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When an Irresistible Prejudice Meets Immovable Politics: Black Legal Gun Ownership Undermines Racially Resentful White Americans' Gun Rights Advocacy

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Historical evidence suggests that White Americans' support for gun rights (i.e., opposition to gun control) is challenged by Black Americans exercising their legal rights to guns (e.g., The Black Panther Party and the Mulford Act of 1967). Here, we examined two empirical questions. First, we tested whether White Americans implicitly racialize gun rights as "White." In a preregistered study employing a novel IAT, racially resentful White Americans indirectly associated gun rights with White (and not Black) people. Moreover, this association was not primarily based in partisanship. Racial resentment overwhelmed the effect of party identification in explaining this association (Study 1). Given racial resentment typically predicts stronger support for gun rights (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2013), we next examined whether Black legal gun ownership undermines gun rights support among racially resentful White Americans across two studies (total $N = 773$), including a nationally representative sample of White partisans. In both studies, racially resentful White Americans expressed less support for a gun right (i.e., concealed-carry) when informed that Black (vs. White) Americans showed greater utilization of the gun right (Studies 2 and 3). Study 3 provided initial evidence suggesting that the observed reduced support is more closely linked to concerns about identity than security. Overall, these results support that Black legal gun ownership can reduce opposition to gun control among gun rights' most entrenched advocates.

Keywords: racial resentment, prejudice, gun rights, gun control, gun owner identity

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> If you're a black person in America, gun rights are not for you. It's as simple as that. In fact, the safest way to sell a black person a gun in America, they should say, is when you buy a gun, you should buy a white person with it and they hold the gun for you.
>
> —Trevor Noah, *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*

> Every able-bodied African-American must register for a legal firearm. That's the only way they'll change the law.
>
> —Dave Chapelle, *Dave Chappelle: Sticks and Stones*

In 1967, Ronald Reagan, then Republican governor of California, signed and passed the Mulford Act—a law that repealed Californians' legal right to openly carry loaded firearms in public. The primary motivation behind this legislation, which had the support of the National Rifle Association (NRA), was widely attributed to an attempt to disarm members of The Black Panther Party (BPP). The BPP was a national organization whose stated goal was to combat White oppression, and whose members had begun lawfully carrying firearms in public to protect themselves and their neighborhood residents from police brutality in the 1960s (Bloom

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& Martin, 2016). In particular, the Mulford Act gained widespread support in the state legislature after two dozen members of the BPP protested the law at the California state capitol while openly, and legally, carrying loaded firearms (see, Winkler, 2011). From the capitol steps, Bobby Seale, cofounder of the BPP declared:

> The Black Panther Party for self-defense calls upon the American people in general and the Black people in particular to take careful note of the racist California Legislature which is considering legislation aimed at keeping the Black people disarmed and powerless . . . . (Caraccio, 2017)

Throughout U.S. history, various gun control measures have previously been employed to disarm Black Americans in an explicitly racist manner (Burkett, 2008; Cottrol & Diamond, 1991; Tahmassebi, 1991; Winkler, 2011). For example, before the Civil War, Southern states highly restricted or prohibited free Black people from carrying firearms; some states authorized White patrols to lawfully enter free and enslaved Black persons' homes and seize any found arms and—without adjudication—punish those without a "proper" explanation for their arms (Cottrol & Diamond, 1991). After the Civil War, southern states adopted "Black Codes" to maintain White supremacy, which included not allowing free or recently freed Black people to own a gun (Cottrol & Diamond, 1991). The Mulford Act of 1967 was distinct from these explicitly racist gun control laws; impacting the rights of all Californians, this gun control legislation was race-neutral on its face. Yet, historians argue that its immediate intended effect was to disarm Black Americans who had been using their legal gun rights (Winkler, 2011). Therefore, as social psychologists, we argue that its passage can be interpreted as driven by anti-Black attitudes.

Recent research has highlighted the role of racial resentment in *promoting support* for gun rights (i.e., opposition to gun control) among White Americans (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2013). However, as highlighted in the opening quotes and historical examples, the current research seeks to understand whether racially resentful attitudes can still be implicated today in *promoting opposition* to gun rights when Black Americans are thought to be using their legal rights to guns.

Critically, the context in which gun legislation is considered can reduce support for gun rights among White Americans with highly entrenched progun attitudes. In stark contrast to the Republican-led push for gun control in the late 1960s, today Republicans are associated with holding strong, progun attitudes (Buttrick, 2020; Conley, 2019). Although Democrats and Republicans showed similar support for gun control in the 1960s and 1970s (Conley, 2019), partisan differences in progun attitudes today are, in part, attributed to Republicans seeing guns as a means of safety and seeing gun owners as part of their in-group more than Democrats do (Losee et al., 2020).

However, even for these entrenched partisan differences in support of gun rights today, context matters. For example, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2001) tested whether how gun control legislation was framed would decrease opposition among Republicans, but not Democrats. Specifically, the researchers framed laws about carrying concealed handguns as an issue of "law-abiding citizens having the right to protect oneself" or an issue of "concealed handguns as a threat to public safety." These two framings were expected to activate two distinct, contrasting considerations among Republicans—a preference for individual liberties and smaller government versus an emphasis on public safety, respectively—and lead to divergent views on the gun control measure for Republicans only. The researchers found support for this hypothesis in a predominantly White, midwestern sample. Republicans reported less opposition to concealed handgun laws when framed as an issue of public safety compared to when framed as an issue of individual rights. The issue framing did not impact Democrats' support of concealed handgun laws (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001). These results highlight that making key contextual information salient, such as *who* is using their legal rights to guns and firearms, may elicit changes in entrenched progun attitudes. As concern about societal-level crime is associated with less support for gun rights (Filindra & Kaplan, 2017), an increase in concerns about public safety due to Black Americans utilizing their legal rights to guns may underlie any reduced support for gun rights.

In addition to contextual information about who is using their legal gun rights, central to our research is the hypothesis that White Americans' racial attitudes, not just conventional partisan attitudes, play a key role in progun attitudes. Compared with party identification, racial resentment is just as predictive, if not a stronger predictor, of support for gun rights (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2013). And, this past research has found that holding racially resentful attitudes is associated with greater support for gun rights. Racial resentment as a construct captures negative affect toward Black Americans that is expressed in terms of support for conservative values of individualism, self-reliance, and strong work ethic and the belief that Black people violate these values and instead rely on special government favors (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears & Henry, 2003). This form of racism is symbolic in nature because these racial attitudes stem from early socialization of abstract moral values and beliefs rather than personal experience/self-interest and are applied to Black Americans as a collective group, rather than to specific Black individuals (Sears & Henry, 2003).

While racial resentment, a statement of moral values, is not exclusively a belief system of the political right, Republicans, on average, score higher on racial resentment than do Democrats (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019; Knuckey, 2005). And while scoring higher in racial resentment may possess a slightly different, qualitative meaning for some non-White racial groups (e.g., Black Americans; Kam & Burge, 2017; Tesler & Sears, 2010), racial resentment has been thoroughly studied in White Americans and is found to predict attitudes toward a broad array of policies, whether explicitly racial or seemingly race-neutral (Maxwell & Shields, 2014; Wallsten et al., 2017; Wilson & Brewer, 2013). Of note, racial resentment is not a niche attitude; national surveys show that White Americans skew toward higher levels of resentment and that these attitudes are relatively stable over time (Jardina, 2021 see also, Filindra & Kaplan, 2017).

Among White Americans, holding racially resentful attitudes is associated with stronger support for gun rights, even when accounting for the perceived racial threats that often seem to drive gun rights support (e.g., fear of Black criminals; Kleck, 1997). In national survey data, O'Brien et al. (2013) found racial resentment was associated with support for gun rights (e.g., concealed-carry and having a gun in one's home), even when controlling for fear of Black Americans as violent, anti-Black implicit attitudes, and relevant demographic variables (e.g., party identification, gender,

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living in the south). Filindra and Kaplan (2015) found that racial resentment predicted stronger support for gun rights among White Americans and that the predictive effect of racial resentment was exacerbated among participants first exposed to images of Black Americans. The authors attributed the strong positive association of racial resentment and progun attitudes to racialized narratives promoted by gun proponents, such as the NRA, in the late 1970s. Gun rights proponents framed access to guns as a privileged right suitable only for "moral" Americans—an ostensibly race-neutral statement infused with coded racial language that implicitly signals that guns were meant for White Americans (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015). Therefore, ideas of *who* legal gun owners are may be racialized among White Americans, too, especially for those who may hold more racially resentful attitudes. Given that legal gun ownership functions as a valued social identity (Burkett, 2008; Joslyn et al., 2017; Lacombe, 2019), making salient that Black Americans are utilizing their legal rights to guns, and thus are legal gun owners, too, may negatively impact White perceptions of legal gun owners as a social group, which might underlie any reduced support for gun rights.

This historical understanding of U.S. gun rights motivates our specific research question which asserts that racially resentful White Americans may instead show *reduced* support for gun rights when Black Americans, instead of White Americans, are thought to be exercising their legal rights to guns. First, we ask, do racially resentful White Americans associate gun rights with White Americans rather than Black Americans? We hypothesize that racial resentment would predict a stronger bias to associate gun rights with White people. Further, if racially resentful White Americans equate legal gun owners most of all with White Americans, does contextual information about growing Black legal gun ownership affect their typical progun attitudes? Specifically, we hypothesize that showing Black Americans as utilizing their legal gun rights more than White Americans (as opposed to when White Americans are shown as utilizing gun rights most) will elicit racially resentful White Americans to show reduced support for gun rights. And, to shed light on potential factors contributing to this reduction in support, we exploratorily examine whether this salience of Black legal gun rights utilization affects White Americans' evaluations of legal gun owners as a social group or increases concerns about safety.

Overview of Studies and Hypotheses

In Study 1, we use an implicit association task to indirectly test whether White Americans associate gun rights more closely with White Americans than with Black Americans. We expected this racialized association of gun rights with White Americans to be predicted by participant's reported level of racial resentment, such that White Americans high in racial resentment should show stronger associations between White people and gun rights than would White Americans low in racial resentment, even when controlling for party identification.

In Studies 2 and 3, we examined whether learning that Black Americans are exercising their legal right to concealed-carry reduces racially resentful White Americans' support for concealed-carry rights, as with the historical example of the BPP and the Mulford Act. We expected that reduced support for gun rights should be more tailored toward those rights that Black Americans are shown to be exercising at a faster rate, namely, concealed-carry, and less so to other gun rights. Given the explicit and polarized partisan nature of gun rights in the U.S. (Conley, 2019), in this research, we focus on White Democrats and Republicans to examine the effect of racial attitudes over and above the effect of entrenched partisan differences in progun attitudes. All studies were approved by the University of California, Los Angeles Institutional Review Board.

Study 1

In Study 1, we tested whether White Americans associate gun rights (relative to gun control) with White Americans (relative to Black Americans) using an implicit association task. As outlined in our preregistered analysis plan (https://osf.io/pe6yh/), we sought to test five hypotheses in this study. We first hypothesized that, in the overall sample of White Americans, there would be a significant association of gun rights with White Americans and not Black Americans. Second, we hypothesized that party identification would be an important predictor of this racial bias, in that Republicans would show a significant association of gun rights with White Americans, but that Democrats would not show this association. Third, we hypothesized that this racial bias would be significantly stronger in Republicans than Democrats. Our fourth and fifth hypotheses were central to our key theory that we test in this set of studies. We hypothesized that participants high in racial resentment would show a significant association of gun rights with White Americans (and not Black Americans) and that racial resentment would be a significant, positive predictor of this racial bias when controlling for party identification. Support for this specific hypothesis would give credence to our theory that anti-Black attitudes, and less so political partisanship, explain the racialization of gun rights. Also, we explore whether legal gun ownership itself functions as a racialized social identity by testing whether more positive evaluations of legal gun owners (e.g., warmth) are associated with a bias to associate gun rights with White Americans.

Method

Participants

As outlined in our preregistration materials, our target participant recruitment goal was 100 participants based on prior research interested in between-participants differences (Plaut et al., 2011). Further, an a priori power analysis indicated needing at least 68 participants to detect a medium effect ($f^2 = .15$) with adequate power ($1 - ß = .80$) using a linear regression model. Thus, our target sample size ensured adequate power for between-participants analyses even after accounting for exclusions outlined by Greenwald et al. (2003). We recruited a sample of 100 White Americans who identified as Democrat or Republican using Prolific Academic recruitment services. Based on recommended quality checks for IAT surveys (Greenwald et al., 2003), eight participants were excluded for either speeding (>10% of IAT trials with response latency <300 ms) or for taking a significant break (IAT trial >10,000 ms) during the task; two were excluded for not self-identifying as White/Caucasian; and data from two others were lost due to a software-saving error. Thus, our final sample included 88 White

Americans (44% women, 56% men[1]) who identified politically as either Republican (50%) or Democrat (50%). In this final sample, 32% of participants reported owning a gun, which tracks closely with population data as 30% of U.S. adults own a gun (Schaeffer, 2021). Participants were offered $1.50 in exchange for participation in a 10-min study.

Procedure

After providing consent to participate in the study, participants first completed our demographic and individual difference measures in the order described below[2] and then completed the IAT on their personal computers using the Inquisit Player web software.

Measures

Warmth Toward Legal Gun Owners. Participants used a feeling thermometer to rate their perceived warmth toward legal gun owners from 0 (*very cold*) to 100 (*very warm*). We use greater ratings of warmth to indicate more positive evaluations of legal gun owners.

Personal Gun Ownership. Two items inquired about personal ownership of a gun. Participants responded to "Do you own a handgun?" and then were asked, "Do you own any other type of gun (not a handgun)?" For both questions, participants were given the response options "*Yes*," "*No*," or "*I prefer not to say*." Participants who indicated "*Yes*" were categorized as gun owners.

Political Party Identification. Using a two-part question, participants first indicated whether they generally identified as "Democrat," "Republican," or "Independent." Participants who selected "Democrat" or "Republican" then selected between two choices of whether they identified strongly with the party or not so strongly. Participants selecting "Independent" indicated whether they thought of themselves as closer to the Democratic party (i.e., lean Democrat), the Republican party (i.e., lean Republican), or closer to neither party. Participants who reported leaning toward either party were categorized as Democrat or Republican respectively, while those who responded "closer to neither party" were identified as pure Independents and would be excluded from analyses per our inclusion criteria.

Racial Resentment. Four items were used to measure racial resentment toward Black Americans (e.g., "Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Black people should do the same without any special favors"; "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Black people would try harder they could be just as well off as White people"; The American National Election Studies, 2020). Participants responded from 1 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly*. This scale showed excellent reliability, $\alpha = .93$.

IAT. Participants completed a novel IAT devised to indirectly measure the strength of association between gun rights/gun control and race (White vs. Black American).[3] Participants completed 120 test trials in total. In half the trials, participants were asked to pair the five pretested gun rights concept words/phrases (i.e., *self-protection, hunting, concealed carry, NRA, gun range*) with images of White faces and the five pretested gun control words (i.e., *waiting period, weapons ban, gun free zone, magazine ban, bumpstock ban*) with photos of Black faces. These pairings were then swapped in the other half of the trials. The order of the pairing trials was counterbalanced between participants. Positive IAT *D* scores indicate a bias to associate gun rights (relative to gun control) with White Americans (relative to Black Americans), whereas negative scores indicate a stronger association of gun rights and Black Americans (and gun control with White Americans).

Results and Discussion

Main Analyses

Descriptives are displayed by party identification in Table 1, overall item descriptives and correlations are displayed in Table 2, and linear regression results are displayed in Table 3. The confidence intervals (CIs) reported in-text pertain either to the 95% CI of the mean IAT D score in the one-sample t-tests (notated with subscript *M*) or the 95% CI of the b-coefficient in the linear regression models. Partial correlations (r_p) were used to estimate the effect size of individual regression predictors, consistent with prior research on gun attitudes testing interaction effects (Kerner et al., 2022). We first examined whether there was an overall bias in the sample to associate gun rights with White Americans (i.e., mean IAT *D* score > 0). As predicted, conducting a one-sample *t* test against zero, we find a small, yet significant, bias to more strongly associate gun rights with White Americans (and gun control with Black Americans) in the overall sample ($M_D = .15$, $SD_D = .42$, 95% CI_M: [.06, .23]), $t(87) = 3.29$, $p = .001$.

Racial Resentment. To test for the presence of a bias to associate gun rights with White Americans depending on the extent of participant racial resentment, we first used one-sample t-tests to compare mean IAT *D* scores of both participants high in racial resentment ($\geq +1$ *SD* above the sample mean) and participants low in racial resentment (≤ -1SD below the sample mean) to zero. As hypothesized, participants high in racial resentment showed a significant association of gun rights with White Americans ($M_D = .40$, $SD_D = .43$, 95% CI_M [.18, .63]), $t(16) = 3.86$, $p = .001$ (see Figure 1). However, participants low in racial resentment showed no significant association between gun rights and race, ($M_D = -.03$, $SD_D = .39$, 95% CI_M [−.23, .18]), $t(15) = .26$, $p = .80$. We next employed linear regression to test whether racial resentment predicted a bias to associate gun rights with White Americans relative to Black Americans. As hypothesized, racial resentment was a significant positive predictor of IAT *D* score, and this effect was not moderated by gun ownership and remained significant when controlling for gun ownership (Model 1).

Political Party Identification. We next tested whether Republicans and Democrats associated gun rights with White relative to Black Americans by employing two one-sample t-tests to compare the mean IAT *D* score of both Republicans and Democrats to zero. As hypothesized, Republicans showed a significant association of gun rights with White Americans ($M_D = .27$, $SD_D =$

[1] Analysis of participant gender for each study is included in the online supplemental materials. The primary effects reported in each study were robust to participant gender.

[2] Given data for Study 1 was collected in the first week of April 2020, two questions related to perceived threat were asked to ensure salient concerns due to the cultural context (e.g., COVID-19, mass shootings) were not influencing the results. All reported effects hold when controlling for these concerns and are described in the online supplemental materials.

[3] The development of the novel IAT is described in full in the online supplemental materials.

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Table 1
Descriptives by Political Party Identification for Study 1

Measure	Democrat		Republican				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	95% CI	*d*
IAT D score	.02	.40	.27	.39	3.02**	[.09, .42]	.64
Racial resentment	1.93	1.05	3.52	.95	7.41***	[1.16, 2.01]	1.58
Warmth: Legal gun owners	45.91	22.20	83.23	21.38	8.03***	[83.23, 45.91]	1.71

Note. 95% CI (confidence interval) pertains to the difference in means. *d* = Cohen's *d* (effect size).
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

.39, 95% CI_M [.15, .39]), $t(43) = 4.62$, $p < .001$. However, Democrats showed no significant association between gun rights and race ($M_D = .02$, $SD_D = .40$, 95% CI_M: [−.10, .14]), $t(43) = .29$, $p = .77$ (see Figure 2). As hypothesized, Republicans reported significantly greater IAT *D* scores than Democrats, and this effect was not moderated by gun ownership and held when controlling for gun ownership (Model 2).

We next examined whether racial resentment predicted a bias to associate gun rights with White Americans after accounting for party identification by regressing IAT *D* score on party identification and racial resentment. As hypothesized, racial resentment remained a significant predictor of IAT *D* score while party identification no longer predicted IAT *D* score even if controlling for gun ownership. Party identification did not moderate the effect of racial resentment on IAT *D* score (Model 3).[4]

Exploratory Analyses: Warmth Toward Legal Gun Owners

In the exploratory analyses outlined in our preregistration document, we also sought to test the association between feelings of warmth toward legal gun owners and bias to associate gun rights with White Americans relative to Black Americans. We find that greater warmth toward legal gun owners is associated with stronger associations between gun rights and White Americans, $B = .005$, $SE = .001$, $t(86) = 3.55$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.002, .008], $r_p = .36$. This relationship between warmth toward legal gun owners and IAT *D* score was not moderated by gun ownership, $B = -.001$, $SE = .005$, $t(84) = -.27$, $p = .79$, 95% CI [−.01, .01], $r_p = -.03$, and held when controlling for gun ownership, $B = .006$, $SE = .002$, $t(85) = 3.88$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.003, .01], $r_p = .39$. Regressing IAT *D* score on party identification and legal gun owner evaluations, warmth toward legal gun owners remained significantly associated with IAT *D* score, $B = .004$, $SE = .002$, $t(85) = 2.03$, $p = .045$, 95% CI [.00008, .008], $r_p = .22$, while party identification no longer predicted IAT *D* score, $B = .11$, $SE = .11$, $t(85) = .99$, $p = .33$, 95% CI [−.11, .33], $r_p = .11$. Party identification did not significantly moderate the relationship between warmth toward legal gun owners and IAT *D* score, $B = .003$, $SE = .004$, $t(84) = .75$, $p = .45$, 95% CI [−.004, .01], $r_p = .08$.

Altogether, this study served as initial evidence for the racialization of gun rights (and gun control) in the minds of some White Americans, the basis for our hypotheses in the subsequent studies. As predicted, both party identification and racial resentment significantly predict an implicit bias to relatively associate gun rights with White Americans and gun control with Black Americans. Republicans (but not Democrats) and participants high (but not low) in racial resentment showed this pattern of racial bias. Importantly, neither of these effects were moderated by personal gun ownership. However, this racial bias was overwhelmingly driven by anti-Black attitudes, as only racial resentment remained a significant predictor of this bias when testing the effect of racial resentment and political partisanship simultaneously. In addition, our exploratory analyses highlighted that more positive evaluations of legal gun owners were related to stronger relative associations of White Americans with gun rights when controlling for party identification. Thus, among a sample of White Americans, both holding more racially resentful attitudes and having more positive evaluations of legal gun owners were associated with greater racialization of gun rights with White Americans and gun control with Black Americans.

Table 2
Table of Means and Correlations for Study 1

Measure	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
1. IAT *D* score	.15	.41			
2. Racial resentment	2.72	1.28	.37***		
3. Owner (0 = nongun owner)	.32	.47	.04	.23*	
4. Warmth: Legal gun owners	64.57	28.67	.36***	.62***	.50***

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Study 2

In Study 1, we established that racially resentful White Americans strongly associate gun rights with White Americans and gun control with Black Americans, even when accounting for party identification. Given this racialization of gun rights as White, but not Black among this group, Black Americans exercising their gun rights may elicit reduced support for gun rights. In the subsequent study, we examine whether racially resentful White Americans, a group who typically shows the strongest support for gun rights, would show reduced support for gun rights if Black legal gun ownership was instead made salient.

[4] In the online supplemental materials, we exploratorily test party identification as a moderator of racial resentment in all studies, examining its effect within Republicans and Democrats. These analyses suggest racial resentment may have larger political effects on Republican gun policy attitudes. More systematic and confirmatory research is needed as these findings contradict prior research on the political effects of racial prejudice (Sniderman & Carmines, 1997).

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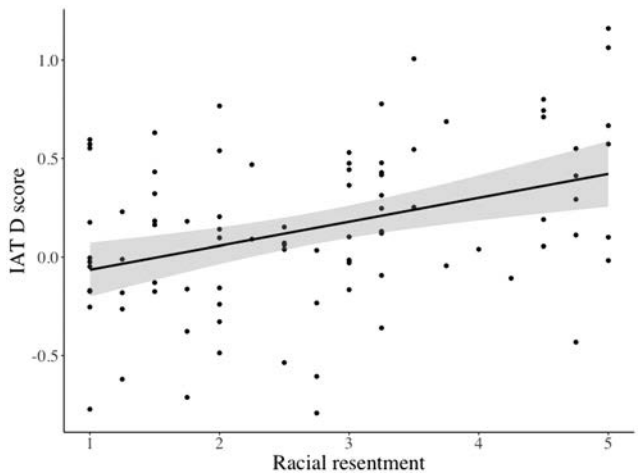
Table 3
Hierarchical Linear Regression Results Predicting IAT D Score in Study 1

	Step 1					Step 2					Step 3				
Model/predictor	*b*	*SE*	*t*	95% CI	r_p	*b*	*SE*	*t*	95% CI	r_p	*b*	*SE*	*t*	95% CI	r_p
Model 1			Outcome = IAT *D* score												
RR	.12	.03	3.75***	[.06, .19]	.37	.12	.03	3.73***	[.06, .19]	.37	.13	.04	3.08**	[.04, .21]	.32
Owner						−.04	.09	−.42	[−.22, .14]	−.05	−.04	.09	−.40	[−.22, .15]	−.04
RR × Owner											−.01	.07	−.07	[−.15, .14]	−.01
Model 2			Outcome = IAT *D* score												
Pid	.25	.08	3.02**	[.09, .42]	.31	.27	.09	3.05**	[.10, .45]	.31	.35	.10	3.35**	[.14, .56]	.34
Owner						−.06	.10	−.65	[−.25, .13]	−.07	.12	.16	.76	[−.20, .45]	.08
Pid × Owner											−.29	.20	−1.42	[−.69, .12]	−.15
Model 3			Outcome = IAT *D* score												
RR	.10	.04	2.32*	[.01, .19]	.24	.10	.04	2.33**	[.01, .18]	.25	.03	.06	.62	[−.08, .14]	.07
Pid	.10	.11	.97	[−.11, .31]	.10	.12	.11	1.12	[−.10, .34]	.12	.09	.10	.88	[−.12, .30]	.10
Owner						−.07	.09	−.70	[−.25, .12]	−.08	—	—	—	—	—
RR × Pid											.14	.08	1.66	[−.03, .30]	.18

Note. 95% CI (confidence interval) pertains to the b-coefficient. r_p = partial correlations (effect size); RR = racial resentment (mean centered); Pid = political party identification (0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican); Owner = personal gun ownership (0 = nongun owner, 1 = gun owner).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Thus, we experimentally varied the salience of Black Americans' use of legal gun rights, testing for its effect on White Americans' support for gun rights. We expected that racially resentful White Americans would report less support for gun rights, such as concealed-carry, when Black Americans are described as utilizing concealed-carry rights at the fastest rate compared to when White Americans are described as utilizing them at the fastest rate. We selected concealed-carry given the availability of racial data on its utilization, its previous use in research on gun attitudes, and that it is legal in all U.S. states. To examine the sensitivity of the effect, we examined whether Black concealed-carry salience impacted support only for concealed-carry rights support—the specific gun right that Black Americans were described as using—or whether it impacted support for gun rights more broadly. Participants were offered $1.50 in exchange for participation in a 15-min study.

Figure 1
Association of Gun Rights With White Americans Predicted by Racial Resentment in Study 1



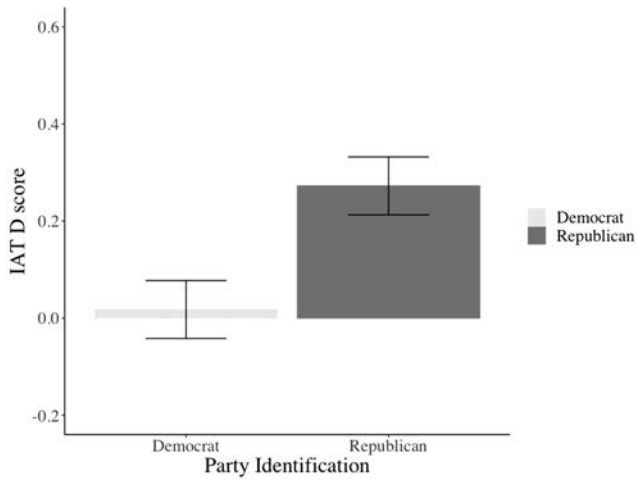
Note. Shaded area represents continuous 95% confidence intervals. For reference, figure displays Model 1, Step 1 as shown in Table 3.

Method

Participants

Our target participant recruitment goal was 400 participants. This sample size provided over 95% power to detect a small to medium effect ($f^2 = .05$) using a linear regression model that tests our primary hypothesis regarding a two-way interaction between experimental condition and participants' reported level of racial resentment (high vs. low) while controlling for party identification. We recruited a sample of 515 White American participants using Amazon's Mechanical Turk. As we were primarily interested in White partisans and leaners, participants who identified as pure Independents (13%) were excluded from analyses. Of the remaining participants, those who failed to pass the required a priori manipulation and attention checks were excluded from analyses (12%). Thus, our final sample consisted of 393 White Americans

Figure 2
Association of Gun Rights With White Americans Predicted by Political Party Identification in Study 1



Note. Error bars are standard errors.

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(44% women, 55% men, <1% identified as a different gender or did not disclose their gender) who identified politically as either Republican (38%) or Democrat (62%). In this final sample, 27% of participants reported owning a gun, and 9% reported having a concealed-carry permit.

Procedure

Participants were informed that they were participating in a study ostensibly about how readers perceive news articles that highlight everyday people and communities utilizing their individual rights that are protected in the United States. Participants were then told that they would be randomly assigned to read one of these articles and answer questions related to their perception of the article and the article content. In reality, all participants were randomly assigned to read one of two articles about concealed-carry rights in the United States. To experimentally manipulate the salience of Black Americans' (versus White Americans') legal utilization of their concealed-carry rights, participants were randomly assigned to read an article that either described the rate of concealed-carry permit obtainment as increasing fastest among Black Americans (key condition: *Black increase*) or White Americans (control condition: *White increase*). Each article's title, image, and race-related information reflected their respective racial focus (see online supplemental materials). For example, participants read the following race-related information:

> Records from states that keep statistics on race and concealed handgun permits showed that from 2012 to 2016, the number of *Blacks* (*Whites*) who have permits grew 30 percent faster than *Whites* (*non-Whites*) who have them. For example, in North Carolina, which has detailed data on the race of permit holders from 1996 to 2016, the growth rate for *Blacks* (*Whites*) is twice as fast as that for *Whites* (*non-Whites*).

All other aspects of the article were the same across conditions. For example, participants were given accurate data about concealed-carry permit holders, such as information demonstrating how permit holders are extremely law-abiding (i.e., the percent of permit holders charged or convicted of a felony has decreased in recent years). Participants were then asked about their perceptions of the article, including the article's perceived topical relevance to American life and Constitution-protected rights, emotions felt while reading (i.e., worry, happiness, relaxed), information familiarity, and interest in learning more. Participants then answered our measures of interest and demographics.

Note, the experimental articles were modeled after a real Fox News article, which accurately described that Black Americans were obtaining concealed-carry permits at faster rates than White Americans. However, in both Studies 2 and 3, participants in the White increase condition (who read about faster increases in White concealed-carry) reported greater familiarity with the article information, even though the information presented in the Black increase condition was based in reality.[5] Thus, we interpret the greater familiarity with the information in the White increase condition as evidence suggesting the White increase condition functioned more as a "status quo" reference condition, as the Black increase condition made less familiar information about Black concealed-carry salient. The full description of the article and experimental method can be found in the online supplemental materials.

Measures

The full item list for the two gun rights-related measures can be found in the online supplemental materials.

Support for Concealed-Carry Rights. Seven items measured support for the right to carry concealed weapons. Items measured attitudes toward and beliefs about concealed-carry given the article content (for example, "It is an individual's lawful right to be able to carry a concealed gun"; "Given the increased rates of conceal carry permits, law enforcement's jobs will be easier"; "Because of the risk of criminals getting guns, we should be careful in who carries concealed guns" [reverse-coded]). Participants responded to items using a 7-point scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, and the measure showed good reliability, $\alpha = .88$.

Support for General Gun Rights. Seven items measured support for general gun rights that were not specific to concealed-carry. Items measured beliefs about gun rights in general (e.g., "To what extent do you support or oppose a ban on semiautomatic weapons"; "In general, if more people had guns, there would be less crime"; "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun, is a good guy with a gun"). Participants responded to items using a 7-point scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree (strongly oppose)* to 7 = *strongly agree (strongly support)*, and the measure showed good reliability, $\alpha = .91$. These items were adapted and modified from prior research and opinion surveys on U.S. gun policy attitudes and perceptions (Bui & Sanger-Katz, 2017; Stroebe et al., 2017).

Racial Resentment. This construct was measured using the same four items from Study 1, $\alpha = .93$. To avoid revealing our true interest in resentment toward Black Americans in this study, participants answered the racial resentment items near the end of the survey along with other demographic information. Confirming that the experimental manipulation did not have an effect on the proposed moderator, racial resentment toward Black Americans did not significantly differ between the White increase ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.29$) or Black increase conditions ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.28$), $t(390.88) = -1.32$, $p = .19$, 95% CI [−.43, .08], $d = -.13$.

Personal Gun Ownership and Political Party Identification. These two demographic variables were measured as described in Study 1.

Results and Discussion

Primary Analyses

To test our main hypothesis regarding the expected interaction of Black concealed-carry salience (White increase = 0, Black increase = 1) and racial resentment on our key measures of interest, we tested a hierarchical linear regression model that first tested

[5] In Studies 2 and 3, the only article perception item that approached significance by condition (Black increase vs. White increase) was information familiarity, as participants in the Black increase condition reported less information familiarity than participants in the White increase condition, $t(389.68) = -1.67$, $p = .095$, 95% CI [−.60, .05], $d = -.17$, and, $t(368.28) = -2.57$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [−.76, −.10], $d = -.26$, respectively. No other condition differences in article perceptions approached significance (all $ps > .14$).

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for main effects of predictors simultaneously. We then included an interaction term between Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment to test our key hypotheses regarding whether the effect of experimental condition is contingent on participant level of racial resentment. Specifically, we tested whether the effect of Black concealed-carry salience was observed at low (−1 *SD* below the mean) and high (+1 *SD* above the mean) levels of racial resentment. For each dependent measure, we first report the key test for an interaction effect of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment, and then report the main effects of the predictors. As shown in Table 4, Republicans reported significantly more support for concealed-carry rights, more support for general gun rights, and greater racial resentment than Democrats (*t*s > 13.62, *p*s < .001). Thus, we include party identification as a covariate in all regression analyses. Overall item descriptives and correlations are displayed in Table 5.

Support for Concealed-Carry Rights. To test whether the effect of Black concealed-carry salience on support for concealed-carry rights was contingent on level of racial resentment, we regressed support for concealed-carry rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction while controlling for party identification. A significant interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment emerged, $B = -.23$, $SE = .08$, $t(385) = -2.76$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [−.39, −.07], $r_p = -.14$. We followed up by testing simple effects to examine the effect of Black concealed-carry salience at high and low levels of racial resentment. As shown in Figure 3, among participants high in racial resentment, those in the Black increase condition reported less support for concealed-carry rights compared to participants in the White increase condition, $B = -.33$, $SE = .15$, $t(385) = -2.19$, $p = .029$, 95% CI [−.63, −.03], $r_p = -.11$. However, no significant effect of Black concealed-carry salience was found for participants low in racial resentment, $B = .26$, $SE = .15$, $t(385) = 1.71$, $p = .09$, 95% CI [−.04, .55], $r_p = .09$. Thus, as hypothesized, being made to think about Black (as opposed to White) Americans legally using their concealed-carry rights elicited less support for concealed carry rights among participants high in racial resentment, but not those low in racial resentment.[6]

Examining main effects, we regressed support for concealed-carry rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and party identification. Participants higher in racial resentment reported greater support for concealed-carry rights, $B = .45$, $SE = .05$, $t(386) = 8.79$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.35, .55], $r_p = .41$, and Republicans reported greater support for concealed-carry rights than Democrats, $B = 1.24$, $SE = .13$, $t(386) = 9.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.97, 1.50], $r_p = .42$. However, no significant main effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged, $B = -.03$, $SE = .11$, $t(386) = -.33$, $p = .75$, 95% CI [−.25, .18], $r_p = -.02$.

Support for General Gun Rights. We next examined whether Black concealed-carry salience elicited less support for general gun rights unrelated to concealed-carry. Again, we regressed support for general gun rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction, while controlling for party identification. No significant interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment emerged on support for general gun rights, $B = .06$, $SE = .09$, $t(388) = .63$, $p = .53$, 95% CI [−.12, .23], $r_p = .03$, as there was no effect of Black concealed-carry salience among participants low in racial resentment, $B = -.03$, $SE = .16$, $t(388) = -.20$, $p = .85$, 95% CI [−.35, .29], $r_p = -.01$, or high in racial resentment, $B = .11$, $SE = .16$, $t(388) = .70$, $p = .49$, 95% CI [−.21, .43], $r_p = .04$.

Examining main effects, participants higher in racial resentment did report greater support for general gun rights, $B = .45$, $SE = .05$, $t(389) = 8.21$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.34, .55], $r_p = .38$, and Republicans reported greater support for general gun rights than Democrats, $B = 1.75$, $SE = .14$, $t(389) = 12.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.47, 2.04], $r_p = .53$. However, again, no main effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged, $B = .04$, $SE = .12$, $t(389) = .35$, $p = .72$, 95% CI [−.19, .27], $r_p = .02$. Thus, unlike support for concealed-carry rights, being made to think about Black (as opposed to White) Americans legally using their concealed-carry rights did not differentially influence racially resentful participants' support for gun rights unrelated to concealed-carry.

Exploratory Analyses: Personal Gun Ownership

To ensure that the interactive effect of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment on support for concealed carry rights was not driven by differences between gun owners versus nonowners, we examined whether this interaction effect held when controlling for personal gun ownership. We thus regressed support for concealed-carry rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction, while controlling for both party identification and gun ownership. Gun owners reported greater support for concealed-carry rights than nonowners, $B = .36$, $SE = .13$, $t(383) = 2.76$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [.10, .61], $r_p = .14$. Yet, the two-way interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment remained significant, $B = -.24$, $SE = .08$, $t(383) = -2.89$, $p = .004$, 95% CI [−.40, −.08], $r_p = -.15$. Again, participants high in racial resentment reported less support for concealed-carry rights in the Black increase condition than in the White increase condition, $B = -.36$, $SE = .15$, $t(383) = -2.35$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [−.65, .06], $r_p = -.12$, but the effect of Black concealed-carry salience for participants low in racial resentment was not significant, $B = .26$, $SE = .15$, $t(383) = 1.73$, $p = .08$, 95% CI [−.03, .55], $r_p = .09$.

Thus, we find support for our primary hypotheses: When Black Americans are perceived to be legally utilizing gun rights, such as obtaining concealed carry permits, at a faster rate than White Americans, racially resentful White Americans show less support for such gun rights. In this sample, we found that this interactive effect of racial resentment and the race of Americans described utilizing their gun rights held when controlling for party identification and gun ownership. Of note, our pattern of results shows that Black Americans' faster utilization of concealed-carry rights did not implicate racially resentful White Americans' support for gun rights more generally, but only their support for the particular gun right that Black Americans were described as utilizing.

Study 3

Study 3 was intended to replicate the primary results of Study 2 in a nationally representative U.S. sample. We also sought to extend Study 2's findings by examining two potential factors

[6] In analyses available in the online supplemental materials, in Studies 2 and 3, we find similar patterns of support for concealed-carry rights whether excluding or including political party identification, gun ownership, or both simultaneously as covariates.

Table 4
Descriptives by Political Party Identification for Studies 2 and 3

Measure	Democrat		Republican				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	95% CI	*d*
Racial resentment							
Study 2	2.12	1.05	3.63	1.08	13.63***	[1.29, 1.73]	1.42
Study 3	2.41	1.00	3.58	.93	11.84***	[.98, 1.37]	1.21
Support for concealed carry rights							
Study 2	2.76	1.12	4.68	1.21	15.54***	[1.67, 2.16]	1.65
Study 3	2.99	1.16	4.34	1.24	10.87***	[1.10, 1.59]	1.12
Support for general gun rights							
Study 2	2.01	1.07	4.43	1.45	17.75***	[2.16, 2.69]	1.97
Study 3	2.42	1.24	4.11	1.43	12.27***	[1.42, 1.96]	1.26
Gun-related safety concerns							
Study 3	5.56	1.19	4.51	1.32	−8.10***	[−1.30, −.79]	−.83
Warmth: Legal gun owners							
Study 3	57.84	27.93	82.69	21.15	9.39***	[19.64, 30.05]	1.00

Note. 95% CI (confidence interval) pertains to the difference in means. *d* = Cohen's *d* (effect size).
*** $p < .001$.

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underlying racially resentful White Americans' reduced support for gun rights in the Black increase condition—less positive evaluations of legal gun owners and increased concerns about public safety. First, given Study 1 found that racially resentful White Americans strongly associated gun rights with White Americans and thought more positively of legal gun owners as a social group (see Table 2), a change in the perceived racial make-up of legal gun owners may negatively impact the evaluations (e.g., warmth) of the social group as a whole. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) might suggest that if such White Americans perceive Black Americans as joining the ranks of legal gun owners, their favorable perceptions of legal gun owners might be undermined—especially if they perceive Black Americans as unlikely to assimilate to group norms (Danbold & Huo, 2021). As racial resentment captures the endorsement that Black Americans have and continue to violate valued cultural U.S. norms (e.g., individualism), racially resentful White Americans may be particularly motivated to restrict access to this group through limiting legal access to guns. Second, perceiving Black Americans as increasingly utilizing their legal rights to guns may increase concerns about public safety because White Americans strongly associate Black Americans with crime and violence (Eberhardt et al., 2004). If Black concealed-carry salience increases perceived threat to public safety, it may also motivate reduced support for gun rights (see Filindra & Kaplan, 2017). In sum, we also test whether racially resentful White Americans who learn that rates of concealed-carry are increasing at a faster rate among Black (versus White) Americans report less warmth toward legal gun owners and/or more concerns about guns as a threat to public safety. The current study was advertised as a 15-min study, and participant payment method and amount were determined by Luc.id panel recruitment services and survey suppliers.

Method

Participants

As in Study 2, we sought to recruit 400 White Americans who identified as Democrat or Republican as this sample size still provided over 80% power to detect a small effect ($f^2 = .03$; the suggested sample size was at least $N = 368$). In this study, we recruited a nationally representative sample in terms of age, gender, and region of the country using Luc.id panel recruitment services. The final sample consisted of 380 White Americans (53% women, 46% men, with <1% identified as a different gender or not disclosing their gender), who identified politically as either Republican (49%) or Democrat (51%). Of these, 30% reported owning a gun and 13% reported having a concealed-carry permit.

Procedure

The manipulation of Black concealed-carry salience was identical to Study 2. The only procedural difference was that immediately after reading their assigned article, participants were asked to respond briefly to an open-ended question to increase engagement with the experimental manipulation ("In your opinion, what effect do you think recent trends in concealed carry will have on the United States?"). Participants then continued with the rest of the procedures as outlined above for Study 2, including providing article perceptions and answering the dependent measures of interest and demographic variables as described below.[7]

Measures

Support for Concealed-Carry Rights. The same seven items as in Study 2 measured support for the right to carry concealed weapons, $\alpha = .82$.

Support for General Gun Rights. The same seven items as in Study 2 measured support for gun rights other than concealed-carry, $\alpha = .86$.

Warmth Toward Legal Gun Owners. Participants rated perceived warmth toward legal gun owners from 0 (*very cold*) to 100 (*very warm*) as in Study 1.

Gun-Related Public Safety Concerns. Four items were used to capture concerns about guns and access to guns as a threat to safety. First, participants were asked, "To what extent does the

[7] Participants responded to additional items as pilot data to test unrelated hypotheses, including whether legal gun ownership threatened typical American values. These questions were out of the scope of the current described research and thus are not discussed further.

Table 5
Table of Means and Correlations for Studies 2 and 3

Measure	Study 2								Study 3	
	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	*M*	*SD*
1. Racial resentment	2.69	1.29		.18	.47	.50	−.32	.44	2.98	1.13
2. Owner (0 = nongun owner)	.27	.44	.36		.34	.37	−.26	.34	.30	.46
3. Concealed carry rights support	3.49	1.48	.62	.35		.82	−.68	.67	3.65	1.37
4. General gun rights support	2.93	1.70	.62	.37	.85		−.72	.67	3.25	1.58
5. Gun-related safety concerns	—	—	—	—	—	—		−.53	5.04	1.36
6. Warmth: Legal gun owners	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		70.41	27.66

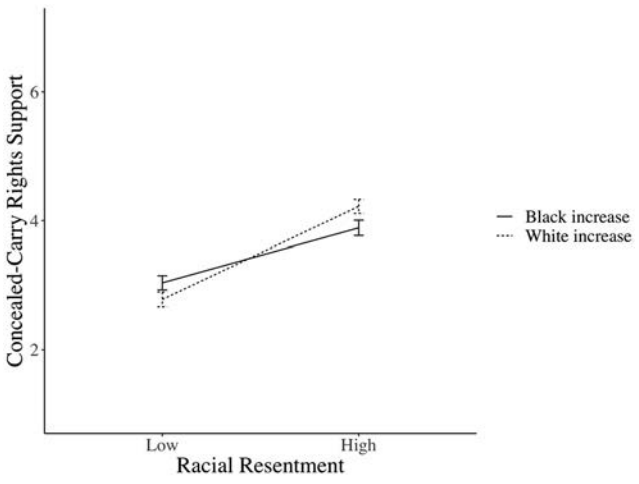
Note. All *r*s, $p < .001$. Study 2 = below diagonal. Study 3 = above diagonal.

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ease with which people can [illegally/legally] obtain guns contribute to gun violence in the country today?" from 1 = *does not contribute at all* to 7 = *contributes a great deal.* Then participants were asked two items that measured the extent to which they were worried about increases in gun violence over the next five years (i.e., How worried are you about increases in [general gun violence/mass shootings] in the next 5 years?) from 1 = *not worried at all* to 7 = *very worried.* These four items showed acceptable reliability, $\alpha = .75$, and were averaged. We report these items as a combined scale, but results replicate when analyzed as separate items.

Racial Resentment. This construct was measured using the same four items from the previous studies, $\alpha = .85$. Again, the experimental manipulation did not affect the proposed moderator, as racial resentment toward Black Americans did not significantly differ between the White increase ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.04$) or Black increase conditions ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.21$), $t(358.18) = 1.28$, $p = .20$, 95% CI [−.08, .38], $d = .13$. Unlike Study 2, however, participants were not asked about attitudes toward Asian Americans and Latino Americans after responding to the key items measuring resentment toward Black Americans.

Figure 3
Support for Concealed-Carry Rights Predicted by Racial Resentment and Black Concealed-Carry Salience in Study 2 (Controlling for Political Party Identification



Note. Error bars are standard errors.

Personal Gun Ownership and Political Party Identification. These two demographic variables were measured as described in prior studies.

Results and Discussion

We employed the same analysis strategy as described in Study 2. We again first report the key test for an interaction effect of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment, and then report main effects. Republicans reported significantly more support for both concealed-carry and general gun rights, greater racial resentment, and more warmth toward legal gun owners than did Democrats, (ts > 9.38, ps $< .001$; Table 4). Thus, as in Study 2, we included party identification as a covariate in all regression analyses.

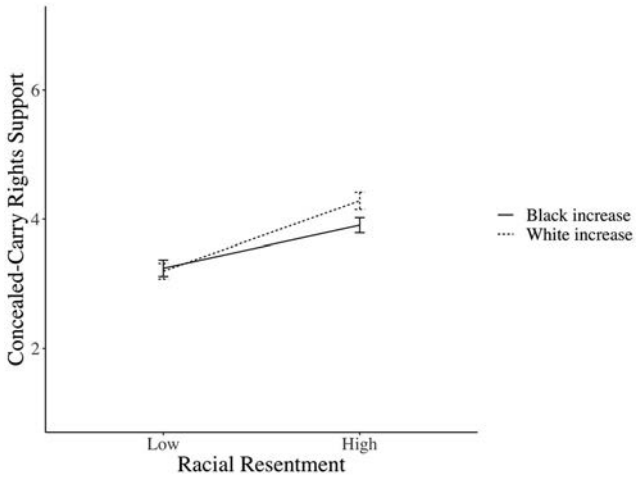
Support for Concealed-Carry Rights

We regressed support for concealed-carry rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction while controlling for party identification. Here, the key expected interaction was not significant, $B = -.19$, $SE = .11$, $t(371) = -1.77$, $p = .08$, 95% CI [−.39, .02], $r_p = -.09$. However, upon examining the simple effects of Black concealed-carry salience at high and low levels of racial resentment, our hypotheses were supported and replicated the results of Study 2 (see Figure 4). Among participants high in racial resentment, those in the Black increase condition reported less support for concealed-carry rights compared to participants in the White increase condition, $B = -.38$, $SE = .17$, $t(371) = -2.22$, $p = .027$, 95% CI [−.71, −.04], $r_p = -.11$. Black concealed-carry salience had no significant effect on support for concealed carry rights among participants low in racial resentment, $B = .05$, $SE = .17$, $t(371) = .27$, $p = .79$, 95% CI [−.28, .37], $r_p = .01$. Consistent with Study 2, this pattern of effects at high and low levels of racial resentment held when also including personal gun ownership as a covariate ($B = -.42$, $SE = .16$, $t(368) = -2.60$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [−.74, −.10], $r_{sp} = -.13$, and, $B = .00$, $SE = .16$, $t(368) = -.02$, $p = .98$, 95% CI [−.32, .31], $r_p = .00$, respectively).

Examining main effects, both greater racial resentment and being Republican were again associated with more support for concealed-carry rights (respectively, $B = .37$, $SE = .06$, $t(372) = 6.06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.25, .50], $r_p = .30$; and $B = .90$, $SE = .14$, $t(372) = 6.42$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.62, 1.17], $r_p = .32$). Consistent with Study 2, no significant main effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged, $B = -.16$, $SE = .12$, $t(372) = -1.36$, $p = .18$, 95% CI [−.40, .07], $r_p = -.07$.

Figure 4

Support for Concealed-Carry Rights Predicted by Racial Resentment and Black Concealed-Carry Salience in Study 3 (Controlling for Political Party Identification)



Note. Error bars are standard errors.

Support for General Gun Rights. We then regressed support for general gun rights on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction while controlling for party identification. Replicating Study 2, no significant interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment emerged, $B = -.09$, $SE = .12$, $t(375) = -.75$, $p = .45$, 95% CI [−.32, .14], $r_{sp} = -.03$, as no effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged on support for general gun rights among participants low in racial resentment, $B = .01$, $SE = .19$, $t(375) = .07$, $p = .95$, 95% CI [−.35, .38], $r_{sp} = .00$, or high in racial resentment, $B = -.19$, $SE = .19$, $t(375) = -.99$, $p = .32$, 95% CI [−.55, .18], $r_{sp} = -.04$.

Examining main effects, greater racial resentment and being Republican were again associated with more support for general gun rights, ($B = .43$, $SE = .07$, $t(376) = 6.29$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.30, .56], $r_p = .31$; $B = 1.18$, $SE = .15$, $t(376) = 7.65$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.87, 1.48], $r_p = .37$, respectively); however, no main effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged, $B = -.09$, $SE = .13$, $t(376) = -.65$, $p = .52$, 95% CI [−.35, .17], $r_p = -.03$.

Warmth Toward Legal Gun Owners. We next regressed warmth toward legal gun owners on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction while controlling for both party identification and gun ownership.[8] No significant interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment emerged on warmth toward legal gun owners, $B = -3.62$, $SE = 2.14$, $t(344) = -1.70$, $p = .09$, 95% CI [−7.82, .58], $r_p = -.09$. Looking at the simple effects, there was no effect of Black concealed-carry salience on warmth toward legal gun owners among participants low in racial resentment, $B = 1.55$, $SE = 3.42$, $t(344) = .45$, $p = .65$, 95% CI [−5.18, 8.28], $r_p = .02$. Yet, among participants high in racial resentment, the effect of Black concealed-carry salience approached significance, whereby those in the Black increase condition reported less warmth toward legal gun owners than those in the White increase condition, $B = -6.62$, $SE = 3.42$, $t(344) = -1.94$, $p = .05$, 95% CI [−13.35, .11], $r_p = -.10$. Examining the main effects, greater racial resentment, being Republican, and being a gun owner were associated with more warmth toward legal gun owners, $B = 6.07$, $SE = 1.25$, $t(345) = 4.85$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [3.61, 8.53], $r_p = .25$, and, $B = 15.90$, $SE = 2.83$, $t(345) = 5.62$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [10.33, 21.47], $r_p = .29$, and, $B = 15.00$, $SE = 2.65$, $t(345) = 5.66$, $p < .001$, 95% CI[9.79, 20.22], $r_p = .29$, respectively. We found no main effect of Black concealed-carry salience on warmth toward legal gun owners, $B = -2.54$, $SE = 2.44$, $t(345) = -1.04$, $p = .30$, 95% CI [−7.33, 2.26], $r_p = -.06$.

Gun-Related Public Safety Concerns. Last, we regressed concerns about guns as a threat to public safety on Black concealed-carry salience, racial resentment, and their interaction while controlling for party identification. There was no significant interaction of Black concealed-carry salience and racial resentment, $B = .03$, $SE = .11$, $t(375) = .26$, $p = .80$, 95% CI [−.20, .25], $r_p = .01$, and no effect of Black concealed-carry salience among participants high or low on racial resentment, $B = .16$, $SE = .18$, $t(375) = .87$, $p = .38$, 95% CI [−.20, .52], $r_p = .05$, and, $B = .09$, $SE = .18$, $t(375) = .51$, $p = .61$, 95% CI [−.26, .45], $r_p = .03$, respectively. Examining main effects, greater racial resentment and being Republican were associated with less concerns about guns as a threat to public safety, $B = -.21$, $SE = .07$, $t(376) = -3.11$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [−.34, −.08], $r_p = -.16$ and, $B = -.79$, $SE = .15$, $t(376) = -5.29$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−1.09, −.50], $r_p = -.26$, respectively. No main effect of Black concealed-carry salience emerged, $B = -.13$, $SE = .13$, $t(376) = -.98$, $p = .33$, 95% CI [−.38, .13], $r_p = .05$.

Overall, in a nationally representative sample, we again found that information detailing Black Americans utilizing their legal rights to concealed-carry at a faster rate than White Americans elicited less support for concealed-carry rights among racially resentful White Americans. And, again, this information did not attenuate their support for general gun rights unrelated to concealed-carry. Exploring potential factors underlying these observed effects, we find evidence suggesting racially resentful White Americans are less positive in their attitudes toward legal gun owners when Black (vs. White) Americans' utilization of concealed-carry is salient, but show no difference in their concerns about public safety. However, further research is needed, and this particular finding should be interpreted with caution as observed condition differences were only marginally significant ($p = .05$).

General Discussion

Today, the rate of personal gun ownership in the U.S. stands exorbitantly high from a global perspective, accounting for 45% of global civilian-held firearms (Karp, 2018). Yet, throughout America's history, support for significant gun control legislation has been stirred by the thought of Black Americans using their legal rights to guns. Over a half-century ago, The Black Panther Party's use of their legal rights to guns inspired one of the strictest gun control laws in recent U.S. history—signed into law by and with the support of White conservatives. Implicit in this history and later narratives of conservative, progun organizations in the 1970s, gun rights were conceptualized as primarily for White Americans. Our results provide support for our hypotheses that gun rights today are still racialized as *White* in the minds of many White

[8] We controlled for gun ownership in this model to account for gun owners effectively evaluating their in-group.

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American partisans and attending to legal Black gun ownership can still attenuate support for gun rights among those who typically hold the strongest progun attitudes.

First, using an implicit association task, we find that gun rights are racialized in the mind of White Americans, being more strongly associated with White Americans than Black Americans—especially among White Americans who hold strong anti-Black attitudes. Specifically, racially resentful White Americans more quickly associated *gun rights* category words with White Americans and *gun control* category words with Black Americans; this bias was not observed among White Americans low in racial resentment. And second, by manipulating information suggesting that legal utilization of gun rights like concealed-carry is increasing fastest among Black Americans (versus White Americans), we find this information affects racially resentful White Americans' support for gun rights. Specifically, racially resentful White Americans showed less support for concealed-carry rights when Black Americans were described as utilizing legal concealed-carry rights at a faster rate than White Americans compared with when White Americans were described as utilizing concealed-carry rights at the fastest rate.

The specific nature of our findings adds to a large literature about the continued effect of racial resentment on White Americans' policy attitudes even after accounting for self-interest and various sociodemographic variables (e.g., gun ownership; see Sears & Henry, 2005; Tesler, 2016). Here, we contribute to the growing literature about the impact of racial resentment on gun attitudes (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015, 2017; O'Brien et al., 2013). Past research has found greater racial resentment to reliably produce more progun attitudes. Our results do replicate these findings. Overall, racial resentment was positively associated with support for general gun rights, support for concealed-carry rights, and warmth toward legal gun owners. However, we identify an important contextual factor that attenuates the effect of racial resentment on support for gun rights. Our results show that racially resentful White Americans' strong support for gun rights in part depends on *who* is perceived to be engaging in the legal use of their gun rights.

Our pattern of results also suggested Black Americans' legal use of gun rights may have a precise effect on racially resentful White Americans' gun attitudes. Racially resentful White Americans specifically showed reduced support for concealed-carry rights, which Black Americans were explicitly described as utilizing, but did not show less support for a host of other gun rights unrelated to concealed-carry. This result suggests a motivation to reduce support for specific gun rights being utilized by Black people, while still preserving support for other gun rights. This finding aligns with recent research that highlights guns can serve as a way to cope with perceived threats to safety, control, or a sense of belongingness (Buttrick, 2020; Kerner et al., 2022; Stroebe et al., 2017). To the extent that a particular gun right may no longer provide a source of psychological safety (e.g., increases in Black concealed-carry in this study context, increases in BPP openly carrying loaded firearms in the 1960s), a reduction of support for that specific gun right, but not gun rights broadly, is reasonable. Further, our data show that Black legal gun ownership did not elicit greater concerns about public safety among White Americans, but that it served as a threat to a valued social identity—legal gun owners. In Study 1, racially resentful White Americans held the most positive evaluations of legal gun owners but showed less warmth toward legal gun owners when Black (versus White) concealed-carry was salient (Study 3). Therefore, the observed reductions in support for concealed-carry rights may be more strongly linked to symbolic threats to identity than to realistic threats to security.

Finally, our results further the conceptual distinction of racial resentment as measuring racial prejudice versus simply capturing political conservatism. Critiques of racial resentment posit that the construct captures general conservatism or support for racially conservative policies rather than anti-Black prejudice (Carmines et al., 2011). However, in the current study, racially resentful attitudes were pitted against an entrenched conservative attitude: support for gun rights. Of note, while racially resentful White Americans only showed reduced support for concealed-carry rights, but not other gun rights, this lower support implicated their own concealed-carry rights as well. Thus, our results captured that racially resentful White Americans may support reductions in concealed-carry rights broadly when Black utilization of legal concealed-carry is salient—similar to the broad policy impact of the 1967 Mulford Act. Given that we find racially resentful White Americans to be less supportive of a conservative policy due to its utilization by Black Americans, we contribute additional evidence that racial resentment captures racial animus and prejudice and not simply conservatism (see also, Wallsten et al., 2017).

Limitations and Future Directions

In our two experimental studies, we tested concealed-carry as the primary gun right of interest. However, it could be argued that concealed-carry laws may be a uniquely malleable gun right for racially resentful White Americans and that support for other gun rights is less likely to be influenced by user race. Although possible, this is likely not the case. Of note, the gun-related words/phrases used in the implicit association task from Study 1 were varied, and yet the bias to associate gun rights with White Americans and gun control with Black Americans was still observed. In addition, support for concealed-carry is a commonly tested gun policy in research on gun attitudes (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; O'Brien et al., 2013; Shepperd, Losee, et al., 2018; Shepperd, Pogge, et al., 2018), and applies when studying national U.S. samples as concealed-carry is currently legal in all U.S. states. Regardless, future work should examine whether varying gun laws that Black Americans are described as using (e.g., guns in the workplace) elicit similar patterns of support among racially resentful White Americans.

It is also important to note the limitations of the relative nature of our findings in each study. First, our test of White Americans' racialization of gun rights in Study 1 is inherently a relative comparison given the fundamental nature of the IAT paradigm (Pinter & Greenwald, 2005). Thus, the strong pairing of White Americans and gun rights also implicates a relatively stronger pairing of Black Americans and gun control. Both interpretations of White = gun rights and Black = gun control are consistent with our overall theory and the results of the subsequent studies. Of note, it could be argued that perceptions of Black Americans as liberal (Chambers et al., 2013) elicit Black Americans to be more immediately linked to gun control and drive the found overall association. However, this interpretation is undercut given that both White conservatives and liberals perceive Black Americans as liberal at similar rates (Chambers et al., 2013), but in the present research,

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only politically and racially conservative White Americans showed the implicit association of White = gun rights and Black = gun control (Study 1). Although our specific question and hypotheses were motivated by specific Black-White historical precedent, future research might investigate whether the strength of the relative association between White Americans and gun rights is maintained if non-Black racial minorities are used as the target categories. Using non-Black minorities as a target category would help delineate whether White Americans racialize gun rights as relatively White, specifically, or non-Black, more generally.

Second, given there was no "true control" condition present in Studies 2 and 3, an alternative interpretation of these study's findings is that exposure to information about faster rates of White concealed-carry permit obtainment may have instead *increased* support for concealed-carry rights among racially resentful White Americans (relative to the Black increase condition). As noted prior, participants did report more familiarity with the information contained in the White increase condition compared with the Black increase condition article; this result suggests that White participants perceived information about faster increases in White concealed-carry permits as closer to their understanding of the "status quo" in the U.S., which we interpreted as the White increase condition functioning more as the reference condition. Additionally, our hypothesized reduction in support aligns with historical precedent, such as the Mulford Act of 1967; which illustrated that increases in Black legal gun ownership can reduce White conservative support for gun rights. Nevertheless, this alternative interpretation is still consistent with our overarching hypothesis; it suggests that racially resentful White Americans' reactions to legal gun owners increasingly utilizing their gun rights, including the extent to which this information may facilitate an *increase* in support for the specific right, depends on the race of the owner—and, is attenuated if the owners are Black. Future research should include additional conditions that can further confirm directionality. Together, our results and these distinctions motivate future inquiry into understanding how and for whom legal gun ownership functions as a racialized social identity and its implications for gun attitudes and policy support.

Future research should also explore the likely varied mechanisms underlying why Black legal gun ownership reduces White Americans' support for gun rights. Our results complement past research that shows exposure to Black faces increases support for gun rights among the most racially resentful White Americans (Filindra & Kaplan, 2015). These prior findings may be tapping into strong cognitive associations between Blackness and crime among White Americans (Eberhardt et al., 2004), leading racially resentful White Americans to more strongly cling to their gun rights when thinking about Black criminality. In contrast in the present study, as noted prior, the manipulation of Black concealed-carry did not increase concerns about public safety. In Studies 2 and 3, emphasizing increases in law-abiding, Black concealed-carrying gun owners likely reduced the extent to which strongly supporting concealed-carry rights would mitigate perceived threats of Black gun ownership. Given that historical gun control efforts targeting Black Americans primarily sought to reduce Black Americans' collective power (e.g., post-Civil War "disarmament posses," including the Ku Klux Klan; Winkler, 2011; see also Cottrol & Diamond, 1991), future research should examine the extent to which Black legal gun ownership functions as a threat to the symbolic safety guns provide for White Americans and/or increases White concerns about the utility of gun ownership to maintain collective power or the status quo.

Conclusion

In January 2020, a group of protestors marched on Virginia's state capitol to protest gun control legislation being considered by the newly Democrat-controlled Virginia state legislature. Unlike in 1967, these protestors, many of whom were armed, numbered over 20,000 strong—and the overwhelming majority of these protestors were White. And, unlike in 1967, these protests were not met with increased calls for sweeping gun control legislation; in fact, a vote on the proposed gun control legislation failed a month later, struck down by both Democrats and Republicans—an action praised by conservative organizations such as the NRA (Booker, 2020). Here we documented that the differential response to 20,000 White, legally armed protestors compared with 24 Black, legally armed protestors is in part rooted in prejudice toward Black Americans and the perception that gun rights are for White Americans. In all, our results suggest that understanding the existing debate over gun rights in the U.S. requires understanding how Black legal gun ownership challenges seemingly staunch support of this fundamental right to bear arms—and that understanding racism in the U.S. may need to look no further than for whom White Americans perceive gun rights to be.

Context of the Research

Against a backdrop of massive protests arguing for the protection of gun rights from government overreach by U.S. gun rights organizations and White American gun rights activists, this research was in part motivated by their parallel (and longstanding) silence when the rights of Black legal gun owners are ignored or violated by government actors (e.g., Jacqueline Dixon, Philando Castile, Amir Locke). While deserving attention long before now, understanding how Black legal gun ownership shapes gun attitudes from a social psychological perspective is particularly pertinent as Black Americans are presently the fastest-growing group of legal gun owners in the U.S. (Aning, 2022; Spencer, 2021). Putting present-day observations in context with the historical role of race, racism, and the asymmetrical application of gun control laws in the U.S. provided a more holistic perspective as we sought to test how race and racism play a nuanced, yet integral role in present-day White Americans' gun attitudes and policy support. This historical perspective aligns with the first author's particular approach to social psychological research and broader research program in the domains of sports, firearms, and Black history. The present article's focus and contribution to theory on racial resentment situate this research in the long trajectory of broad political and psychological literature on symbolic racism (e.g., Kinder & Sears, 1981), which is integral to the three authors' research perspective on the central role of race in U.S. political attitudes.

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