of positive discussion about policing and the criminal justice system. Third, some research shows that certain forms of policing (specifically, community-oriented policing) can improve perceptions of police performance among Black Americans (Branton,

Carey, Ramirez, et al. 2024). On this view, exposure to community-oriented policing may drive participation in positive discussion about policing and the criminal justice system.¹⁸

Overall, these findings build on the comparison of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion by demonstrating that race also moderates the *content* of carceral political discussion. Specifically, these results show that Black Americans are more likely to engage in negative than positive discussions of the carceral state, and more likely to engage in negative *and* positive discussions of the carceral state than white Americans. Taken together, the findings in **Study 1** suggest that conventional measures of political discussion obscure meaningful racial differences in (1) patterns of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion, and (2) the content of carceral political discussion.¹⁹

3.2 Study 2: Correlates of Carceral Political Discussion

I next analyze the political correlates of carceral political discussion. To the extent that carceral and liberal-democratic discussion represent different domains of political discussion,

¹⁸ Table A5 examines the correlation between positive and negative carceral discussion. This analysis shows that participation in positive and negative carceral discussion is reasonably strongly correlated: the weighted Pearson's R correlation coefficients are 0.54 for Black respondents and 0.51 for white respondents.

¹⁹ For space considerations, I analyze the potential predictors of (a) carceral and liberal-democratic discussion and (b) positive and negative carceral discussion in Section 9 of the Appendix. Several findings are worthy of discussion. First, proximal carceral contact correlates with carceral and liberal-democratic discussion for Blacks and whites, which coheres with the mobilizing impact of proximal contact (e.g., Walker 2020). Second, proximal contact correlates with negative but not positive carceral discussion for Blacks and whites, which supports the proposed explanation for the mobilizing impact of proximal contact: namely, that individuals are mobilized to action because they develop negative views of the carceral state. Third, personal carceral contact does not predict carceral discussion for whites or Blacks, but it does *negatively* correlate with liberal-democratic discussion for Blacks. This finding aligns with the demobilizing impact of direct carceral contact (e.g., Weaver and Lerman 2010). Finally, the analysis shows racial differences in the potential predictors of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion: for instance, consuming political news from television correlates with carceral discussion for Blacks but not whites, and consuming political news from television correlates with liberal-democratic discussion for whites but not Blacks.

I expect these two kinds of discussion to have distinct attitudinal and behavioral correlates. Moreover, to the extent that talking about the carceral state yields a different perspective on the state and government for Black and white Americans, I expect to find important racial differences in the political correlates of positive and negative carceral discussion.

To examine the political correlates of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion, I focus on six variables modeled as dependent variables: (1) internal political efficacy, or the belief that one is well-qualified to participate in politics (Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991);²⁰ (2) external political efficacy, or the belief that leaders in government care about “people like me” (Balch 1974);²¹ (3) sense of linked fate, or the belief that one’s own life chances depend on the status and fortunes of your racial group as a whole (Dawson 1995);²² and the perceived importance of (4) voting, (5) campaigning for a political candidate, and (6) attending a protest.²³ For space considerations, I present only the frequency measures of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion as independent variables.²⁴

²⁰ To measure internal efficacy, I asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following standard statement: “I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics.” Responses were coded on a scale from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5).

²¹ To measure external efficacy, respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement: “The leaders in government care about people like me” on a scale from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5).

²² Although developed to explain Black political attitudes and behaviors, expressions of linked fate have been found in other racial groups (e.g., Gay, Hochschild, and White 2016; Junn and Masuoka 2008; Segura 2012). To measure linked fate, I asked the two standard questions: Do you think what happens to [Respondent’s race/ethnicity] people in this country will have something to do with what happens in your life? If yes: Do you think that what happens generally to [Respondent’s race/ethnicity] people in this country will affect you: A lot, some, not very much. Responses coded 0 (No), 1 (Not very much), 2 (Some), or 3 (A lot).

²³ To measure these political engagement variables, I asked: “How important is it for you personally to do the following activities?” Vote in elections, Campaign for political candidates, Attend protests or rallies. Responses were coded on a 1-5 scale from “Not at all important” (1) to “Extremely important” (5).

²⁴ These analyses are based on a final sample of 1,227. This sample includes cases that were removed from the descriptive analyses because they were missing on weight dimensions. Tables A15-A18 present regression models with the binary and number of discussion partners measures as independent variables. These results

Table 5 presents the multivariate regression models with these results for white and Black respondents. This table shows several important distinctions in the political correlates of carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. Turning first to internal efficacy, the table shows that liberal-democratic political discussion positively correlates with internal efficacy for white ($p < 0.01$) and Black respondents ($p < 0.01$), while carceral political discussion has no meaningful relationship with internal efficacy for white respondents and only a small positive correlation for Black respondents. This finding suggests that talking about government and elections more directly maps onto feeling qualified to participate in politics than talking about policing and the criminal justice system.

Second, Table 5 shows that carceral political discussion positively correlates with feelings of linked fate for whites ($p < 0.01$) and Blacks ($p < 0.01$), while liberal-democratic discussion does not correlate with linked fate for either racial group. This finding suggests that talking about policing and the criminal justice system reinforces a sense of linked fate with one's racial group for both white and Black respondents. This interpretation coheres with the differential treatment of white and Black Americans by the criminal justice system: to the extent that the carceral state differently shapes the fortunes of white and Black Americans, talking about policing and the criminal justice system should contribute to feelings of racial linked fate. Given that linked fate is a ubiquitous variable of interest in research on racial group politics (e.g., Rogers and Kim [2023](#)), this finding draws attention to an important but understudied role of political discussion for both white and Black Americans.

Third, for both white and Black respondents, liberal-democratic discussion strongly and positively correlates with assigning importance to voting ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$), campaigning ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$), and protesting ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$). Like liberal-democratic discussion, carceral discussion correlates with campaigning and protesting for white ($p < 0.1$, $p < 0.01$) and Black respondents ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$). Unlike liberal-democratic discussion, however, carceral discussion does not correlate with voting for Blacks or whites. This finding suggests

are substantively and statistically similar to the frequency measure.

Table 5: Correlates of Frequent Political Discussion
Correlates for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.070 (0.047)	-0.049 (0.046)	0.178*** (0.050)	-0.052 (0.050)	0.081* (0.045)	0.200*** (0.047)
Liberal-Democratic	0.262*** (0.047)	-0.024 (0.045)	0.019 (0.050)	0.287*** (0.050)	0.259*** (0.045)	0.166*** (0.047)
Party ID	-0.155*** (0.048)	-0.204*** (0.046)	-0.096* (0.051)	-0.305*** (0.051)	-0.217*** (0.045)	-0.294*** (0.047)
Constant	1.986*** (0.258)	2.284*** (0.250)	1.018*** (0.274)	2.366*** (0.273)	1.289*** (0.246)	2.015*** (0.256)
N	677	677	677	677	677	677
R ²	0.156	0.069	0.044	0.191	0.133	0.172
Adjusted R ²	0.147	0.060	0.034	0.183	0.124	0.163

Correlates for Black Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.092* (0.049)	-0.022 (0.048)	0.154*** (0.054)	-0.056 (0.053)	0.143** (0.057)	0.246*** (0.058)
Liberal-Democratic	0.281*** (0.052)	0.065 (0.050)	0.059 (0.057)	0.348*** (0.056)	0.324*** (0.060)	0.174*** (0.061)
Party ID	-0.099** (0.049)	-0.232*** (0.047)	0.048 (0.053)	-0.438*** (0.053)	-0.318*** (0.056)	-0.251*** (0.057)
Constant	1.454*** (0.268)	1.608*** (0.259)	1.424*** (0.292)	3.229*** (0.289)	1.665*** (0.311)	1.247*** (0.314)
N	560	560	560	560	560	560
R ²	0.221	0.168	0.034	0.235	0.209	0.205
Adjusted R ²	0.211	0.157	0.022	0.226	0.199	0.195

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

that talking about government and elections more directly correlates with formal channels of participation (i.e., voting), while talking about the police and criminal justice system more closely maps onto nonvoting forms of participation (e.g, campaigning and protesting).

These results, then, suggest that carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion differently correlate with political attitudes and behaviors. Americans who engage in carceral political discussion have increased feelings of linked fate and assign more importance to campaigning and protesting. Respondents who engage in liberal-democratic political discussion, on the other hand, do not differ from others in their feelings of linked fate and are more likely to assign importance to voting. Taken together, these findings show that focusing on liberal-democratic discussion obscures the distinct political correlates of carceral discussion.

Next, this section extends the analysis by including the binary measures of positive and negative carceral discussion as independent variables. Table 6 presents these results for white and Black respondents and shows that positive and negative carceral discussion have distinct political correlates.²⁵ Turning first to external efficacy, the table shows that positive discussion positively correlates with external efficacy for Blacks ($p < 0.01$) and whites ($p < 0.05$), while negative discussion strongly and negatively correlates with external efficacy for Blacks ($p < 0.01$). This result shows that talking about topics like police brutality appears to undermine external efficacy among Black Americans, and aligns with research showing that living near police killings depresses external efficacy (Branton, Carey, and Martinez-Ebers 2021). This finding thus demonstrates how focusing on carceral discussion adds complexity to the liberal-democratic assumption that political discussion generates the kind of knowledge and engagement with government that leads to political voice and influence (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Klofstad 2010; Searing et al. 2007).

²⁵ These results are similar to the alternative measures of positive and negative carceral discussion. Tables A19 and A20 in the Appendix present regressions with these alternative measures.

Table 6: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion
Correlates for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	-0.027 (0.106)	0.235** (0.100)	0.242** (0.110)	0.045 (0.112)	0.227** (0.101)	-0.101 (0.105)
Negative	0.317*** (0.114)	-0.096 (0.106)	0.049 (0.118)	0.227* (0.119)	0.232** (0.108)	0.444*** (0.113)
Party ID	-0.167*** (0.050)	-0.216*** (0.047)	-0.099* (0.052)	-0.332*** (0.052)	-0.243*** (0.047)	-0.278*** (0.049)
Constant	2.553*** (0.255)	2.082*** (0.239)	1.292*** (0.265)	2.780*** (0.268)	1.826*** (0.243)	2.526*** (0.253)
N	677	677	677	677	677	677
R ²	0.103	0.074	0.029	0.154	0.081	0.123
Adjusted R ²	0.094	0.064	0.019	0.145	0.072	0.114

Correlates for Black Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.320** (0.132)	0.809*** (0.117)	-0.196 (0.137)	0.381*** (0.141)	0.764*** (0.151)	0.503*** (0.152)
Negative	0.166 (0.183)	-0.653*** (0.163)	0.851*** (0.191)	-0.0002 (0.195)	-0.007 (0.210)	0.387* (0.211)
Party ID	-0.134*** (0.050)	-0.239*** (0.045)	0.040 (0.053)	-0.467*** (0.054)	-0.359*** (0.058)	-0.281*** (0.058)
Constant	1.985*** (0.298)	1.742*** (0.265)	1.279*** (0.311)	3.671*** (0.318)	2.267*** (0.341)	1.545*** (0.344)
N	560	560	560	560	560	560
R ²	0.156	0.235	0.041	0.188	0.162	0.165
Adjusted R ²	0.145	0.225	0.028	0.177	0.152	0.154

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Carceral discussion coded as positive/negative if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic at least once in the past year. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Second, Table 6 shows that talking about the positive aspects of the carceral state positively correlates with feelings of linked fate for white respondents ($p < 0.05$). Negative carceral discussion, on the other hand, strongly and positively correlates with linked fate for Black respondents ($p < 0.01$). These findings support the interpretation of linked fate from the previous section: to the extent that white and Black Americans are treated differently by the carceral state, talking about the police and the criminal justice system should reinforce the belief that your life chances depend on the status and fortunes of your racial group.

Third, Table 6 shows that positive and negative carceral discussion have racially distinct behavioral correlates. For white respondents, positive carceral discussion positively correlates with assigning importance to campaigning ($p < 0.05$). For Black respondents, positive carceral discussion positively correlates with voting ($p < 0.01$), campaigning ($p < 0.01$), and protesting ($p < 0.01$). This finding aligns with the positive relationship between positive carceral discussion and external efficacy: to the extent that talking about positive and responsive aspects of the carceral state correlates with perceptions of government responsiveness, it should also correlate with assigning increased importance to political participation.

Fourth, the table shows that negative carceral discussion positively correlates with voting ($p < 0.1$), campaigning ($p < 0.05$), and protesting ($p < 0.01$) for white respondents. For Black respondents, however, negative carceral discussion only correlates with assigning importance to protesting ($p < 0.1$). One interpretation of this result is that for white Americans, negative carceral discussion provides opportunities to identify injustices and mobilizes participation through multiple channels (voting, campaigning, protesting) because their external efficacy is unaffected. For Black respondents, however, negative carceral discussion may yield the perception that the state is unjust and unresponsive and thus only increase the perceived importance of protest (i.e., a more immediate outlet for frustrations and a first step to getting issues on the political agenda). Combined with the finding that negative discussion correlates with decreased efficacy for Black respondents, these findings offer evidence for the proposed but not empirically investigated explanation for the finding that proximal carceral

contact mobilizes protest (e.g., Walker 2014; Walker 2020; Ang and Tebes 2024). The explanation proposed in this literature is that proximal carceral contact yields the perception that the state is unjust and unresponsive and thus mobilizes immediate extra-voting activities (like protest) rather than voting. The results in Table 6 provide empirical evidence for this proposed chain among Black respondents: here, talking and knowing about the negative and coercive aspects of the carceral state appears to decrease perceptions of efficacy and in turn increase the perceived value of protest but not voting.

Though based on cross-sectional data and thus preventing causal claims, the findings in this section provide suggestive evidence that carceral and liberal-democratic discussion have distinct political correlates and that there are racial differences in the correlates of positive and negative carceral discussion. Whites who engage in positive carceral discussion have increased external efficacy and linked fate, while Blacks who engage in positive carceral discussion also have increased external efficacy and assign more importance to voting, campaigning, and protest. Blacks who engage in negative carceral discussion, on the other hand, assign increased importance to protest and have increased linked fate but decreased external efficacy, while Whites who engage in negative carceral discussion do not differ from others in external efficacy and assign more importance to voting, campaigning, and protest. Taken together, these findings suggest that carceral political discussion has the potential to shape participants' views about government, sense of identity, and political engagement. Moreover, these findings suggest that these impacts vary meaningfully by race and the content of carceral discussion, and that conceptions of political discussion as an unalloyed good mask the multiple roles of different domains of political discussion. The next section takes a more expanded view of the carceral state to examine patterns of political discussion about a second set of punitive institutions: the immigration system.

4 Racial Variation in Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

4.1 Data and Variables

Studies 1 and **2** bring the carceral state into the study of political discussion by focusing on discussion about policing and the criminal justice system. However, the American carceral state extends beyond these institutions and includes and intersects with the immigration system (Harris, Walker, and Eckhouse [2020](#); Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#); Maltby et al. [2020](#); Gottschalk [2015](#)). This section thus expands the analysis by focusing on carceral discussion about immigration authorities and the immigration system. **Study 3** examines variation in liberal-democratic discussion and carceral discussion about the immigration system among Latino and white Americans. **Study 4** explores the political correlates of these two domains of political discussion.

The data for these studies come from a nationally diverse sample of 1,062 whites and Latinos collected on Prolific in Spring 2024.^{[26](#)} The first measure rewords the policing and criminal justice questions to focus on discussion about “immigration authorities or the immigration system.”^{[27](#)} The second measure rewords the nine-item battery to focus on the following topics of discussion about the immigration system.^{[28](#)}

1. About violence or abuse by immigration authorities
2. About how immigration authorities often use more force than necessary

²⁶ Table A21 in the Appendix presents descriptive statistics for this sample.

²⁷ The full question wordings are as follows: (1) Binary: “During the past year, did you talk with anyone about [immigration authorities or the immigration system/government or elections] or did you not do this during the past year?” Responses coded 0 (No) or 1 (Yes). Frequency: “During the past year, how often did you discuss [immigration authorities or the immigration system/government or elections]?” Responses coded 1 (Never) - 5 (Very Often). Number of discussion partners: “With roughly how many different people did you talk about [immigration authorities or the immigration system/government or elections] during the past year?” Responses coded 1 (Zero), 2 (1-2), 3 (3-5), 4 (6-9), or 5 (10 or more).

²⁸ Responses were coded “Never” (0), “Once” (1), “A few times (2-3)” (2), or “Several times (4+)” (3). The survey presented these topics in randomized order.

3. About how the American immigration system often treats people badly or unfairly based on their race or ethnicity
4. About a negative interaction with immigration authorities or the immigration system
5. About how immigration enforcement is necessary for public safety
6. About how the American immigration system usually treats people fairly
7. About how the American immigration system is often viewed unfairly
8. About how immigration authorities should be allowed to use force because immigration enforcement is dangerous
9. About a positive interaction with immigration authorities or the immigration system

4.2 Study 3: Racial Variation in Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

Table 6 reports weighted means for three measures of carceral discussion about the immigration system for whites and Latinos: the binary measure of carceral discussion in the past year (Binary), frequency of carceral discussion in the past year (Frequency), and the number of carceral discussion partners in the past year (Count).²⁹ Table 7 reports weighted means for three measures of liberal-democratic political discussion. Significant differences between Latinos and whites were determined through a two-tailed t-test and are indicated with an *a* in the second column. These results are robust in a regression model that includes gender, age, education, income, and political affiliation.³⁰

Table 7 shows that participation in discussion about the immigration system does not significantly differ for Latino and white Americans, although whites are somewhat more likely to discuss the immigration system with more people than Latinos ($p < 0.01$). Table

²⁹ As in the previous section, I built a survey weight using American Community Survey population estimates on dimensions of gender, age, education, and income. Because of missing cases on weight dimensions, and after dropping respondents who failed an attention check, my final sample size is 922.

³⁰ Tables A22 and A23 in the Appendix present these regression models for carceral discussion about the immigration system and liberal-democratic political discussion.

8, however, shows that Latinos are significantly less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than whites. Specifically, whites are 8% more likely to discuss government and elections than Latino respondents ($p < 0.01$), more frequently discuss government and elections ($p < 0.05$), and are more likely to discuss government and elections with more people ($p < 0.01$). Together, these results suggest that patterns of discussion about the immigration system differ from patterns of liberal-democratic discussion (Leighley and Matsubayashi 2009; Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla 2019), and specifically, that the white-Latino gap in political discussion closes for this domain of carceral political discussion.³¹

Table 7: Racial Variation in Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

	Latino	White
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.68	0.72
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	2.42	2.47
Carceral Discussion Partners (Count)	2.19	2.36 ^a
N	403	519

Notes: Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Latinos and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

Table 8: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Political Discussion

	Latino	White
Political Discussion (Binary)	0.86	0.94 ^a
Political Discussion (Frequency)	3.04	3.18 ^a
Political Discussion Partners (Count)	2.81	3.04 ^a
N	403	519

Notes: Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Latinos and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

³¹ Section 5 of the Appendix shows limited overlap between these domains of political discussion: the Pearson's R coefficients for the binary measure are 0.39 for Latinos and 0.23 for whites.

Analyses of the content of this domain of carceral discussion reveal further racial variation in discussion about the immigration system. Table 9 presents weighted means for positive and negative carceral discussion about the immigration system among Latino and white respondents. This table uses an adapted measure of carceral discussion content that focuses on topics related to the immigration system. To measure these means, I created binary measures of positive and negative carceral discussion. The positive/negative measure is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic at least once in the past year.³² Table A24 presents these results in a regression model with gender, age, education, income, and political affiliation.³³

As expected, Table 9 suggests that race shapes the content of carceral discussion about the immigration system. Starting with the measure of negative carceral discussion, this table shows that Latinos are 15% ($p < 0.01$) more likely to have engaged in a negative discussion about the immigration system in the past year than whites. This difference represents a 0.31 standard deviation change in the discussion measure and coheres with the greater repressiveness of the immigration system for Latinos than white Americans.³⁴

³² Positive topics are (1) how immigration enforcement is necessary for public safety, (2) how the American immigration system usually treats people fairly, (3) how the American immigration system is often viewed unfairly, (4) how immigration authorities should be allowed to use force because immigration enforcement is dangerous, (5) a positive interaction with immigration authorities or the immigration system. Negative topics are (1) violence or abuse by immigration authorities, (2) how immigration authorities often use more force than necessary, (3) how the American immigration system often treats people badly or unfairly based on their race or ethnicity, (4) a negative interaction with immigration authorities or the immigration system.

³³ The results in Table 9 are robust to alternative content measures coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic a few times (2-3) or several times (4+), and “0” otherwise. Table A25 presents descriptive means using this alternative measure for positive and negative carceral discussion. Table A26 presents the separate t-test results for each individual positive and negative topic.

³⁴ Section 5 of the Appendix examines the correlation between positive and negative carceral (immigration) discussion. This section shows that positive and negative carceral discussion are weakly correlated: the weighted Pearson’s R correlation coefficients are 0.26 for Latinos and 0.36 for white respondents.

Table 9: Positive and Negative Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

	Latino	White
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.76	0.68 ^a
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.71	0.56 ^{ab}
N	403	519

Notes: Carceral discussion coded positive/negative if respondents talked about a positive/negative topic at least once in past year. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined Latinos and whites indicated with an *a* in second column. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) between positive and negative discussion indicated with a *b* in second row.

Table 9, however, also shows that Latinos are 8% ($p < 0.01$) more likely to *positively* discuss the immigration system than whites. Latinos also appear substantively more likely positively than negatively discuss the immigration system. As with positive discussion of policing and criminal justice among Black respondents, one potential explanation for this finding is respectability politics, or the process by which members of marginalized groups comply with dominant social norms to advance their own group’s condition. Although developed in the context of Black politics, respectability politics is a portable concept (Jefferson 2023; Dazey 2021; Brown and Jones 2022). In this context, positive discussion about the immigration system among Latinos could represent efforts to create distance from those who jeopardize the position or image of Latinos already living in the United States.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that race also moderates the content of carceral political discussion about the immigration system. Specifically, Latino respondents appear more likely to engage in negative *and* positive discussions of the immigration system than white Americans. These results thus extend the insights from **Studies 1** and **2**: like carceral political discussion about policing and the criminal justice system, these results suggest that focusing only on conventional measures of political discussion generates an incomplete picture of political discussion among Latinos.³⁵

³⁵ For space considerations, I analyze and discuss the potential predictors of (a) carceral (immigration) and

4.3 Study 4: Correlates of Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

I next analyze the political correlates of liberal-democratic discussion and discussion about the immigration system. As with discussion about policing and the criminal justice system, I expect these two domains of political discussion to have distinct correlates. My analysis focuses on the frequency measure and the six dependent variables from **Study 2**: (1) internal political efficacy, (2) external political efficacy, (3) sense of linked fate, and the perceived importance of (4) voting, (5) campaigning for a candidate, and (6) attending a protest.³⁶

Table 10 shows the attitudinal and behavioral correlates of carceral discussion about the immigration system and liberal-democratic discussion for whites and Latinos. This table shows several important distinctions in the correlates of these two domains of discussion. First, liberal-democratic discussion positively correlates with internal efficacy for white ($p < 0.01$) and Latino ($p < 0.01$) respondents, while discussion about the immigration system positively correlates with internal efficacy for whites ($p < 0.01$) but not Latinos. This finding suggests that for Latinos, talking about government and elections more directly maps onto feeling qualified to participate in politics than talking about the immigration system.

Second, the table shows that carceral discussion about the immigration system positively correlates with feelings of linked fate for white ($p < 0.05$) and Latino ($p < 0.01$) respondents, while liberal-democratic discussion correlates with feelings of linked fate for Latinos ($p < 0.05$) but not white respondents. This finding aligns with the differential treatment of whites and Latinos by the immigration system and research that links immigration enforcement to feelings of linked fate among Latinos (Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez 2017; Maltby et al. 2020). Moreover, this finding suggests that for Latinos, talking about immigration authorities and the immigration system reinforces the perceived link between your life chances

liberal-democratic discussion and (b) positive and negative carceral discussion in Section 9 of the Appendix.

³⁶ These analyses are based on a final sample of 941. This sample includes the cases that were removed from the descriptive analyses because they were missing on weight dimensions. Tables A27-A30 in the Appendix present similar results with the binary and number of discussion partners measures as independent variables.

Table 10: Correlates of Frequent Political Discussion
Correlates for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.161*** (0.049)	0.022 (0.049)	0.124** (0.054)	0.075 (0.048)	0.231*** (0.051)	0.124** (0.051)
Liberal-Dem	0.207*** (0.054)	-0.098* (0.053)	0.026 (0.059)	0.304*** (0.052)	0.190*** (0.055)	0.080 (0.056)
Party ID	-0.028 (0.054)	-0.205*** (0.053)	-0.064 (0.059)	-0.272*** (0.052)	-0.208*** (0.056)	-0.134** (0.056)
Constant	1.808*** (0.279)	2.038*** (0.276)	0.865*** (0.307)	2.078*** (0.271)	1.221*** (0.288)	1.845*** (0.290)
N	528	528	528	528	528	528
R ²	0.150	0.078	0.045	0.243	0.149	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.139	0.065	0.032	0.233	0.137	0.083

Correlates for Latino Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.087 (0.056)	0.063 (0.052)	0.175*** (0.061)	0.053 (0.062)	0.246*** (0.059)	0.131** (0.062)
Liberal-Dem	0.440*** (0.062)	-0.038 (0.058)	0.150** (0.068)	0.337*** (0.069)	0.067 (0.066)	0.200*** (0.069)
Party ID	-0.054 (0.057)	-0.086 (0.054)	-0.075 (0.063)	-0.269*** (0.064)	-0.088 (0.061)	-0.180*** (0.063)
Constant	1.393*** (0.302)	2.118*** (0.282)	1.205*** (0.332)	1.999*** (0.336)	1.817*** (0.320)	1.815*** (0.334)
N	413	413	413	413	413	413
R ²	0.204	0.020	0.090	0.202	0.083	0.134
Adjusted R ²	0.190	0.003	0.075	0.188	0.067	0.119

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

and your ethnic group more than talking about government and elections.

Third, Table 10 shows that liberal-democratic political discussion positively correlates with voting for white ($p < 0.01$) and Latino ($p < 0.01$) respondents, while carceral discussion about the immigration system does not correlate with this outcome for either group. Moreover, discussion about the immigration system positively correlates with the perceived importance of protesting for both white ($p < 0.05$) and Latino ($p < 0.05$) respondents. These results broadly align with the finding that proximal contact with the immigration system motivates non-traditional participation like protesting but not voting (Walker, Roman, and Barreto 2020; Street, Jones-Correa, and Zepeda-Millán 2017).

Next, Table 11 uses the binary measures of positive and negative carceral discussion about the immigration system as independent variables. This table shows that positive and negative discussion have distinct political correlates.³⁷ Turning first to internal efficacy, Table 11 shows that positive discussion about the immigration system positively correlates with internal efficacy for whites ($p < 0.01$). As expected, this finding suggests that talking about topics like how the immigration system usually treats people fairly and positive interactions with immigration authorities correlates with the belief that the government cares about “people like me” for whites. More surprisingly, Table 11 also shows that negative discussion positively correlates with internal efficacy for Latinos ($p < 0.01$). One potential interpretation of this finding is that for Latinos, negative carceral discussion about the immigration system provides opportunities to develop a greater understanding of the political system in ways that increase one’s faith in getting the government to listen to “people like me.”

Turning next to linked fate, Table 11 shows that negative carceral discussion about the immigration system strongly and positively correlates with linked fate for Latinos ($p < 0.01$), while neither form of carceral discussion correlates with this outcome for whites. This finding

³⁷ These results are robust to the alternative measures of positive and negative carceral discussion about the immigration system. Tables A31 and A32 in the Appendix present regression tables with these alternative measures of positive and negative carceral discussion.

aligns with the greater repressiveness of the immigration system for Latinos in the United States and research that links punitive immigration environments to linked fate among Latinos (Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez 2017; Maltby et al. 2020): to the extent that the immigration system is more punitive and salient for Latinos, talking about the immigration system should reinforce the belief that one’s life chances depend on the fortunes of other Latinos.

Table 11: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral (Immigration) Discussion
Correlates for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.305*** (0.107)	0.010 (0.102)	0.104 (0.115)	0.277*** (0.106)	0.363*** (0.110)	0.007 (0.107)
Negative	0.121 (0.102)	0.082 (0.098)	-0.072 (0.109)	-0.049 (0.101)	0.276*** (0.105)	0.403*** (0.102)
Party ID	-0.044 (0.056)	-0.191*** (0.054)	-0.072 (0.060)	-0.309*** (0.055)	-0.213*** (0.058)	-0.115** (0.056)
Constant	2.401*** (0.266)	1.747*** (0.255)	1.137*** (0.285)	2.922*** (0.263)	1.750*** (0.274)	1.998*** (0.267)
N	528	528	528	528	528	528
R ²	0.092	0.073	0.031	0.167	0.093	0.101
Adjusted R ²	0.080	0.060	0.018	0.155	0.081	0.089

Correlates for Latino Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.157 (0.132)	0.130 (0.116)	0.027 (0.136)	0.240* (0.143)	0.198 (0.130)	-0.114 (0.135)
Negative	0.492*** (0.131)	0.108 (0.115)	0.641*** (0.135)	0.167 (0.142)	0.627*** (0.129)	0.784*** (0.134)
Party ID	-0.077 (0.062)	-0.086 (0.054)	-0.064 (0.063)	-0.302*** (0.067)	-0.084 (0.061)	-0.156** (0.063)
Constant	2.167*** (0.301)	2.002*** (0.264)	1.363*** (0.310)	2.699*** (0.326)	1.854*** (0.297)	1.940*** (0.308)
N	413	413	413	413	413	413
R ²	0.099	0.024	0.098	0.146	0.101	0.160
Adjusted R ²	0.083	0.008	0.083	0.131	0.085	0.145

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Carceral discussion coded as positive/negative if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic at least once in the past year. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Finally, Table 11 shows that positive carceral discussion about the immigration system is positively correlated with perceived importance of voting ($p < 0.01$) and campaigning ($p < 0.01$) for white but not Latino respondents. However, the table shows that negative carceral discussion about the immigration system positively correlates with the perceived importance of campaigning and protesting for both Latino ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$) and white ($p < 0.01$, $p < 0.01$) respondents. This interpretation aligns with the finding that proximal contact with the immigration system motivates protest rather than voting (Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#)), and suggests that negative carceral discussion may represent or yield the perception that the state is unresponsive and unjust and thus correlate with more immediate outlets for frustration like campaigning and protesting.

Overall, then, **Studies 3** and **4** suggest that liberal-democratic discussion and carceral discussion about the immigration system have distinct political correlates and that there are racial differences in the correlates of positive and negative discussion about this domain of the carceral state. Latinos who engage in negative discussion about the immigration system have increased linked fate and assign increased importance to campaigning and protest. Whites who engage in negative carceral discussion also assign increased importance to campaigning and protest but do not differ from others in feelings of linked fate. Whites who engage in positive discussion about the immigration system, on the other hand, have increased internal efficacy and assign increased importance to voting and campaigning, while Latinos who engage in positive carceral discussion do not meaningfully differ from others in efficacy or engagement. Together, these findings suggest that discussion about the immigration system represents another potentially important opportunity for political socialization with impacts that vary meaningfully by race and discussion content.

5 Conclusion

What is political discussion? Mainstream research in American politics defines political discussion as “conversation between citizens that deals with political matters” (Conover and

Miller (2018). Empirically, this concept has been measured by asking respondents if and with whom they discuss topics like politics or government and elections. These measures offer a valuable foundation for analyses of political outcomes and illuminate many aspects of what Soss and Weaver (2017) describe as the liberal-democratic “first face” of the state. However, this research does not capture political discussion about the carceral “second face” of the state that operates through institutions responsible for policing and punishment.

In this paper, I have argued that we should broaden our conception of political discussion to include the coercive or “second face” of the state. By adapting the conventional measure of political discussion to include policing and the criminal justice system, this paper shows, first, that the assumed group differences in political discussion are reversed for carceral political discussion: Black Americans are (a) more likely to engage in carceral political discussion, (b) less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than white Americans, and (c) more likely to negatively than positively discuss policing and the criminal justice system. As such, focusing only on conventional measures of political discussion leads to incomplete conclusions about patterns of political discussion (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 2003; Wong et al. 2011; Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla 2019).

Second, the paper shows that carceral discussion meaningfully correlates with political outcomes and that these relationships are in some cases racially distinct. Among white Americans, positive carceral discussion correlates with external efficacy and linked fate, while negative carceral discussion has no impact on linked fate or external efficacy but positively correlates with voting, campaigning, and protesting. Among Black Americans, positive carceral discussion correlates with external efficacy, voting, campaigning, and protesting, while negative carceral discussion correlates with linked fate, depressed external efficacy, and assigning importance to protest. These findings thus add complexity to the liberal-democratic view that more political discussion is better and capable of generating the kind of knowledge and engagement that leads to political influence and voice (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Klofstad 2010; Searing et al. 2007).

Finally, the paper shows that these patterns extend beyond policing to include other dimensions of the carceral state. Specifically, the paper shows that measuring political discussion about the immigration system closes the white-Latino gap in political discussion, and that discussion about the immigration system has important political correlates even when accounting for liberal-democratic discussion. These findings build on a growing body of research on the impact of immigration enforcement on political attitudes and behavior (Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#); Maltby et al. [2020](#); Rocha, Knoll, and Wrinkle [2015](#)), and suggest that discussion about the immigration system represents another important domain of political discussion that is obscured by conventional measures of political discussion.

Taken together, these findings have important implications for understanding political discussion in American politics. First, these findings join research on the impact of the carceral state on political outcomes from participation (White [2019](#); Lerman and Weaver [2014](#)) to political knowledge (Cohen and Luttig [2020](#)) by showing that the carceral state also shapes the prevalence and correlates of political discussion. Second, the paper challenges the assumption that more political discussion is better (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Klofstad [2007](#)) by highlighting the sometimes countervailing roles of different domains of political discussion. Third, the paper extends research on the limits of using white Americans to generalize about political concepts (Cohen and Luttig [2020](#); Phoenix and Chan [2022](#); Chudy and Engelhardt [2023](#); Jefferson [2023](#)) by finding consistent racial variation in patterns of carceral political discussion. Finally, the paper demonstrates the value of combining survey and listening methods to study political discussion and builds on a growing body of research that seeks to harness the advantages of using qualitative and ethnographic tools to improve survey research (Thachil [2018](#); Verghese [2024](#); Bell-Martin [2022](#)). Scholars might consider using this approach to investigate patterns in the content of conventional political discussion and other understudied domains of political discussion. Such efforts could complement the more nuanced insights of “analytic listening” studies of political discussion (e.g., Harris-Lacewell [2004](#); Cramer [2016](#); Weaver, Prowse, and Piston [2019](#)).

These findings thus offer several contributions to research on political discussion, the carceral state, and racial and ethnic politics. However, there are important limitations that suggest avenues for future work. First, more could be done to investigate carceral discussion from an intersectional perspective. People are differently impacted by the carceral state along lines of gender (McCorkel [2013](#); Page, Piehowski, and Soss [2019](#); Nuamah and Mulroy [2023](#); Katzenstein and Waller [2015](#)), sexuality (Kunzel [2008](#); Dillon [2018](#); Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock [2011](#)), disability (Parsons [2018](#); Morgan [2022](#); Laniyonu and Goff [2021](#)), and religion (Felber [2020](#)). Future work could explore how considerations of intersectionality complicate the patterns and correlations that I present in this study. For instance, a promising site for future research may examine how patterns of negative carceral discussion (and the associated correlates) vary at different intersections of marginalized identities.

Second, my analysis focuses on two dimensions of the carceral state: policing and criminal justice institutions and the immigration system. However, the carceral state also overlaps with and works alongside welfare agencies (Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston [2022](#); Katzenstein and Waller [2015](#); Roberts [2014](#); Soss, Fording, and Schram [2011](#); Gustafson [2011](#); Wacquant [2009](#)). Focusing on this dimension of the carceral state and other punitive policies could illuminate additional group-based differences in the patterns and correlates of political discussion. For instance, programs like Child Protective Services and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families are more repressive and surveilling for women of color (Roberts [2002](#); Roberts [2012](#); Roberts [2022](#)). As such, we might expect discussion about punitive experiences of these programs to be more prevalent among women of color than men (and perhaps also white women). Moreover, research shows that interacting with unresponsive welfare programs can depress political efficacy and engagement as citizens develop a pessimistic view of government (Soss [1999](#); Soss [2000](#)). Talking about unresponsive welfare programs (with and without lived experience) may similarly depress efficacy and engagement. Such a finding would complicate the expectation that political discussion generates political engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague [1995](#); Klofstad [2007](#); Carlson, Abrajano, and Bedolla [2019](#)).

Third, this paper uses real-world conversations from Fora to bring surveys closer to the lived experience of political discussion. However, the analyses still rely on cross-sectional data. This means that (a) the paper remains further from real-world political discussion than constitutive studies, and (b) that the paper does not make causal claims about carceral discussion. Constitutive approaches (i.e., examinations of what carceral political discussion is and how it works) by scholars like Weaver, Prowse, and colleagues can further illuminate the scope of carceral discussion and how it might inform and be informed by political attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Weaver, Prowse, and Piston [2019](#)). Causal analyses (i.e., examinations of what carceral political discussion predicts and is predicted by) could do more to establish the extent to which the correlations in this study represent causal relationships.

The central goal of the present paper, however, is to demonstrate that carceral political discussion is an important component of the political experience and socialization of Americans, and that its prevalence and impact vary meaningfully by racial group membership. If we want to understand how political discussion varies and shapes political outcomes, we should thus more expansively examine how citizens talk about different domains of the state and government, and consider how and why different domains of political discussion vary across racial groups. More broadly, we should remain attuned to the many ways that the experience of citizenship can vary for different groups of citizens. This paper provides a window into this variation in the context of political discussion, but political discussion is just one feature of the experience of citizenship. A more complete picture of democracy and government in America thus demands attention to the following question: *what comprises relevant and important political experiences and for whom?*

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Supplementary Material for “Measuring Carceral Political Discussion and Its Political Consequences”

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1 Descriptive Statistics for Prolific Sample

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics for Prolific Sample

	White	Black
Female	0.50	0.49
18-29	0.13	0.19
30-39	0.33	0.35
40-49	0.22	0.24
50-59	0.15	0.16
60+	0.17	0.06
High School	0.99	0.99
College	0.85	0.87
Democrat	0.33	0.40
Republican	0.32	0.20
Independent	0.34	0.39
N	694	564

Sample collected on Prolific in March-April 2024.

2 Fora Collections on Policing and Criminal Justice

Policing and Criminal Justice Collections on Fora¹

1. City of Madison Police and Fire Commission Conversations (6 conversations)
2. Madison Police Civilian Oversight Board (9)
3. Mountain West: Law Enforcement in your Community – America Amplified (1)
4. Digital Coverage of Crime & Justice Conversations – Alabama Media Group (6)
5. Rikers Public Memory Project (4)
6. Mott Haven Branch: Criminal Justice – New York Public Library (NYPL) (1)
7. St. George Branch: Policing and Building Opportunities for Dialogue Across Staten Island Shores – NYPL (1)
8. Allerton Branch: Homelessness, Crime & Prison System – NYPL (1)
9. Allerton Branch: Poverty and Prison – NYPL (1)
10. St. George Branch: Police, Mental Health & Social Issues – NYPL (1)
11. Grand Central Branch: Transportation, Culture and Policing – NYPL (1)
12. Harlem Branch: Gentrification & Police Presence – NYPL (1)
13. New York Center for Interpersonal Development: Young Adults discuss Poverty and Prison in Stapleton – NYPL (1)
14. Staten Island Justice Center: Politics of a Community – NYPL (1)
15. Arkansas Justice Reform Coalition – Reimagine Arkansas (2)
16. Policing and the Criminal Legal System: UNC Chapel Hill – JUST Inequities Community Conversations(1)
17. Castle Sq Teens: Violence in our Communities Local Voices Network – MA Pilot (1)
18. Sterling MA Guns Conversations (5)

¹ Fora collections related to the criminal justice system (as of June 2024). Number of conversations indicated in parentheses after the collection title.

3 Illustrations of Carceral Discussion Topics

Illustrative Excerpts of Carceral Discussion Topics from Fora

1. About police killings or police brutality

Excerpt 1: “For black folks in the United States, we are constantly living under oppression. We are constantly living in a system that doesn’t value us, that doesn’t appreciate us, that is in fact designed to injure us in some way, both emotionally and economically. Sometimes it manifests in the case of police violence physically, right? To live in that kind of heightened state creates something referred to as a flight or fight response. Your body is literally releasing adrenaline just to live in the United States.”

Excerpt 2: “And what else? What should policing look like? Right. People are angry. Rightfully so, justifiably so. People of color, people in... They’re just angry. And I think we’re just fed up with the police brutality, the violence, the injustice. And I think also that this goes hand in hand with our incarceration, the system of incarcerating people. That needs to change.”

2. About how the police often use more force than necessary

Excerpt 1: “I’m always stressed out and worried because of the police. And then, one time, I was into a little altercation on the South side of Madison and it took five police officers to come and try to arrest me. Of course, I wasn’t in my right mind and I started fussing and cussing, but that was a lot. Five men with guns drawn for one person, so I believe Madison police, they are a little excessive, like they ain’t got nothing better to do. They just can’t wait to get that call. That’s how I feel.”

Excerpt 2: “And sooner or later, it’s going to blow up, and it’s going to escalate, and it’s going to turn into something real, real ugly because people are getting tired of police shootings. They’re getting tired of turning—you go on your phone. You look at a video. You see cops beating up people. For what?”

3. About how the police or criminal justice system treat Black people unfairly

Excerpt 1: “I think even looking at there are racial disparities, they are documented. Anyone can pull up the annual report, it is very clear that police officers here in Madison will arrest if you’re a black teenager, I think the odds, it’s like insane. You’re like twice as likely. Who knows what the data is? But it’s like very obvious that there are some huge racial disparities.”

Excerpt 2: “There’s a lot... there are certainly a whole lot of mug shots and police reports that involve people of color. And that is linked to the fact that we police those neighborhoods that tend to be majority black, especially in Alabama, differently than we police white neighborhoods, so there are going to be more arrests.”

4. About a negative interaction with the police or criminal justice system

Excerpt 1: “I think my first experience with police was when I was 18. We were traveling from Fayetteville to Fort Smith. We got pulled over, and we had weed in the car. We got pulled over for a broken windshield. I just remember, I was real young. I had never interacted with police officers. They were always there to help, not to... Like I was never the target. I remember these cops wanted to get us so bad. I’m so upset, and I’m getting really nervous. He comes up to me, and he’s like, “Why are you freaking out, if there’s nothing in the car?” I said, “I just have anxiety.” He said, “No. I’m medically trained. That vein in your neck is not from anxiety. It’s from nervousness, because you know.” In my head I was thinking, “What an uneducated dude, because anxiety and nervousness is basically the same thing. You’re making me nervous.” From then on, my whole perspective of the police was kind of shifted, because I was like, this dude has all the power. And he used it, and I got charged. All the power to decide my future right now, and he thinks that anxiety and nervousness are different. Yeah, I just remember kind of being shaken by that, and having my whole view of the police be shaken.”

Excerpt 2: “I was at my own house and I had the second disagreement with the police officer, nothing big or [inaudible] worthy, but she arrested me and no charges were ever filed, but I was on probation. And so she arrested me,

and she threw me in the back of her car. It was over 80 degrees outside, closer to 90. And she put me back there with the windows completely rolled up, and that... Yeah. And you wouldn't do that to a dog, right? If you saw a dog in a car, you'd break the window. So that made me feel really unsafe and just, I don't know what word to use... Stigmatized or completely turned me off and really helped me to feel unsafe and just not protected."

5. About how the police are necessary for public safety

Excerpt 1: "There's a lot of gun and gang violence activity happening on Findlay and College Avenue. Just recently somebody was killed in front of the building of 1150 College just walking out the door and was shot up. That concerns me. I'm actually happy with the police presence. There's a cop car on every corner now. Just about every corner you're going to see a cop car. That seems to deter people from acting crazy and I appreciate that."

Excerpt 2: "Like I said, I don't believe in defunding the police. What's going to happen if we defund the police? I mean, are we going to go back to Wild West days? Are we going back to the '80s in Jersey City, where everybody was shooting each other? I mean, the mid '80s to the late '80s, into the '90s, my block was not safe. Once a week our house was broken into, somebody tried to steal my car from out in the alleyway."

6. About how the police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly

Excerpt 1: "Yeah, my experience with officers in the schools is that they do everything they can not to arrest kids. They're extremely kind and very, very positive role models for kids in the schools. The schools I've worked in, some of the resource officers are people of color, and they're working with students of color. They're able to see a police officer in a responsible role being good with kids, being supportive."

Excerpt 2: "We tend to think that the police ... I've talked to students about this, black students who are like, "Oh, I'm worried about the police or F the police and this and that." I'm like, "Don't worry about the police, most of the police, 99% of the police have enough training and have a decent

understanding that they can try to de-escalate the situation, at least the ones I've encountered. Even the ones that I've disagreed with. Pulling me over for speeding or something. I'm not afraid of them."

7. About how the police are often viewed unfairly

Excerpt 1: "But this total hatred towards all policemen, I think I should be corrected. You can't hate them all, you've got to trust some of them. You can't defund them all because then you have no police force."

Excerpt 2: "And one of my concerns has to do with the view of the actions of police. Every day on my drive in, I drive by a coffee shop and there are a couple, two to four police cars there every day. And once I went through the drive through and bought a gift card for the officers because I wanted to tell them, "Thank you." And whenever I see someone in the military or a police officer, I'd try to make a point to go up and shake their hand and tell him, "Thank you."...But the reason I stop and say thank you is because I know that I am not willing to put myself in harm's way either in the military or in a police force and I want to make sure that those people know that I am grateful. And I think it must be very difficult to get up every day and go to work because I believe in my heart that the majority of them are good people and they are in it for the right reason and they want to help people and make our area safer and better place to live. And then of course, there are bad ones that do bad things- And I don't mean to oversimplify, but it bothers me a lot when I see in the news and the news is giving us potentially, just a piece of the story, right? It bothers me when I see that there's so much ... There's a contentious battle about the number of police officers, and is there going to be money? And do we do this? And boy, that bothers me. It bothers me because I feel like we are not getting to the heart of the issue and we are not helping the people that need help and we are also not saying to the police officer, "Thanks for putting yourselves out there everyday." Because I am sure not doing it. That bothers me. It bothers me that it feels like that's just so contentious and I feel like there's got to be a middle ground there someplace."

8. About how the police should be allowed to use force because policing is dangerous

Excerpt 1: “But I see the police car parked in front of the high school regularly when I drive past it. I’m like good on you, that’s a good policy to have that. Because the only way to stop somebody that has a gun is with a gun. At least in that kind of situation. That’s how I think of it anyways.”

Excerpt 2: “We just went through our town budgeting and we had very little argument from anyone about the police department budget. It was a higher increase than what we’ve had. But we have a solid police department with solid leadership, with equipment that is functional. We have top of the line stun gun tasers because we had an issue where someone was methed out and swinging at an officer with an ax and ended up being a physical altercation because the stun gun didn’t work and the community members stepped up to help subdue him. It was just a whole lot of that. And now we have safe equipment all around, and trying.”

9. About a positive interaction with the police or criminal justice system

Excerpt 1: “More recently my car broke down back in October and I was sitting on the side of the road waiting for the towing company to come and in the span of an hour so many people pulled over to see if I was okay, to see if I needed a ride. Three police officers pulled over to see if I was okay, to see if I needed a ride anywhere, and I just thought that was a good overall summary of the vibe that you get in Madison. Although we have our own set of problems I think as a community we really strive to help one another out and I hear all of the time especially from people who come from other places how welcoming people tend to be especially in the city and how open we are to each other. So I just thought “Wow so many people stopped to see if I was all right.” It just felt so great.”

Excerpt 2: “I think one of the things we do is just as a community, we’ve elevated mental health and kind of put it at the forefront more than other communities have. And I look at various aspects of when we had a 51-50, which is when the cops are called to your home for a mental health condition, our police officers here are trained in mental health. And the way they deescalated my son and our whole family situation was fantastic.”

4 Regression Tables for Descriptive Means

Table A2: Carceral Discussion

	Carceral (Binary)	Carceral (Frequency)	Carceral (Count)
White	-0.028 (0.028)	-0.453*** (0.061)	-0.205*** (0.064)
Female	-0.014 (0.025)	0.200*** (0.055)	-0.080 (0.058)
Age	-0.010 (0.009)	0.005 (0.020)	-0.015 (0.021)
Income	0.015*** (0.004)	0.026*** (0.009)	0.015 (0.009)
Education	0.030** (0.014)	0.074** (0.030)	0.125*** (0.032)
Republican	-0.067** (0.032)	-0.003 (0.070)	-0.006 (0.073)
Independent	-0.071** (0.030)	-0.076 (0.067)	0.053 (0.070)
Constant	0.641*** (0.060)	2.356*** (0.133)	2.120*** (0.139)
N	1,221	1,221	1,221
R ²	0.043	0.082	0.044
Adjusted R ²	0.037	0.076	0.038

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A3: Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Liberal-Dem (Binary)	Liberal-Dem (Frequency)	Liberal-Dem (Count)
White	0.080*** (0.019)	0.078 (0.060)	0.282*** (0.059)
Female	0.005 (0.017)	0.087 (0.055)	-0.237*** (0.054)
Age	0.010 (0.006)	0.108*** (0.020)	0.028 (0.020)
Income	0.013*** (0.003)	0.029*** (0.009)	0.022** (0.009)
Education	0.006 (0.009)	0.057* (0.030)	0.109*** (0.030)
Republican	-0.018 (0.021)	-0.180*** (0.069)	-0.168** (0.068)
Independent	-0.055*** (0.020)	-0.343*** (0.067)	-0.250*** (0.066)
Constant	0.716*** (0.040)	2.408*** (0.132)	2.344*** (0.130)
N	1,221	1,221	1,221
R ²	0.057	0.076	0.079
Adjusted R ²	0.051	0.070	0.074

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

5 Correlational Analyses

Table A4: Correlations Between Carceral and Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Black	White
Binary Discussion	0.39	0.27
Frequency of Discussion	0.50	0.47
Number of Discussion Partners (Count)	0.61	0.56
N	551	670

Notes: Coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between each of the measures of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion.

Table A4 presents coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between white and Black respondents for each measure of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion: the binary, frequency, and number of discussion partners measures. Carceral and liberal-democratic discussion are somewhat but not strongly correlated: the coefficients for the binary measure are 0.39 for Black respondents and 0.27 for white respondents. The correlations are stronger for the frequency and count measures: 0.5 for Blacks respondents and 0.47 for white respondents for the frequency measure, and 0.61 for Black respondents and 0.56 for white respondents for the count measure.

Table A5: Correlation Between Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Black	White
	0.54	0.51
N	551	670

Notes: Coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlation between positive and negative discussion.

Table A5 presents coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between positive and negative carceral discussion for white and Black respondents. This measure is coded as positive/negative if respondents talked about any positive/negative carceral topic at least

once in the past year. Positive and negative carceral discussion are reasonably correlated: the correlation coefficients are 0.54 for Black respondents and 0.51 for white respondents.

Table A6: Correlations Between Carceral (Immigration) and Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Latino	White
Binary Discussion	0.39	0.23
Frequency of Discussion	0.46	0.49
Number of Discussion Partners (Count)	0.61	0.48
N	403	519

Notes: Weighted Pearson's R correlation coefficients between carceral (immigration) and liberal-democratic discussion.

Table A6 presents the coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between white and Latino respondents for each measure of carceral (immigration) and liberal-democratic discussion. The table shows that liberal-democratic discussion and this domain of carceral and discussion are also somewhat but not strongly correlated: the coefficients for the binary measure are 0.39 for Latinos respondents and 0.23 for white respondents. The correlations are also stronger for the frequency and count measures: the coefficients are 0.46 for Latino respondents and 0.49 for whites respondents for the frequency measure, and 0.61 for Latino respondents and 0.48 for white respondents for the count measure.

Table A7: Correlation Between Positive and Negative Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

	Latino	White
	0.26	0.36
N	403	519

Notes: Pearson's R correlation coefficients between positive and negative discussion.

Table A7 presents the coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between positive and negative carceral (immigration) discussion for white and Latino respondents.

This measure is coded as positive/negative if respondents talked about any positive/negative carceral (immigration) discussion topic at least once in the past year. The table shows that positive and negative carceral discussion are not strongly correlated: the correlation coefficients are 0.26 for Latino respondents and 0.36 for white respondents.

Overall, these results suggest that there is some but not an overwhelming amount of overlap between (a) liberal-democratic and carceral political discussion and (b) positive and negative carceral discussion. There do not appear to be major racial differences in these correlations. People who talk about government and elections do not necessarily talk about policing and the criminal justice system, and people who discuss policing and criminal justice system do not necessarily discuss government and elections.

6 Regression Table for Descriptive Content Means

Table A8: Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Positive Carceral Discussion	Negative Carceral Discussion
White	-0.055** (0.025)	-0.072*** (0.023)
Female	0.012 (0.023)	0.066*** (0.021)
Age	0.007 (0.008)	-0.012 (0.008)
Income	0.008** (0.004)	0.009*** (0.003)
Education	0.019 (0.013)	0.006 (0.011)
Republican	0.040 (0.029)	-0.179*** (0.026)
Independent	0.003 (0.028)	-0.118*** (0.025)
Constant	0.663*** (0.055)	0.907*** (0.050)
N	1,221	1,221
R ²	0.017	0.081
Adjusted R ²	0.012	0.076

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

7 Descriptive Means with Alternative Content Measures

Table A9: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Black	White
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.70	0.61 ^a
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.84 ^b	0.62 ^a
N	551	670

Notes: Content measures coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) between positive and negative carceral discussion are indicated with a *b* in the second row.

8 Descriptive Means with Individual Content Measures

Table A10: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Discussion Topics

	White	Black
Police killings/brutality	1.43	1.91 ^a
Police use more force than necessary	1.25	1.87 ^a
Police treat Black people unfairly	1.16	2.00 ^a
Negative interaction with police or criminal justice system	0.88	1.47 ^a
Police are necessary for public safety	1.48	1.46
Police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly	0.92	1.15 ^a
Police should be allowed to use force	0.88	0.88
Police are often viewed unfairly	1.08	0.93 ^a
Positive interaction with police or criminal justice system	0.93	1.07 ^a

Notes: Responses were coded Never (0), Once (1), A few times (2-3) (2), or Several times (4+) (3). Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

9 Predictors of Political Discussion

Table A11 presents an analysis of the potential predictors of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion, analyzed separately for white and Black respondents: gender, age, income, political affiliation, education (a 5-point scale from less than high school, high school, some college, BA degree, to postgraduate degree), a binary measure of organizational membership (e.g., professional, neighborhood, religious), and measures of how many days a week respondents consume political news from TV or radio, print newspapers or magazines, social media, or blogs and YouTube. All political news variables are scored on a 0–1 scale.²

The model also includes personal and proximal carceral contact as potential predictors of political discussion. Personal contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to the following question: “Have you ever been arrested, charged, or questioned by the police, even if you were not guilty, excluding minor traffic stops such as speeding?” (and 0 otherwise. Proximal contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to the question, “And what about someone you know, such as a close friend or family member? Do you know someone who has been arrested, charged or questioned by the police, even if they weren’t guilty, excluding minor traffic stops such as speeding?” and 0 otherwise.

Several results from Table A11 are worthy of discussion. First, proximal carceral contact positively correlates with carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion for Black and white respondents. This finding coheres with research that attributes a mobilizing effect to proximal carceral contact (Lee, Porter, and Comfort [2014](#); Walker and García-Castañón [2017](#); Walker [2020](#); Anoll and Israel-Trummel [2019](#); Ang and Tebes [2024](#)). Second, and interestingly, personal carceral contact does not correlate with carceral discussion for white or Black respondents, but it does negatively correlate liberal-democratic political discussion among Black respondents. This aligns with the finding that direct carceral contact can depress participation (White [2019](#); White [2022](#); Weaver and Lerman [2010](#); Haselswerdt [2009](#); Burch [2011](#); McDonough, Enamorado, and Mendelberg [2022](#)). Finally, there are racial

² These questions were adapted from Cohen and Luttig ([2020](#)).

differences in the relationships between political news sources and political discussion: for instance, consuming political news from TV correlates with carceral discussion for Black but not white respondents, while consuming political news from TV correlates with liberal-democratic discussion for white but not Black respondents.

Table A11: Predictors of Carceral and Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Carceral (White)	Carceral (Black)	Liberal-Dem (White)	Liberal-Dem (Black)
Female	0.058* (0.033)	-0.010 (0.035)	0.017 (0.020)	0.049 (0.031)
Age	0.004 (0.013)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.008)	0.009 (0.015)
Income	0.003 (0.006)	0.011* (0.006)	0.010*** (0.003)	0.015*** (0.005)
Education	0.045** (0.019)	-0.010 (0.021)	0.029*** (0.011)	-0.003 (0.019)
Party ID	-0.019 (0.020)	-0.019 (0.020)	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.016 (0.018)
TV	0.041 (0.048)	0.175*** (0.062)	0.080*** (0.029)	0.038 (0.055)
Print	-0.021 (0.081)	-0.052 (0.072)	-0.084* (0.048)	-0.026 (0.064)
Social Media	0.071 (0.049)	0.003 (0.059)	0.012 (0.029)	0.058 (0.053)
Blogs	0.075 (0.057)	0.023 (0.059)	0.061* (0.034)	0.112** (0.052)
Organization	0.065* (0.038)	0.108** (0.047)	-0.022 (0.023)	0.017 (0.041)
Personal	0.017 (0.041)	0.027 (0.042)	-0.038 (0.024)	-0.062* (0.037)
Proximal	0.095*** (0.036)	0.130*** (0.037)	0.066*** (0.021)	0.143*** (0.033)
Constant	0.413*** (0.104)	0.586*** (0.105)	0.747*** (0.062)	0.535*** (0.093)
N	677	557	677	557
R ²	0.043	0.079	0.070	0.086
Adjusted R ²	0.026	0.058	0.053	0.065

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A12 presents an analysis of the potential predictors of positive and negative carceral discussion: gender, age, income, political affiliation, education, organizational membership, political news consumption, and personal and proximal carceral contact. Several findings are worth noting. First, proximal contact strongly correlates with negative but not positive carceral discussion for Black and white respondents. This finding supports the proposed explanation for the finding that proximal contact mobilizes participation: namely, that through proximal contact, individuals develop or reinforce negative views of the carceral state and are mobilized to action (Walker and García-Castañón [2017](#); Walker [2020](#)). Second, organizational membership positively correlates with positive and negative carceral discussion for white and Black respondents. Finally, there are racial differences in the relationships between political news sources and positive and negative carceral discussion: consuming political news from TV correlates with positive carceral discussion for Blacks and whites, for instance, while consuming news from TV, social media, and print correlates with negative carceral discussion for white but not Black respondents.

Table A12: Predictors of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Positive (White)	Positive (Black)	Negative (White)	Negative (Black)
Female	0.041 (0.032)	-0.039 (0.030)	0.088*** (0.030)	0.013 (0.022)
Age	0.009 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.014)	-0.034*** (0.012)	-0.023** (0.011)
Income	0.010* (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)
Education	-0.010 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	0.003 (0.017)	0.010 (0.014)
Party ID	0.041** (0.019)	0.006 (0.017)	-0.063*** (0.018)	-0.020 (0.013)
TV	0.178*** (0.047)	0.173*** (0.054)	0.094** (0.044)	0.029 (0.040)
Print	0.093 (0.078)	0.112* (0.063)	0.137* (0.074)	0.041 (0.046)
Social Media	0.081* (0.047)	-0.008 (0.052)	0.097** (0.044)	0.021 (0.038)
Blogs	0.094* (0.054)	0.056 (0.051)	0.048 (0.051)	0.033 (0.037)
Organization	0.147*** (0.037)	0.174*** (0.040)	0.101*** (0.035)	0.074** (0.030)
Personal	-0.014 (0.039)	-0.026 (0.037)	-0.031 (0.037)	0.015 (0.027)
Proximal	0.041 (0.035)	0.006 (0.033)	0.111*** (0.033)	0.104*** (0.024)
Constant	0.344*** (0.100)	0.623*** (0.091)	0.803*** (0.094)	0.840*** (0.067)
N	677	557	677	557
R ²	0.102	0.125	0.097	0.083
Adjusted R ²	0.086	0.106	0.080	0.063

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A13 presents the potential predictors of liberal-democratic discussion and carceral discussion about the immigration system. This analysis uses the same predictors as Tables A11 and A12, although personal carceral contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to the question, “Have you ever been stopped or questioned by immigration officials, or faced detention or deportation for immigration reasons?” Proximal carceral contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to the question, “And what about someone you know, such as a close friend or family member? Do you know someone who has been stopped or questioned by immigration officials, or has faced detention or deportation for immigration reasons?”

The table shows, first, that proximal contact with the immigration system positively correlates with carceral and liberal-democratic discussion for Latino and white respondents. This result aligns with the finding that proximal contact with the immigration system can mobilize participation (Walker, Roman, and Barreto [2020](#)). Second, there are racial differences in the relationships between political news sources and carceral discussion. For instance, consuming political news from TV correlates with carceral discussion about the immigration system for whites but not Latinos, and consuming political news from blogs and organizational membership correlates with carceral discussion for Latinos but not whites.

Table A13: Predictors of Carceral (Immigration) and Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Carceral (White)	Carceral (Latino)	Liberal-Dem (W)	Liberal-Dem (L)
Female	-0.008 (0.041)	0.029 (0.045)	0.014 (0.024)	0.030 (0.030)
Age	0.041** (0.017)	0.064*** (0.022)	0.021** (0.010)	0.020 (0.015)
Income	0.007 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.008)	0.0002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.005)
Education	0.018 (0.022)	0.071** (0.029)	-0.014 (0.013)	0.016 (0.019)
Party ID	0.036 (0.025)	-0.023 (0.026)	-0.009 (0.014)	-0.025 (0.017)
TV	0.164*** (0.062)	0.028 (0.076)	0.029 (0.037)	0.011 (0.051)
Print	-0.003 (0.098)	-0.111 (0.124)	-0.032 (0.058)	-0.067 (0.083)
Social Media	-0.054 (0.061)	0.024 (0.074)	-0.037 (0.036)	0.033 (0.050)
Blogs	0.110 (0.068)	0.226*** (0.076)	0.047 (0.040)	0.084 (0.051)
Organization	-0.010 (0.049)	0.113** (0.053)	-0.027 (0.029)	0.052 (0.036)
Personal	-0.049 (0.147)	0.001 (0.088)	0.063 (0.086)	0.027 (0.059)
Proximal	0.167*** (0.060)	0.248*** (0.050)	0.016 (0.035)	0.006 (0.034)
Constant	0.253** (0.118)	0.047 (0.131)	0.912*** (0.070)	0.751*** (0.088)
N	527	412	527	412
R ²	0.065	0.155	0.025	0.036
Adjusted R ²	0.043	0.130	0.002	0.008

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A14 presents an analysis of the potential predictors of positive and negative carceral discussion: gender, age, income, political affiliation, education, organizational membership, political news consumption, and personal and proximal carceral contact. First, the table shows that proximal contact strongly correlates with positive and negative carceral discussion for white respondents. For Latinos, however, proximal carceral contact only correlates with negative carceral discussion. Second, the table shows differences in the relationships between political news sources and positive and negative carceral discussion. For instance, consuming political news from blogs positively correlates with positive but not negative carceral discussion for both whites and Latinos.

Table A14: Predictors of Positive and Negative Carceral (Immigration) Discussion

	Positive (White)	Positive (Latino)	Negative (White)	Negative (Latino)
Female	-0.031 (0.041)	0.043 (0.041)	0.048 (0.043)	0.124*** (0.041)
Age	0.006 (0.017)	0.004 (0.020)	-0.037** (0.018)	-0.027 (0.020)
Income	0.002 (0.007)	0.014* (0.007)	-0.016** (0.007)	-0.003 (0.007)
Education	0.009 (0.022)	0.019 (0.026)	0.067*** (0.023)	-0.004 (0.026)
Party ID	0.029 (0.024)	0.048** (0.024)	-0.063** (0.025)	-0.052** (0.024)
TV	0.123** (0.061)	0.088 (0.070)	0.011 (0.065)	-0.002 (0.070)
Print	0.105 (0.097)	0.166 (0.114)	0.224** (0.102)	0.288** (0.114)
Social Media	-0.021 (0.060)	-0.050 (0.068)	-0.057 (0.063)	0.067 (0.068)
Blogs	0.216*** (0.067)	0.274*** (0.070)	0.129* (0.070)	0.042 (0.070)
Organization	0.070 (0.048)	0.157*** (0.049)	0.070 (0.051)	0.089* (0.049)
Personal	-0.088 (0.144)	0.078 (0.081)	-0.023 (0.152)	0.014 (0.081)
Proximal	0.179*** (0.059)	0.045 (0.046)	0.248*** (0.062)	0.226*** (0.046)
Constant	0.398*** (0.116)	0.219* (0.120)	0.595*** (0.122)	0.696*** (0.120)
N	527	412	527	412
R ²	0.078	0.136	0.102	0.161
Adjusted R ²	0.057	0.110	0.081	0.136

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

10 Correlates of Alternative Discussion Measures

Table A15: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.243** (0.098)	-0.070 (0.092)	0.202** (0.102)	0.122 (0.102)	0.133 (0.095)	0.286*** (0.098)
Liberal-Dem	0.457*** (0.164)	-0.174 (0.155)	0.213 (0.172)	0.635*** (0.172)	0.126 (0.159)	0.241 (0.164)
Party ID	-0.177*** (0.048)	-0.206*** (0.046)	-0.087* (0.051)	-0.333*** (0.051)	-0.247*** (0.047)	-0.302*** (0.048)
Constant	2.337*** (0.266)	2.292*** (0.252)	1.173*** (0.278)	2.441*** (0.279)	1.993*** (0.258)	2.547*** (0.266)
N	677	677	677	677	677	677
R ²	0.117	0.069	0.030	0.171	0.063	0.120
Adjusted R ²	0.108	0.060	0.020	0.162	0.053	0.111

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A16: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.021 (0.049)	0.028 (0.047)	0.140*** (0.051)	0.015 (0.051)	0.063 (0.047)	0.141*** (0.048)
Liberal-Dem	0.240*** (0.049)	-0.040 (0.047)	0.035 (0.052)	0.254*** (0.051)	0.130*** (0.048)	0.135*** (0.049)
Party ID	-0.151*** (0.048)	-0.207*** (0.046)	-0.086* (0.051)	-0.306*** (0.050)	-0.229*** (0.047)	-0.288*** (0.048)
Constant	2.150*** (0.256)	2.157*** (0.246)	1.063*** (0.270)	2.300*** (0.268)	1.680*** (0.248)	2.236*** (0.255)
N	677	677	677	677	677	677
R ²	0.142	0.067	0.040	0.194	0.085	0.149
Adjusted R ²	0.133	0.057	0.030	0.185	0.075	0.140

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A17: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for Black Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.166 (0.114)	-0.094 (0.107)	0.395*** (0.121)	-0.061 (0.123)	0.076 (0.136)	0.244* (0.135)
Liberal-Dem	0.475*** (0.128)	-0.053 (0.120)	0.165 (0.135)	0.535*** (0.137)	0.188 (0.152)	0.304** (0.151)
Party ID	-0.130*** (0.050)	-0.241*** (0.047)	0.037 (0.053)	-0.465*** (0.054)	-0.367*** (0.059)	-0.287*** (0.059)
Constant	1.915*** (0.264)	1.824*** (0.248)	1.539*** (0.279)	3.614*** (0.283)	2.637*** (0.313)	1.890*** (0.311)
N	560	560	560	560	560	560
R ²	0.174	0.167	0.035	0.198	0.122	0.149
Adjusted R ²	0.164	0.157	0.023	0.188	0.111	0.138

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A18: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for Black Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.144*** (0.054)	-0.018 (0.051)	0.091 (0.057)	-0.067 (0.058)	0.109* (0.063)	0.291*** (0.063)
Liberal-Dem	0.179*** (0.052)	0.052 (0.050)	0.176*** (0.056)	0.311*** (0.056)	0.213*** (0.062)	0.077 (0.061)
Party ID	-0.125** (0.049)	-0.234*** (0.047)	0.040 (0.052)	-0.452*** (0.053)	-0.353*** (0.058)	-0.285*** (0.057)
Constant	1.671*** (0.261)	1.635*** (0.250)	1.363*** (0.279)	3.400*** (0.280)	2.116*** (0.307)	1.496*** (0.304)
N	560	560	560	560	560	560
R ²	0.206	0.167	0.053	0.227	0.168	0.198
Adjusted R ²	0.196	0.156	0.041	0.217	0.157	0.188

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

11 Correlates of Alternative Content Measures

Table A19: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	-0.041 (0.087)	0.050 (0.082)	0.180** (0.091)	-0.004 (0.092)	0.287*** (0.083)	-0.063 (0.085)
Negative	0.294*** (0.090)	-0.007 (0.085)	0.043 (0.094)	0.201** (0.095)	0.143* (0.085)	0.493*** (0.088)
Party ID	-0.165*** (0.049)	-0.205*** (0.047)	-0.099* (0.051)	-0.330*** (0.052)	-0.254*** (0.047)	-0.271*** (0.048)
Constant	2.631*** (0.243)	2.099*** (0.229)	1.375*** (0.253)	2.870*** (0.256)	1.968*** (0.231)	2.537*** (0.238)
N	677	677	677	677	677	677
R ²	0.106	0.067	0.027	0.153	0.086	0.144
Adjusted R ²	0.097	0.057	0.017	0.144	0.077	0.135

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Positive/negative carceral discussion is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic either a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A20: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for Black Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.292*** (0.108)	0.654*** (0.096)	-0.287** (0.112)	0.156 (0.116)	0.633*** (0.124)	0.259** (0.126)
Negative	0.213 (0.143)	-0.567*** (0.128)	0.792*** (0.148)	0.195 (0.153)	-0.005 (0.164)	0.263 (0.167)
Party ID	-0.123** (0.050)	-0.229*** (0.045)	0.036 (0.052)	-0.463*** (0.054)	-0.346*** (0.058)	-0.278*** (0.059)
Constant	2.000*** (0.276)	1.868*** (0.247)	1.364*** (0.286)	3.673*** (0.296)	2.450*** (0.317)	1.882*** (0.323)
N	559	559	559	559	559	559
R ²	0.164	0.234	0.055	0.185	0.165	0.149
Adjusted R ²	0.154	0.224	0.043	0.175	0.154	0.138

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Positive/negative carceral discussion is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic either a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

12 Descriptive Statistics for Prolific Sample: Immigration

Table A21: Descriptive Statistics for Prolific Sample (Immigration)

	White	Latino
Female	0.50	0.48
18-29	0.15	0.38
30-39	0.30	0.37
40-49	0.25	0.16
50-59	0.19	0.05
60+	0.11	0.04
High School	0.99	1.00
College	0.83	0.85
Democrat	0.31	0.35
Republican	0.32	0.28
Independent	0.36	0.36
N	536	423

Sample collected on Prolific in June 2024.

13 Regression Tables for Descriptive Means: Immigration

Table A22: Carceral Discussion (Immigration)

	Immigration (Binary)	Immigration (Frequency)	Immigration (Count)
White	0.001 (0.033)	-0.022 (0.071)	0.071 (0.068)
Female	-0.049 (0.030)	-0.103 (0.065)	-0.143** (0.062)
Age	0.037*** (0.011)	0.064*** (0.023)	0.078*** (0.022)
Income	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.018* (0.011)	0.003 (0.010)
Education	0.033** (0.016)	0.098*** (0.035)	0.113*** (0.033)
Republican	0.078** (0.038)	0.309*** (0.082)	0.236*** (0.078)
Independent	0.014 (0.037)	-0.094 (0.080)	0.031 (0.077)
Constant	0.483*** (0.066)	1.988*** (0.143)	1.511*** (0.136)
N	922	922	922
R ²	0.028	0.050	0.058
Adjusted R ²	0.021	0.042	0.051

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A23: Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Liberal-Dem (Binary)	Liberal-Dem (Frequency)	Liberal-Dem (Count)
White	0.067*** (0.021)	0.010 (0.068)	0.164** (0.072)
Female	0.011 (0.019)	0.145** (0.061)	-0.055 (0.065)
Age	0.004 (0.007)	0.077*** (0.022)	0.019 (0.023)
Income	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.014 (0.010)	0.025** (0.011)
Education	0.003 (0.010)	0.137*** (0.033)	0.134*** (0.035)
Republican	-0.065*** (0.024)	-0.218*** (0.077)	-0.232*** (0.082)
Independent	-0.064*** (0.023)	-0.258*** (0.076)	-0.200** (0.081)
Constant	0.900*** (0.041)	2.552*** (0.135)	2.326*** (0.144)
N	922	922	922
R ²	0.029	0.062	0.056
Adjusted R ²	0.022	0.055	0.049

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

14 Regression Table for Descriptive Content Means: Immigration

Table A24: Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion (Immigration)

	Positive Carceral Discussion	Negative Carceral Discussion
White	-0.071** (0.032)	-0.145*** (0.034)
Female	-0.126*** (0.029)	0.006 (0.031)
Age	-0.002 (0.011)	-0.037*** (0.011)
Income	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)
Education	0.024 (0.016)	0.090*** (0.017)
Republican	0.189*** (0.037)	-0.195*** (0.039)
Independent	0.089** (0.036)	-0.117*** (0.038)
Constant	0.677*** (0.065)	0.739*** (0.068)
N	922	922
R ²	0.058	0.092
Adjusted R ²	0.051	0.085

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

15 Descriptive Means with Alternative Content Measures: Immigration

Table A25: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion (Immigration)

	Latino	White
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.60	0.57
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.53 ^b	0.45 ^a
N	403	519

Notes: Content measures coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Latinos and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column. Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between positive and negative carceral discussion are indicated with a *b* in the second row.

16 Descriptive Means with Individual Content Measures: Immigration

Table A26: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Discussion Topics (Immigration)

	White	Latino
Violence or abuse by immigration authorities	0.60	0.86 ^a
Immigration authorities use more force than necessary	0.50	0.79 ^a
Immigration system treats people unfairly based on race/ethnicity	0.83	1.12 ^a
Negative interaction with immigration authorities/system	0.58	0.80 ^a
Immigration authorities necessary for public safety	1.14	1.18
Immigration authorities or system usually treat people fairly	0.42	0.42
Immigration authorities should be allowed to use force	0.54	0.43
Immigration system is often viewed unfairly	0.73	0.92 ^a
Positive interaction with immigration authorities/system	0.29	0.37

Notes: Responses were coded Never (0), Once (1), A few times (2-3) (2), or Several times (4+) (3). Significant differences ($p < 0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Latinos and whites are indicated with an *a* in the second column.

17 Correlates of Alternative Discussion Measures: Immigration

Table A27: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.393*** (0.101)	0.003 (0.097)	0.092 (0.110)	0.255** (0.100)	0.372*** (0.107)	0.227** (0.104)
Liberal-Dem	0.294* (0.175)	-0.388** (0.168)	0.091 (0.189)	0.298* (0.174)	-0.124 (0.185)	-0.108 (0.180)
Party ID	-0.052 (0.055)	-0.200*** (0.053)	-0.066 (0.060)	-0.303*** (0.055)	-0.235*** (0.058)	-0.148*** (0.057)
Constant	2.253*** (0.298)	2.162*** (0.287)	1.032*** (0.323)	2.684*** (0.295)	2.128*** (0.314)	2.299*** (0.306)
N	528	528	528	528	528	528
R ²	0.106	0.081	0.031	0.174	0.066	0.078
Adjusted R ²	0.094	0.069	0.018	0.163	0.053	0.066

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A28: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for White Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.166*** (0.053)	0.002 (0.052)	0.080 (0.058)	0.093* (0.052)	0.239*** (0.054)	0.161*** (0.054)
Liberal-Dem	0.162*** (0.051)	-0.037 (0.050)	0.050 (0.056)	0.153*** (0.051)	0.141*** (0.053)	0.033 (0.053)
Party ID	-0.031 (0.055)	-0.201*** (0.054)	-0.062 (0.060)	-0.283*** (0.055)	-0.216*** (0.057)	-0.144** (0.057)
Constant	1.943*** (0.279)	1.912*** (0.274)	0.887*** (0.306)	2.466*** (0.278)	1.383*** (0.288)	1.944*** (0.288)
N	528	528	528	528	528	528
R ²	0.138	0.072	0.039	0.193	0.134	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.126	0.060	0.027	0.183	0.123	0.084

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A29: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for Latino Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.369*** (0.113)	0.011 (0.101)	0.255** (0.119)	0.270** (0.122)	0.405*** (0.116)	0.269** (0.121)
Liberal-Dem	0.694*** (0.176)	0.040 (0.157)	0.498*** (0.186)	0.552*** (0.190)	0.020 (0.181)	0.222 (0.189)
Party ID	-0.067 (0.060)	-0.086 (0.054)	-0.078 (0.064)	-0.277*** (0.065)	-0.100 (0.062)	-0.192*** (0.065)
Constant	1.922*** (0.315)	2.113*** (0.281)	1.406*** (0.333)	2.363*** (0.341)	2.317*** (0.324)	2.285*** (0.338)
N	413	413	413	413	413	413
R ²	0.124	0.016	0.073	0.168	0.051	0.102
Adjusted R ²	0.109	-0.001	0.057	0.153	0.034	0.086

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A30: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for Latino Americans

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Immigration	0.083 (0.065)	-0.055 (0.058)	0.178*** (0.069)	0.113 (0.071)	0.257*** (0.067)	0.176** (0.070)
Liberal-Dem	0.302*** (0.063)	-0.049 (0.056)	0.134** (0.066)	0.159** (0.069)	-0.050 (0.065)	0.094 (0.067)
Party ID	-0.100* (0.059)	-0.089* (0.053)	-0.098 (0.063)	-0.301*** (0.065)	-0.107* (0.061)	-0.204*** (0.064)
Constant	1.874*** (0.298)	2.343*** (0.268)	1.371*** (0.316)	2.425*** (0.327)	2.208*** (0.309)	2.107*** (0.320)
N	413	413	413	413	413	413
R ²	0.146	0.025	0.091	0.167	0.060	0.122
Adjusted R ²	0.131	0.008	0.076	0.153	0.044	0.107

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

18 Correlates of Alternative Content Measures: Immigration

Table A31: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for Whites (Immigration)

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.387*** (0.097)	-0.006 (0.095)	0.171 (0.106)	0.333*** (0.097)	0.334*** (0.101)	0.024 (0.098)
Negative	0.229** (0.098)	0.026 (0.095)	-0.048 (0.106)	-0.010 (0.097)	0.340*** (0.102)	0.506*** (0.098)
Party ID	-0.041 (0.055)	-0.194*** (0.054)	-0.074 (0.060)	-0.311*** (0.055)	-0.209*** (0.058)	-0.104* (0.056)
Constant	2.365*** (0.257)	1.797*** (0.251)	1.094*** (0.280)	2.897*** (0.257)	1.818*** (0.268)	2.012*** (0.260)
N	528	528	528	528	528	528
R ²	0.122	0.071	0.034	0.176	0.103	0.122
Adjusted R ²	0.110	0.059	0.021	0.165	0.091	0.111

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Positive/negative carceral discussion is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic either a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.

Table A32: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for Latinos (Immigration)

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.273** (0.114)	0.235** (0.099)	-0.040 (0.115)	0.204* (0.123)	0.244** (0.115)	-0.065 (0.118)
Negative	0.287** (0.116)	0.057 (0.100)	0.712*** (0.117)	0.201 (0.124)	0.311*** (0.116)	0.560*** (0.120)
Party ID	-0.089 (0.063)	-0.095* (0.054)	-0.035 (0.063)	-0.296*** (0.067)	-0.099 (0.063)	-0.154** (0.065)
Constant	2.370*** (0.296)	2.049*** (0.257)	1.379*** (0.298)	2.737*** (0.317)	2.179*** (0.296)	2.149*** (0.306)
N	413	413	413	413	413	413
R ²	0.092	0.035	0.127	0.150	0.062	0.134
Adjusted R ²	0.076	0.018	0.112	0.135	0.046	0.119

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Positive/negative carceral discussion is coded as “1” if respondents talked about any positive/negative topic either a few times (2-3) or several times (4+) and “0” otherwise. Suppressed coefficients are income, age, education, and gender.