

Beyond Glass Ceilings: Examining The Role of Racial Resentment, FIRE, and Hostile Sexism

in Whites Evaluations of Vice President Kamala Harris¹

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Abstract

The research on minority candidate evaluation has explored questions about the degree to which white voters will support minority candidates, as well as the extent to which racial attitudes influence electoral support for racialized and non-racialized candidates. A recent debate has emerged in the literature, suggesting that the 1981 racial resentment battery may be outdated and, as a result, may not accurately capture how white Americans think about race in contemporary American politics. Using data from the 2020 CMPS, we investigate the degree to which DeSante and Watts Smith's (2020) FIRE model and hostile sexism influence evaluations of Vice President Kamala Harris among young and older generations of whites. In this study, we merge the literature on Black women in politics, racialization, and racial attitudes to theorize that Kamala Harris, the first Black and Southeast Asian woman Vice President, may be evaluated negatively among whites because of her race and gender. Our findings confirm that both negative racial attitudes and hostile sexism influence evaluations of Kamala Harris among whites. While some dimensions of FIRE are significant predictors of evaluations of Kamala Harris, racial resentment remains a major determinant of whites' evaluations of the nation's first Southeast Asian and Black Female Vice President across generations. The results also highlight important similarities and differences in how racial attitudes influence the political attitudes of younger and older generations of whites. Our findings also reveal that the potency of racial attitudes in American politics is beyond the racial resentment index and is associated with beliefs about white privilege, fear of other races, beliefs that racial incidents are rare, and an acknowledgment of anti-Black racism.

Keywords: Racial Attitudes, Hostile Sexism, Racial Resentment, FIRE, Kamala Harris

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Introduction

Race and gender continue to significantly influence American politics. Specifically, women and Black candidates often face challenges winning elections outside of majority-black districts. Even when they secure victories, they frequently face more stringent evaluations and are perceived as less competent. When considering women candidates who are not white the potential for negative racial attitudes and biases about women further complicates their evaluation. Notably, Black women remain starkly underrepresented in American politics at nearly every governmental level. Numerous empirical studies suggest that both Black individuals and women, especially Black women, face compounded disadvantages in American politics due to their race and gender (Gay 1999). This double disadvantage arises because voters often evaluate women of color more critically. These candidates are perceived as less competent and are less frequently recruited to run for office. Alongside these structural challenges, Black candidates face biases from white voters who hold negative racial attitudes (Riley and Peterson, 2019). The election of Kamala Harris as the first Black and Southeast Asian Vice President of the United States was a pivotal moment in American political history. For many racialized groups, particularly African Americans, her election symbolized a breakthrough in the nation's political glass ceiling. Her nomination ignited enthusiasm among Black Greek Letter Organizations, HBCU alumni, and people representing various races and ethnicities.. However, much like Barack Obama, Harris confronted a barrage of sexist and racist attacks soon after her nomination. Though the Biden-Harris ticket succeeded in the 2020 Presidential Election, Harris faced intense political scrutiny as Vice President. Numerous news outlets and commentators have highlighted her low approval ratings, with some going so far as to label her "the most unpopular VP ever" or claim she set a "record low for VP" (Lightman, 2023 and Leader, 2023). Kamala Harris's mixed-race identity adds another layer of complexity to discussions about

representation and her historic candidacy. It opens up avenues to evaluate white Americans' responses to her and her diverse racial background. While media and pollsters often ascribe Vice President Kamala Harris's low approval ratings to political missteps, they glaringly overlook the potential impact of her race and gender on these evaluations, especially among white Americans. Given the U.S.'s racial climate, enduring gender discrimination, and the historic significance of Harris's Vice Presidency, the lack of scholarly exploration into the intersection of race and gender in perceptions of her role is concerning. This oversight is particularly striking when considering the extensive research on white reactions to the Obama presidency (Tesler 2012; Riley and Peterson, 2022). To bridge this research gap, our study investigates to what extent racial attitudes and hostile sexism affect Kamala Harris' evaluations among whites and to what extent these attitudes vary across generations of whites?

White Americans' reactions to minority candidates are nuanced, often deeply rooted in perceptions about race. In fact there is a massive body of scholarship that documents the influence of racial resentment on vote choice (Tesler 2012; Riley and Peterson, 2022). These reactions are further complicated when considerations of gender and the broader political climate come into play. Existing scholarly literature paints a varied picture, predominantly focusing on Black congressional candidates and statewide races (Brown 2014; Riley and Peterson 2019; Viasalvanich 2017). A key reason for this narrow focus may be the stark underrepresentation of racialized women of color in executive leadership within the U.S. political framework. This leaves limited case studies to examine the interplay of race and racial attitudes on the election, evaluations, and approvals of these candidates. Historically, a wealth of scholarship has delved into white Americans' support for Black candidates in biracial elections and their attitudes on public policy preferences (Schuman et al. 1997; Citrin, Green, and Sears 1990; Hajnal 2001; Tesler 2008; and many more). These studies have relied

on the 1981 Kinder and Sanders racial resentment index which taps into beliefs about Blacks not working hard enough, getting undeserved advantages, and Blacks needing to work as hard as everybody else. Recently, some scholars, like Desante and Watts Smith (2020), have pushed for a reevaluation of traditional measures, like the racial resentment index, questioning their relevance in today's shifting racial landscape. Desante and Watts Smith (2020) have developed and introduced the FIRE model which they argue better captures how white millennials are thinking about race. The FIRE model is predicated on whites' fear of other races, the denial of institutional racism, the belief that racial incidents are rare, and white empathy about racism. Despite the introduction of these new measures, scholars of racial attitudes in American politics have been reluctant to test the potency of these attitudes and their influence in American politics. In this work we take up this important issue.

While a burgeoning body of research explores how voters react to mixed-race candidates like Kamala Harris, white Americans' reactions remain underexplored (Lemi, Casarez, and Sadhwani 2022; Lemi 2020; Green, Matos, and Sanbonmatsu. 2022; Leslien, Masuoka, Gaither, Remedios, and Viniuan 2022.). The findings from studies on Indian Americans, however, echo a broader consensus in political science, indicating that even a subtle invocation of the race Black can spark adverse reactions among Indian Americans (whites as well) (Lemi, Casarez, and Sadhwani 2022). This phenomenon has historical precedents like the 'one-drop rule' where individuals with even a trace of Black ancestry were categorized as Black. In this context, Kamala Harris' lighter skin tone and straight hair may not shield her from these entrenched racial perceptions (Cite Nadia Sistersyley) . Despite extensive research into white support for Black candidates, there exists a significant void in understanding evaluations of Black female candidates, especially those in high-ranking positions.

This is a reflection of both their underrepresentation and evolving racial perceptions in today's world. Several studies point out that Black women, despite possessing considerable political ambition, confront challenges stemming from both their race and gender (Dowe 2020). While some research suggests strategic advantages for Black women in specific contexts (Baruer 2020), a more common narrative underscores their double disadvantage (Dowe 2020, Githens and Prestage 1977).

In today's America, where conversations around white privilege, racial incidents, and shifting racial perceptions dominate the discourse, academic approaches must evolve to capture the multifaceted nature of racial attitudes. Kamala Harris's election offers a unique opportunity to unpack white American responses in a racially charged political environment. Her intersecting racial, gender, and ethnic identities further deepen the intrigue. By concentrating our analysis on white attitudes towards Kamala Harris, we aim to provide scholars with an empirical assessment of how racial and gender dynamics might mold her evaluations among white Americans. Our study encapsulates and strives to move beyond traditional models like racial resentment by testing the predictive power of newer models like the FIRE in evaluating Kamala Harris. In light of Donald Trump's overtly sexist commentary during his campaigns, we also delve into the potential influence of hostile sexism on evaluations of Kamala Harris. In understanding whether negative racial attitudes and sexism affect Kamala Harris' evaluations, we tap into broader implications for minority representation, racial attitudes, and Black politics. From a theoretical vantage point, such attitudes, if proven influential, could indicate that minority and female candidates may face enduring challenges in their political journeys, particularly in a racially charged milieu. In this article, while we predominantly focus on white racial attitudes, we recognize the critical role of white voters in

shaping political outcomes and the need to continue exploring the changing functions of racial attitudes in American politics.

The article is structured as follows: We begin by reviewing existing literature on voter evaluations of female candidates and racial attitudes. Next, we probe deeper into racial attitudes, examining the FIRE model's predictive capabilities in the context of Kamala Harris. We subsequently present our guiding theoretical framework and hypotheses. Finally, we discuss our data collection methods, our approach to the research question, our findings, implications, and conclusion.

Evaluating Women in U.S. Politics

Individuals evaluate politicians based on various factors: partisan and ideological affiliations, racial biases, gender discrimination, and policy perspectives. One of the central questions of the academic literature on candidate evaluation has been the extent to which minority candidates are negatively impacted by their racial identification. While some scholars argue that Black women may be doubly disadvantaged by their race and gender, others contend that Black women are not necessarily doubly disadvantaged and can more effectively mobilize voters than men (Lemi and Brown 2019). Under this view, women candidates rely on social networks, community organizations, and affiliations with insulation to mobilize support strategically. While a bulk of the research on candidate evaluation centers on male candidates, a handful explore the influence of appearances on female candidate evaluations (Lemi and Brown 2019; Brown et al. 2013; Orey and Zhang 2019). Such research primarily probes the role of personality traits, appearances, and traditional measures of racial prejudice on vote choice (Kahn 1996; Lawless 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Specifically these studies have explored how the public responds to Black women with natural hair, large earrings, etc.

(Brown et al. 2013; Orey and Zhang 2019). Although there has been a substantial increase in the number of women running for political office, women remain severely underrepresented in American politics, resulting in voters evaluating these candidates in more complex ways that include but are not limited to race. According to Dowe (2019), "in 2018, more than 600 Black women sought elected office in the United States" (697). Still, we know very little about how racial considerations among whites have influenced how white Americans see the most powerful woman of color in the U.S., Vice President Kamala Harris.

According to the Center for American Women in Politics, women in the United States make up about 51 percent of the U.S. population. Yet, they comprise only 24 percent of members of the United States Congress. When these numbers are examined by chamber and office level, women make up 24 percent of the U.S. Senate, 27 percent in the U.S. House of Representatives, 30 percent of statewide executives, 0 percent of U.S. presidents, and 25 percent of mayors. Even when political representation is examined by race, Black women are severely underrepresented, making up about 4.7 percent of the U.S. Congress, 1.9 percent of State Executives, 4.6 percent of State Legislatures, and 7 percent of Mayors (Center for American Women in Politics). The underrepresentation of women in U.S. politics is not a new phenomenon; however, scholars examining women's political representation in U.S. politics have offered competing explanations. Scholars such as Mansbridge (1999) and Tate (2001) have found that descriptive representation matters for Black voters because it increases trust, engagement, and interaction between Black voters and politicians. As Valeria Sinclair Chapman argues, descriptive representation matters far beyond symbols because, for Blacks, there is substantive meaning in symbols (Sinclair Chapman 2002). This is why Black women have established unique political identities distinct from Black men and white women (Brown 2014). Scholars have found that female candidates are seen as more compassionate when handling issues

such as education and healthcare but are more likely to advocate for racial justice issues. These studies argue that Black women bring unique perspectives to legislative bodies which helps explain why "Black women's ambition is shaped by political socialization, networks, and gendered and racial identity" (Dowe 2019, 697). Kamala Harris' unique identity as a Black and Southeast Asian American, combined with her policy stances and political affiliations, might elicit varied reactions among white Americans. Analyzing the response to her is crucial, especially when considering the white reactions to previous Black politicians like Jesse Jackson and Barack Obama. The fact that all of her predecessors are white men makes uncovering how white Americans evaluate her all the more important. Prior studies have found that Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in the 1980s resulted in whites' dissociation with the Democratic Party and most recently scholars have found that Barack Obama's rise to political power resulted in partisanship becoming linked to negative racial attitudes (Telser 2012).

The existing knowledge about Black women in politics is primarily sourced from legislative studies, leaving a gap in understanding their executive roles (Bratton, Haynie, and Reingold 2006; Orey, Smooth, Adams, and Harris-Clark 2007; Brown 2014). One rationale that scholars have put forth about the underrepresentation of Black women is that political parties recruit them less frequently than men (Tate 2003, 62); women more often opt to run in local elections and are less likely to win, facing greater scrutiny than male counterparts (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994, 106). Even though there has been a significant uptick in the number of women contesting political office, Women still face significant barriers in politics. The public is more likely to hold them to a higher level of scrutiny. They are more likely to be described as inauthentic, untruthful, and deceiving. These descriptions of women are linked to how society has been politically socialized to see women. Women have been systematically excluded from almost all aspects of life, and as a result, the public

has been conditioned to see women through a certain lens. Consider, for example, the challenges that Black women such as Shirley Anita Chisholm, Carol Moseley Braun, and Stacy Abrams faced as politicians. Although women of all races face significant barriers as candidates, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that Black women may face an even greater level of scrutiny because of their race and gender. Baxter and Lansing (1983) argue that Black women are "a special interest group fighting to overcome the twin barriers of racial and gender discrimination" (108). Although Black women may face deeper scrutiny and several obstacles, researchers have found that they are more likely to be supported by individuals who attend church, younger voters, voters with higher levels of education, and women voters (Dolan 1996; Rosenthal 1995; McDermott 1998).

Gender stereotypes have also been found to play a barrier in the political fortunes of women candidates. The 2016 Presidential election presented scholars with an ideal opportunity to examine the extent to which sexism influenced vote choice in the 2016 presidential election, considering how Donald Trump engaged in sexist rhetoric throughout the campaign. Nelson (2019), Frasure-Yokley (2018), and Ratliff et al. (2019) have all found that sexist attitudes were significant predictors of voting for Donald Trump. These studies have relied on hostile sexism, ambivalent sexism, and benevolent sexism to capture negative attitudes toward women. At its core, hostile sexism, as Frasure-Yorkley (2018) contends, "reflects negative or antagonistic evaluations and stereotypes about women" (6). The literature in this area tends to overwhelmingly focus on the elections involving white women leaving scholars to speculate if these same attitudes have negative consequences for Black women candidates and politicians. While several studies show that most voters' political preferences are still explained by partisans and ideological affiliations, it is not unreasonable to suspect that these attitudes may also influence how voters evaluate Black women candidates (Box-Steffensmeier, De Boef, and Lin 2004; Dolan 1997). In a society that has always been

organized around white male-dominated patriarchy, negative attitudes about women are a phenomenon that may likely influence evaluations of Kamala Harris.

Racial Attitudes and the Evaluation of Black Candidates

The academic discourse on the influence of racial attitudes on candidate evaluations has largely sidelined Black women, directing its focus primarily on white women and Black men. Most research in this domain has harnessed the concept of racial resentment to encapsulate white racial attitudes. The elections of Barack Obama in 2008, Donald Trump in 2016, and the ensuing racial tensions have invigorated scholarly efforts to discern the magnitude to which white racial attitudes shape white political behavior, policy inclinations, and public perceptions among white voters (Tesler 2014; Riley and Peterson 2019). These investigations underscore the salience of racial resentment in white political predilections.

In 1981, Kinder and Sanders pioneered the racial resentment framework, suggesting that overt forms of racism became socially taboo post the Civil Rights Movement. They proposed this was superseded by a more insidious form known as symbolic racism, subsequently termed new racism or racial resentment. This "new racism", as articulated by Kinder and Sanders (1996), revolves around the stereotype that Black individuals are lazy and violate the Protestant work ethic. This ideology posits that Blacks' struggles stem from a lack of effort and poor decision-making. Over time, numerous studies have corroborated that racial resentment correlates with white opposition to Black candidates and both racialized and non-racialized policies. Some research even indicates that racial resentment has permeated white attitudes towards issues ranging from climate change to figures associated with Barack Obama post his presidency (Telser 2015; Benegal and Holman 2021)

Black politics scholars have consistently noted that strides in Black progress often trigger a reactionary conservatism among white Americans, intent on curbing said advancement (Walters 2003). Scholars delving into political psychology suggest that Obama's ascent to power rendered the U.S. political climate more permeable to racialized considerations across various political arenas (Telser, 2015). As Telser (2012) elaborates, racialization can be envisioned as a sprinkle of glitter from a Black politician that inadvertently racializes affiliated issues. A Black politician championing progressive agendas can inadvertently activate underlying racial biases, causing many of their actions or policies to be interpreted through a racialized prism. Hajnal (2007) proposes that whites are wary of Black politicians, fearing preferential treatment towards Blacks. Other research affirms that even a mere racial mention can elicit a negative white response, consistent with Riley and Peterson's thesis that explicit acknowledgment of Black-centric policies or movements is likely to provoke adverse reactions among whites (Riley and Peterson 2020).

New Directions in Racial Attitudes: Racial Resentment and FIRE

Although there is an overwhelming amount of empirical evidence which shows that racial resentment remains a powerful predictor of white political preferences, a handful of scholars have challenged political scientists to consider the fact that the racial resentment index that was first created in 1981 may be an outdated assessment of contemporary racial attitudes in America (DeSante and Watts Smith 2019). Scholars in this school of thought assert that "a consensus has emerged that "colorblind racism" is America's current dominant racial ideology" (DeSante and Watts Smith 2019, 639). These scholars have called for better measures that capture the affective dimensions of racial attitudes and measures that also capture the cognitive dimensions such as anger about existence of racism, apathy towards racism, fear of other races, guilt about racism, and empathy (DeSante and Watts Smith 2019; Banks and Valentino 2012). Leveraging elements from

the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) and the Psycho-Social Costs of Racism to Whites (PCRW), these scholars have devised the FIRE metric, representing fear of other races, acknowledgment of institutional racism, the rarity of racial incidents, and empathy. Their research indicates the predictive capability of FIRE in mapping racialized policy preferences (DeSante and Watts Smith 2020), especially among white millennials. DeSante and Watts Smith (2019) and (2020) provide convincing empirical evidence that demonstrates that items from the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), and the Psycho-Social Costs of Racism to Whites (PCRW) to show that "FIRE provides substantial predictive power, and it gives scholars greater nuance and leverage to describe and explain the effects of different components of whites' racial attitudes" (645). Their evidence further shows that FIRE is predictive of racialized policy preferences such as welfare and support for Donald Trump. This work is predicated on the idea that discourse and conversations surrounding race in American politics have evolved. In *"Racial Stasis: The Millennial Generation and the Stagnation of Racial Attitudes in American Politics,"* DeSante and Watts Smith challenge political scientists to consider the spectrum of racial attitudes that capture previously unexplored dimensions foundational to white racial attitudes. The murders of Trayvon Martin in 2012, Michael Brown in 2014, Alton Sterling in 2016, among others, catalyzed the Black Lives Matter Movement, with its primary objective being to challenge systemic anti-Black racism and pressuring politicians to address this racism on national platforms. These overtly racist incidents have spurred society to discuss systemic racism more intensively. While there are new attempts to ban the teaching of critical race theory, these efforts have thrust discussions about race and racism into the forefront of American politics.

In agreement with DeSante and Watts Smith (2020), we argue that political scientists should delve into and test the predictive power of newer measures of racial attitudes like FIRE.

Concurrently, we posit that racial resentment, despite the changing landscape of American politics, might still be a significant explanatory factor in how whites evaluate or respond to Black leadership. Historically, the foundation of white attitudes has been tethered to beliefs about Black individuals being lazy, receiving undue privileges, and lacking diligence. However, newer measures like FIRE encompass the denial of an objective reality, racial gaslighting, and denial of privilege. In this context, we use Vice President Kamala Harris as a case study to: examine how various models of racial attitudes might influence evaluations of a high level Black and Southeast Asian woman and delve into the depth of how each of these attitudinal dimensions might influence white evaluations of Harris. This research broadens the literature on candidate evaluations by shifting focus from white women to the first Black and Southeast Asian American woman to hold the Vice Presidency. We provide an empirical contribution by gauging the predictive and explanatory power of the FIRE model among whites in their assessment of Kamala Harris.

In addition to cognitive and affective measures of racial attitudes, we consider whether an explicit measure of racial prejudice is captured by a failure to acknowledge that Anti-Black racism is a major problem in the U.S. Unlike the fire model, this model centers a specific kind of racism that targets Black people in the U.S. Given the heightened racial tension and uprising sparked by Anti-Black racism, the denial of such acts captures a racial gaslighting that denies an objective reality faced by Black people in the U.S. As such, attitudes about Anti-Black racism should also influence whites' evaluations of Harris. Given the historical potency of racial resentment and the significance of FIRE among white millennials, we test which model has the most explanatory power of whites' evaluations of Kamala Harris across generations. We move beyond the FIRE and Racial Resentment models to evaluate the extent to which beliefs about Anti-Black racism also shape evaluations of Harris. Given Donald Trump's derogatory treatment of women during both

Presidential campaigns, we assess the extent to which hostile sexism affects evaluations of Kamala Harris.

In this paper, our lens is primarily on white racial attitudes, acknowledging that much of the scholarly discourse has emphasized white opinions. This focus deserves critique; racialized groups such as Asians, Pacific Islanders, Blacks, and Latinos merit research attention. Given the radicalization of whites, the rise in white supremacist activity, the January 6 insurrection by a predominantly white crowd, the emerging white racial identity, and the enduring centrality of racism in American politics, the scholarly community must also persist in uncovering the evolving dynamics of negative racial attitudes. While whites remain a dominant voting bloc, influencing candidate selections, policy adoptions, and the trajectory of institutional racism dismantling, there is still a continued need to investigate the wide range of racial attitudes.

Theoretical Framework

We integrate the literature on Black women in politics, racialization, and racial attitudes to postulate that Kamala Harris, the first Black and Southeast Asian woman Vice President, may face negative evaluations. Existing scholarship compellingly argues that the presence of Barack Obama, the first African-American president, along with his associations and policy preferences, activated racial attitudes previously latent in public opinion (Tesler 2012). Kamala Harris's election as Vice President offers an invaluable chance to examine how perceptions of race and gender might influence her appraisal among whites. .

Dowe (2019) contends, "Black women fuel this radical imagination through networking, political mobilization, and seeking office. They understand that political engagement enriches their lives and communities, despite the many adversities they confront, such as pay discrimination, sexism, public shaming, and isolation" (p. 697). This insight, in turn, influences the policies Black

women endorse, leading to the distinctive political identity articulated in Brown's (2014) representational identity theory. Evidence suggests that Black women prioritize racial identity over gender, leading them to champion racialized policies like criminal justice reform and healthcare (Gay and Tate 1998; Mansbridge and Tate 1992). Such stances render Harris particularly vulnerable to racialization.

Peterson and Riley's racial reaction thesis posits that explicitly using the term 'Black' is likely to elicit negative responses from whites (2022). Emerging literature on mixed-race candidates, which probes responses to Harris, reveals that even Indian Americans showed less support when Harris' identity was framed as both Black and Indian (Lemi, Casarez, a, and Sadhwani 2022) . A pernicious legacy of white supremacy has been its ability to sow division between racial groups. Harris' unique blend of Black and Indian identity can ignite negative racial sentiments among white Americans, especially during periods of heightened racial tension. While race is a social construct, whites in America have historically adhered to the 'one drop rule', suggesting any trace of Black ancestry designates someone as Black. This simplistic and intellectually shallow approach overlooks modern scientific understandings of race. Harris' identity diverges from the typical profile of those who've occupied the Vice Presidency. A female and nonwhite person, she has both Black and Indian lineage. She often identifies as a Black woman, sometimes a person of color, and has acknowledged both her Black and Indian heritage.

Kamala Harris, born to immigrants from India and Jamaica, is an alumnus of Howard University, a renowned Historically Black University. During her time there, she joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She made history as the first Black and Southeast Asian American woman District Attorney in San Francisco, Attorney General of California, and Senator from California. In the Senate, she staunchly opposed many of Donald Trump's policies and nominees,

consistently demonstrating sharp scrutiny during confirmation hearings. While she has received accolades from many on the left, she has also faced criticism from progressives regarding her prosecutorial record. For example, as District Attorney and Attorney General in California, she supported a truancy law, faced criticism for not taking a robust stance on police misconduct, was perceived as not pursuing banks aggressively enough, and oversaw a significant increase in the incarceration of Black and Brown individuals for minor drug offenses. As Vice President, she has been assigned responsibilities like voting rights and immigration, among others. From the moment she declared her presidential aspirations, she encountered racist and sexist attacks. Progressives claimed she was overly politically ambitious, while some members of the GOP alleged she wasn't born in the U.S. On the campaign trail, Donald Trump and several other GOP members intentionally mispronounced her name, alluded to her personal relationships, and questioned her qualifications despite her more than two decades of experience as a prosecutor. For these reasons, it is likely that Kamala Harris' mixed-race identity, specifically her Black identity, may be enough to activate a negative reaction from white Americans, leading to negative evaluations. We move beyond the FIRE and Racial Resentment models to evaluate the extent to which beliefs about Anti-Black racism also shape evaluations of Harris.

Lemi (2021) contends that sometimes a mixed race candidate may be less likely to benefit from the support of their own group because the candidate might not be perceived as “conforming to the standards of a particular group's identity.” While this might be true for in-group assessments, we contend that additionally Harris' mixed racial identity, especially the Black label, has the potential to activate a host of racial attitudes among whites, especially in the U.S. Some studies such as Lesli et al. (2022) have found that in an experiment in which whites were asked about their preferences of biracial and single race candidates, that “white participants completely overlook racial identity cues

and instead focused on description of the candidate's family heritage along with their own assumptions about hypodescent" (p. 2). Considering her achievements, her policy stances in the Senate, the racially charged environment of her candidacy/vice presidency, and insights from scholars like Brown (2014), Dowe (2019), and Tesler (2015), it's reasonable to anticipate these factors such as racial attitudes may influence evaluations of Kamala Harris. Her conversations about systemic racism in the U.S. amidst a tumultuous racial landscape likely elicited negative racial sentiments akin to the reactions to Obama's presidency. Although of mixed racial and ethnic heritage, Harris identifies as a Black and Southeast Asian American woman. Notably, during the presidential campaign, Donald Trump openly mocked her name, and media outlets, including Newsweek, questioned her eligibility to serve as Vice President (Brester 2020). These racist claims likely resonated with a segment of white Americans, serving as coded racial messages.

We theorize that the interplay of Harris's identity, her political record, and the backdrop of her rise to the Vice Presidency contributed to her racialization in ways that could not be overlooked. Smith and Fox (2001) have shown that voters' reactions to female candidates vary by the office they seek. We anticipate that, like Obama's presidency, Harris's Vice Presidency represents a seismic shift in the American political landscape, potentially provoking racial backlash from whites that might influence how she is evaluated (Walters 2003). We suspect that given how deeply entrenched attitudes about race is in American politics that white respondents with negative racial attitudes will have negative evaluations of Kamala Harris. We further suspect that given DeSante and Watts Smith's (2020) framework is predicated on the notion that white millennials are conditioned to think about race differently that the FIRE measures will be more likely to influence white evaluations among younger generations of whites than older generations of whites. On the other hand we believe that the racial resentment measure of racial attitudes will remain a potent influence on attitudes among all

whites. We also hypothesize that given the pervasiveness of anti-blackness in society, that whites who fail to acknowledge anti-Black racism exists will be more likely to have negative evaluations of Harris. For these reasons we test the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses:

Racialization

H₁: Whites with negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

FIRE

H₂: FIRE measures are more likely to influence the younger generation's evaluations of Kamala Harris.

Racial Resentment

H₃: Whites who have high racial resentment are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

Anti-Black Racism

H₄: Whites who fail to acknowledge that Anti-Black Racism is a major problem in the U.S. are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

Hostile Sexism

H₅: Whites who score high on the hostile sexism scale are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

H₆: Racial resentment will have a greater impact on evaluations of Kamala Harris than FIRE.

Data and Methods

We empirically evaluate our research question and hypotheses by utilizing data from the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey and employ logistic regression analysis to examine determinants of attitudes towards Kamala Harris. For the purpose of this research, we are only interested in white respondents and therefore restrict our analysis to only include the 3200 white respondents. This dataset is very attractive and useful for our analysis because of its oversample of white respondents.

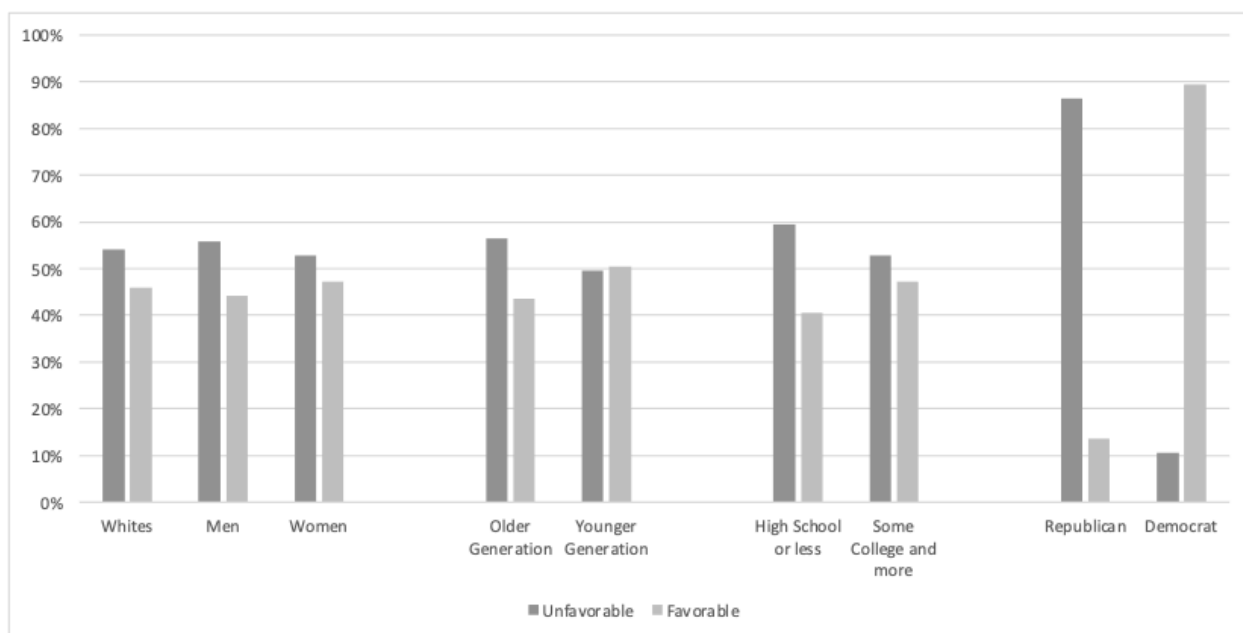
Dependent Variable

The campaigning and subsequent election of the first Black and Southeast Asian woman as the Vice President of the United States affords us the opportunity to empirically test the role of both race and gender in how whites make their political decisions. The dependent variable we use to measure attitudes toward Black women specifically asks how the respondent feels toward Kamala Harris. More specifically, respondents are asked, "Please indicate whether your overall opinion of Vice President Kamala Harris is very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, very unfavorable, no opinion at all, or haven't heard enough to say." We recode this question as a dummy variable with respondents who indicate an unfavorable opinion of Kamala Harris coded as 0, and a favorable opinion of Kamala Harris coded as 1.⁴ Graph 1 displays the percentage of whites who evaluate Harris favorably and unfavorably.

<Enter Graph 1 Here>

Graph 1. Attitudes toward Harris and Select Demographics

⁴ We use a dummy variable for ease of interpretation.



According to Graph 1, unfavorable opinions of Harris tend to come from whites who are men, older, less educated, and Republican. The data shows some support for the observations made by other scholars discussed earlier in this work. More specifically, Democrats, those with higher education, younger, and women are more likely to have positive opinions of Black women (McDermott 1998). The most substantial difference is between Republicans and Democrats as can be expected in this political environment. Most Republicans, 86%, held an unfavorable view of Harris while most Democrats, 89.4%, held favorable views. Whites with high school as their highest level of education have notable differences when it comes to their opinions about Harris with about 59% indicating an unfavorable opinion and only 41% percent having a favorable opinion, an 18% difference between the two groups. Similar differences exist with generations and gender, with a difference of about 13 percent across generations and 11 percent across gender. This begins to tell an interesting story about the favorable and unfavorable opinions of Kamala Harris. At the least we note that the white community was not unified in their willingness to support the first Black woman

on a presidential ticket and we see preliminary support for the research of our colleagues. We turn our attention beyond the demographic description of white respondents who evaluate Harris favorably to explaining why White opinions toward Harris vary.

Explanatory variables

We center the work of Kinder and Sanders (1996), DeSante and Watts Smith (2020), Frasure-Yokley (2018), and Nelson (2021) to test our hypotheses. Because we are interested in examining to what extent racial attitudes and sexism are predictive of evaluations of Kamala Harris, our primary explanatory variables are racial attitudes and hostile sexism. Our measure of racial attitudes includes three variables; racial resentment, FIRE (whites' fear of other races, the denial of institutional racism, the belief that racial incidents are rare, and white empathy about racism), and the acknowledgement of anti-Black racism. To operationalize these concepts measures consistent with extant research (see Table 1). We use the standard measure of racial resentment which includes the four-item composite index of racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Riley and Peterson 2020; Peterson and Riley 2022), a frequently-used measure of anti-Black racial attitudes that has also been included in national election surveys since 1988 (e.g., Smith, Kreitzer, and Suo 2020). The racial resentment scale draws on four questions with responses measured on an ordinal five-point scale ranging from Agree strongly to Disagree strongly (see Table 1).

Table 1 Measures of Explanatory Variables

<p>Racial Resentment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>"Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors."</i> 2. <i>"Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for Blacks to work their way out of the lower class."</i> 3. <i>"Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve."</i> 4. <i>"It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough, if Blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites."</i>

FIRE Measures

CoBRA

Racial Privilege: *White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of their race.*

Blatant Racial Issues: *In your opinion, you were unfairly treated because of your Racial background or ethnicity⁵.*

Institutional Discrimination: *Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.*

PCRW

White Empathy: *Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am angry that racism exists.*

Fear of Others: *Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: I am sometimes fearful of people of other races.*

Anti-Black Racism

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement: Anti-Black Racism is a major problem in the U.S.

Hostile Sexism

1. *Many women interpret innocent remarks or acts as sexist*
2. *Women seek to gain power by getting control over men*
3. *Many women fail to appreciate what men do for them*
4. *Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she tries to put him on a tight leash.*

Each of the racial resentment questions are coded so that higher numbers correspond with more racially resentful responses and the middle category is excluded from the additive scale. As a result, the final scale ranges from 4 to 16 with a 4 indicating the least racially resentful response and a 16 indicating the most racially resentful. We expect respondents with higher racial resentment scores to have unfavorable opinions of Harris.

FIRE

⁵This question departs from the typical FIRE questions. The usual FIRE question asks respondents to agree or disagree with the statement, "White people in the US are discriminated against because of the color of their skin." This measure is coded so that it only includes respondents who say they are white and also say that white people are treated unfairly because of their skin.

DeSante and Watts Smith (2020) call for new understanding in the way that racial attitudes influence individuals' political attitudes. Their work suggest that racial resentment may be outdated and encourages scholars to investigate differences in how racial attitudes might impact younger adults. More specifically, this research calls for an inclusion of variables that test whites' fear of other races, the denial of institutional racism, the belief that racial incidents are rare, and white empathy about racism better known as FIRE. In order to test FIRE, these scholars identify two main dimensions, the colorblind racial attitudes scale (CoBRA) and the psychological cost of racism to whites (PCRW). We replicate and test these dimensions as permitted with the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey.

We use three items from the Colorblind Racial Attitudes Scale or CoBRAS (Neville et al. 2000) that have also been used in other measures of prejudice (see Table 1). The CoBRA measures include scales that exist among three dimensions, but the CMPS includes only one question for each of the various scales which we use to gauge the impact of each CoBRA measure. Each CoBRA measure includes an ordinal six-point scale ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. Unlike the racial resentment measure, these variables do not include an exact middle category. Instead, the middle categories are "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree" so we include these categories for the analysis. The first dimension focuses on racial privilege. The measure is coded from 1 to 6 so that higher numbers indicate stronger disagreement with the statement which we characterize as a more negative racial attitude. More specifically, the question asks whether the respondent believes white people advance because of their race. The answers of slightly, somewhat, and strongly disagree indicate the respondent is resistant to acknowledging white privilege, and as a result we consider these responses to be negative racial attitudes. Institutional discrimination is the dimension for the second CoBRA measure. Respondents agree or disagree with the statement that they believe they

were unfairly treated because of their racial background or skin. For this measure, higher measures mean respondents have the strongest disagreement with the statement they were treated unfairly. Higher numbers for this measure are also considered more negative racial attitudes. The final CoBRA measure, colorblind racism, asks whether racial problems in the U.S. are rare. Agreement with this statement means the respondent thinks racial problems in the U.S. are rare, those who agree strongly, somewhat, and slightly, are coded with lower numbers, and indicate a negative racial attitude. Because those who agree with this statement deny the existence of racism, we expect them to have an unfavorable evaluation of Harris.

The PCRW measures are also a series of questions that focus on two dimensions, empathetic reactions toward racism and fear of others (see Table 1). Like the CoBRA measures, the CMPS includes one question for each dimension. These variables range from a high of 6 to a low of 1 with lower numbers indicating the respondent has the strongest disagreement with the statement. Respondents are asked whether they are angry that racism exists to gauge their empathetic reaction. Higher numbers indicate that they disagree with that statement therefore we describe disagreement as having negative racial attitudes. The second dimension, fear of other races, is measured by asking respondents whether they are fearful of people of other races. Those who respond that they agree are coded with lower numbers and classified as having negative racial attitudes, and we expect them to have unfavorable opinions of Harris.

Anti-Black Racism

Like scholars such as DeSante and Watts Smith (2020), we also call for a greater diversity of measures to capture today's racial attitudes. Racial resentment and FIRE measures both address important dimensions of racial attitudes, but we contend that the acknowledgement of anti-Black racism must also be included in works interrogating the significance of racial attitudes. The work by

Peterson and Riley (2022) suggests the belief that anti-Black racism is a reality may also impact a person's political attitudes. An acknowledgement that this specific type of racism exists suggests an awareness about today's racial climate and may foster attitudes which support candidates who are perceived as Black. Moreover, denial that anti-Black racism exists will likely influence respondents to have unfavorable opinions of Black political figures like Harris.

To measure anti-Black racism respondents are asked whether they believe anti-Black racism is a problem (see Table 1). This variable ranges from 1 to 4, with higher numbers indicating more disagreement that anti-Black racism is a problem. Those who disagree with this statement are classified as having negative racial attitudes. We use logistic regression to investigate our hypothesis about the impact this racial attitude has on how Kamala Harris is evaluated. More specifically, that whites who fail to acknowledge that Anti-Black Racism is a major problem in the U.S. are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris. As recommended by the most recent scholarship, this measure pushes us to consider the way racial attitudes may have pivoted in today's racial climate (Desante and Watts 2020).

Hostile Sexism

Scholars such as Nelson (2021) argue that "...hostile sexism, and modern sexism enhanced the assessments on several evaluative criteria of the white male candidate, while depressing the assessment of the Black woman candidate" (642). We are interested in investigating whether this claim holds for Black women political figures. As a result, we include hostile sexism as a measure to examine how such attitudes may influence evaluations of Kamala Harris. To measure hostile sexism, we utilize the available survey items to create a hostile sexism scale (see Table 1).

We recode the responses to these questions so that higher numbers indicate more hostile sexism and combine the responses to all questions to create a hostile sexism scale. Additionally, we

exclude respondents who neither agree nor disagree so that each individual variable ranges from 1 to 4 with 4 showing the most hostility. Our final scale adds the 4 variables to create a variable ranging from 4 to 16, similar to the racial resentment scale. Higher values on this additive scale indicate more hostile sexism.⁶

We also control for generation, gender, party identification, education, and income. DeSante and Watts Smith (2020) found that "White millennials are no more likely than their older counterparts to acknowledge that being White is associated with receiving advantages, and they are just as likely to believe that race is not an important factor in shaping certain kinds of opportunities for minorities" (Desante and Watts Smith 2020, 187). Our measure for generation comes from their work. Respondents born before 1980 are categorized as part of the older generation and those born during or after 1980 are categorized as the younger generation. Older people are the comparison category and coded as 0. We extend their assertion by examining if there are significant differences across generations in how the various racial groups evaluate Kamala Harris. We also test whether the younger generation's racial attitudes impact evaluations of Harris differently from the impact these racial issues have on the older generation's evaluation. Gender is measured with male respondents coded as 0 and female respondents coded as 1. Prior studies also find partisanship and ideology to be significant predictors of political preferences (Campbell et al. 1960). We know that these two variables are highly correlated with each other, so we opt to control for party identification and not ideology. Respondents are coded as Republican, Independent, and Democrat, 1-3 respectively. We create a dummy variable to measure education and divide the respondents into those who have a high school education or less and those who have some college and more. To

⁶ We computed a Chronbach's alpha of .828 to test the validity of the hostile sexism scale and determine that there is internal consistency with these measures.

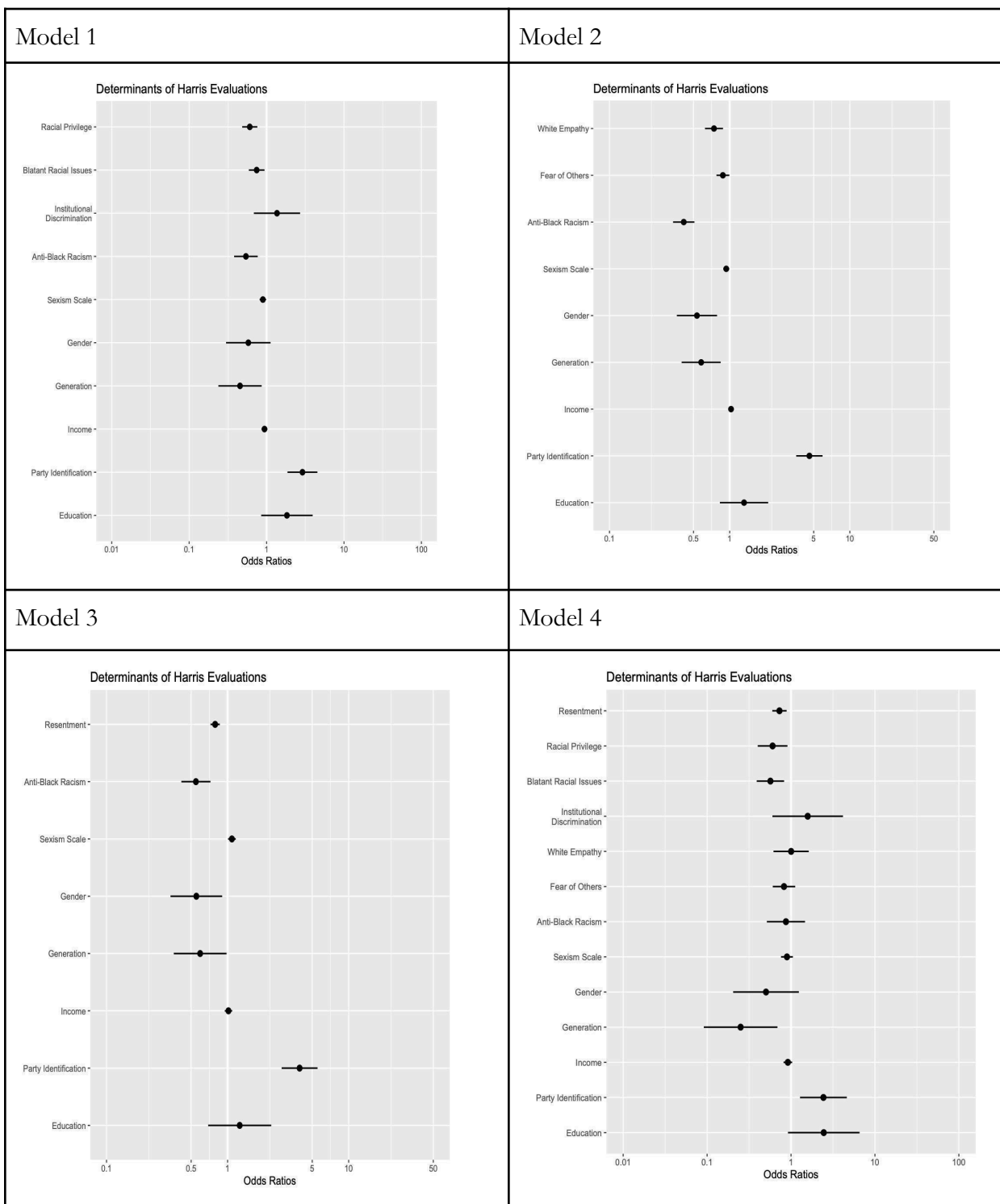
capture class differences, we control for income and code the variable so that higher numbers indicate more income.

Findings

We use logistic regression to capture the determinants of unfavorable attitudes toward Harris because attitudes toward Harris are measured as a binary variable. In doing so we investigate the legitimacy and impact of 4 different models along with the relative impact of the explanatory variables in each of the 4 models. Models 1-3 include only one dimension of FIRE, CoBRA or PCRW, or it includes racial resentment, while Model 4 controls for all of these variables. The first model, designated as Model 1, is our attempt to evaluate the impact of the FIRE CoBRA variables measuring racial privilege, blatant racial issues, and institutional discrimination. The second model investigates the impact of the FIRE PCRW variables which measure white empathy and fear of others. Model 3 investigates the impact of racial resentment. These models allow us to compare the relative impact the FIRE measures have on Harris evaluations.⁷

<Enter Figure 1 About Here>

⁷ The fitness of the models is calculated using McFadden's pseudo R Square. The McFadden R Square for Model 1 is .35, Model 2 is .40, Model 3 is .46, and Model 4 is . Higher numbers indicate a greater fit for the model.



Note: For logistic regression output, please see Appendix A

Figure 1 displays the odds ratios of the explanatory and control variables in Model 1. The CoBRA measures of FIRE are captured by the first 3 variables on this graph, racial privilege, blatant, racial issues, and institutional racism. The model also includes the controls of beliefs about the existence of anti-Black racism, the hostile sexism scale, gender, generation, income, party identification, and education. The horizontal axis reports the corresponding odds ratio values. Values under 1 indicate a negative relationship between the explanatory and dependent variables. As a result, we will refer to values below 1 on the horizontal axis as a negative relationship; those respondents are less likely to have favorable evaluations of Kamala Harris. Only two of the CoBRA measures are significant, racial privilege and blatant racial issues and both are negative values. Recall that racial privilege asks respondents whether whites have special benefits because they are white. A negative value here means that whites who agree with this statement are more likely to have favorable evaluations toward Kamala Harris. Interestingly, the negative value for blatant racial issues means whites who agree that racial problems in the US are rare are more likely to have favorable opinions of Harris. This finding is counter to our expectation and suggests that white respondents who favor Harris have a more innocent view of race in the United States. Perhaps their unwillingness to connect the various racial incidents happening prior to 2020 as more than rare provides them a naivete that translates into support for Harris. These CoBRA measures indicate partial support for our first hypothesis, H_1 , that whites with negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

In this model we also include anti-Black racism and it performs as expected. It supports our hypothesis, H_4 , that people who agree anti-Black racism is a problem are more likely to favorably evaluate Harris indicated by the negative value for the anti-Black racism variable in Figure 1. White respondents who score lower on the hostile sexism scale are also more likely to have a favorable

evaluation. The other significant variables are generation and party identification. Democrats and older people are more likely to have favorable opinions toward Kamala Harris according to this model. We determine the relative importance of each of the explanatory variables by conducting a variable importance review and determine that the most important variable in this model is party identification, followed by racial privilege, and then anti-Black racism (see Wei et al, 2015).⁸ According to this statistic, higher numbers indicate a greater impact on the dependent variable (see Appendix B). We include this table so that we can see how the relevance of each variable changes depending on the model. Interestingly, the hostile sexism scale had the least impact of all of the significant measures in Model 1.

At first glance the dimension of the FIRE measures identified as CoBRA (racial privilege and blatant racial issues) have a significant impact on the opinions whites have about Kamala Harris. The specification of the model modestly explains the variation in how whites evaluate her according to the pseudo R squared, and two of the three CoBRA measures are significant predictors. Moreover, the CoBRA measure of racial privilege is second only to partisanship. This model supports H₁ that whites with negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable attitudes toward Kamala Harris as evidenced by the CoBRA and the anti-Black racism measures. There is also support, albeit weak, for our H₅ that whites who score high on the hostile sexism scale are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

The second model which we also report in Figure 1 uses the FIRE PCRW measures, white empathy and fear of others, but does not include the CoBRA or racial resentment variables. The other variables, anti-Black racism, the hostile sexism scale, gender, generation, income, party

⁸ We use the caret package in R to calculate variable importance.

identification, and education are also included in the model. In this case, both FIRE PCRW measures are significant and indicate that whites who agree that they are angry racism exists and those who agree that they are sometimes fearful of people of other races are more likely to have a favorable opinion of Harris. The first variable which measures white empathy performs as we expected, people who have negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable opinions of Harris. On the other hand, the variable measuring fear of other races did not perform as expected. In fact, the influence of this variable is in the *opposite* direction. Although this does not support H₁ that negative racial attitudes lead to unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris, we are cautioned given the other information we uncover. Calculating the most important variables shows that fear of others is the least important of all significant variables. While party identification is the most important variable specified in this model, racial empathy is the second most impactful variable in this model. This model indicates mixed support for our H₁ that negative racial attitudes lead to unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris.

Model 2 also supports H₅ that those who score high on the hostile sexism scale are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Kamala Harris. The negative value means that this variable performs in the expected direction. As is the case with Model 1, this variable is the least impactful on Harris attitudes. We judge this as support for the hypothesis that those who have hostile sexism scores are more likely to evaluate Harris negatively.

Anti-Black racism outperforms the FIRE PCRW measures in this model. Those who agree that anti-Black racism is a problem are the more likely to have positive evaluations of Harris. According to Table 1, this variable is only second to party identification when estimating the impact of the variables that explain Harris evaluations and in the right direction. Hypotheses H₁ and H₄ are supported by this model; those who have negative racial attitudes and those who believe anti-Black

racism is a problem favorably evaluate Harris. The control variables of party identification, gender, and generation are also significant. Democrats, women, and older whites are more likely to evaluate Harris positively.

The impact of the racial resentment variable is tested in Model 3. This model includes racial resentment as the variable to measure racial attitudes instead of the FIRE variables, along with the hostile sexism scale, the anti-Blackness variable, and the controls of gender, generation, income, education, and party identification also included in Figure 1. In this graph, we find that racial resentment, anti-Black racism, hostile sexism, party identification, generation, and gender all have significant relationships with attitudes toward Kamala Harris. Racial resentment has the expected relationship with evaluations of Harris. The odds ratio value less than 1 indicates a negative relationship, those who have more racial resentment are the least likely to evaluate Harris favorably. Again, supporting the H_1 that whites who have negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable opinions of Harris. Additionally, this Model supports H_4 regarding anti-Black racism. Whites who agree that anti-Black racism is a major problem are more likely to evaluate her positively. Hypotheses H_1 and H_4 are both supported with these two variables. Not only are these variables important, they are the most impactful behind party identification as racial resentment is the second and anti-Black racism the third most important variables.

The variable measuring hostile sexism suggests a different impact when racial resentment is accounted for in the model. In Model 1 and Model 2 the variable measuring hostile sexism had a marginal, yet significant impact on Harris evaluations. In both of these models, people who had the most hostility were the most likely to have unfavorable opinions, supporting H_5 . In Model 3, hostile sexism is significant and has a *positive* impact on evaluations of Harris. Although this variable is significant, we are cautioned about its impact on this model because like the other models, it has a

marginal impact on opinions toward Harris. In fact, this variable has next to the least impact of all significant variables in the model. Unlike the other models, this model does not support H₅ that whites who have higher scores on the hostile sexism scale will have more unfavorable attitudes toward Kamala Harris. The control variables of gender, generation, and party identification are all significant and as expected. Democrats, older whites, and men are more likely to have favorable opinions toward Harris.

All three models indicate some support for H1 regarding the impact of racial attitudes and H₄ regarding the existence of anti-Black racism. We have mixed findings for H₅, the influence of the hostile sexism scale. We calculate the McFaddens' R squared in each of these models to begin the conversation about the relative impact of these variables, but our 3 models do not allow us to make the comparison that we want to make. As a result we specify an additional model, Model 4, that controls for all of the racial attitude variables, the 5 FIRE measures and racial resentment to isolate the impact each has on Harris evaluations (see Figure 1).

The results from Model 4 are also displayed in Figure 1. According to the graph only the racial attitudes measuring racial resentment, racial privilege, and blatant racial issues are significant. This means that when controlling for all of the relevant variables, racial resentment and only two FIRE measures (both CoBRA) prove to be significant. Whites who have more racial resentment, whites who agree that people have certain benefits because of their skin, and whites who agree that racial problems in the US are rare all have a negative value on the graph. This means that when controlling for all factors, those who have more racial resentment and those who disagree that white privilege exists are less likely to have favorable opinions, but those who agree that racial incidents are rare also have favorable opinions of Harris. We also notice that the most important variable in this model is racial resentment (see Appendix B). This is the first model where it is *more* important than

partisanship. According to this model, the first and second most important variables are racial attitudes. The most important variable is racial resentment and the second most important variable is the FIRE CoBRA variable labeled as blatant racial issues. Party identification is the third most important variable. This finding is extremely important because it suggests that when one looks at the different dimensions whites use to make political decisions, racial attitudes still have a significant impact on those decisions. At a time when we discuss political polarization, we cannot ignore the unwavering, but changing role that race plays on the American political landscape. The other FIRE measures, hostile sexism scale, and anti-Black racism variables fail to meet significance in this model when we control for all factors. Model 4 supports our sixth hypothesis, H_6 , that racial resentment has a greater impact on attitudes toward Harris than the FIRE measures. The failure of some of the FIRE measures to gain significance, the calculation of the importance of each variable, and the pseudo R Square values in Models 1, 2, and 3, suggest that racial resentment is still powerful in explaining white attitudes.

We turn our attention to the generational differences between younger and older whites when it comes to the significant racial attitude variables, racial resentment, racial privilege, and blatant racial issues. Our hypothesis, H_2 , asserts that the FIRE measures will have a greater impact on younger whites. All 4 models indicate that the variable measuring generation is significant and that younger generations are more likely to have favorable opinions toward Harris. Because we wanted to tease out the relative impact of each variable within the cohorts, we replicated Model 4 with the two cohorts. The first cohort, the younger generation is captured in Model 5 and the older generation is captured in Model 6. Lastly in Model 7 we compute interactions between the generation variable and racial attitude variables and discuss the results.

We specify one model for young whites, Model 5, and one model for older whites, Model (see Table 2). Like the previous models, we calculate the variable importance of each measure. According to Model 5 in Table 2, the most important variables for younger whites include racial resentment followed by institutional discrimination. This is different from Model 6 where party identification and racial resentment have about the same impact on feelings toward Kamala Harris for older whites. Blatant racial issues, one of our CoBRA measures, is the third most important variable. The model for younger whites shows a similar picture. While the significant explanatory variables for older whites include racial resentment, party identification, blatant racial issues, education, racial privilege, and gender (in order of importance), the significant explanatory variables for younger whites include racial resentment, institutional discrimination, income, fear of others, political party, and anti-Black racism (listed in the order of importance). This is an interesting finding since institutional discrimination has not been significant in any of the other models. Moreover, this finding suggests that while the racial variables remain consistent in their ability to predict white opinions and behavior, the younger generation might internalize racial issues differently, and therefore as suggested by DeSante and Watts Smith, we may eventually need different ways of measuring racial attitudes as the relevance of the racial attitudes variables are not consistent across both age groups.

<Enter Table 2 Here>

Table 2. Determinants of Attitudes toward Harris for Younger and Older Generations

Independent Variables	Model 5 (SE)	Model 6 (SE)

Racial Resentment	-0.522 ^{***} (0.19)	-0.29 ^{***} (0.04)
CoBra:		
1. Racial Privilege	-0.39 (0.40)	-0.42 ^{**} (0.20)
2. Blatant Racial Issues	-0.30 (0.38)	-0.41 ^{**} (0.17)
3. Institutional Discrimination	3.32 ^{***} (1.35)	0.41 (0.48)
PCRW:		
1. White Empathy	-0.17 (0.44)	0.07
2. Fear of Others	0.94 ^{**} (0.46)	-0.25 [*] (0.15)
Anti-Black Racism	-1.24 ^{**} (0.72)	0.00 (0.27)
Sexism Scale	-0.08 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.08)
Gender	-1.81 (1.25)	-0.83 [*] (0.44)
Income	-0.49 ^{**} (0.21)	-0.06 (0.06)
Party Identification	1.62 ^{**} (0.87)	0.93 ^{***} (0.32)
Education	2.26 (1.93)	1.07 ^{**} (0.50)

Note: The results are based on data from the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey. Each model is estimated using binary logistic regression in R. The dichotomous dependent variable is evaluations toward Kamala Harris. The McFadden pseudo R-Square, calculated using the R caret package, is .74 for Model 5 and .42 for Model 6.
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table 3. Determinants of Attitudes toward Harris with Generation and Racial Attitudes Interactions

Independent Variables	Model 7 (SE)
Racial Resentment	-0.56*** (0.09)
CoBra:	
1. Racial Privilege x Generation	-0.70** (0.36)
2. Blatant Racial Issues x Generation	-0.42** (0.21)
3. Institutional Discrimination x Generation	0.71 (.40)
PCRW:	
1. White Empathy x Generation	0.63 (.40)
2. Fear of Others x Generation	-0.50** (.22)

Anti-Black Racism x Generation	0.89** (.40)
Sexism Scale	-0.08 (.08)
Gender	-1.14** (.47)
Income	-0.10* (0.06)
Party Identification	0.86*** (.30)
Education	0.84* (.50)

Note: The results are based on data from the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey. Each model is estimated using binary logistic regression in R. The dichotomous dependent variable is evaluations toward Kamala Harris. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

In both cohort models, the relationship between racial resentment and attitudes toward Harris is profound and as expected. Whites who have higher resentment scores are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Harris. This relationship is indicated by the negative values of the racial resentment variable. Racial resentment has an unmistakable impact when modeling attitudes toward Harris for younger whites and when modeling the attitudes of older whites.

The impact of the significant CoBRA measures in the 2 models show an interesting relationship between CoBRA and attitudes toward Harris. For older whites, two CoBRA measures

show a very clear impact on evaluations of Harris. Those who believe racial privilege is a problem and those who believe that blatant racial issues are rare, have more positive evaluations of Kamala Harris. How older people evaluate Harris clearly depends on their beliefs about racial privilege. As revealed in Model 5, younger whites do not have a clear relationship between this variable and opinions about Harris as neither of these CoBRA measures are significant. For older whites the relationship between the ability of attitudes toward blatant racial issues to predict evaluations of Kamala Harris is more clearly related, but for younger whites these two relationships are not supported.

The CoBRA measure of institutional discrimination has a significant impact on opinions of Harris when looking at the younger generation of whites, but not with the older generation. Young whites are more likely to favorably evaluate Harris when they believe institutional discrimination exists. This is an interesting finding as it suggests that both generations of whites use beliefs, albeit different beliefs, about racism to make decisions about Kamala Harris. The CoBRA measures predict attitudes toward Harris and this impact varies depending on the generation. Unfortunately, this analysis does not allow us to conclude the relative impact of the various CoBRA measures.

The PCRW measures demonstrate an equally interesting relationship between these attitudes and opinions of Harris. According to Table 2 the only PCRW measure that has a significant influence on attitudes toward Harris is fear of others. The positive value indicates that younger whites who fear other races are more likely to have unfavorable opinions of Harris, on the other hand the negative value for older whites means they are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward Harris when they fear people from other races. Although we do not know exactly why this difference exists, the racial threat work of scholars such as Giles and Buckner (1993) suggests that

more contact between groups can cause more hostility toward the outgroup. Given that the older generations have often participated in white flight and other activities to limit their contact with Black people, they are able to separate support for Harris from her identity. Perhaps their fear of Black people becomes activated when they are in close contact with Black people and then evaluate all things Black, including Harris, negatively as their younger generation may be doing presently.

Beliefs about the existence of anti-Black racism also demonstrate an important generational difference when it comes to evaluations of Harris. Younger whites who do not believe that this type of racism exists negatively evaluate Harris, yet the model of the older generation does not show a significant relationship between this acknowledgement and attitudes toward Harris. Like the other racial attitudes variables, this variable suggests that whites' political attitudes might vary based on their generation.

We use Model 7 to investigate these relationships using interaction terms. We include each of the FIRE (CoBRA and PCRW) measures as well as the variable measuring the belief that anti-Black racism exists as interaction terms with generation (see Table 3). Interestingly, we see a pattern similar to what we have seen with the rest of the models. The interaction terms for 3 of the FIRE measures (2 CoBRA and 1 PCRW) and the acknowledgement that anti-Black racism exists proved significant. The work of DeSante and Watts Smith appropriately posits that future scholarship on racial attitudes needs to consider how different generations of whites might use different racial calculations to make political decisions and Model 7 supports this claim. The interaction terms for racial privilege, blatant racial issues, fear of others, and anti-Black racism indicate that the impact that these factors have on how whites evaluate Harris depends on which generation they are a part of. This suggests that there is a generational difference when considering the impact of FIRE on the attitudes of whites. The bottom line is that younger and older

generations of whites evaluate Harris differently when considering FIRE racial attitudes, but also when considering whether they believe anti-Black racism exists. Recall that our earlier findings for the models with different generations indicated different significant factors for determining opinions toward Harris. In the case of the younger generation, opinions depended on racial resentment, institutional discrimination, fear of others, and anti-Black racism. The opinions for the older generation depended on racial privilege, blatant racial issues, and fear of others (in a different direction). Both of these tests, using the 2 models and using interaction terms support the claim that generational differences exist and help to explain why evaluations of Kamala Harris vary.

Although we have not been able to fully support H_2 , we find evidence that there are certainly generational differences among whites. We are satisfied that we have been able to solidly support hypotheses H_1 , H_3 , H_4 , H_6 and partially H_5 : Whites with negative racial attitudes are more likely to have unfavorable opinions toward Kamala Harris, Whites with racial resentment are more likely to have unfavorable evaluations of Harris, Whites who fail to acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists are more likely to have unfavorable opinions toward Kamala Harris, and racial resentment will have a greater impact on attitudes toward Harris than FIRE measures. We have provided some support, although much weaker, for our H_5 . We have not been able to fully support our hypotheses regarding the generational divide, H_2 . Our findings demonstrate that there is a difference between the younger generation and the older generation when it comes to the impact of racial attitudes on political decisions. The difference is not as simple as one model, FIRE or racial resentment, being more predictive than the other model.

Conclusion and Implications

Discourse around Kamala Harris's low poll numbers has pointed to many explanations, yet none of these explanations has considered how her race and gender might be influencing how she is

evaluated. We initiated this study to explore the influence of racial attitudes and hostile sexism on evaluations of America's first Black and Southeast Asian American Vice President, Kamala Harris, specifically among white Americans. Additionally, we aimed to discern whether these attitudes differ across generations of whites in how they influence evaluations of Kamala Harris. Utilizing data from the 2020 CMPS Survey, we used logistic regression to estimate our models. Our findings show that while DeSante and Watts Smith's (2020) FIRE model is a significant explanatory factor in whites' evaluations of Kamala Harris, racial resentment remains a powerful predictor across generations—even after accounting for partisanship. Furthermore, we discovered that hostile sexism also plays a role in these evaluations. While previous studies have extensively examined the likelihood of white Americans voting for Black political candidates, there was a gap in understanding the extent to which attitudes, like the FIRE model and hostile sexism, influence evaluations of female minority candidates in executive positions. Many of these earlier studies predominantly focused on Black male congressional candidates. We fill this void by using Kamala Harris as a test case. In our article, we draw on representational identity theory (Brown 2014) and the literature on racial attitudes to argue that Black women forge distinct political identities (Dowe 2023). This, in turn, influences their policy preferences and political styles in representing Black interests which then influence how negative racial attitudes might influence how women like Kamala Harris are evaluated. We argue that in a highly racialized political setting, Kamala Harris' position is bound to trigger racial attitudes. Our findings support this assertion.

Our findings reveal that whites possessing negative racial attitudes are more inclined to evaluate Kamala Harris negatively. For instance, whites who fail to recognize the privilege associated with their race are more likely to have negative perceptions of Vice President Harris. Conversely, whites acknowledging that anti-Black racism is a major issue in the U.S. tend to view Harris more

favorably. Our data also suggests that whites expressing anger over the existence of racism tend to have a more positive opinion of Harris. Overall the evidence in this article suggests that racial consciousness among whites might lead to better reactions to candidates like Kamala Harris. Interestingly, whites who occasionally harbor fears toward other races and those who naively see racial incidents as rare also displayed more favorable evaluations of Harris. This observation is counterintuitive; one would typically assume that those fearful of other races and those who see racial incidents as rare would view Harris more negatively. To the contrary, our finding indicates more understanding of the way in which proximity to Black people, the contact thesis, might influence political attitudes. When comparing the predictive power of the FIRE model against racial resentment, our evidence indicates that while certain aspects of FIRE are significant in determining evaluations of Kamala Harris, racial resentment proves more influential. We aren't dismissing the significance of the FIRE model in explaining white racial attitudes. Yet, racial resentment continues to be a pivotal determinant of whites' political inclinations. Our research highlights both distinct differences and parallels in how each of these racial attitudes influences perceptions of Kamala Harris. For instance, racial resentment remains the most salient explanatory variable across both older and younger white generations. Among older whites, evaluations of Harris can be attributed to racial resentment and dimensions of FIRE including beliefs that white privilege exists, that racial incidents are sporadic, and the fear of others. Meanwhile for younger whites, racial resentment and certain other dimensions of FIRE including institutional racism and fear of others, play a role in shaping evaluations of Harris. Additionally, our study reveals substantial evidence that hostile sexism significantly influences evaluations of Harris.

This study's findings underscore three significant conclusions. Firstly, racial resentment remains a powerful influence on whites' political attitudes across generations. Secondly, Black women like Kamala Harris will continue to face significant challenges as politicians and candidates due to negative racial attitudes. Thirdly, racial attitudes in America have evolved to encompass issues like privilege, institutional discrimination, anti-Black racism, and the denial of racial incidents' existence. Such shifts are hardly surprising given the traumatic racial events America has experienced over the past two decades. We've witnessed glaring racism within our criminal justice system, the brazen parading of white supremacists in our streets chanting "Jews will not replace us!", a president's reluctance to condemn white supremacist groups, an insurrection threatening the Congress's certification of a presidential election, and state legislatures curbing the teaching of critical race theory. Against this backdrop, one might question why racial resentment still significantly influences whites' evaluations of Kamala Harris across generations. We argue that racial resentment continues to be pivotal in shaping white political preferences because it encapsulates stereotypes pervasive in almost every facet of American society. Stereotypes suggesting Black Americans are lazy and undeserving are perpetuated relentlessly in media and daily social and political discourse, both domestically and internationally. While discussions about race in America have progressed to encompass white privilege, institutional discrimination, and anti-Black racism, it's vital to understand racial attitudes aren't binary. These attitudes are multifaceted and evolve as societal understanding of race develops.

As demonstrated in this article, racial resentment and certain facets of the FIRE model play a significant role in shaping how whites perceive Kamala Harris. This research also highlights the nuanced challenges faced by African American women in politics. Their racial identity may empower

them to champion issues vital to minority communities that mobilize voters. Yet, championing these issues might elicit adverse reactions from white Americans. Many voters, already holding racial biases, may remain unsupportive regardless of these politicians' stances or actions. Scholars like Dowe (2023) have written extensively about the radical imagination of Black women in U.S. politics. In her work, Dowe (2023) argues that Black women's political ambition to seek and run for office is driven by their concern for issues impacting their community but that this interest is distinct and is reflected in the kinds of policies that these women advocate for. In the current political context in the U.S. for Black women candidates to be viable candidates, they must speak to issues of racial justice in order to mobilize their base. The research in this study underscores the need for a profound shift in white Americans' racial perspectives and their bearing on political attitudes. Our research contributes to a growing body of research examining mixed-race candidates' evaluations and the potential challenges these candidates face from the white majority (Lemi, Casarez, and Sadhwani 2022; Lemi 2020; Green, Matos, and Sanbonmatsu. 2022; Leslien, Masuoka, Gaither, Remedios, and Viniuan 2022). As more Black women and women of color enter the political arena, they must navigate this intricate and often unjust landscape adroitly. Our study also reveals the substantial influence of hostile sexism on evaluations of Kamala Harris when accounting for specific racial attitudes. These observations affirm that while there have been strides in the political representation of women and Black individuals, there's still a considerable journey ahead. The perceptions and evaluations of Black women and people of color in politics are deeply intertwined with their race and gender.

In this article, we take up the charge from scholars like DeSante and Watts Smith (2020) who advocated for the testing of their FIRE Model, we find significant evidence of its predictive validity.

We argue that if contemporary discussions about race in America center on concepts like white privilege, then the FIRE model should provide valuable insights into white perceptions in an increasingly racialized political landscape. Our findings suggest that recognizing institutional racism, expressing empathy, acknowledging white privilege, and admitting the existence of anti-Black racism lead to more favorable evaluations of Kamala Harris. This implies that a possible remedy for America's racial issues might hinge on whites' willingness to critically introspect their racial privilege. However, whether this awareness can instigate tangible policy changes remains an open question. The testing of these new racial attitude measures sheds light on racism's enduring denial of objective truth. For instance, the racial resentment model is built on the idea that Blacks are lazy and undeserving — a stereotype that only permeated American political discourse after the abolishment of slavery and the end of sharecropping. There was nothing indolent about slaves, as the system of whiteness would not permit it, nor about sharecroppers who received a mere .25 for chopping cotton. As evolving perspectives on race enter the political narrative, it is striking that, despite compelling evidence of whites' privileges, many continue to deny white privilege. A stark example can be drawn from the contrasting responses to the Black Lives Matter protests, who faced militarized police forces after George Floyd's murder, and the armed white insurrectionists who temporarily seized the U.S. Capitol. Denying white privilege or downplaying racial incidents goes against the objective experiences of Black Americans who encounter distinct forms of racism. The fact that attitudes about white privilege now influence political judgments in the U.S. sheds light on the initiatives of numerous Republican-led legislatures to prohibit the teaching of critical race theory in public schools.

Future research should delve into how well the FIRE model forecasts political behavior. Currently, we understand that FIRE elucidates both racialized and non-racialized policy perspectives among whites, including white millennials. It also holds predictive power in determining whites' views of Kamala Harris and potentially other Black candidates. The evidence suggests that Kamala Harris, akin to Barack Obama, will grapple with considerable challenges in her vice-presidential role due to her racial identity. Some interpret the elections of groundbreaking figures like Kamala Harris and Barack Obama as indicators of America transcending racial impediments. Yet, the political journeys of these individuals underscore the profound entrenchment of race in the American political psyche. As the late Toni Morrison once said in an interview where she was discussing white people's refusal to interrogate their whiteness, "If you can only be tall because someone is on their knees, then you have a serious problem and my feeling is white people have a serious problem, and they should start thinking about what they can do about it."

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Appendix A

Independent Variables	Model 1 (SE)	Model 2 (SE)	Model 3 (SE)	Model 4 (SE)
Racial Resentment			-0.24*** (0.04)	-0.32*** (0.10)
CoBra:				
1. Racial Privilege	-0.50*** (0.11)			-0.51** (0.21)
2. Blatant Racial Issues	-0.29*** (0.12)			-0.57*** (0.19)
3. Institutional Discrimination	0.31 (0.35)			0.46 (0.49)
PCRW:				
1. White Empathy		-0.30*** (0.09)		0.00 (0.25)
2. Fear of Others		-0.13** (0.06)		-0.19 (0.16)

Anti-Black Racism	-0.61*** (0.18)	-0.88*** (0.10)	-0.60*** (0.14)	-0.14 (0.27)
Sexism Scale	-0.11** (0.05)	-0.07** (0.03)	0.08** (0.04)	-0.11 (0.08)
Gender	-0.54 (0.34)	-0.63*** (0.20)	-0.59** (0.25)	-0.69 (0.46)
Generation	-0.79** (0.33)	-0.55*** (0.13)	-0.52** (0.26)	-1.38*** (0.52)
Income	-0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.09 (0.06)
Party Identification	1.07*** (0.23)	1.53*** (0.13)	1.37*** (0.17)	0.89*** (0.33)
Education	0.61 (0.39)	0.28 (0.24)	0.23 (0.31)	0.90* (0.50)

Note: The results are based on data from the Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey. Each model is estimated using binary logistic regression in R. The dichotomous dependent variable is evaluations toward Kamala Harris. The McFadden pseudo R-Square, calculated using the R caret package, is .34 for Model 1, .40 for Model 2, .46 for Model 3, and .45 for Model 4. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Appendix B

Most Important Determinants of Harris Evaluations

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Resentment			5.30	3.16
Racial Privilege	4.35			2.43
Blatant Racial Issues	2.47			2.95
Institutional Discrimination	0.88			0.93
White Empathy		3.41		0.01
Fear of Others		2.07		1.23
Anti-Black Racism	3.43	8.42	4.27	0.52
Sexism Scale	2.23	2.30	2.18	1.34
Gender	1.61	3.19	2.37	1.49
Generation	2.40	2.86	2.04	2.68
Income	1.39	0.93	0.46	1.44
Party Identification	4.70	11.84	7.87	2.71
Education	1.55	1.17	0.75	1.79

Note: These values are calculated using the caret package in R. Variables with the higher numbers

Table 3. Most Important Determinants of Harris Evaluations by Generation

Variables	Model 5 Younger Whites	Model 6 Older Whites
Resentment	2.71	2.94
Racial Privilege	0.98	2.11
Blatant Racial Issues	0.79	2.39
Institutional Discrimination	2.46	0.84
White Empathy	0.38	0.31
Fear of Others	2.06	1.68
Anti-Black Racism	1.71	0.00
Sexism Scale	0.47	1.40
Gender	1.45	1.86
Income	2.33	1.00
Party Identification	2.94	2.94
Education	1.17	2.16
McFadden Pseudo R-Square	.74	.42

Note: These values are calculated using the caret package in R. Variables with the higher numbers have the greatest impact.