Carceral Political Discussion*

Jasmine English†

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Abstract

What comprises important political discussion and for whom? Measures of political discussion in American politics focus on government and elections and neglect the coercive "second face" of the state. This paper remedies this oversight by exploring *carceral political discussion* about topics like policing and the criminal justice system. Do conventional and carceral political discussion vary by race? Do these discussion domains differently correlate with efficacy and engagement? With original survey data, I first show that Black Americans engage in less conventional political discussion but more carceral political discussion than whites. Second, I show that conventional and carceral political discussion have racially distinct political correlates. Substantively, the paper demonstrates that conventional measures provide an incomplete picture of political discussion and highlights the importance of understanding how different groups of citizens talk about the state. Methodologically, it presents a novel approach of using real-world conversation data to measure political discussion content.

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† Postdoctoral Fellow, Stanford University (jasenglish@stanford.edu)

1 Introduction

Political discussion between citizens is central to research in political behavior. Decades of research demonstrate the relationship between political discussion and 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 studies of political discussion, respondents are usually asked if and with whom they discuss "politics," "political matters," or "government or elections."[1] However, this approach is limited in its understanding of political discussion because these questions focus on what Soss and Weaver (2017) describe as the liberal-democratic or "first face" of the state—i.e., 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 capture discussions of the carceral or "second face" of the state that focuses on surveillance and criminalization (Soss and Weaver 2017), and that exercises power through policing and punishment. 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.

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

[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).

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 about the police and criminal justice system than whites. This expectation reverses established patterns 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).

Second, carceral discussion may matter for political attitudes and behaviors, even when we account for engagement in conventional political discussion. For example, 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). Even without direct carceral contact, talking about the carceral state may yield a view of government as unfair and coercive and correlate with depressed efficacy and engagement. This relationship 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 discussion is better and capable of generating the kind of political knowledge and engagement that leads to political influence (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Searing et al. 2007).

However, there are also reasons to expect carceral discussion to correlate with political mobilization. Recent research attributes a mobilizing effect to *proximal* carceral contact (contact via friends or family) and *community* carceral contact (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-Castañon 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 contact, discussion about the police and criminal justice system could

provide opportunities to identify perceived injustice and catalyze political engagement.[2]

This paper examines 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, the frequency of carceral discussion, and the number of carceral discussion partners. My second measure captures the *content* of carceral discussion by measuring different topics of carceral discussion. 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 a corpus of facilitated 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 two related analyses of carceral discussion. **Study 1** shows that Black Americans are more likely to engage in carceral discussion than whites, but less likely to engage in liberal-democratic (i.e., conventional) 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 and that positive and negative carceral discussion have racially distinct correlates: for instance, negative carceral discussion correlates with linked fate and depressed external efficacy for Black Americans, while whites who negatively discuss the carceral state do not differ from others in linked fate or external efficacy. These findings suggest that race also moderates the correlates of carceral discussion and complicate the long-held assumption that more political discussion is better (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Searing et al. 2007).

[2] This expectation makes no assumption about the goal of mobilization: carceral discussion could generate support for less punitive policies or a reactionary response (Engelhardt 2021; Drakulich and Denver 2022).

[3] Created by Kathy Cramer and colleagues at the MIT Center for Constructive Communication and Cortico, Fora brings together small groups of community members for facilitated discussions about topics like education, policing, and elections. All conversations are recorded, transcribed, and uploaded. Fora launched in 2018 and contains over 1,500 in-person and virtual conversations among over 8,000 people.

This paper makes several contributions to research on political discussion, racial and ethnic politics, and the carceral state. First, my findings complicate longstanding assumptions about political discussion. The disposition that underpins most research on political discussion is that political discussion concerns the "first face" of the state and that more is better than less. This understanding comports with the prevailing model of citizenship in American politics: that government is about electoral-representative politics and that more involvement with government is better. But this model is not the experience of all and varies most markedly by race (Soss and Weaver 2017; White, Nathan, and Faller 2015; Einstein and Glick 2017; Butler and Broockman 2011; Michener, SoRelle, and Thurston 2022). My findings challenge these prevailing understandings by highlighting the multiple and sometimes countervailing roles of different political discussion domains across racial groups.

Second, the paper demonstrates the importance of examining how political concepts look and operate differently across racial groups. At the core of the study of American politics are concepts that capture engagement with politics. Although scholars often treat the experience of these concepts as racially uniform, recent work finds racial variation in the nature and scope of concepts like political knowledge (Cohen and Luttig 2020; Pérez 2015), political efficacy (Phoenix and Chan 2022), political trust (Chudy and Engelhardt 2023), participation norms (Anoll 2018), punitive attitudes (Jefferson 2023), and ideological identification (Jefferson 2024).[4] This paper extends this intervention to an emblematic form of political engagement: political discussion. In so doing, the paper highlights the limits of using white Americans to generalize about political experiences and concepts.

Third, mainstream research on American politics has until recently ignored the carceral face of the state (Soss and Weaver 2017). This imbalance is being corrected by research on

[4] This effort to revisit concepts across race can be situated in a longer history of conceptual critiques. For instance, research on domain-specific attentiveness shows that racial gaps in political knowledge decline significantly on issues that are salient to racial minority groups (Iyengar 1986; Iyengar 1990; Hutchings 2001). This literature also finds parallels in research that examines how concepts look and operate differently for men and women. For example, one important strand of this research challenges the existence of a gender gap in political sophistication by broadening the definition of concepts like political knowledge (Sanbonmatsu 2003; Dolan 2011; Harbin 2024; Kraft 2024).

how the carceral state impacts outcomes like participation (e.g., White 2019; Lerman and Weaver 2014), candidate preferences (Burch 2012), and socialization (Anoll, Engelhardt, and Israel-Trummel 2022). However, the carceral state has remained absent from research on political discussion with the exception of Weaver, Prowse, and colleagues, who analyze conversations in highly policed neighborhoods (e.g., Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019).[5] This paper analyzes carceral discussion with national data and shows that incorporating the carceral state stands to meaningfully shift our understanding of political 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 implications from discussion in specific communities.[6] By making use of newly available real-world conversation data from Fora, 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).

[5] 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 national data.

[6] See, for example, the depiction of the concept of "rural consciousness" using informal group conversations in Wisconsin (Cramer 2016), and the revisiting of the concept of political knowledge with conversations from highly policed neighborhoods (Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019).

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).

How might political discussion impact political outcomes? This literature proposes several non-mutually exclusive channels of influence (Eveland 2004). First, political discussion can expose participants to new political information or provide additional exposure to political information of interest. Second, the expectation of political discussion provides motivation to cognitively engage with the discussion topic (by deciding how it is relevant, noticing important issues, and so on). Third, the act of engaging in political discussion encourages cognitive engagement and information processing during the discussion. Although not the empirical focus of this study, these channels of influence underpin my expectations for the potential role and impact of political discussion about the carceral state.

These expectations respond to the observation that research on political discussion defines political discussion as "spontaneous, unstructured face-to-face conversation between citizens that deals with political matters" (Conover and Miller 2018). Some measures of this concept ask if and with whom respondents discuss "politics" or "political matters." For instance, the American National Election Studies (ANES) asks: "Do you ever discuss politics with your family or friends?" Other measures focus on government or elections, such as: "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).[7] Scholars have also asked more targeted questions,

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

such as: "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 more targeted examples include questions 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. In other words, these measures do not do a good job of capturing discussions about the carceral or "second face" of the state that exercises power through coercion and shapes the political experiences of marginalized communities of color, who most often encounter the government through its "second face"—i.e., through police, courts, bail offices, parole agencies, and prisons, and immigration authorities (Western 2006; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Gottschalk 2008).

However, one response to this critique is that perhaps respondents *do* think about the carceral state (e.g., policing, incarceration, prisons) when asked about political discussion. I address this concern in Appendix S1 with an original survey of 1,400 Americans.[8] Respondents who discussed politics in the past year were asked: "When you discussed politics with other people, what kinds of topics did you talk about? You should include all topics that you consider to be "political." Please be as detailed and thorough as possible." Using a structural topic model (STM), I measure the ten most frequent topics for the full sample and white and Black respondents separately.[9] In brief, I find that respondents tend to focus on the "first face" of the state: e.g., politicians and parties (president, congress), electoral issues (economy, war), and participation (voting, elections). Topics related to the carceral state do not feature in the ten most frequent topics for any sample, which suggests that

[8] I conducted the survey on YouGov in October 2023. Appendix S1 provides a more detailed discussion.
[9] An STM inductively discovers themes in a text corpus using document structure and word frequencies.

existing political discussion measures are indeed not capturing the carceral state.

How might incorporating the carceral state impact our understanding of political discussion? First, I expect carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system to change assumed racial patterns of political discussion. Most scholarship shows that whites 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. As such, 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 carceral discussion.

Second, I expect (3) carceral and conventional (i.e., liberal-democratic) political discussion to have distinct attitudinal and behavioral correlates. For instance, because the carceral state so differently determines the fortunes and life chances of white and Black Americans, I expect talking about policing and the criminal justice system to correlate with linked fate for both white and Black Americans. 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 about the coercive face of the state to correlate with depressed 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 the coercive side of the state can yield the perception of an unresponsive and coercive government. Importantly, this expectation departs from the assumption that underpins most research on political discussion: that more political discussion is better. On this view, political discussion generates political knowledge and engagement (Huckfeldt and

Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Searing et al. 2007). In turn, those who know about and engage with government enjoy political voice, whereas more detached citizens are underserved.

However, I also expect negative carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system to correlate with protest for white and Black Americans by providing opportunities to identify injustice. This expectation builds on research that attributes a mobilizing effect to proximal carceral contact, whereby contact catalyzes participation by exposing perceived injustice (Lee, Porter, and Comfort 2014; Walker 2014; Walker and García-Castañon 2017; Williamson, Trump, and Einstein 2018; Ang and Tebes 2024). According to this research, proximal contact mobilizes nonvoting activities like protest because contact yields a view of government as unresponsive and nonvoting activities offer a more immediate outlet for frustrations (Lee, Porter, and Comfort 2014; Walker 2020; Gillion 2013).

In sum, this study aims to demonstrate the importance of investigating racial variation in the nature and scope of political concepts by revisiting the concept of political discussion. In so doing, the paper makes the case that *carceral political 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 United States (e.g., Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019; Prowse, Weaver, and Meares 2020). These papers represent the richest treatment of political discussion about the carceral state in political science and draw important lessons about the experience of race-class subjugated communities.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 national-level data.

3 Carceral Political Discussion

3.1 Data and Variables

To measure carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system—and 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 administered on the online survey platform, Prolific.[10] The first set of questions adapts existing measures of political discussion to measure participation in carceral and liberal-democratic political discussion. The questions are presented below. Respondents received both sets of questions in random order.

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 used this Prolific survey to collect a nine-item battery of discussion topics about the police and criminal justice system. 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). This method is well-suited to uncovering information that we do not know to look for (in this case, topics of carceral discussion) and can be situated within the framework of grounded theory development.

[10] Table A1 in Appendix S2 presents descriptive statistics for this sample. Appendix S14 describes how the study adheres to APSA's Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research.

Broadly, grounded theory involves taking an inductive, iterative approach to qualitative or ethnographic data to develop knowledge about a phenomenon (Charmaz 2014).[11]

The Fora platform brings together community members for multi-person facilitated dialogues about their communities. The platform launched in 2018 and contains over 1,500 in-person and virtual conversations among over 8,000 people. Fora's goal is to engage community members or stakeholders by inviting them to talk about their personal experiences and perspectives on topics like education, public health, policing, and elections. Each collection of conversations is convened by a partner organization (e.g., community organizations, corporate spaces, schools) in partnership with Cortico. Conversations are hosted virtually or in scheduled locations (e.g., public libraries or private homes). Each conversation is facilitated by trained facilitator who guides the conversation with discussion prompts to elicit experiences, opinions, and questions from participants.[12]

To generate topics of carceral discussion, I focused on the 18 collections that dealt with some aspect of the criminal justice system. These collections contained 44 total conversations (each around 1–1.5 hours long) and are listed in Appendix S3. Examples include the "City of Madison Police and Fire Commission Conversations" (seven conversations about law enforcement among 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). Facilitator prompts from this set of collections include: "I'd like to invite you to take a minute to think about a story that illustrates your first interaction with the police, or ideas about the police and maybe if that still impacts you today" (City of Madison Police and Fire Commission Conversations) and "From your experience, what do you see as the positive role the police in our community play today? What gaps or needs do they fill?" (Mountain West: Law Enforcement in your Community Conversations). Although Fora do

[11] Like analytic listening, grounded theory involves using coding to apply and refine analytical categories to segments of text in order to generate generalizable concepts from the data (for more details on the coding process for this paper, see the discussion on p12-13).

[12] All facilitators participate in a Cortico orientation which provides facilitation guidance and an opportunity to practice the conversation guide. Orientations are tailored to each partner and project. For more details on Fora conversations, see: https://help.fora.io/hc/en-us/categories/360005919073-Cortico-FAQ.

not provide the racial composition of each conversation, the conversations do include white and Black participants (evident from names, self-identification, explicit discussions of race, etc.) such that we have reason to expect racial variation in represented voices.

To examine these data for patterns and topics of carceral discussion, I began by closely listening to and reading the 18 collections on the criminal justice system. My analysis involved several rounds of qualitative coding (Saldaña 2015). The first round involved listening to and reading the 18 collections and taking preliminary jottings about potential carceral discussion topics (Saldaña 2015, 20-21). After developing an initial topic list, I conducted a round of structural coding to identify and revise this 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 carceral discussion topics (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 Fora for keywords related to policing and criminal justice and read selections of the associated transcripts.[13] For each keyword, I categorized relevant sections into existing or new carceral discussion topics. I continued this exercise for each keyword until all new data could be categorized into existing topics.

Table 1 presents the nine carceral discussion topics that feature in the survey measure with illustrative conversation excerpts from Fora. This measure is designed to be indicative of carceral discussion rather than exhaustive. In the Prolific 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). Appendix S4 includes additional conversation excerpts for each discussion topic.

[13] I used keywords from the Fora "Topics" function. This function uses the conversations to automatically identify and categorize keywords into topics. Keywords for "criminal justice" include police, policing, criminal justice, jail, law enforcement, arrest, incarceration, gun violence, public safety, probation, prison, and parole.

Table 1: Carceral Discussion Topics and Illustrative Examples

1. Negative: About police killings or police brutality *"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?"*
2. Negative: About how the police often use more force than necessary *"...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. Negative: About how the police or criminal justice system treat Black people unfairly *"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."*
4. Negative: About a negative interaction with the police or criminal justice system *"...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?"*
5. Positive: About how the police are necessary for public safety *"What's going to happen if we defund the police? I mean, are we going to go back to Wild West days?"*
6. Positive: About how the police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly *"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."*
7. Positive: About how the police are often viewed unfairly *"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."*
8. Positive: About how the police should be allowed to use force because policing is dangerous *"...the only way to stop somebody that has a gun is with a gun."*
9. Positive: About a positive interaction with the police or criminal justice system *"...our police officers here are trained in mental health. And the way they deescalated my son and our whole family situation was fantastic."*

Study 1 uses the carceral and liberal-democratic discussion measures and the carceral discussion content measure to examine racial variation in the prevalence of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion and positive and negative carceral discussion. **Study 2** uses these measures to examine the political correlates of these domains of political discussion.

3.2 Study 1: Racial Variation in Carceral Discussion

Due to the fundamental differences in how Black and white Americans experience the carceral state, I have argued that (1) focusing on carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system 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 uses the survey data from Prolific to examine these expectations. 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 is 1,221.[14]

The first analysis examines racial differences in carceral and liberal-democratic discussion. Turning first to carceral discussion, Table 2 reports the weighted means for the three carceral discussion measures 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-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.[15]

As expected, this table shows that Black respondents are significantly more likely to

[14] This final sample excludes respondents who failed an attention check.

[15] Tables A2 and A3 in Appendix S5 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).

engage in carceral discussion than white respondents. Starting with the binary measure, Table 2 shows that Black respondents are (6%, p<0.05) more likely to have discussed the carceral state in the past year than their white counterparts. The frequency measure shows that the difference in discussion frequency between Black and white respondents 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 Black and white respondents is 0.26 (p<0.01). This difference represents a 0.26 standard deviation change. Together, these results indicate that Black Americans are more likely to engage in political discussion about the carceral state than white Americans.

Table 2: Racial Variation in Carceral Discussion

	Black	White
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.77	0.71^a
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	2.89	2.43^a
Carceral Discussion Partners (Count)	2.59	2.33^a
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.

Turning next to liberal-democratic political discussion, Table 3 reports the weighted means for each political discussion measure for white and Black respondents. Significant differences were determined using a two-tailed t-test between Black and white respondents 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.[16]

For space considerations, Tables 2 and 3 focus on broad comparisons by racial group. I analyze heterogeneity in carceral and liberal-democratic discussion by gender and party

[16] Readers interested in the overlap between carceral and liberal-democratic discussion should see Appendix S6. Table A4 presents weighted Pearson's R correlations between carceral and liberal-democratic discussion and shows limited overlap: for instance, the correlation coefficients for the binary measure are 0.39 for Blacks and 0.27 for whites. This suggests that people who discuss policing and the criminal justice system do not necessarily discuss government and elections and vice versa.

Table 3: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Black	White
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Binary)	0.85	0.93^a
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Frequency)	3.09	3.23^a
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Count)	2.74	2.98^a
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.

affiliation in Appendix S7. These analyses reveal broadly similar patterns. First, relative to their white counterparts, both Black democrats and republicans consistently talk more about the carceral state and less about government and elections. Second, both Black men and women are more likely to engage in carceral discussion than their white counterparts, while white men and women are more likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion.

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, race 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 respondents would be more likely to talk about policing and the criminal justice system than whites. The results support this expectation: Black Americans are more likely to engage in political discussion about this domain of 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 conventional measures of political discussion provide an incomplete picture of political discussion among Black Americans. That a pilot study from an earlier period (November 2023) on a different platform finds similar results further supports this point.[17]

The analyses thus far, however, does not tell us about the *content* of carceral discussion.

[17] I fielded this pilot survey on Lucid. The details and results of the pilot are reported in Appendix S8.

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. Appendix S9 presents these results in a regression model that includes gender, age, education, income, and political affiliation.[18]

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 negatively discuss policing and the criminal justice system 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 repressiveness, Table 4 also shows that Black respondents are also (7%, $p<0.01$) more likely to negatively than positively discuss the carceral state.[19]

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.

[18] Appendix S10 presents the separate t-test results for each individual positive and negative topic.

[19] Table A5 in Appendix S6 examines the correlation between positive and negative carceral discussion. This analysis shows that participation in positive and negative carceral discussion is reasonably correlated: the weighted Pearson's R correlation coefficients are 0.54 for Black and 0.51 for white respondents.

More surprisingly, Table 4 shows that Black respondents are (4%, $p<0.05$) more likely to *positively* discuss policing and the criminal justice system 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 the criminal justice system. 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 carceral discussion. Third, some research shows that certain forms of policing (specifically, community-oriented policing) can improve perceptions of police performance among Black Americans (Branton et al. 2024). On this view, exposure to community-oriented policing may drive participation in positive discussion about policing and the criminal justice system.

For space considerations, I analyze heterogeneity in positive and negative carceral discussion by gender and partisanship in Appendix S7. These analyses reveal broadly similar racial patterns across subgroups. First, both Black republicans and democrats are more likely to engage in negative and positive carceral discussion than their white counterparts. However, the racial gap in negative carceral discussion between white and Black democrats is substantively small. This suggests that the puzzling finding in Table 4—the Black respondents are more likely to *positively* discuss policing and the criminal justice system than white respondents—is mostly driven by Black republicans. Second, Black men are more likely to engage in both negative and positive carceral discussion than white men, but Black women are only more likely to engage in *negative* carceral discussion than white women (i.e., they are no more likely to engage in positive carceral discussion than white women). Gender

differences in the content of carceral discussion could be explored in future work.

Overall, these findings build on the comparison of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion by demonstrating that race also moderates the *content* of carceral 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 carceral discussion than whites. Together, the findings in **Study 1** suggest that conventional measures of political discussion obscure meaningful racial differences in patterns of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion and the content of carceral discussion.

3.2 Study 2: Correlates of Carceral Discussion

I next analyze the political correlates of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion. To examine these correlates, I focus on six variables modeled as dependent variables: (1) internal efficacy, or the belief that one is qualified to participate in politics (Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991);[20] (2) external efficacy, or the belief that government leaders care about "people like me" (Balch 1974);[21] (3) linked fate, or the belief that one's life chances depend on the status and fortunes of your racial group (Dawson 1995);[22] and the perceived importance of personally (4) voting, (5) campaigning for a political candidate, and (6) attending a protest.[23] To preserve space, I analyze potential predictors (e.g., age, gender, education, income, organizational membership) of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion in Appendix S11.[24]

[20] To measure internal efficacy, respondents to agreed or disagreed with the statement: "I consider myself well qualified to participate in politics" 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 behavior 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] Several findings are worthy of brief discussion here. First, party identification does not correlate with carceral or liberal-democratic discussion for white or Black respondents, which suggests that racial variation in discussion is not simply an artifact of partisanship. Second, organizational membership correlates

I model these variables as dependent variables because I expect carceral and liberal-democratic discussion to yield distinct perspectives on the state by exposing participants to new information and encouraging cognitive engagement with the topic (Eveland 2004). In turn, I expect these perspectives to matter for political attitudes and the perceived importance of political behaviors. For each variable, I describe the potential impact of political discussion: for example, how talking about the carceral state could increase linked fate and the perceived importance of protest among Black Americans. However, I also consider the potential for reverse causality: for instance, how linked fate could itself spur conversations about policing. Although modeled with dependent variables, then, the following analyses are cross-sectional and primarily examine whether carceral discussion has meaningful political correlates that are obscured by focusing on conventional measures.

Table 5 presents regression models for white and Black respondents and shows important distinctions in the political correlates of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion.[25] For space considerations, I present only the frequency measures of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion as independent variables.[26] Turning first to internal efficacy, Table 5 shows that liberal-democratic discussion positively correlates with internal efficacy for white ($p<0.01$) and Black respondents ($p<0.01$), while carceral discussion has no meaningful relationship with internal efficacy for whites and only a weak positive correlation for Black respondents. Intuitively, this finding suggests that talking about government and elections more directly maps onto feeling qualified to formally participate in politics than talking about topics related to policing and the criminal justice system.

Second, Table 5 shows that carceral discussion positively correlates with linked fate for

with carceral discussion but not liberal-democratic discussion for both white and Black respondents (e.g., professional, religious). Third, proximal carceral contact correlates with carceral and liberal-democratic discussion for Blacks and whites. Personal contact, however, does not correlate with carceral discussion for whites or Blacks, but does negatively correlate with liberal-democratic discussion among Blacks. This latter result aligns with the finding that direct contact depressed participation (e.g., Weaver and Lerman 2010).

[25] These analyses are based on a final sample of 1,227. This sample includes cases removed from the analysis in Study 1 because they were missing on weight dimensions.

[26] Appendix S12 presents substantively and statistically similar models with the binary and discussion partner measures of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion as independent variables.

white ($p<0.01$) and Black respondents ($p<0.01$), while liberal-democratic discussion does not correlate with linked fate for either group. One interpretation of this finding is that talking about the carceral state reinforces linked fate for both racial groups. For Black respondents, talking about the carceral state could represent an opportunity to learn about how their race could undermine their own life outcomes. For white respondents, carceral discussion could provide an opportunity to learn how whiteness can provide privilege and protection. However, another interpretation is that high linked fate could itself generate conversations about the carceral state. For instance, Black respondents who think the status of Black Americans will impact their own life may be more attuned to and likely to discuss differential racial treatment by the carceral state. These interpretations are not mutually exclusive and suggest important but understudied relationships between political discussion and linked fate, a core variable of interest in research on racial politics (Rogers and Kim 2023).

Third, for 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 assigning importance to campaigning and protesting for white ($p<0.1$, $p<0.01$) and Black respondents ($p<0.01$, $p<0.01$). However, carceral discussion does not correlate with assigning importance to voting for either group. One interpretation of these findings is that carceral discussion boosts the perceived importance of nonvoting activities more than voting. This point coheres with research that links proximal carceral contact to nonvoting activities like protest (Walker 2014; Walker 2020; Ang and Tebes 2024). According to this research, proximal contact mobilizes nonvoting activities because contact yields a view of government as unresponsive and nonvoting activities are a more immediate outlet for frustrations (Lee, Porter, and Comfort 2014; Walker 2020; Gillion 2013). On this view, carceral discussion may similarly yield a view of government as unresponsive and increase the perceived importance of nonvoting activities like campaigning and protesting.

In sum, these results suggest that carceral and liberal-democratic discussion differently

Table 5: Correlates of Frequent Political Discussion

Correlates for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.070	−0.049	0.178***	−0.052	0.081*	0.200***
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Liberal-Democratic	0.262***	−0.024	0.019	0.287***	0.259***	0.166***
	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Party ID	−0.155***	−0.204***	−0.096*	−0.305***	−0.217***	−0.294***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Constant	1.986***	2.284***	1.018***	2.366***	1.289***	2.015***
	(0.258)	(0.250)	(0.274)	(0.273)	(0.246)	(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 Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.092*	−0.022	0.154***	−0.056	0.143**	0.246***
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Liberal-Democratic	0.281***	0.065	0.059	0.348***	0.324***	0.174***
	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Party ID	−0.099**	−0.232***	0.048	−0.438***	−0.318***	−0.251***
	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Constant	1.454***	1.608***	1.424***	3.229***	1.665***	1.247***
	(0.268)	(0.259)	(0.292)	(0.289)	(0.311)	(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. Appendix S13 presents tables with estimates for all covariates.

correlate with political attitudes and behaviors. White and Black Americans who engage in carceral discussion feel more linked fate and assign more importance to campaigns and protests. White and Black Americans who discuss government and elections, on the other hand, do not differ from others in linked fate and assign more importance to voting. Together, these findings suggest that focusing only on conventional (i.e., liberal-democratic) political discussion obscures the political correlates and potential impact 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 and shows that positive and negative carceral discussion have distinct political correlates. First, positive carceral discussion positively correlates with external efficacy for Black ($p<0.01$) and white ($p<0.05$) respondents, while negative carceral discussion strongly and negatively correlates with external efficacy for Black respondents ($p<0.01$). One interpretation of this finding coheres with research that explains political efficacy from a political learning perspective. Soss (1999), for instance, argues that welfare programs are sites of political learning about government: responsive programs generate perceptions of government responsiveness, while unresponsive programs undermine those perceptions. On this view, talking about topics like "how the police treat people fairly" could boost perceptions of government responsiveness, while talking about police brutality could undermine those perceptions. Another interpretation is that external efficacy *itself* shapes the content of carceral discussion: people inclined to view the government as responsive/unresponsive may be more likely to positively/negatively discuss the police and criminal justice system. Either way, these findings add complexity to the long-held 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).

Second, Table 6 shows that talking about the positive aspects of the carceral state positively correlates with feelings of linked fate for whites ($p<0.05$). Negative carceral discussion, on the other hand, strongly and positively correlates with linked fate for Black respondents

Table 6: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

Correlates for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	−0.027	0.235**	0.242**	0.045	0.227**	−0.101
	(0.106)	(0.100)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.101)	(0.105)
Negative	0.317***	−0.096	0.049	0.227*	0.232**	0.444***
	(0.114)	(0.106)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.108)	(0.113)
Party ID	−0.167***	−0.216***	−0.099*	−0.332***	−0.243***	−0.278***
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.047)	(0.049)
Constant	2.553***	2.082***	1.292***	2.780***	1.826***	2.526***
	(0.255)	(0.239)	(0.265)	(0.268)	(0.243)	(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 Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.320**	0.809***	−0.196	0.381***	0.764***	0.503***
	(0.132)	(0.117)	(0.137)	(0.141)	(0.151)	(0.152)
Negative	0.166	−0.653***	0.851***	−0.0002	−0.007	0.387*
	(0.183)	(0.163)	(0.191)	(0.195)	(0.210)	(0.211)
Party ID	−0.134***	−0.239***	0.040	−0.467***	−0.359***	−0.281***
	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.058)
Constant	1.985***	1.742***	1.279***	3.671***	2.267***	1.545***
	(0.298)	(0.265)	(0.311)	(0.318)	(0.341)	(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. Appendix S13 presents tables with estimates for all covariates.

($p<0.01$). These findings cohere with and extend the proposed interpretations of linked fate in the discussion of Table 5. First, these findings suggest that negative carceral discussion is an opportunity for Black Americans to learn about how their blackness could undermine their own lives, while positive carceral discussion allows white Americans to learn about how their whiteness provides privilege or in some way shape their lives. However, these findings also support the interpretation that linked fate could itself generate conversations about the carceral state: Black respondents who think the status of Black Americans will impact their life may be more likely to negatively discuss the carceral state, while whites who feel a sense of linked fate with other white Americans be more likely to positively discuss this topic.

Third, positive and negative carceral discussion have distinctly correlate with the perceived importance of political behaviors. Turning first to positive carceral discussion, Table 6 shows that engaging in positive discussion correlates with assigning importance to campaigns for white respondents ($p<0.05$). For Black respondents, positive carceral discussion correlates with assigning importance to voting ($p<0.01$), campaigning ($p<0.01$), and protesting ($p<0.01$). These findings align with the proposed interpretation of the positive correlation between positive carceral discussion and external efficacy: if talking about the positive and responsive side of the carceral state generates perceptions of government responsiveness, it should also correlate with assigning importance to political participation.

Turning next to negative carceral discussion, Table 6 shows that negative discussion positively correlates with assigning importance to voting ($p<0.1$), campaigning ($p<0.05$), and protesting ($p<0.01$) for whites. For Black respondents, however, negative carceral discussion only correlates with assigning importance to protesting ($p<0.1$). One interpretation of this result is that negative carceral discussion provides opportunities for whites to identify injustices and mobilize 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 unresponsive and thus only increase the perceived importance of protest (a more immediate outlet for frustrations and first step to

getting issues on the political agenda). Combined with the finding that negative carceral discussion correlates with lower external efficacy for Black respondents, these results support the argument that proximal carceral contact yields the perception of an unresponsive state which mobilizes nonvoting activities (like protest) rather than voting (Walker 2014; Walker 2020; Ang and Tebes 2024). Indeed, one reading of these findings is that Table 6 provides support for this proposed chain among Black respondents: talking about the negative and coercive aspects of the carceral state generates pessimistic perceptions of government responsiveness (lower external efficacy) which increases the perceived importance of protest.

Though based on cross-sectional data and thus preventing causal claims, these findings suggest 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. White respondents who engage in positive carceral discussion have higher external efficacy and linked fate. Black respondents who engage in positive carceral discussion also have higher external efficacy and assign more importance to voting, campaigning, and protest. Black respondents who engage in negative carceral discussion, on the other hand, have lower external efficacy, higher linked fate, and assign more importance to protest. Whites who engage in negative carceral discussion do not differ from others in external efficacy and assign more importance to voting, campaigning, and protest. Together, these findings suggest that carceral discussion has the potential to shape participants' views about government, sense of identity, and political engagement. Moreover, these findings suggest that these correlates vary by race and carceral discussion content, and that conceptions of political discussion as an unalloyed good mask the multiple roles of different domains of political discussion.

4 Conclusion

At the core of the study of American politics are concepts that capture engagement with the political process. With some notable exceptions, scholars usually operate with the disposition that the scope and nature of these concepts are racially uniform. However, the racial

stratification of American politics provides reasons to expect these concepts to look and operate differently by racial group membership. This paper anticipates and examines this kind of racial variation in one emblematic form of political engagement: 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 argue 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 the carceral state, this paper shows, first, that the assumed racial group differences in political discussion are reversed for carceral political discussion: Black Americans are (a) more likely to engage in carceral discussion about policing and the criminal justice system, (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. Focusing only on conventional measures of political discussion thus generates an incomplete picture of patterns of political discussion among Americans (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 respondents, positive carceral discussion correlates with external efficacy and feelings of linked fate, while negative carceral discussion positively correlates with assigning importance to voting, campaigning, and protesting. Among Black respondents, positive carceral discussion correlates with external efficacy and assigning importance to 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 view that more political discussion is better and capable of generating the kind of political knowledge and engagement that leads to political influence and voice (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007; Klofstad 2010; Searing et al. 2007).

Together, these findings have important implications for research on political discussion, the carceral state, and racial and ethnic politics. First, the paper challenges the assumption that more political discussion is better (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007) by revisiting the definition of political discussion and highlighting the sometimes countervailing roles of different domains of political discussion. Second, 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 carceral discussion. Third, my findings join research on the impact of the carceral state on political outcomes (White 2019; Lerman and Weaver 2014; Cohen and Luttig 2020) by showing that the carceral state also shapes the nature and scope of 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 combine the advantages of qualitative and ethnographic tools to improve survey research (Thachil 2018; Verghese 2024). Scholars might use this approach to investigate patterns of conventional political discussion and other understudied political discussion domains. Such efforts could complement the nuanced insights of "analytic listening" studies of political discussion (e.g., Harris-Lacewell 2004; Cramer 2016; Weaver, Prowse, and Piston 2019).

Despite these contributions, there are several limitations to this study 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). This paper briefly examines heterogeneities by party identification and gender but future work could more systematically examine how patterns of carceral discussion and associated correlates vary at the intersections of different marginalized identities.

Second, my analysis focuses on policing and criminal justice institutions but the carceral state also includes immigration enforcement (Harris, Walker, and Eckhouse 2020) 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 these aspects of the carceral state could illuminate additional group differences in political discussion. For instance, we might expect immigration enforcement discussion to be more prevalent and linked to efficacy and engagement among Latinos (Walker, Roman, and Barreto 2020; Vargas, Sanchez, and Valdez 2017; Maltby et al. 2020). We might also expect discussion about programs like Child Protective Services and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families to be more prevalent among women of color (Roberts 2002; Roberts 2012). Moreover, we might expect talking about unresponsive welfare programs to generate a pessimistic view of government and depress efficacy and engagement (Soss 1999; Soss 2000). Such a finding would further complicate the expectation that political discussion generates political engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Klofstad 2007).

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 cannot 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 discussion is an important component of the political experience and socialization of Americans, and that its prevalence and correlates vary meaningfully by race. If we want to understand how political discussion varies and correlates with political outcomes, we should thus more expansively examine how different groups of citizens talk about different domains of the state. More broadly, we should remain attuned to the ways that political experiences 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 form of political experience. A more complete picture of political life in America thus demands attention to the following question: *what comprise relevant and important political experiences and for whom?*

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Supplementary Material for "Carceral Political Discussion"

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1 What Do Existing Political Discussion Measures Capture?

I argue that existing measures of political discussion focus on the liberal-democratic or "first face" of the state. But what if respondents think about the carceral state (e.g., policing, criminal justice, law enforcement, arrests, incarceration, prisons) when asked about their discussions of "politics?" To investigate this concern, I draw on data from a nationally representative original survey of 1400 Americans (700 whites, 700 African Americans) conducted on YouGov in October 2023.

This survey asked the following questions: "From time to time, people discuss politics with other people. During the last year, did you talk with anyone about politics or did you not do this with anyone during the last year?" Followed by: "When you discussed politics with other people, what kinds of topics did you talk about? You should include all topics that you consider to be "political." I used the broader prompt ("politics") rather than the narrower prompt ("government and elections") because this measure is better equipped for this particular investigation (i.e., the "politics" prompt is more likely to elicit responses that include carceral topics than the "government and elections" prompt, which is more tightly focused on the state's "first face").

Using a structural topic model (STM), I analyzed responses to these questions to investigate whether existing political discussion measures neglect the carceral state. An STM is a model that inductively discovers themes in a text corpus using document structure and word frequencies. I estimated an STM with ten topics to examine what people talk about when talking about "politics." Figure 1 presents the ten most frequent topics for the full sample. The words next to each topic represent words most frequently associated with each topic. Figure 1 shows that respondents frequently refer to topics related to the state's "first face": politicians and parties (president, congress), electoral issues (economy, war, immigration), and participation (voting, elections). However, issues related to the carceral state do not feature in the ten most frequent topics. Figure 2 presents similar patterns for white and Black respondents separately. These data suggest that existing measures are indeed not capturing the carceral face of the state.

Figure 1:

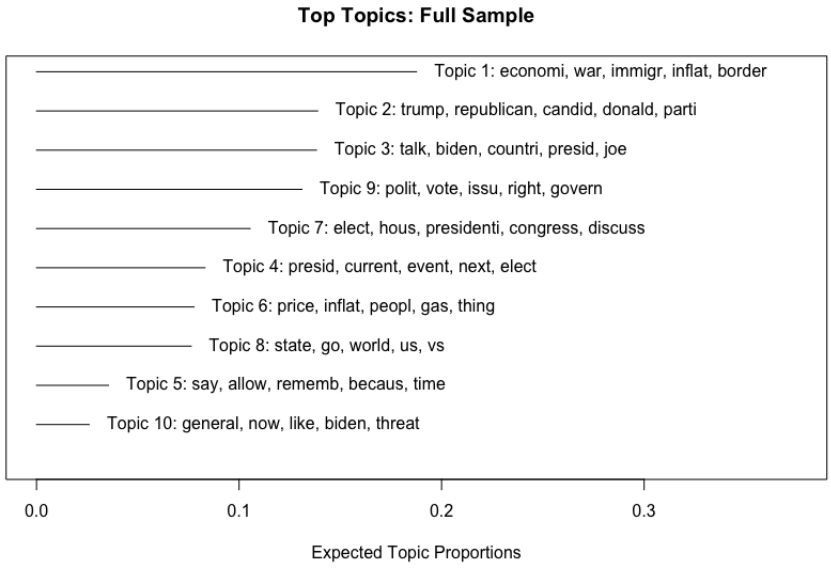
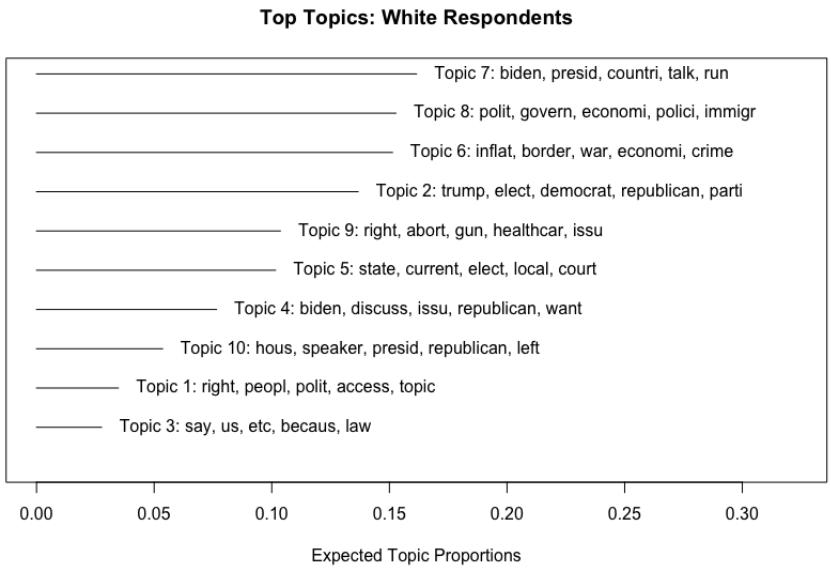


Figure 2:


Top Topics: White Respondents
Topic 7: biden, presid, countri, talk, run
Topic 8: polit, govern, economi, polici, immigr
Topic 6: inflat, border, war, economi, crime
Topic 2: trump, elect, democrat, republican, parti
Topic 9: right, abort, gun, healthcar, issu
Topic 5: state, current, elect, local, court
Topic 4: biden, discuss, issu, republican, want
Topic 10: hous, speaker, presid, republican, left
Topic 1: right, peopl, polit, access, topic
Topic 3: say, us, etc, becaus, law
0.00
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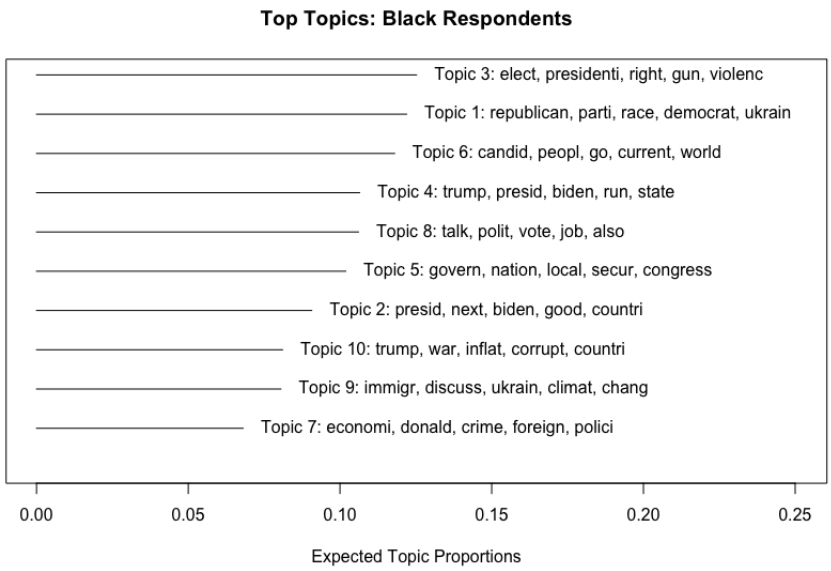
0.30
Expected Topic Proportions


Top Topics: Black Respondents
Topic 3: elect, presidenti, right, gun, violenc
Topic 1: republican, parti, race, democrat, ukrain
Topic 6: candid, peopl, go, current, world
Topic 4: trump, presid, biden, run, state
Topic 8: talk, polit, vote, job, also
Topic 5: govern, nation, local, secur, congress
Topic 2: presid, next, biden, good, countri
Topic 10: trump, war, inflat, corrupt, countri
Topic 9: immigr, discuss, ukrain, climat, chang
Topic 7: economi, donald, crime, foreign, polici
0.00
0.05
0.10
0.15
0.20
0.25
Expected Topic Proportions

2 Descriptive Statistics: Prolific

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 Spring 2024.

3 Fora Collections on Policing and the Criminal Justice System

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

1. City of Madison Police and Fire Commission Conversations, 6
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

4 Illustrative Excerpts of Carceral Discussion from Fora

Negative carceral discussion topics:

1. About police killings or police brutality: "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."

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

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

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

Positive carceral discussion topics:

1. About how the police are necessary for public safety: "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."

2. About how the police or criminal justice system usually treat people fairly: "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."

3. About how the police are often viewed unfairly: "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."

4. About how the police should be allowed to use force because policing is dangerous: "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."

5. About a positive interaction with the police or criminal justice system: "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."

5 Regressions for Descriptive Means

Table A2: Carceral Discussion

	Carceral (Binary)	Carceral (Frequency)	Carceral (Count)
White	−0.028	−0.453***	−0.205***
	(0.028)	(0.061)	(0.064)
Female	−0.014	0.200***	−0.080
	(0.025)	(0.055)	(0.058)
Age	−0.010	0.005	−0.015
	(0.009)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Income	0.015***	0.026***	0.015
	(0.004)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Education	0.030**	0.074**	0.125***
	(0.014)	(0.030)	(0.032)
Republican	−0.067**	−0.003	−0.006
	(0.032)	(0.070)	(0.073)
Independent	−0.071**	−0.076	0.053
	(0.030)	(0.067)	(0.070)
Constant	0.641***	2.356***	2.120***
	(0.060)	(0.133)	(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***	0.078	0.282***
	(0.019)	(0.060)	(0.059)
Female	0.005	0.087	−0.237***
	(0.017)	(0.055)	(0.054)
Age	0.010	0.108***	0.028
	(0.006)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Income	0.013***	0.029***	0.022**
	(0.003)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Education	0.006	0.057*	0.109***
	(0.009)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Republican	−0.018	−0.180***	−0.168**
	(0.021)	(0.069)	(0.068)
Independent	−0.055***	−0.343***	−0.250***
	(0.020)	(0.067)	(0.066)
Constant	0.716***	2.408***	2.344***
	(0.040)	(0.132)	(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.

6 Correlations Between Discussion Domains

Table A4 presents coefficients from weighted Pearson's R correlations between white and Black respondents for carceral and liberal-democratic discussion: binary, frequency, no. of discussion partners. These domains are somewhat correlated: the binary measure coefficients are 0.39 for Black respondents and 0.27 for white respondents. The correlations are stronger for frequency and count: 0.5 for Black and 0.47 for white respondents for frequency, and 0.61 for Black and 0.56 for white respondents for count. 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 discussion are reasonably correlated: the correlation coefficients are 0.54 for Black respondents and 0.51 for white respondents. Overall, these results suggest present but not overwhelming overlap between liberal-democratic and carceral discussion and between positive and negative carceral discussion. People who talk about government and elections do not necessarily talk about policing and criminal justice, and vice versa.

Table A4: Correlation 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 carceral and liberal-democratic discussion.

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.

7 Heterogeneity Analyses: Party Affiliation and Gender

Table A6 and A7 present the weighted means for each measure of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion for republicans and democrats by race. The results are similar to the main paper. First, Table A6 shows that Black republicans and democrats are more likely to engage in carceral discussion than their white counterparts. Second, Table A7 shows that white republicans and democrats are more likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than their black counterparts (although this latter racial difference is more consistent among democrats). Broadly, then, these analyses reveal similar patterns to the results in the main paper: Black democrats and republicans consistently talk more about policing and the criminal justice system than their white counterparts, which departs from the established pattern of white Americans talking more about politics.

Table A6: Racial Variation in Carceral Discussion by Party

	Black Reps	White Reps	Black Dems	White Dems
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.75	0.70	0.84	0.76
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	3.02	2.42^a	3.04	2.38^b
Carceral Discussion (Count)	2.71	2.27^a	2.64	2.29^b
N	113	218	225	224

Notes: Significant differences ($p<0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white republicans are indicated with an a in the second column. Significant differences ($p<0.01$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white democrats are indicated with an b in the fourth column.

Table A7: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Discussion by Party

	Black Reps	White Reps	Black Dems	White Dems
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Binary)	0.88	0.94^a	0.90	0.95^b
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Frequency)	3.25	3.23	3.25	3.43^b
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Count)	2.92	2.92	2.85	3.19^b
N	113	218	225	224

Notes: Significant differences ($p<0.1$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white republicans are indicated with an a in the second column. Significant differences ($p<0.1$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white democrats are indicated with an b in the fourth column.

Table A8 and A9 present the weighted means for the carceral and liberal-democratic discussion measures for men and women. The results are also similar to the main paper. First, Table A8 shows that Black men and women are more likely to engage in carceral discussion than their white counterparts (although this racial difference is more pronounced among men). Second, Table A9 shows that white men and women are more likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than their black counterparts. These analyses thus support the broad patterns in the main paper.

Table A8: Racial Variation in Carceral Discussion by Gender

	Black Women	White Women	Black Men	White Men
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.74	0.71	0.80	0.71^{b}
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	2.93	2.53^{a}	2.84	2.31^{b}
Carceral Discussion (Count)	2.46	2.31	2.70	2.34^{b}
N	272	338	279	332

Notes: Significant differences (p<0.01) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white women are indicated with an *a* in the second column. Significant differences (p<0.01) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white men are indicated with an *b* in the fourth column.

Table A9: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Discussion by Gender

	Black Women	White Women	Black Men	White Men
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Binary)	0.85	0.93^{a}	0.85	0.94^{b}
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Frequency)	3.08	3.30^{a}	3.09	3.16
Liberal-Dem Discussion (Count)	2.59	2.86^{a}	2.87	3.12^{b}
N	272	338	279	332

Notes: Significant differences (p<0.1) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white women are indicated with an *a* in the second column. Significant differences (p<0.1) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white men are indicated with an *b* in the fourth column.

Table A10 presents the weighted means for positive and negative carceral discussion for republicans and democrats. Similar to the main text, Table A10 shows that Black republicans and democrats are more likely to engage in both negative and positive carceral discussion than their white counterparts (although the racial gap in negative carceral discussion is smallest for democrats). This suggests that the more puzzling finding in Table 4 in the main text—the Black respondents are more likely to *positively* discuss policing and the criminal justice system than white respondents—is mostly driven by Black republicans.

Table A10: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion by Party

	Black Reps	White Reps	Black Dems	White Dems
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.91	0.80^{a}	0.88	0.72^{a}
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.91	0.68^{ab}	0.96^{b}	0.93^{b}
N	113	218	225	224

Notes: Significant differences (p<0.01) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white republicans are indicated with an *a* in the second column. Significant differences (p<0.01) between Black and white democrats are indicated with an *a* in the fourth column. Significant differences (p<0.01) between positive and negative discussion indicated with a *b* in the second row.

Table A11 presents the weighted means for positive and negative carceral discussion for female and male respondents. Similar to the main text, Table A11 shows that Black men are more likely to engage in both negative and positive carceral discussion than their white counterparts. Black women, on the other hand, are only more likely to engage in negative carceral discussion than white women (and are no more likely to engage in positive carceral discussion). Black women are significantly more likely to engage in negative than positive carceral discussion, whereas Black men engage in negative and positive carceral discussion at similar rates. This point highlights the potential for gender differences in the valence of carceral discussion.

Table A11: Racial Variation in Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion by Gender

	Black Women	White Women	Black Men	White Men
Positive Carceral Discussion	0.78	0.81	0.87	0.75^{a}
Negative Carceral Discussion	0.89^{b}	0.84^{a}	0.91	0.73^{a}
N	272	338	279	332

Notes: Significant differences ($p<0.1$) determined through a two-tailed t-test between Black and white women indicated with an a in the second column. Significant differences ($p<0.01$) between Black and white men are indicated with an a in the fourth column. Significant differences ($p<0.01$) between positive and negative discussion indicated with a b in the second row.

8 Pilot Study (November 2023)

In November 2023, I ran a pilot on Lucid using similar survey questions to the main Prolific survey. I fielded these questions as part of an omnibus online study to a nationally diverse sample of 1,946 American adults (1,641 white respondents and 305 Black respondents). The questions are presented below. All respondents received both sets of political discussion questions. As in the main survey, I randomized the order of the blocks of discussion questions.

1. Binary measure of discussion: "During the last year, did you talk with anyone face-to-face, on the phone, by email, or in any other way about [government or elections/policing] or did you not do this with anyone during the last year?" 0 (No) or 1 (Yes).

2. Frequency of discussion: "During the last year, how often did you discuss [government or elections/policing]?" 1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), or 5 (Very Often).

Table A12 reports the means for the binary and frequency measures of carceral discussion for white and Black respondents. Significant differences between Black and white respondents were determined through a two-tailed t-test and indicated with an a in the second column. As in the main survey, Black respondents are significantly more likely to engage in carceral discussion than white respondents. Table A13 reports the corresponding means for liberal-democratic discussion and shows that Black respondents are substantively less likely to engage in liberal-democratic discussion than white respondents (although unlike the main survey, these differences do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance). These results are thus generally consistent with Tables 2 and 3: Black Americans are more likely to discuss the carceral state but substantively less likely to discuss government and elections.

Table A12: Racial Variation in Carceral Discussion

	Black	White
Carceral Discussion (Binary)	0.50	0.40^a
Carceral Discussion (Frequency)	2.18	1.88^a
N	1641	305

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

Table A13: Racial Variation in Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Black	White
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Binary)	0.57	0.61
Liberal-Democratic Discussion (Frequency)	2.36	2.42
N	1641	305

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.

9 Regressions for Descriptive Content Means

Table A14: Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Positive Carceral Discussion	Negative Carceral Discussion
White	-0.055^{**}	-0.072^{***}
	(0.025)	(0.023)
Female	0.012	0.066^{***}
	(0.023)	(0.021)
Age	0.007	-0.012
	(0.008)	(0.008)
Income	0.008^{**}	0.009^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)
Education	0.019	0.006
	(0.013)	(0.011)
Republican	0.040	-0.179^{***}
	(0.029)	(0.026)
Independent	0.003	-0.118^{***}
	(0.028)	(0.025)
Constant	0.663^{***}	0.907^{***}
	(0.055)	(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.

10 Means: Individual Content Measures

Table A15: 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 coded Never (0), Once (1), A few times (2-3) (2), or Several times (4+) (3). Significant differences ($p<0.05$) determined through two-tailed t-test between Blacks and whites indicated with an a in second column.

11 Predictors of Political Discussion

Table A16 examines the potential predictors of carceral and liberal-democratic discussion: gender, age, income, political affiliation, education (5-point scale from less than high school to postgraduate degree), a binary measure of organizational membership (e.g., professional, 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 (on a 0–1 scale). These questions were adapted from Cohen and Luttig (2020). The model also includes personal and proximal carceral contact as predictors. Personal carceral contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to: "Have you ever been arrested, charged, or questioned by the police, even if you were not guilty, excluding minor traffic stops such as speeding?" Proximal carceral contact is coded as 1 if a respondent answered yes to: "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?"

Several findings are worthy of discussion. First, party identification does not correlate with either domain of political discussion for white or Black respondents, which suggests that racial variation in these domains are not simply an artifact of partisanship. Second, organizational membership correlates with carceral discussion but not liberal-democratic discussion for both white and Black respondents. Third, proximal carceral contact positively correlates with carceral and liberal-democratic discussion for Black and white respondents. This finding coheres with research that attributes a mobilizing effect to proximal carceral contact (e.g., Walker 2020). Personal contact, on the other hand, does not correlate with carceral discussion for whites or Black respondents, but it does negatively correlate liberal-democratic discussion among Black respondents. This aligns with the finding that direct carceral contact can depress participation (e.g., Weaver and Lerman 2010). Finally, there are racial differences in the relationships between political news sources and political discussion: for instance, consuming political news from TV correlates with carceral discussion for Black respondents, while consuming political news from TV correlates with liberal-democratic discussion for white respondents.

Table A17 examines the potential predictors of positive and negative carceral discussion. First, age negatively predicts negative carceral discussion for both white and Black respondents and coheres with research on generational differences in attitudes toward the carceral state (Ekins 2016). Second, white democrats are more likely to negatively discuss the carceral state while white republicans are less likely to negatively discuss the carceral state. Interestingly, partisanship does not correlate with either positive or negative carceral discussion Black respondents. Third, organizational membership correlates with positive and negative carceral discussion for both white and Black respondents. Fourth, proximal contact correlates with negative but not positive carceral discussion for Black and white respondents. This supports the proposed explanation for the finding that proximal carceral contact mobilizes participation: that individuals develop negative views of the carceral state through proximal contact and are mobilized (e.g., Walker 2020). Finally, there are racial differences in relationships between political news and positive and negative discussion: TV political news correlates with positive carceral discussion for Black and white respondents, for instance, while news from TV, social media, and print correlates with negative discussion for white but not Black respondents.

Table A16: Predictors of Carceral and Liberal-Democratic Discussion

	Carceral (White)	Carceral (Black)	Liberal-Dem (White)	Liberal-Dem (Black)
Female	0.059*	−0.009	0.018	0.050
	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.020)	(0.031)
Age	0.007	−0.014	−0.003	0.009
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.015)
Income	0.004	0.012**	0.010***	0.016***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Education	0.039**	−0.009	0.027**	−0.003
	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.019)
Democrat	0.035	0.032	0.034	0.030
	(0.039)	(0.040)	(0.023)	(0.035)
Republican	−0.064	−0.063	0.002	−0.009
	(0.040)	(0.049)	(0.024)	(0.044)
TV	0.044	0.173***	0.079***	0.038
	(0.048)	(0.062)	(0.029)	(0.055)
Print	−0.022	−0.042	−0.083*	−0.023
	(0.081)	(0.072)	(0.048)	(0.064)
Social Media	0.080*	0.014	0.014	0.061
	(0.049)	(0.059)	(0.029)	(0.053)
Blogs	0.078	0.030	0.061*	0.114**
	(0.056)	(0.059)	(0.033)	(0.052)
Organization	0.078**	0.114**	−0.019	0.019
	(0.038)	(0.047)	(0.023)	(0.041)
Personal	0.028	0.029	−0.035	−0.061
	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.024)	(0.037)
Proximal	0.093**	0.125***	0.065***	0.141***
	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.021)	(0.033)
Constant	0.377***	0.521***	0.700***	0.485***
	(0.096)	(0.090)	(0.057)	(0.080)
N	681	557	681	557
R^2	0.050	0.084	0.068	0.086
Adjusted R^2	0.031	0.062	0.050	0.064

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

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A17: Predictors of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion

	Positive (White)	Positive (Black)	Negative (White)	Negative (Black)
Female	0.042	−0.040	0.090***	0.014
	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.022)
Age	0.008	−0.009	−0.026**	−0.023**
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.011)
Income	0.011*	0.001	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)
Education	−0.005	−0.005	−0.010	0.011
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.014)
Democrat	−0.079**	−0.008	0.128***	0.036
	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.025)
Republican	0.017	0.059	−0.125***	−0.025
	(0.039)	(0.043)	(0.036)	(0.031)
TV	0.173***	0.174***	0.106**	0.028
	(0.046)	(0.054)	(0.043)	(0.039)
Print	0.091	0.104*	0.127*	0.046
	(0.078)	(0.063)	(0.072)	(0.046)
Social Media	0.081*	−0.016	0.117***	0.026
	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.043)	(0.038)
Blogs	0.090	0.051	0.056	0.036
	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.037)
Organization	0.140***	0.169***	0.130***	0.078***
	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.030)
Personal	−0.020	−0.027	−0.010	0.016
	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.036)	(0.027)
Proximal	0.043	0.010	0.110***	0.101***
	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.024)
Constant	0.438***	0.649***	0.641***	0.776***
	(0.093)	(0.078)	(0.086)	(0.057)
N	681	557	681	557
R^2	0.108	0.130	0.141	0.087
Adjusted R^2	0.090	0.109	0.124	0.065

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

Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

12 Political Correlates: Alternative Discussion Measures

Table A18: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.243**	−0.070	0.202**	0.122	0.133	0.286***
	(0.098)	(0.092)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.095)	(0.098)
Liberal-Dem	0.457***	−0.174	0.213	0.635***	0.126	0.241
	(0.164)	(0.155)	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.159)	(0.164)
Party ID	−0.177***	−0.206***	−0.087*	−0.333***	−0.247***	−0.302***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.047)	(0.048)
Female	−0.300***	−0.123	0.127	0.147*	0.011	−0.059
	(0.080)	(0.075)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.077)	(0.079)
Age	0.034	−0.002	−0.036	0.152***	−0.038	−0.159***
	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Income	0.008	0.020	−0.002	0.040***	0.010	−0.019
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Education	0.198***	0.144***	0.085*	0.179***	0.071	0.060
	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Constant	2.337***	2.292***	1.173***	2.441***	1.993***	2.547***
	(0.266)	(0.252)	(0.278)	(0.279)	(0.258)	(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.

Table A19: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.021	0.028	0.140***	0.015	0.063	0.141***
	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.047)	(0.048)
Liberal-Dem	0.240***	−0.040	0.035	0.254***	0.130***	0.135***
	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.048)	(0.049)
Party ID	−0.151***	−0.207***	−0.086*	−0.306***	−0.229***	−0.288***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.048)
Female	−0.247***	−0.134*	0.147*	0.199**	0.040	−0.020
	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.076)	(0.078)
Age	0.031	−0.001	−0.033	0.148***	−0.039	−0.158***
	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Income	0.007	0.019	−0.001	0.040***	0.008	−0.020
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Education	0.188***	0.140***	0.083*	0.168***	0.060	0.052
	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Constant	2.150***	2.157***	1.063***	2.300***	1.680***	2.236***
	(0.256)	(0.246)	(0.270)	(0.268)	(0.248)	(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.

Table A20: Correlates of Binary Political Discussion for Black Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.166	−0.094	0.395***	−0.061	0.076	0.244*
	(0.114)	(0.107)	(0.121)	(0.123)	(0.136)	(0.135)
Liberal-Dem	0.475***	−0.053	0.165	0.535***	0.188	0.304**
	(0.128)	(0.120)	(0.135)	(0.137)	(0.152)	(0.151)
Party ID	−0.130***	−0.241***	0.037	−0.465***	−0.367***	−0.287***
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.059)	(0.059)
Female	−0.186**	−0.169**	−0.063	−0.042	−0.149	−0.113
	(0.088)	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.094)	(0.104)	(0.103)
Age	0.069*	0.097***	−0.051	−0.021	−0.071	−0.146***
	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.046)
Income	0.038**	0.041***	−0.018	−0.004	0.049***	0.048**
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Education	0.235***	0.184***	0.078	0.237***	0.102	0.240***
	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.063)
Constant	1.915***	1.824***	1.539***	3.614***	2.637***	1.890***
	(0.264)	(0.248)	(0.279)	(0.283)	(0.313)	(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.

Table A21: Correlates of Political Discussion Partners for Black Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.144***	−0.018	0.091	−0.067	0.109*	0.291***
	(0.054)	(0.051)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.063)	(0.063)
Liberal-Dem	0.179***	0.052	0.176***	0.311***	0.213***	0.077
	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.062)	(0.061)
Party ID	−0.125**	−0.234***	0.040	−0.452***	−0.353***	−0.285***
	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.058)	(0.057)
Female	−0.091	−0.160*	0.002	0.045	−0.064	−0.020
	(0.087)	(0.083)	(0.092)	(0.093)	(0.102)	(0.101)
Age	0.068*	0.095**	−0.053	−0.023	−0.076*	−0.148***
	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Income	0.031**	0.037**	−0.024	−0.012	0.036*	0.038**
	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education	0.205***	0.182***	0.052	0.213***	0.073	0.208***
	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.062)	(0.062)
Constant	1.671***	1.635***	1.363***	3.400***	2.116***	1.496***
	(0.261)	(0.250)	(0.279)	(0.280)	(0.307)	(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.

13 Main Regressions with All Covariates

Table A22: Correlates of Frequent Political Discussion for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.070	−0.049	0.178***	−0.052	0.081*	0.200***
	(0.047)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Liberal-Dem	0.262***	−0.024	0.019	0.287***	0.259***	0.166***
	(0.047)	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Party ID	−0.155***	−0.204***	−0.096*	−0.305***	−0.217***	−0.294***
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Female	−0.320***	−0.117	0.102	0.146*	−0.020	−0.097
	(0.078)	(0.076)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.074)	(0.077)
Age	0.008	0.0002	−0.036	0.122***	−0.065**	−0.175***
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.030)
Income	0.008	0.019	−0.001	0.042***	0.007	−0.019
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Education	0.205***	0.140***	0.092**	0.188***	0.068	0.066
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.044)
Constant	1.986***	2.284***	1.018***	2.366***	1.289***	2.015***
	(0.258)	(0.250)	(0.274)	(0.273)	(0.246)	(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

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A23: Correlates of Frequent Political Discussion for Black Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Carceral	0.092*	−0.022	0.154***	−0.056	0.143**	0.246***
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.054)	(0.053)	(0.057)	(0.058)
Liberal-Dem	0.281***	0.065	0.059	0.348***	0.324***	0.174***
	(0.052)	(0.050)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.061)
Party ID	−0.099**	−0.232***	0.048	−0.438***	−0.318***	−0.251***
	(0.049)	(0.047)	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Female	−0.162*	−0.167**	−0.064	−0.009	−0.135	−0.102
	(0.085)	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.092)	(0.098)	(0.100)
Age	0.056	0.093**	−0.057	−0.033	−0.092**	−0.161***
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.044)	(0.045)
Income	0.035**	0.037**	−0.018	−0.007	0.037**	0.041**
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education	0.192***	0.179***	0.057	0.199***	0.053	0.199***
	(0.052)	(0.051)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Constant	1.454***	1.608***	1.424***	3.229***	1.665***	1.247***
	(0.268)	(0.259)	(0.292)	(0.289)	(0.311)	(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.

Table A24: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for White Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	−0.027	0.235**	0.242**	0.045	0.227**	−0.101
	(0.106)	(0.100)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.101)	(0.105)
Negative	0.317***	−0.096	0.049	0.227*	0.232**	0.444***
	(0.114)	(0.106)	(0.118)	(0.119)	(0.108)	(0.113)
Party ID	−0.167***	−0.216***	−0.099*	−0.332***	−0.243***	−0.278***
	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.047)	(0.049)
Female	−0.306***	−0.126*	0.130	0.143*	−0.003	−0.074
	(0.080)	(0.075)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.076)	(0.080)
Age	0.044	−0.011	−0.039	0.157***	−0.038	−0.144***
	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Income	0.013	0.014	−0.004	0.046***	0.008	−0.015
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Education	0.216***	0.141***	0.100**	0.198***	0.082*	0.075*
	(0.046)	(0.043)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Constant	2.553***	2.082***	1.292***	2.780***	1.826***	2.526***
	(0.255)	(0.239)	(0.265)	(0.268)	(0.243)	(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

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01
Notes: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table A25: Correlates of Positive and Negative Carceral Discussion for Black Respondents

	Int. Efficacy	Ext. Efficacy	Linked Fate	Vote	Campaign	Protest
Positive	0.320**	0.809***	−0.196	0.381***	0.764***	0.503***
	(0.132)	(0.117)	(0.137)	(0.141)	(0.151)	(0.152)
Negative	0.166	−0.653***	0.851***	−0.0002	−0.007	0.387*
	(0.183)	(0.163)	(0.191)	(0.195)	(0.210)	(0.211)
Party ID	−0.134***	−0.239***	0.040	−0.467***	−0.359***	−0.281***
	(0.050)	(0.045)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.058)	(0.058)
Female	−0.150*	−0.117	−0.077	0.005	−0.095	−0.074
	(0.089)	(0.079)	(0.093)	(0.095)	(0.102)	(0.103)
Age	0.074*	0.077**	−0.032	−0.020	−0.078*	−0.142***
	(0.040)	(0.036)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.046)
Income	0.045***	0.034**	−0.009	0.001	0.048***	0.052***
	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education	0.223***	0.178***	0.066	0.228***	0.086	0.221***
	(0.054)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.063)
Constant	1.985***	1.742***	1.279***	3.671***	2.267***	1.545***
	(0.298)	(0.265)	(0.311)	(0.318)	(0.341)	(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.

14 Ethical Considerations

Survey participants were recruited from Prolific, a platform for opt-in survey research. Before the survey, I used the following text to inform participants about the research study and ask for their voluntary and informed consent: "I agree to participate in a research study conducted by researchers from REDACTED. Findings from this study may be reported in scholarly journals, at academic seminars, and at research association meetings. The data will be stored at a secured location and retained indefinitely. No identifying information about me will be made public and any views I express will be kept completely confidential. My participation is voluntary. I am free to stop the survey at any time. If I have questions, I can contact REDACTED. By checking the box below I understand my rights and give my consent to participate in the survey. If I choose not to participate, the survey will end." Participants were compensated at $16.88/hour (above the average state minimum of $10.69 in 2024). The study did not intervene in political processes or harm participants and presented minimal risks to participants.