

Racial Justice as Transitional Justice: Framing and Public Support for Racial Justice Initiatives in the United States

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Abstract

Does framing racial justice policies as part of a broader human rights-oriented movement increase public support for enacting reforms? Recent media coverage of racial justice initiatives in the U.S. has been controversial. Even ideologically sympathetic politicians have criticized demands like defund the police and reparations to Black Americans. In this paper, we focus specifically on racial justice policies associated with defunding the police that reallocate police budgets to things like community and social services. We use a survey experiment to test whether framing these initiatives as part of an international movement around transitional justice affects support for these policies among the American public. Our results largely confirm that framing racial justice policies as transitional justice can increase support, especially among non-Republicans. This has important implications for researchers analyzing state-centered approaches to justice in the United States, and for activists seeking to garner support for racial justice policies.

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1 Introduction

How does the framing of racial justice issues affect support for police reform policies? Recent media coverage of racial justice initiatives in the United States has been controversial as advocates demand that the state address the historical and present-day abuses committed by the U.S. security apparatus, especially the police, against minority communities. Calls for the federal, state, and local governments to “defund the police” have become a rallying cry at protests, especially after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd – an unarmed Black man – on camera in May 2020.

Nevertheless, the policies designed to address policing remain controversial. Even political elites who are ideologically sympathetic to racial justice initiatives have criticized demands like “defund the police” and providing reparations to Black Americans for injustices of the past and present.¹ But demands from below can play an important role in supporting or inhibiting the implementation of these policies. And after the murder of George Floyd, media coverage of protests against police brutality and demands for police reform made racial justice increasingly salient for the mass public. For example, in the aftermath of the uprising in the summer of 2020, Pew found broad public support for many police reform measures, but low support for decreasing spending on police departments.²

In this paper, we argue that framing the policies designed to address policing in the United States as part of a larger international human rights-oriented movement can increase support for the policies. Specifically, we focus on policies associated with the call to “defund the police” that specifically invoke the funding of police departments—reducing police budgets and reallocating those funds to other services and initiatives. We argue that framing these policies as transitional justice will increase American support for them, both in the abstract and in specific contexts. Transitional justice broadly refers to policies and procedures that states implement while in transitions out of periods of political violence.³ Though it is often associated with countries newly transitioning to democracy from periods of authoritarian rule, scholars and human rights

¹<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/06/19/defund-the-police-movement-faces-skepticism-328084>

²<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/07/09/majority-of-public-favors-giving-civilians-the-power-to-sue-police-officers-for-misconduct/>.

³More generally, contemporary racial justice policies—including other policies designed to address policing—can also be considered part of transitional justice. In the paper we focus exclusively on policy interventions to police budgets, but for additional examples see, e.g. Posthumus and Zvobgo (2021) and <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/28/biden-racial-transitional-justice-racism-south-africa-mandela/>.

activists have increasingly begun to focus on how even in established democracies, addressing the abuses of the past can play an important role in increasing democratic quality, ensuring future stability, and protecting human rights. We argue that this association with normatively appealing ideas like human rights – in addition to the knowledge that transitional justice has been implemented and found to be effective elsewhere in the world – will increase support for implementing police reform policies in the United States.

We test our primary argument using a survey experiment conducted in March 2022 on a national sample of Americans. We frame four policy proposals associated with the defund the police movement as part of an international movement around transitional justice. We also frame the exact same policies as defunding the police. We compare each frame to a control and evaluate the effects of the framing on support for general police reform policies and on support for implementing policies in specific scenarios. We find that framing these policies as transitional justice does increase support for the policies, and that it increases support for implementation in specific scenarios for certain groups of Americans.

Our findings have important implications for both scholars and activists looking to evaluate public support for the racial justice movement. We contribute to the literature on policing and public opinion by showing how police reform policies are sensitive to the ways in which they are presented to the mass public. Our findings also provide a contribution to the literature on transitional justice by showing how the reputation of transitional justice practices can influence policy support, even outside of explicitly transitional contexts.

In the next section, we provide an overview of the existing research on public support for racial justice and police reform, showing the ways in which policing and racial justice are intimately connected in the minds of the American public. In Section 3, we present our argument, outlining in detail what transitional justice is and the way that framing police reform policies as transitional justice can increase support for the policies. We also present several additional hypotheses about American ideological and informational characteristics that we expect to moderate the effects of our transitional justice and “defund the police” framing. In Section 4, we introduce the survey and explain the experimental design. In Section 5 we present the results of our experiment. We find support for our primary hypothesis, namely that framing racial justice policies as transitional justice increases support for these policies. This

is particularly true among non-Republicans. Framing the same policies using the language of defunding the police, however, has little effect on overall support for the policies, regardless of partisan affiliation. In Section 6 we conclude by outlining the impact of our findings for those pursuing racial justice initiatives in the United States.

2 Public Support for Police Reform

Recent years have seen growing calls to reform police departments as a matter of racial justice. While this is spurred on by behaviors of individual officers, these calls are also about addressing the systemic structural problem that is disproportionately felt by Black citizens of the United States. In the summer of 2020, the movement for racial justice coalesced around the slogan “defund the police.” Public discourse centered these discussions, with scholars finding increased mentions of police reform and justice for victims of police brutality on social media and in internet searches (Patnaude, Lomakina, Patel and Bizel 2021).

Calls to reform the police are intimately tied to racial politics due to well-documented racial disparities in policing. Black and indigenous men and women, and Latino men face a much higher lifetime risk of being killed by police than whites, with police killing being one of the leading causes of death for young men of color (Edwards, Lee and Esposito 2019). These disparities affect not only individuals’ lived experiences, but also broader patterns of political behavior and perceived legitimacy of the state. Citizens who have interactions with the carceral system through policing and prisons have lower levels of political participation and less trust and confidence in the government (Weaver and Lerman 2010). Some evidence suggests that hearing about someone who had a good or bad experience with police, as well as being a member of a group with high levels of police contact, are both important for perceptions of police and political mobilization (Walker 2014). In neighborhoods where there is a high concentration of policing with use of force, citizens are less likely to engage with the government through 311 calls (Lerman and Weaver 2014). Furthermore, there is evidence that while police violence reduces trust in the police force, it does not alter perceptions of police organizations and willingness to follow election endorsements made by these organizations (Boudreau, MacKenzie and Simmons 2019).

Racial disparities in policing are not only a normative issue, but can impede perceptions

of police legitimacy. Individuals' attitudes about the police are shaped by their perception of police legitimacy, which is impacted by both the fairness and distribution of police services and the performance of police (Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Policing tactics, like increasing militarization and use of SWAT techniques, can reduce perceived legitimacy and support for law enforcement while having no observable impact on crime (Mummolo 2018). In some cases, learning about racial disparities in policing can reduce trust in police, though it can also further entrench support among those who think that minorities commit more crimes and opposition among those who believe that police officers rely on racial profiling (Mullinix and Norris 2019).

Furthermore, policing is globally considered an issue of human rights. Acting as agents of the state, police have a monopoly on use of force and apply this power unevenly in contexts globally (Davenport, Soule and Armstrong 2011; Alves 2014; González 2017; Kubaienko, Okhrimenko, Kryzhanovska, Kislitsyna and Hryshchenko 2021). Instead of defending or upholding human rights, police are often perpetrators of human rights abuses (Bonner 2009; Jauregui 2013; Najdowski, Bottoms and Goff 2015). Recognizing the crucial role that police forces play—both in upholding democratic standards and violating human rights—the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights outlined a series of standards and practices that police forces should meet globally (UNHCR 1996). However, police forces worldwide continue to violate these human rights recommendations—in the United States, police forces have long failed to comply with international human rights standards (University of Chicago Law School 2020). After Floyd's murder in 2020, a group of 54 African countries, backed by more than 600 activist groups, called upon the UN Human Rights Council to address police violence and systemic racism in law enforcement.⁴ The resultant report highlighted the problem of racialized police violence in the United States while also contextualizing the issue as part of a larger problem of human rights abuses in policing globally. In doing so it outlined an agenda to “reverse cultures of denial, dismantle systemic racism and accelerate the pace of action; end impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials and close trust deficits in this area; ensure that the voices of people of African descent and those who stand up against racism are heard and that their concerns are acted upon; and acknowledge and confront legacies, including through accountability and redress” (UNHCR 2021).

In light of racial disparities in policing in the United States and demands from social move-

⁴<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066312>

ments like Black Lives Matter to address the root of these issues, there are many suggestions for police reform. Policies like prohibiting the use of chokeholds or establishing an external unit to investigate use of force enjoy broad bipartisan support—but that support can be undermined by the messenger and ultimately affirm polarized opinion (Boudreau, MacKenzie and Simmons 2019). While the messenger is important, the framing of the message also impacts support: using a racial equity frame can undermine support of policies despite shifts in public opinion to support racial equity (English and Kalla 2021). This is perhaps because of variation in support for racial equity through movements like Black Lives Matter and calls for police reform vary both between races, with whites being less likely to express support relative to blacks (Rakich 2020), and within races, with whites who are aware of their racial privilege being more sympathetic to the movement and its demands than others (Cole 2020). This is intimately related to partisan voting behavior, with those supportive of BLM and police reform more likely to support Democrats at the ballot box (Drakulich, Wozniak, Hagan and Johnson 2020).

We build on this existing work by focusing on public perceptions of the policies associated with defunding the police, which is one key proposal for police reform. In general, defunding the police involves reallocating funds away from police departments to other services. More specifically, those advocating for defunding the police have called for policies that reduce police budgets and the size of police departments, and shift responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers. They demand that the money taken from police departments as part of the defunding process be reinvested in communities that have been victimized by policing and the carceral state, with particular emphasis on minority communities. Recent research suggests that the policy has not found much public support, with individuals being particularly concerned about the implications for crime and public safety (Vaughn, Peyton and Huber 2022). In the sections that follow, we address this relatively unpopular proposal, evaluating the extent to which the framing of the policies matters for support.

3 Transitional Justice and Defunding the Police

Transitional justice is defined as the “formal and informal procedures implemented by a group or institution of accepted legitimacy around the time of a transition out of an oppressive or

violent social order, for rendering justice to perpetrators and their collaborators, as well as to their victims” (Kaminski, Nalepa and O’Neill 2006, 295). The aims of transitional justice policies most often fall into three broad categories: (1) holding perpetrators of abuses accountable for their actions, (2) providing support or some form of reparations for victims of such abuses, including guarantees to things like truth, and (3) implementing a set of institutional reforms at the state level that ensure the non-repetition of abuses in the future. For each of these goals, any number of transitional justice mechanisms can be employed, with varying degrees of participation by victims and perpetrators of abuses alike (Nalepa 2010; Hayner 2011; Zvobgo 2020).

Specific transitional justice policies can be implemented in pursuit of any or all of the aforementioned goals. For example, vetting and purging are two interrelated processes related to employment, which involve removing from positions of authority those individuals seen as responsible for perpetrating abuses (Bates, Cinar and Nalepa 2020).⁵ Victim compensation and restitution include things like restoring rights and property, but also things like providing monetary compensation to immediate and extended victims of abuses (David and Choi 2006; David 2017).⁶ The mechanisms of transitional justice associated with the non-repetition of abuses can include everything from addressing the underlying social and economic causes of political violence to specific reforms focused on the training and professionalization of state security forces.

Many of these transitional justice mechanisms have been implemented precisely to address human rights abuses by the state security apparatus, including law enforcement and the military, elsewhere in the world. For example, during Russia’s brief period of democracy in the early 1990s, Boris Yeltsin reduced the size of the former KGB apparatus by 46% and transferred many remaining personnel to positions within other agencies (Volkov 2016). Yeltsin also reduced the budget of the state security services by nearly 60% from 1994 to 1995, leading to a massive reduction in the number of security agents (Agentura 2019). In El Salvador in 1993, President Alfonso Cristiani purged many of the top military officials accused of human rights abuses, while post-Noriega Panama saw a complete overhaul of the country’s judiciary

⁵Bates, Cinar and Nalepa (2020) show that the purging of known perpetrators of abuses and the vetting of unknown perpetrators of abuses often occur at different times and can have differential effects on new democracies.

⁶Particularly in countries recovering from periods of widespread violence, forms of material support for victims can play an important role in addressing the structural problems caused by or contributing to violence (Popovski and Serrano 2012; David 2017).

(Reuters 1993; Human Rights Watch 1991). And in Guatemala in 1999, an ambitious reform plan included vetting and retraining all members of the country’s notorious National Police as it transitioned to civilian rule, though these efforts were met with varying degrees of success (Glebbeek 2001).

3.1 Defunding the Police as Transitional Justice

We begin with a simple premise: framing controversial policies in ways that appeal to targeted audiences should increase support for those policies, whereas framing controversial policies in ways that do not appeal to or actively conflict with the views of targeted audiences decrease support for those policies. Framing can be effective at helping individuals orient their thinking on complex issues, and individuals tend to prefer framing that aligns with their core values and comes from sources that they perceive to be credible (Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001). And as noted above, the racialized nature of contemporary policing in the United States has made reform policies particularly salient among the mass public, both within the United States and globally. As such, they are particularly ripe for observing these kind of framing effects.

We argue specifically that framing the policies associated with the phrase “defund the police” as transitional justice can increase public support for these policies. Despite its many flaws, academics and policymakers alike have long thought of transitional justice mechanisms as being effective at addressing state abuses. Since the early 1990s, an institutional framework has been built around supporting the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, with organizations like the International Center for Transitional Justice opening offices on every continent.⁷ In his 2004 report on transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan pointed out that justice and democracy “are not mutually exclusive objectives, but rather mutually reinforcing imperatives” (United Nations Secretary General 2004, 1). And academics have supported these arguments, pointing to the positive effects of various transitional justice mechanisms on the quality of human rights protection and democracy (Olsen, Payne, Reiter et al. 2010; Horne 2014; Dancy and Thoms

⁷The ICTJ’s headquarters are in New York, but the organization has until recently had an outward-facing focus, with programs in places like Colombia, Uganda, and Kosovo. Recently, however, the ICTJ has explicitly pointed to racial justice in the United States as a venue for its transitional justice work. For more information see <https://www.ictj.org/where-we-work>.

2021).

Implementing transitional justice policies is thus often thought of as contributing to normatively appealing outcomes in the places where they have been implemented.⁸ That is, implementing these kinds of policies—along with things like truth commissions, memorialization projects, and even more punitive processes like criminal trials against those responsible for abuses—are often associated with being crucial for supporting democracy, rule of law development, and respect for human rights (United Nations Secretary General 2004; Olsen et al. 2010).

Framing policies associated with defunding the police as transitional justice is thus likely to increase support for these policies for two mutually reinforcing reasons. The first is that individuals can find policies framed as transitional justice appealing because they learn that these policies have been implemented effectively elsewhere in the world, meaning that they have been implemented and have improved human rights as a result. Individuals like to know that the policies they support have the desired outcome.⁹ If they are informed that these policies are transitional justice and understand that transitional justice been implemented and found to be effective at restoring and preserving human rights elsewhere, they will be more likely to support implementing these policies at home.

The second and related reason that individuals may find policies framed as transitional justice appealing is because doing so links these policies to other concepts that individuals find to be inherently good. An Ipsos poll in 2018 found that 83% of Americans believe that it is important to have laws protecting human rights and 77% of Americans believe that human rights are important for creating a fair society (Bardon, Morin and Boyon 2018). When respondents connect the implementation of transitional justice policies to things like improved human rights, individuals are even more likely to support them, especially when this framing aligns with their core values (Chong and Druckman 2007).

H1a: Transitional Justice framing will increase support of racial justice policies in the United States

Importantly, these two aspects of transitional justice, and the way they can shift public

⁸There is, of course, work suggesting that the results of transitional justice initiatives are far more mixed than advocates would suggest. See, e.g., Olsen et al. (2010).

⁹We suggest that this works in a similar way as policy feedback wherein policies and public opinion have a reciprocal relationship. These effects are more pronounced in populations where the policy itself is visible (Soss and Schram 2007), and things like personally benefiting from a policy can increase support among constituents (Lerman and McCabe 2017). Our frame makes a set of policies more visible for participants and thus should have the desired effect in an experimental setting.

opinion about policing policies, are deeply connected to one another. We suggest that they can work *together* to alter an individual’s opinions about policies designed to address policing in the United States. More specifically, we argue that learning more about what transitional justice is and why it is implemented will make individuals more receptive to the transitional justice frames.¹⁰ That is, providing additional information about the purpose of transitional justice and its connection to human rights should amplify the positive effects of the transitional justice frame, further increasing support for policies associated with defunding the police:

H1b: Receiving information about transitional justice will increase the effectiveness of the transitional justice frames.

If transitional justice is associated with ideas that are considered to be normatively appealing like human rights, the politicization of the phrase “defund the police” has increasingly linked it to concerns about violence and rising crime rates, priming existing racialized stereotypes about Black and other traditionally marginalized communities in the United States. Furthermore, conflicting messages about what “defund the police” is calling for has contributed to a lack of understanding of what the proposed policies are. Therefore, we also suggest that framing the policies as “defunding the police” specifically will decrease support for the policies.

H1c: Defund the police framing will decrease support of racial justice policies in the United States

3.2 Partisanship and American Exceptionalism

Our secondary hypotheses address the factors we expect to moderate the effectiveness of different framing techniques. Partisan identification is a strong predictor of political attitudes in the United States (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1980), and individuals often use partisanship as a heuristic from which to derive their political views. Partisan elites have accordingly sorted on the topic of policing, with Republican elites like Donald Trump expressing support for the police and Democratic elites lending more support to criminal justice reform (Wozniak, Calfano and Drakulich 2019). Furthermore, Americans increasingly see all politics through the lens of partisan identification and have even begun to see their partisanship as a social identity (Mason 2018).

¹⁰This is in line with similar research (Chapman and Chaudoin 2020; Zvobgo 2019), which acknowledges that many people in the United States and elsewhere know very little about transitional justice and thus may be unlikely to form concrete opinions based on the transitional justice frames.

In particular, beliefs about the Black Lives Matter movement and police reform are shaped by partisan leaning: Republican support remains low while Democrats are divided about whether to support BLM and police reform (Rakich 2020). Partisans have strongly different views on BLM, while non-partisans can be persuaded to support or oppose the movement (Drakulich and Denver 2022). Drawing on this literature, we suggest that those who identify as Republican are less likely to support these policies, regardless of how the policies are framed. This is likely to occur because the topic of policing is subject to partisan elite signalling, and self-reported partisans are likely to view this designation as an important social identity. The rallying cry “defund the police” is especially polarized, and should elicit a negative response from Republican respondents. However, even when framing these police reform policies as transitional justice, we expect to find lower levels of support among Republican identifiers.

H2: Republican partisan identification will be associated with low support for racial justice policies.

Additionally, American political culture has long been characterized by a belief that the United States is fundamentally different from, and better than, other nations. This belief is rooted in the country’s unique history, including a lack of feudal history and socialist movements, and specific set of ideological commitments including a creedal commitment to individualism, capitalism, and anti-statism (Hartz 1955; Lipset 1996). This belief in American exceptionalism is often reflected in foreign policy making and military intervention, but it is also present in the approach to human rights. When adopting international human rights standards, the United States seeks exceptions for its citizens, ensuring that domestic law maintains precedent over international law, and delaying ratification (Ignatieff 2009).¹¹ American exceptionalism is also apparent in the judicial system: former Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia rejected the use of foreign and international law (*Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain* 2004) and said “it is my view that modern foreign legal materials can *never* be relevant to an interpretation of-to the *meaning* of-the U.S. constitution” (Scalia 2004).

While American Exceptionalism is visible in policy and legal precedent, it is also an attitude held in the minds of many Americans. Indeed, many Americans think that the United States is exceptional, and perhaps superior to other countries, which is associated with support for

¹¹For example, while the United States signed the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court in 1998, it has yet to ratify the treaty (Bosco 2014).

more unilateral and isolationist foreign policy preferences (Gilmore 2015). We anticipate that individuals who believe in American exceptionalism will be less persuaded by the transitional justice frame. This may be because the transitional justice frame suggests that the United States is behind in terms of addressing state abuses and upholding human rights relative to other countries, or simply because it invokes legal and policy precedent from outside of the United States.

H3: Belief in American exceptionalism will decrease the effectiveness of the Transitional Justice frames.

4 Framing Racial Justice as Transitional Justice

While the literature on transitional justice has increasingly used surveys to explore public opinion related to transitional justice mechanisms, existing survey experiments have focused primarily on understanding support for international transitional justice, especially the International Criminal Court (Chapman and Chaudoin 2020; Zvobgo 2019). Research focused on police reform has also used experimental techniques to evaluate how specific messaging of policies to reform the police can be helped or hindered (Vaughn, Peyton and Huber 2022; Boudreau, MacKenzie and Simmons 2022). Our research builds on these previous streams of research by showing how the framing of controversial policies as domestic transitional justice shapes support for the policies amongst the populations directly affected by them.

In order to evaluate the hypotheses presented in Section 3, in March 2022, we conducted a survey experiment. We recruited a sample of 1923 survey respondents and tested how the different ways of understanding the policies represented by “defund the police” affect support for racial justice initiatives in the United States. While there are a wide variety of policies associated with the phrase, we focus on four specific proposals:

1. Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments
2. Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers
3. Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police
4. Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims’ communities

As outlined in more detail below, we frame these four policies as either proposals associated with

the movement to defund the police and make communities safer, or as proposals associated with transitional justice, linking these policies to those implemented in other countries to address human rights where abuses have occurred.

4.1 Dependent Variable

We measure our dependent variable using a series of questions designed to gauge support for the specific policies presented in the treatments, as well as a broader array of policies associated with defunding the police and transitional justice. We asked our survey respondents questions about the extent to which they support a series of policies, including: reallocating funds from police departments to fund social services, investment in minority communities, trauma centers, and forgivable loans for black-owned businesses.¹²

We also included a number of scenario-style questions to assess support for these kinds of policies in a more personal context. While there is evidence that Americans support racial justice in the abstract, there is skepticism about whether or not this support translates when policies are implemented in their own communities (Sniderman, Brody and Kuklinski 1984). The scenario-style questions provide concrete details about the policy proposed and the injustice being addressed, as well as details about implementation in the respondent’s own community, to estimate more specific support for these policies.

The policy and scenario-style questions are intended to gauge opinions about the same policies in different ways—one in the abstract, and one providing concrete details so as to more accurately assess how individuals’ support may vary when confronted with these policy proposals in their communities. The policy questions ask generally about support for funding different programs. For example, one policy question asks, “to what extent do you support reallocating funds from police departments to investing in community social services?” The scenario-style questions ask about these same policies but with greater detail. For example, one scenario question asks “the city council in Austin, TX, a city of approximately 1 million people, voted to defund the police budget by roughly one third and divert \$150 million to funding social programs and violence prevention. This would mean that fewer police are employed by the city. To what extent do you support this proposal?” Including questions that ask directly

¹²Respondents answered these questions along a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly opposed” to “strongly support.”

about policies and those that additionally include specific information about scenarios allows us to measure support for addressing issues of policing across multiple specifications.

We use each set of questions to create indices capturing respondent support for policies (policy index) and scenarios (scenario index). For ease of interpretation, we then transform these indices into binary variables split at the mean, where the relevant index takes the value of 1 if the individual has an above-average support for the group of policies or scenarios and takes the value of 0 otherwise.¹³

4.2 The Experiment

To evaluate these hypotheses we designed an experiment wherein respondents were randomly assigned to one of three framing conditions: (1) defund the police, (2) transitional justice, or (3) control. Table 1 shows the six treatment assignment groups in the experiment.¹⁴ Groups 1 through 3 received additional information about what transitional justice is before being randomly assigned to one of the primary experimental conditions. As such, there are two control groups: Group 1 received the informational treatment and is therefore the informational baseline, and Group 4 did not receive the informational treatment and is the true baseline.

Table 1: Treatment Assignment Groups

Frame	TJ information	No TJ information
Control	Group 1 (info baseline)	Group 4 (true baseline)
Defund treatment	Group 2	Group 5
TJ treatment	Group 3	Group 6

After answering several pre-treatment questions at the beginning of the survey, respondents were randomly assigned into an informational treatment category. Half of the respondents received no additional information about transitional justice, and half of respondents received the following information:

¹³We understand that our results may be sensitive to the threshold value used to distinguish between support and not support. We therefore reproduce our main results for each possible threshold in Figures A3 and A4 of Appendix A.5. In Appendix A.5 we also reproduce all of our main findings with each item used to construct the two indices as a separate dependent variable. Finally, in Appendix B, we reproduce all of our main findings with the original indices as dependent variables, which preserve the variation in individual responses.

¹⁴Note that in the survey, there were actually four frames and a control. For each overall frame (transitional justice and defund the police), there were two treatment conditions, one that explicitly labeled the policies as such and one that used more general language. For ease of understanding and interpretation, we have combined each set of treatment groups into broad categories of “transitional justice” treatment and “defund the police” treatment. In Appendix A.5 we reproduce our main effects table with the treatment categories disaggregated into the four conditions.

Transitional Justice information

*Over the last 40 years, it has become common practice when addressing state violence and human rights abuses to implement **transitional justice** mechanisms. The aims of transitional justice policies most often fall into three broad categories: (1) holding perpetrators of abuses accountable for the things they have done, (2) providing support for victims of such abuses, and (3) implementing structural reforms that ensure the non-repetition of abuses in the future.*

Recall that, as outlined in Section 3, we expect that framing these policies as transitional justice will increase support for the policies by both signalling that these policies have been effective elsewhere and that they are associated with normatively good outcomes like human rights. The informational frame thus serves two purposes. First, by outlining in detail the purpose of implementing transitional justice and explicitly drawing the link between addressing human rights abuses and implementing transitional justice, the informational frame directly primes those taking the survey to draw the same connection that many academics and policy-makers have made between transitional justice and good outcomes. Second, the informational frame provides respondents with additional information about what is likely an unfamiliar concept.

Within each informational category, the respondents were then randomly assigned to one of three framing conditions: (1) defund the police, (2) transitional justice, or (3) control. Each of the three framing conditions began with the same paragraph of information about policing in the United States:

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

This paragraph was designed to emphasize the role that police are thought to play in society—as upholders of democratic values—by discussing the traffic, crime, and safety. However, it also highlights the racial inequities that are visibly inherent in policing, drawing attention to police as violators of human rights.

The introductory paragraph was then followed by the specific framing of the policies designed to address policing, depending on the treatment category.¹⁵ For those in the “defund the police” treatment category, they received the following condition:

Defund Frame

In response to these abuses, there have been nationwide protests and a growing movement to defund the police. This includes:

- *Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments*
- *Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers*
- *Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police*
- *Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities*

By implementing these policies, those advocating to defund the police believe that communities will be safer. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

By calling attention to the fact that advocates for these policies believe they will make communities safer, this frame explicitly draws a link between police abuses and harm to communities. Specifically, this frame highlights four policies to address policing as part of a movement for police reform. This frame also explicitly emphasizes that these policies are meant to increase community safety. When paired with the first paragraph, it is evident that these policies address inequities in policing.

For those in the “transitional justice” treatment category, they received the following condition:

Transitional Justice Frame

In other countries where violence like this has happened, governments have implemented transitional justice policies to help society address such abuses. These policies include:

- *Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments*
- *Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers*
- *Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police*
- *Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities*

¹⁵We chose not to randomize the order of the policies presented in each frame because reducing police budgets necessarily precedes investing that money into other services.

By implementing these policies, other countries have worked to ensure that those responsible for abuses have faced accountability, victims have received support, and that government abuses do not occur again in the future. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

By explicitly noting that countries elsewhere have implemented these policies to address abuses, the frame is designed to frame these policies in a way that is consistent with how elites, including advocates and policymakers, think about transitional justice, especially its association with human rights. When paired with the introductory paragraph, this frame more explicitly ties police abuses and violence to human rights, using the same set of policies. It also specifically ties the desired outcomes of the policies to the three main goals of transitional justice, thus emphasizing the connection between policing and improvements in human rights. That is, this frame emphasizes that these policies have been found effective at addressing human rights abuses, like those laid out in the introductory paragraph, in other contexts.

Those in the control group did not receive any information about the policies designed to address policing in the United States. They instead received information about other first responders:

Control

Other first responders are also seen as performing essential services to the community. For example, firemen fight deadly fires, and rescue victims in other emergency situations. Similarly, EMTs and paramedics respond to emergency calls for medical assistance, and provide life-saving care while transporting patients to medical facilities. But there have nevertheless been widespread reports of racism, sexual harassment, and homophobia in these professions, as well as accusations of bias in provision of essential services, particularly against Black Americans.

Because racialized abuses, regardless of who commits them, are not neutral, there was no way to create a race-neutral control frame. Instead, the control frame draws attention away from racialized police abuse as the sole source of concern, pointing out bias and abuse in other professions. This frame makes no explicit ties to human rights, and discusses discrimination based on gender and sexuality in addition to race as a problem in the provision of public services more broadly.

Regardless of what treatment they received, all respondents were then asked a series of questions, some of which were used to create the policy and scenario indices described in section 4.1. Data was collected at the panel level for standard demographic questions about race, age,

education level, gender, income, and partisanship.¹⁶ Respondents were also asked several questions designed to capture their level of latent racial resentment and belief in American exceptionalism. Finally, respondents were asked a free-write question, which gave them the opportunity to describe in their own words what they think the phrase “defund the police” means. The full question wording is included in Appendix C.

Table 2: Sample and Population Demographics

	Sample Pop.	Adult Pop.
White	73	75.8
Black	11.9	13.6
Female	51.8	51.1
Republican	34.7	43
Democrat	42.7	46
Age	47	38
Bachelor’s Degree	38.2	32.9
<i>Note:</i>	Population averages are for adults over 18 years old Source: US Census Bureau and Gallup	

Our survey was conducted using Lucid Theorem, and resulted in a sample of 1,923 respondents. These individuals comprise a non-probability based sample recruited by Lucid through emails, push notifications, and in-app pop-ups with financial compensation.¹⁷ While the sample uses non-probability based recruitment techniques, the Lucid Theorem panel is designed to approximate national representation and indeed our sample adheres closely to national benchmarks, as seen in in Table 2. Additionally, the experiment uses random assignment, which allows us to estimate causal effects within the sample.

Table 3 provides basic summary information for the survey respondents. Using the test from Hansen and Bowers (2008), we also checked for balance in treatment assignment. We included variables for respondent’s political party, sex, race, age, and whether they have a bachelor’s degree. The overall χ^2 statistics and associated p-values for treatment groups are: informational treatment, 8.8 (p = .27); defund the police, 4.17 (p = .76); transitional justice,

¹⁶We use these panel level questions as controls in our analysis because they are all collected prior to treatment assignment. For a discussion of post-treatment covariates of interest, such as a measure of racial resentment, see Appendix A.4.

¹⁷Participation in this survey was voluntary and restricted to 18+ residents of the United States. Individuals could opt out of participation at any point during the survey. This protocol was approved by University of Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB21-0635) and the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (H21-03675). Analysis for the survey experiment was preregistered with EGAP (Registration ID: 20220118AA).

Table 3: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Transitional justice information	1,923	0.514	0.500	0	1
Transitional justice frame	1,923	0.409	0.492	0	1
Defund frame	1,923	0.407	0.491	0	1
Control	1,923	0.185	0.388	0	1
Female	1,923	0.518	0.500	0	1
Black	1,923	0.119	0.323	0	1
Republican	1,923	0.347	0.476	0	1
American exceptionalism	1,923	0.630	0.483	0	1
Age	1,923	46.858	17.359	18	98
Bachelor's degree	1,923	0.384	0.487	0	1
Conservative	1,923	0.444	0.497	0	1
Policy support	1,923	0.554	0.497	0	1
Scenario support	1,923	0.532	0.499	0	1

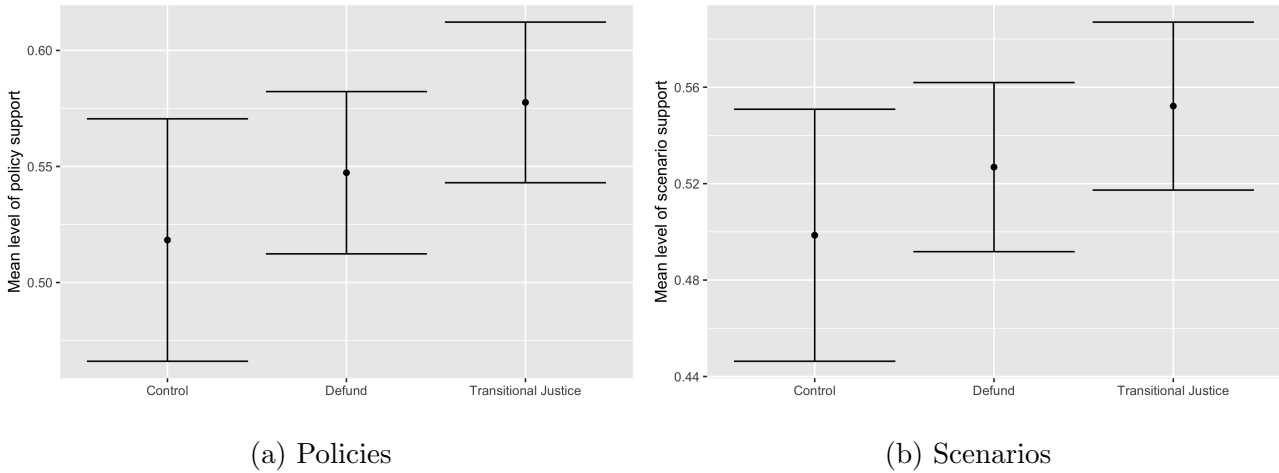
2.25 ($p = .95$); and control, 4.93 ($p = .67$). Thus we do not find evidence of imbalance in treatment assignment for the randomization in the experiment.

5 Results and Analysis

5.1 Defund the Police as Transitional Justice

To assess the average treatment effect of each frame on support for policies associated with defunding the police, we conduct a difference in means test for each dependent variable. Figure 1a shows the percentage of participants in each treatment group who support policies that would defund the police, while 1b shows the percentage who support implementing such policies in specific scenarios. It suggests that there is a difference in means between the treatment groups – especially between the transitional justice and control groups – but that it may not be statistically distinguishable from zero.

Figure 1: Treatment Group Difference in Means



To evaluate the main treatment effects of the frames on support for the policies associated with defunding the police, we conducted simple OLS using both the policy and scenario dependent variables. In Table 4 we assess this support with the inclusion of demographic controls.¹⁸ Models 1 and 5 show the effects of treatment assignment to transitional justice or defund groups on support for the general policies associated with defunding the police, while models 2 and 6 show the framing effects on support for policies in specific scenarios.

In model 1, the point estimate of this effect is .06 and is significant at $p < .05$, a common threshold for significance. This indicates that an individual is 6 percentage points more likely to support the policies associated with defunding the police after exposure to the transitional justice frame. It is also important to note that model 2 in Table 4 shows a weakly significant ($p < .1$), though substantively similar effect on support for implementing these policies in specific scenarios.

Equally important to note are the effects of the “defund the police” framing of these policies. Models 5 and 6 of Table 4 show that framing these policies as defunding the police has no measurable effect on support for the policies in the abstract or in specific scenarios—the results of the “defund the police” frame are both substantively small and statistically insignificant.

We also argue that receiving information about transitional justice will increase the effec-

¹⁸The standard controls used in this paper include indicators for age, gender, race (Black), education above a bachelor’s degree, conservative ideology, and partisan identification. The inclusion of controls in the models reduces the residual uncertainty and allows us to more precisely estimate the effects of each treatment assignment on our dependent variables of interest. In Tables A3, A4, and A5 of Appendix A.2, we present all models included in the main text with the results for covariates. We do not include racial resentment as a control but explore it in depth in Appendix A.4.

Table 4: Main Treatment Effects

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding					
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
TJ Frame	0.06** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)		
TJ Information			-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)		
Defund Frame					0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
TJ Information*Frame			0.06 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)		
Constant	1.00*** (0.05)	0.95*** (0.05)	1.03*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	1.04*** (0.04)	0.95*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.29	0.26
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.25

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

tiveness of the transitional justice frames. In order to evaluate this argument, we interacted indicator variables for assignment to both the transitional justice information group and the transitional justice frame. The results of this analysis are presented as Models 3 and 4 in Table 4.¹⁹ We do not find any evidence to suggest that providing individuals with information about transitional justice has an effect on their support of policies about reallocating police budgets. While the results generally suggest that receiving the informational treatment and then receiving the TJ frame may increase support for the policies associated with defunding the police—both in the abstract and in specific scenarios—these relationships are statistically indistinguishable from zero. In sum, while there is experimental evidence in support of H1a, there is little evidence in support of H1b or H1c.

¹⁹Note that we do not evaluate the effect of the defund the police framing as it relates to Hypothesis 1b. As explained in Section 3, we expect the additional information about transitional justice to amplify the effects of the transitional justice frame by connecting it more explicitly to human rights. We therefore have no reason to expect the information to have any effect on individuals exposed to the “defund the police” frame.

5.2 Partisanship

The second hypothesis addresses the effects of partisanship on political opinion formation and states that partisanship should moderate the effectiveness of the transitional justice treatment and overall support for racial justice policies. In particular, we expect Republican partisan identification to be associated with lower support for racial justice policies, relative to Democrats and Independents, even when the policies are framed as transitional justice.

To address this hypothesis, we interact each of the treatment variables with an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent self-identifies as Republican and 0 otherwise. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5. In all models, we use dichotomous variables of policies or scenarios as the dependent variable, and run the models with demographic controls²⁰.

Table 5: Interacting Treatments with Republican Partisanship

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding			
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TJ Frame	0.07** (0.03)	0.08** (0.04)		
Defund Frame			0.06* (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Republican	-0.25*** (0.05)	-0.24*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)
TJ*Republican	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)		
Defund*Republican			-0.09 (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)
Constant	0.99*** (0.05)	0.93*** (0.05)	1.01*** (0.05)	0.92*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.24	0.23	0.29	0.26
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.25

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

We find little evidence that the transitional justice and defund the police frames have any effect for Republicans. While identifying as Republican has a substantively strong and statistically significant association with decreased support for policies associated with defunding the police, the interaction term in models 1-3 suggest that the added effect of receiving the

²⁰An alternative specification using the original indices as dependent variables is included in Appendix B, Table B2.

transitional justice frame is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Model 1 shows that while identifying as Republican is associated with a 25 percentage point decrease in the probability that an individual will support policies associated with defunding the police, there appears to be no additional effect of framing the policies as transitional justice, at least for Republicans. Model 2 presents similar findings for specific grounded scenarios.

The interaction term in models 3 and 4 suggests something similar—while being Republican significantly decreases the probability that an individual will support the policies associated with defunding the police, there is a weakly significant ($p < .1$) negative effect of framing the policies as “defunding the police” to individuals who identify as Republicans, and only in the case of specific scenarios (model 4). For general policies (model 3), the additional effect of framing them as defunding the police is statistically indistinguishable from zero.

In contrast, the results presented in Table 5 provide strong evidence that framing policies associated with defunding the police as transitional justice is particularly effective for Democrats and Independents. In model 1, we find that exposure to the transitional justice framing increases the probability that an individual who identifies as non-Republican will support these policies by 7 percentage points. Similarly, as presented in model 2, exposure to the transitional justice frame increases the probability that an individual who is not Republican will support implementing these policies in specific scenarios by 8 percentage points. Framing these policies as “defunding the police” has substantively similar, though only weakly significant effects for Democrats and Independents.

5.3 American Exceptionalism

The final hypothesis states that belief in American exceptionalism will decrease the effectiveness of the transitional justice frame. To address this hypothesis, we interact the transitional justice treatment variable with an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent expressed attitudes consistent with American exceptionalism. We measure American exceptionalism using questions about respondents’ support for the following two statements: (1) The United States has a special responsibility to be the leading nation in world affairs, and (2) Because of the United States’ history and its Constitution, the U.S. has a unique character

that makes it the greatest country in the world.²¹

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.²² Note that we do not evaluate the effect of the defund the police framing as it relates to Hypothesis 3. As explained in Section 2, the defund the police movement is intimately connected to other racial justice movements within the United States. Because these social movements are associated with political action *within* the United States, there is little reason to believe that American exceptionalism will have any moderating effects on the defund the police frame.

Table 6: Interacting TJ Treatment with American Exceptionalism

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding	
	Policies (1)	Scenarios (2)
TJ Frame	0.12*** (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)
American Exceptionalism	0.15*** (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)
TJ*AmEx	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
Constant	0.92*** (0.05)	0.90*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.25	0.23
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Consistent with our hypothesis, the transitional justice frame is primarily ineffective among individuals who believe in American exceptionalism. Model 1 in Table 6 shows that expressing beliefs consistent with American exceptionalism actually makes an individual more likely to express support for the policies associated with defunding the police. However, the interaction term presented in model 1 shows that framing these policies *as transitional justice* has the opposite effect: while only weakly significant ($p < .1$), exposure to the transitional justice framing causes an 11 percentage point decrease in the probability that an individual who has

²¹In our analysis, we scale the answers of these two questions together and create an indicator variable using the mean of the sample. Above the mean receives a 1 indicating belief in American exceptionalism, while below the mean receives a 0.

²²An alternative specification using the original indices as dependent variables is included in Appendix B, Table B3.

expressed beliefs in American exceptionalism supports the policies associated with defunding the police. When we analyze the effect of belief in American exceptionalism on support for the specific scenarios in model 2, we find consistent, albeit generally insignificant results.

However, among those who *do not* express beliefs consistent with American exceptionalism, the transitional justice frame can be quite effective at changing attitudes. Model 1 in Table 6 shows that for those without belief in American exceptionalism, framing the policies associated with defunding the police as transitional justice increases the probability that an individual supports the policies by 12 percentage points. Similarly, model 2 shows that the transitional justice framing increases the probability that an individual without a belief in American exceptionalism supports the implementation of policies in specific scenarios by 11 percentage points.

5.4 Discussion

We find evidence that framing policies associated with defunding the police as transitional justice can in fact increase public support for these policies. This is particularly true for individuals who do not identify as Republican, and for those who do not have a strong belief in American exceptionalism. In contrast, framing these policies as “defunding the police” appears to have no effect on support for the general policies or their implementation in more specific scenarios. We offer one interpretation of this result. It is possible that confusion over what the phrase means overshadows any effects of the framing itself. While the “defund the police” frame itself provided respondents with a particular understanding of the phrase, regular use of the phrase by activists, political elites, and the media, may have obscured the framing effects of the treatment.

Our results are particularly important given the *timing* of our survey experiment. While in the immediate aftermath of the 2020 uprising the public seemed more amenable to suggestions for police reform—and some local governments even made commitments to enact reforms—support for reforms attenuated and promises were ultimately not kept. In some cases police forces were even expanded and budgets enlarged. This survey was conducted in March 2022, nearly two years after the initial uprising drew attention to the phrase “defund the police.” There is evidence to suggest that by the end of the summer of 2020, support for Black Lives

Matter had attenuated to lower than pre-uprising levels (Chudy and Jefferson 2021). That is, the timing of our experiment meant it was conducted in a social and political context where opinions around these policies were likely crystallized, and after the tide of public opinion had turned against these reforms. Despite these unfavorable conditions, we still find that framing these policies as transitional justice to be effective, particularly among Democrats and independents, and importantly do not find that the framing decreases support among Republicans.²³

We also test the premise that framing controversial policies in ways that are normatively appealing should increase support for those policies—in this case, framing police reform as transitional justice. We do this in two ways. First, we test an informational frame wherein individuals are randomly selected to receive information about transitional justice and human rights prior to the main framing treatment. Second, in the main informational treatment we provide further information that places police reform policies in the context of human rights. For the informational treatment, we find null results which are consistent with previous literature that tests the effect of providing individuals with information about transitional justice (Zvobgo 2019; Chapman and Chaudoin 2020). These null results could be due to the information about transitional justice provided in the other experimental frames. We provide thorough information about transitional justice policies in the main experimental frames which may render the informational frame redundant. Thus, this result could in fact be capturing the effect of providing *additional* information about transitional justice which is not a significant enough effect to be picked up by the model. Alternatively, these findings could be an indication that respondents were better at making the connections between transitional justice and policies than we expected. Future research should tease apart these possibilities—whether or not providing information can help increase support for policies described in this framework and the extent to which individuals make connections between racial justice policies and transitional justice independently.

When we evaluate the effect of the frames among Republicans, we find that framing these policies as defunding the police has a predictably negative effect, but we do not find significant

²³Although it may seem possible that the effectiveness of the transitional justice framing for Democrats is due to partisan polarization of the issue space, it is important to note that Democratic leaders have also been responsible for undercutting commitments to defund or reign in police forces. For example, after George Floyd’s murder in Minneapolis, the city council voted to reduce police funding but ultimately did not follow through.

effects for the transitional justice frame. Why is this? It could be that there is a floor effect. That is, because average Republican support for these kinds of policies is already so low, it is possible that framing policies to address policing in different ways is not effective. However, using the same measures we present as our dependent variable, we found that 27.69% of Republicans in our sample support these policies and 25.4% of Republicans in our sample support implementing them in specific scenarios. This suggests that our findings are not entirely about floor effects. While framing these policies as defunding the police sometimes decreases support among Republicans, framing these policies as transitional justice may not.

However, it is also possible that the transitional justice framing effect is null among Republicans because the language has not been adopted by conservative elites. For example, the rhetoric of diversity was embraced by legal scholars as a way to find compromise between different interests and ultimately limit the extent of racial redress policies in the future (Joshi 2018). More recently, the language of critical race theory was adopted by conservative elites to vilify any discussion of race in schools. While the rhetoric of “defund the police” is currently largely opposed by conservative elites and voters, it is possible that embracing the language of transitional justice could ultimately meet the same fate in the future.

We also evaluate how belief in American Exceptionalism may moderate the effectiveness of the transitional justice frame. Given that many Americans, including 63% of our sample, view the United States as exceptional, we expected that transitional justice framing would be less effective on these individuals because it suggests that the United States is behind in terms of addressing state abuses. We find that the transitional justice frame is less effective those who believe in American exceptionalism for policies, but we do not find a significant effect for the scenarios. Interestingly, we also find a positive effect for those who believe in American exceptionalism when they do not receive the transitional justice frame. These results support our hypothesis and suggest that those who believe in American exceptionalism may be less receptive to framing domestic racial justice issues as part of a global movement for transitional justice, though they may be supportive of addressing domestic racial justice issues in general.

Overall, framing policies designed to address policing in the United States as transitional justice increases support for these policies, at least in terms of abstract policy support. The results presented above suggest that when these policies are framed as transitional justice,

people are generally supportive of reinvesting in minority communities, social services, and additional care for those who have been negatively affected by policing, and are willing to at least partially divest from policing institutions to do so. This is especially true for those who identify as Democrats and Independents.

We find mixed results for whether or not framing these policies as transitional justice can change support for them in more personalized contexts. That is, framing the policies as transitional justice does appear to increase support in specific scenarios for non-Republicans and those who do not have a strong belief in American exceptionalism. However, in general, we find that even when individuals are more likely to support the policies in the abstract, they are no more likely to support implementing them in specific communities when presented with the opportunity to do so.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that framing racial justice initiatives in the United States, particularly around police reform, can be effectively framed as transitional justice. We set out to test this argument using a framing experiment designed to explicitly capture the how presenting the same set of policies as “transitional justice” or “defunding the police” shapes the support people have for them.

We find strong support for our central hypothesis that transitional justice is an effective framing technique for policies that propose reallocating funds from police departments. This is the effect after a single exposure to this messaging on a topic with high polarization. While there is evidence that survey treatments are temporary, we might be able to see a more persistent effect with consistent messaging—that is, if these policies are consistently framed as part of a broader movement for transitional justice.

When looking more closely at certain characteristics, such as partisanship or belief in American exceptionalism, we find additional support for our hypotheses. In particular, we find that the transitional justice framing is very effective for non-Republicans. Given that these policies are subject to intense partisan polarization, this means that this messaging is effective in the groups for whom support is possible. Getting Democrats and Independents on board with reforming the police through reallocating funds to different social services is normatively

important for advancing racial justice in the United States. This is especially true because, importantly, we do not find a significant framing effect, positive or negative, among Republicans. Future research can explore how different methods of framing racial justice policies, especially around police reform, can be effective for different audiences in the long term.

This study helps to bridge scholarship on attitudes about policing and transitional justice, connecting it to the very real and urgent needs of activists fighting for racial justice in the United States. While the framework of transitional justice is useful for analyzing the aims of racial justice in the U.S., we hope that it can also be a productive frame for activists. The upheaval following the 2020 uprising provides an opportunity for a re-imagining of the relationship between the state and society, one that is not predicated on violence and subjugation, racial or otherwise. Framing these demands in terms of transitional justice can help scholars, activists, and the mass public to reevaluate what the role of the state—and in particular the state security apparatus—should be in the United States.

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Supplementary Information

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A Primary Quantitative Appendix

A.1 Additional Descriptive Statistics

In Table A1 we provide summary statistics for each of the component variables that are used to construct the policy and scenario indices, which we use to create the dependent variables used in the main text. Further analysis with the original indices are included in Appendix B below.

Table A1: Summary Statistics - Dependent Variables

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Community Social Services	1,923	0.524	0.500	0	1
Minority Communities	1,923	0.445	0.497	0	1
Trauma Centers	1,923	0.415	0.493	0	1
Black-owned Businesses	1,923	0.471	0.499	0	1
Austin, TX	1,923	0.516	0.500	0	1
Norman, OK	1,923	0.556	0.497	0	1
Your Town	1,923	0.486	0.500	0	1
Policies	1,923	0.554	0.497	0	1
Scenarios	1,923	0.532	0.499	0	1

In Table A2, we reproduce Table 1 presented in Section 4 and include a raw count of the number of respondents in each treatment category.

Table A2: Treatment Assignment Groups with Respondent Numbers

Frame	TJ information	No TJ information
Control	Group 1 (189)	Group 4 (166)
Defund treatment	Group 2 (395)	Group 5 (387)
TJ treatment	Group 3 (405)	Group 6 (381)

Note: Number of respondents in parentheses

A.2 Main Models with Controls Shown

In Tables A3, A4, and A5 we replicate Tables 4, 5, and 6 from the main text with the estimates for each covariate presented.

Table A3: Main Treatment Effects with Controls Shown

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding					
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
TJ Frame	0.06** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)		
TJ Information			-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)		
Defund Frame					0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Age	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)
Female	0.01 (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Black	0.12*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.14*** (0.04)
Republican	-0.28*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)
Bachelor's Degree	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.0002 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Conservative	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)
TJ Information*Frame			0.06 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)		
Constant	1.00*** (0.05)	0.95*** (0.05)	1.03*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	1.04*** (0.04)	0.95*** (0.05)
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.29	0.26
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.25

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A4: Interacting Treatments with Republican Partisanship (Controls Shown)

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding			
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TJ Frame	0.07** (0.03)	0.08** (0.04)		
Defund Frame			0.06* (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Republican	-0.25*** (0.05)	-0.24*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)
Age	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)
Female	0.01 (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Black	0.12*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.14*** (0.04)
Bachelor's Degree	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.001 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Conservative	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.03)
TJ*Republican	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)		
Defund*Republican			-0.09 (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)
Constant	0.99*** (0.05)	0.93*** (0.05)	1.01*** (0.05)	0.92*** (0.05)
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.24	0.23	0.29	0.26
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.25

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A5: Interacting TJ Treatment with American Exceptionalism (Controls Shown)

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding	
	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)
TJ Frame	0.12*** (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)
American Exceptionalism	0.15*** (0.05)	0.09* (0.05)
Age	-0.01*** (0.001)	-0.01*** (0.001)
Republican	-0.29*** (0.03)	-0.29*** (0.03)
Female	0.01 (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)
Black	0.12*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Bachelor's Degree	0.02 (0.03)	0.05** (0.03)
Conservative	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.10*** (0.03)
TJ*AmEx	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
Constant	0.92*** (0.05)	0.90*** (0.05)
Observations	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.25	0.23
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.23

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A.3 Main Models with Full Sample

In Tables A6, A7, and A8 we present the results of our analysis using the full sample from our survey. The results are largely consistent with those presented in the main text.

Table A6: Main Treatment Effects in Full Sample

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding			
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TJ Frame	0.06** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
TJ Information			-0.03 (0.03)	-0.06** (0.03)
Defund Frame	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
TJ*Information			0.04 (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)
Constant	1.03*** (0.04)	0.94*** (0.04)	1.05*** (0.04)	0.98*** (0.04)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,923	1,923	1,923	1,923
R ²	0.27	0.25	0.27	0.25
Adjusted R ²	0.27	0.25	0.27	0.25

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A7: Interacting Treatments with Republican Partisanship in Full Sample

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding	
	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)
TJ Frame	0.07** (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)
Republican	-0.25*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)
Defund Frame	0.06* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)
TJ*Republican	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)
Defund*Republican	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.10* (0.06)
Constant	1.01*** (0.04)	0.92*** (0.04)
Controls?	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,923	1,923
R ²	0.27	0.25
Adjusted R ²	0.27	0.25

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A8: Interacting TJ Treatment with American Exceptionalism in Full Sample

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding	
	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)
TJ Frame	0.09** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)
American Exceptionalism	0.08*** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)
Defund	0.03 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
TJ*AmEx	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)
Constant	0.96*** (0.04)	0.89*** (0.04)
Controls?	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,923	1,923
R ²	0.22	0.19
Adjusted R ²	0.21	0.19

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A.4 Analysis of Racial Resentment

In the analysis presented in the paper, we do not control for racial resentment. This is for two primary reasons. First, racial resentment is measured post-treatment and therefore can bias our results. This was an intentional choice in the survey design—we purposefully did not want to prime individuals to think too much about race and racial resentment ahead of the treatment. Second, while racial resentment was originally designed to capture a subtle or coded form of racial animus, it is now considered to be overt and recognizable by the average survey taker. Despite these concerns, we also include analysis of racial resentment below.²⁴ In Table A9 we find that conditioning on the post-treatment variable of racial resentment does not substantially change the point estimates of the main treatment effects, but does suppress the statistical significance.

Table A9: Main Treatment Effects Controlling for Racial Resentment

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding					
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
TJ Frame	0.05*	0.04	0.01	0.03		
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)		
TJ Information			-0.05	-0.03		
			(0.04)	(0.05)		
Defund Frame					0.01	0.01
					(0.03)	(0.03)
Racial Resentment	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.13***	-0.13***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
TJ*Information			0.07	0.03		
			(0.05)	(0.06)		
Constant	1.40***	1.30***	1.43***	1.31***	1.40***	1.31***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.30	0.26	0.30	0.26	0.32	0.28
Adjusted R ²	0.30	0.26	0.30	0.26	0.31	0.28

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

²⁴Analysis of racial resentment was not included in the preregistration for the experiment.

We additionally look at the interaction of racial resentment with the treatment conditions. What we find is that racial resentment is a strong negative predictor of support for police reform across both polices and scenarios, regardless of treatment assignment. Again, it is important to keep in mind that racial resentment was collected post-treatment which is likely causing significant bias in the estimate. It is apparent that racial attitudes, like racial resentment, are important for understanding support for police reforms in the United States. This is not surprising. Future research should explore this in more depth with racial resentment as a pre-treatment condition to properly uncover the relationship between these attitudes.

Table A10: Interacting Treatments with Racial Resentment

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding			
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TJ Frame	0.0003 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.08)		
Defund Frame			-0.08 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.08)
Racial Resentment	-0.14*** (0.02)	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.12*** (0.02)
TJ*Racial Resentment	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)		
Defund*Racial Resentment			0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Constant	1.41*** (0.07)	1.31*** (0.08)	1.43*** (0.07)	1.30*** (0.07)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.32	0.29	0.35	0.31
Adjusted R ²	0.32	0.29	0.34	0.31

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Finally, we conduct a threshold analysis to see if the cutoffs we chose for the dependent variables have any effect on the statistical significance of the treatment effects when conditioned on the post-treatment variable racial resentment. We find that for both policies and scenario questions, regardless of the cutoff for the dependent variable, the treatment effects remain just outside the realm of statistical significance at $p > .05$.

Figure A1: Robustness to Varying the Threshold of Support for Policies

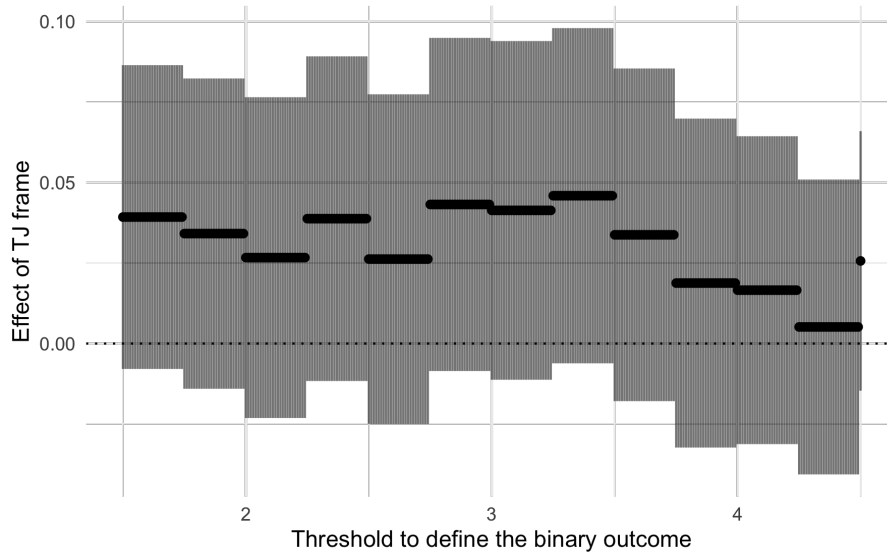
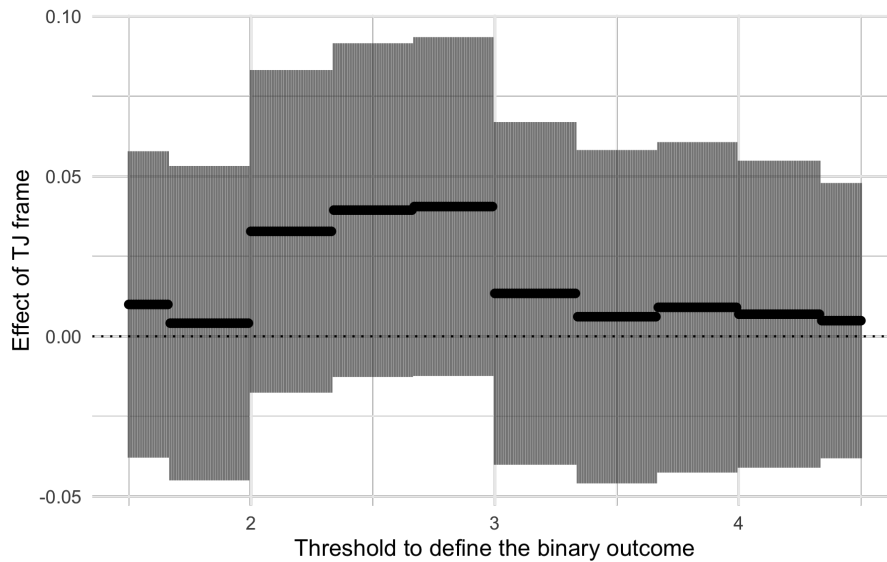


Figure A2: Robustness to Varying the Threshold of Support for Scenarios



A.5 Robustness Checks

In the main analysis, we use binary dependent variables for policy support and scenario support that are constructed such that individuals with scores above the mean are equal to 1 and individuals at or below the mean are equal to 0. We recognize that in conducting this analysis, we are reducing variation in our dependent variable, and that the results may be sensitive to different threshold cutoffs for constructing the variable. We therefore tested the significance of the effect of transitional justice on each of these binary variables when varying the threshold for support.

Figure A3: Robustness to Varying the Threshold of Support for Policies

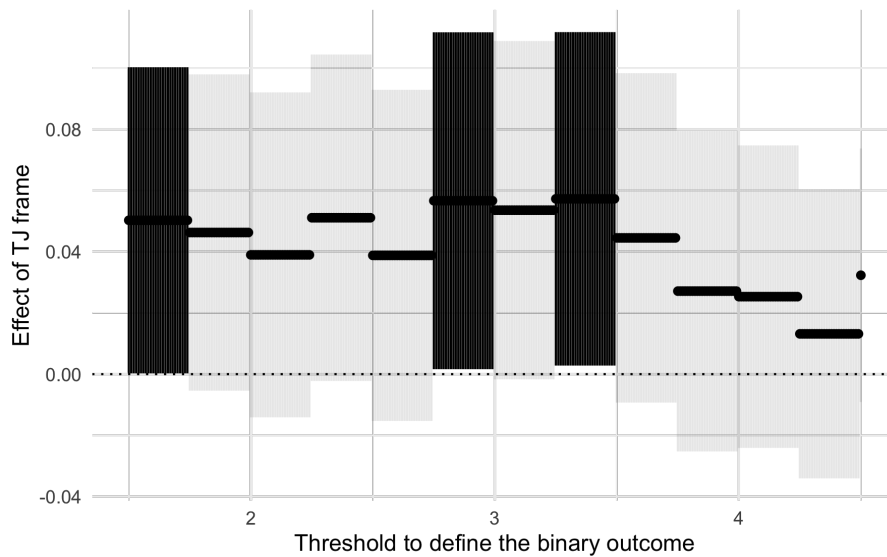
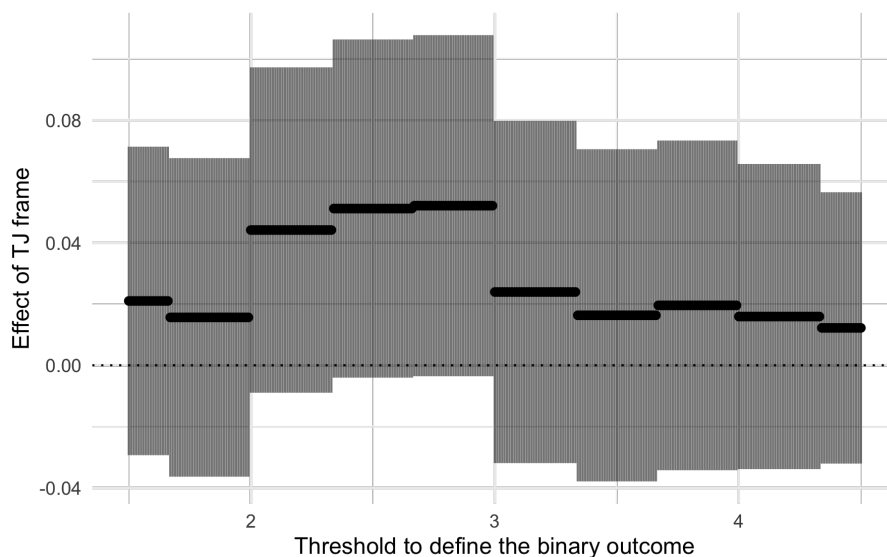


Figure A4: Robustness to Varying the Threshold of Support for Scenarios



In Figure A3, we present the results of this analysis for the policy support dependent variable, and in Figure A4, we present the results for the dependent variable constructed for the scenarios. As both figures show, there is a range of thresholds for which the main findings presented in

Section 5.1 remain statistically significant and substantively similar in terms of the magnitude of the effects.

Table A11: Treatment Assignment Groups

Frame	TJ Treatment	No TJ Treatment
Control	Group 1 (189)	Group 6 (166)
Defund no label	Group 2 (188)	Group 7 (193)
Defund label	Group 3 (207)	Group 8 (194)
TJ no label	Group 4 (221)	Group 9 (195)
TJ label	Group 5 (184)	Group 10 (186)

Note: Number of respondents in parentheses

In our original research design, we had ten total treatment groups, represented in Table A11. That is, for each overall frame (transitional justice and defund the police), there were two treatment conditions, one that explicitly labeled the policies as such and one that used more general language. However, for simplicity we collapse the label and no label groups into one for both the defund and transitional justice frames, resulting in 6 groups. In Table A12 we reproduce our main effects with the treatment categories disaggregated into *transitional justice - label*, *transitional justice - no label*, *defund - label*, and *defund - no label*. We see that the main results are robust to this disaggregation; the transitional justice treatments both appear to increase support for both policies to address policing in the United States and specific grounded scenarios, though the transitional justice frame with a label appears to be more effective.

Table A12: Main Treatment Effects by Label

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding							
	Policies				Scenarios			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
TJ Frame - Label	0.06* (0.03)				0.07** (0.03)			
TJ Frame - No Label		0.05 (0.03)				0.03 (0.03)		
Defund Frame - Label			0.02 (0.03)				0.03 (0.03)	
Defund Frame - No Label				0.03 (0.03)				0.03 (0.03)
Constant	0.97*** (0.06)	1.01*** (0.06)	0.99*** (0.05)	1.04*** (0.05)	0.94*** (0.06)	0.96*** (0.06)	0.94*** (0.05)	0.97*** (0.06)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	725	771	756	736	725	771	756	736
R ²	0.25	0.23	0.28	0.26	0.24	0.22	0.25	0.24
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.22	0.27	0.26	0.23	0.21	0.24	0.23

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In Tables A13, A14, and A15, we also replicate the main results showing the treatment effects when we use each individual item as a dependent variable instead of the dichotomous composite variables we use in the paper. As can be seen in Table A13, it appears that the transitional justice frame is effective at increasing support for all of the proposed policies except providing forgivable loans to Black-owned businesses. It also appears that the transitional justice frame is effective at increasing support for implementing these policies in specific scenarios, including both Norman, Oklahoma and the respondents' towns. As shown in Tables A14 and A15, and in line with the results presented in Section 5.1, that contrary to our hypothesis, that additional information about what transitional justice is does not increase the effectiveness of the transitional justice frame. We also find no evidence that framing these policies as "defunding the police" increases support for any of the individual policies or the scenarios.

Table A13: Main Treatment Effects by Individual Variable (TJ Frame)

<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Services	Communities	Black Businesses	Trauma Centers	Austin, TX	Norman, OK	Your Town
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
TJ Frame	0.07** (0.03)	0.05* (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)
Constant	0.94*** (0.05)	0.80*** (0.05)	0.94*** (0.05)	0.87*** (0.05)	0.97*** (0.05)	0.90*** (0.05)	0.85*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.18	0.22	0.19	0.18
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.17	0.21	0.18	0.17

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A14: Main Treatment Effects by Individual Variable (Informational Frame)

<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	Services	Communities	Black Businesses	Trauma Centers	Austin, TX	Norman, OK	Your Town
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
TJ Frame	0.07 (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.0005 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
TJ Information	-0.01 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.05)
TJ*Information	0.001 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.05 (0.06)	-0.0005 (0.06)
Constant	0.94*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.05)	0.95*** (0.05)	0.85*** (0.05)	0.98*** (0.05)	0.90*** (0.05)	0.85*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.18	0.19	0.25	0.18	0.22	0.19	0.18
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.18	0.24	0.17	0.21	0.18	0.17

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A15: Main Treatment Effects by Individual Variable (Defund Frame)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Services (1)	Communities (2)	Black Businesses (3)	Trauma Centers (4)	Austin, TX (5)	Norman, OK (6)	Your Town (7)
Defund Frame	0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)
Constant	0.89*** (0.05)	0.79*** (0.05)	0.97*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	0.83*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.19	0.20	0.25	0.17	0.22	0.23	0.19
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.19	0.25	0.17	0.22	0.22	0.19

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

We also replicate the main results for Hypothesis 3, showing the treatment effects when we use each individual item as a dependent variable. Table A16 presents the results of this analysis for the transitional justice frame, while Table A17 presents these results for the “defund the police” frame. The results are largely consistent with the findings presented in Section 5.2, though as Table A17 shows, we find that the “defund the police” frame increases support for reallocating funds from police departments to investment in community social services, at least for Democrats and Independents. In contrast, the defund framing appears to especially decrease support for implementing these policies in the specific scenario of Norman, Oklahoma.

Table A16: Treatment Effects by Partisanship and Individual Variable (TJ Frame)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Services (1)	Communities (2)	Black Businesses (3)	Trauma Centers (4)	Austin, TX (5)	Norman, OK (6)	Your Town (7)
TJ Frame	0.09** (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.06* (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.08** (0.04)
Republican	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.27*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.26*** (0.05)	-0.21*** (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.05)
TJ*Republican	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.0000 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Constant	0.92*** (0.05)	0.79*** (0.05)	0.92*** (0.05)	0.87*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	0.88*** (0.05)	0.83*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.18	0.22	0.19	0.18
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.18	0.25	0.17	0.21	0.18	0.17

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A17: Treatment Effects by Partisanship and Individual Variable (Defund Frame)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Services (1)	Communities (2)	Black Businesses (3)	Trauma Centers (4)	Austin, TX (5)	Norman, OK (6)	Your Town (7)
Defund Frame	0.08** (0.04)	0.05 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)	0.06* (0.04)
Republican	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.25*** (0.05)	-0.22*** (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.23*** (0.05)	-0.20*** (0.05)	-0.18*** (0.05)
Defund*Republican	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.13** (0.06)	-0.10 (0.06)
Constant	0.87*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.05)	0.96*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.05)	0.95*** (0.05)	0.92*** (0.05)	0.81*** (0.05)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.19	0.20	0.25	0.17	0.22	0.23	0.19
Adjusted R ²	0.18	0.19	0.25	0.16	0.22	0.23	0.19

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Finally, we also replicate the main results for Hypothesis 4 showing the treatment effects when we use each individual item as a dependent variable. Table A18 presents the results of this analysis. The results are largely consistent with the primary analysis.

Table A18: Treatment Effect by American Exceptionalism and Individual Variable

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	Services (1)	Communities (2)	Black Businesses (3)	Trauma Centers (4)	Austin, TX (5)	Norman, OK (6)	Your Town (7)
TJ Frame	0.13*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.12** (0.05)	0.11** (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.10** (0.05)	0.13*** (0.05)
American Exceptionalism	0.17*** (0.05)	0.12** (0.05)	0.14*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)	0.19*** (0.05)
TJ*AmEx	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.14** (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.12** (0.06)
Constant	0.85*** (0.06)	0.75*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.05)	0.78*** (0.06)	0.94*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.06)	0.74*** (0.06)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.19	0.19	0.26	0.19	0.22	0.19	0.19
Adjusted R ²	0.19	0.19	0.25	0.18	0.21	0.18	0.19

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A.6 Attrition

Among survey respondents, there were 420 who did not complete the survey. These individuals stopped taking the survey at different times, but we have the demographic data for them gathered from the Lucid panel, which is presented in Table A19²⁵. While we were concerned that there may be systematic qualities about the individuals who did not complete the survey — specifically, that Republicans may see the content of the survey and decide not to answer it because of the nature of the topic — we did not find evidence of this phenomenon.

Table A19: Characteristics of Incompletes

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Female	420	0.614	0.487	0	1
Black	420	0.186	0.389	0	1
Republican	420	0.269	0.444	0	1
Bachelor's degree	420	0.245	0.431	0	1
Age	420	40.552	15.615	18	81

²⁵Note that not every demographic question is collected at the panel level. For example, political ideology is a question included in our survey whereas partisan identification is provided by the panel.

B Alternate Model Specifications Using Likert Scales

In this section, we replicate all analyses in the paper using an alternate measure of the dependent variables. That is, we use the original policy and scenario indices, which preserve the full variation in respondent opinions across each of the survey items. These indices were created using the responses to each of the relevant survey items, which respondents answered using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly opposed” to “strongly support.”

Table B1: Main Treatment Effects – Likert Scale

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding					
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
TJ Frame	0.15** (0.07)	0.10 (0.08)	0.12 (0.11)	0.05 (0.11)		
Information			-0.07 (0.12)	-0.07 (0.13)		
Defund					0.08 (0.07)	0.06 (0.08)
TJ*Information			0.05 (0.15)	0.09 (0.15)		
Constant	4.33*** (0.12)	4.24*** (0.13)	4.37*** (0.14)	4.27*** (0.14)	4.34*** (0.12)	4.24*** (0.13)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.31	0.27	0.31	0.27	0.33	0.29
Adjusted R ²	0.31	0.27	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.28

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B1 shows the main effects with this alternative specification. The results are largely consistent with those presented in the main models in Section 5.1.

Table B2: Interacting Treatments with Republican Partisanship – Likert Scale

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding			
	Policies	Scenarios	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
TJ Frame	0.23*** (0.09)	0.16* (0.09)		
Defund Frame			0.15* (0.09)	0.15 (0.10)
Republican	-0.73*** (0.13)	-0.76*** (0.14)	-0.70*** (0.13)	-0.70*** (0.14)
TJ*Republican	-0.24 (0.15)	-0.19 (0.16)		
Defund*Republican			-0.21 (0.15)	-0.26 (0.16)
Constant	4.27*** (0.13)	4.19*** (0.13)	4.29*** (0.13)	4.17*** (0.13)
Controls?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141	1,137	1,137
R ²	0.32	0.27	0.33	0.29
Adjusted R ²	0.31	0.27	0.32	0.28

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

In Table B2, we replicate the analysis for Hypothesis 2. Again, the results are largely consistent with those presented in Table 5.

Table B3: Interacting TJ Treatment with American Exceptionalism – Likert Scale

	Support for Reallocating Police Funding	
	Policies	Scenarios
	(1)	(2)
TJ Frame	0.37*** (0.12)	0.32*** (0.12)
American Exceptionalism	0.48*** (0.12)	0.37*** (0.13)
TJ*AmEx	-0.35** (0.15)	-0.36** (0.16)
Constant	4.07*** (0.14)	4.02*** (0.15)
Controls?	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,141	1,141
R ²	0.32	0.28
Adjusted R ²	0.32	0.27

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

We replicate the analysis for Hypothesis 3 in Table B3. In contrast to the results presented in Section 5.3, the transitional justice frame appears to have a substantive and statistically significant negative effect on those with a belief in American exceptionalism. As models 2 and 4 of Table B3 show, while belief in American exceptionalism is associated with an increase in

support for policies and scenarios associated with defunding the police, framing these policies as transitional justice essentially neutralizes that relationship, especially in the context of specific scenarios.

C Survey Instrument

Appendix C provides a full overview of the survey instrument administered to respondents, including the pre-treatment questions, the information about transitional justice provided to half of the respondents, all five treatment frames, and the specific questions asked to measure the support for policies designed to address policing in the United States. This survey was fielded with Lucid Theorem Survey Sampling and includes the following pretreatment demographic indicators from the panel: age, race, ethnicity, gender, education, income, partisan identification, and region.

Pre-Treatment Questions:

What are the political and social issues that are the most important to you? Select all that apply. (Order of items is randomized).

- National Debt
- Climate Change
- LGBTQ+ Issues
- Gun Control
- Health Care
- Police Brutality
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Economic Growth
- Military Strength
- Racism
- Social Security
- Taxes
- Mass Incarceration
- Crime
- Foreign Policy
- Education
- Terrorism and Homeland Security
- Immigration
- Sexual Harassment
- Women's Rights
- Raising the minimum wage

- Coronavirus Response
- Social Justice
- Abortion

How much work do we still have to do to address racism in the United States?

- A great deal
- A lot
- A moderate amount
- A little
- None at all

Information about TJ (Provided to half of respondents):

Over the last 40 years, it has become common practice when addressing state violence and human rights abuses to implement transitional justice mechanisms. The aims of transitional justice policies most often fall into three broad categories: (1) holding perpetrators of abuses accountable for the things they have done, (2) providing support for victims of such abuses, and (3) implementing structural reforms that ensure the non-repetition of abuses in the future.

Control

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

Other first responders are also seen as performing essential services to the community. For example, firemen fight deadly fires and rescue victims in other emergency situations. Similarly, EMTs and paramedics respond to emergency calls for medical assistance and provide life-saving care while transporting patients to medical facilities. But there have nevertheless been widespread reports of racism, sexual harassment, and homophobia in these professions, as well as accusations of bias in provision of essential services, particularly against Black Americans.

Defund Frame (Label)

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

In response to these abuses, there have been nationwide protests and a growing movement to defund the police. This includes:

- Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments
- Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers
- Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police
- Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities

By implementing these policies, those advocating to defund the police believe that communities will be safer. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

Defund Frame (No Label)

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

In response to these abuses, there have been growing calls to address policing in the United States. This includes:

- Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments
- Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers
- Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police
- Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities

By implementing these policies, advocates believe that communities will be safer. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

Transitional Justice Frame (Label)

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

In other countries where violence like this has happened, governments have implemented transitional justice policies to help society address such abuses. These policies include:

- Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments
- Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers
- Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police

- Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities

By implementing transitional justice policies, other countries have worked to ensure that those responsible for abuses have faced accountability, victims have received support, and that government abuses do not occur again in the future. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

Transitional Justice Frame (No Label)

Police have often been thought of as an essential part of American society. They enforce traffic laws, investigate crimes, and keep communities safe. In recent years, however, there have been numerous high-profile instances of police brutality that have gained widespread media attention. Subsequent investigation has revealed a pattern of such abuses dating as far back as the country itself. In 2020 alone, 1,021 people were shot and killed by police in the U.S. Black Americans bear the brunt of this – they are killed at nearly twice the rate of white Americans despite being less than 13% of the population.

In other countries where violence like this has happened, governments have implemented policies to help society address such abuses. These policies include:

- Reducing police budgets and the size of police departments
- Shifting responsibilities associated with police to other social service providers
- Providing money to communities that have been victimized by the police
- Providing access to specialized health services (including mental health) in victims' communities

By implementing these policies, other countries have worked to ensure that those responsible for abuses have faced accountability, victims have received support, and that government abuses do not occur again in the future. We'd like to assess your opinions on policies meant to address concerns about policing in the United States.

Post-Treatment Questions:

Policies and Scenarios (all 5-point Likert scale answers: support a great deal, support a lot, support a moderate amount, support slightly, do not support)

Policies

These questions represent the main dependent variables of interest for this paper.

- To what extent do you support reallocating funds from police departments to investing in community social services?
- To what extent do you support reallocating funds from police departments to investment in minority communities?
- To what extent do you support reallocating funds from police departments to funding trauma centers?
- To what extent do you support reallocating funds from police departments to covering forgivable loans for Black owned businesses?

Scenarios

These questions are intended to gauge opinions on policy implementation in specific scenarios, rather than just in the abstract (as with the policy questions).

- The city council in Austin, TX, a city of approximately 1 million people, voted to defund the police budget by roughly one third and divert \$150 million to funding social programs and violence prevention. This would mean that fewer police are employed by the city. To what extent do you support this proposal?
- The city council in Norman, OK, a city of approximately 120,000 people, voted to cut 3.6% from the \$23 million police budget. Their plan would reallocate money to community development programs and hiring an internal auditor. This would mean fewer police are employed by the city. To what extent do you support this proposal?
- To what extent would you support a proposal to reduce the police budget and reallocate funds to community social services, such as funding trauma centers allocating money to mental health and substance abuse counseling, **in your town?**

Free Write:

When you hear the phrase “defund the police” what do you think that it means? Please write a few sentences explaining your views.

Covariates:

Our survey design includes standard demographic information (age, race, gender, education, income, party identification) collected from the panel before treatment, as well as attitudinal measurements for racial resentment, American exceptionalism, and ideology.²⁶ We also include two attention check items to ensure the quality of the survey data, both of which occur post-treatment.

²⁶Although ideology, like racial resentment, was measured after treatment assignment, we continue to use it as a covariate. This is because we expect individuals’ political ideology to be stable and not changeable by survey priming and experimental framing, whereas the expression of racial attitudes is more sensitive.