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Recommended Citation

Romine, Morgan, "America's Fear of Civil Unrest Through the Lens of 2020 BLM Protests and January 6th" (2023). *Student Scholar Symposium Abstracts and Posters*. 616.

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America's Fear of Civil Unrest Through the Lens of 2020 BLM Protests and January 6th

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Abstract

Over the past five years, the United States of America (US) has experienced events which highlight societal weakness and faults in the foundations of the US system. This research paper focuses on the level of fear a participant has of civil unrest in the US, how that fear has evolved following the events of 2020, including the January 6th Insurrection and 2020's summer of Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests. Factoring the age, political affiliation, and socio-economic status of the study's participants into the findings, is a way to understand where the participant's fear may be stemming from. My research uses the 2019 and 2020/2021 American Fear Surveys conducted by Chapman University's Henley Lab.

My analysis of the data from the American Fear Surveys indicates that younger individuals, Democrats, and those with lower socio-economic status tend to have greater levels of fear concerning civil unrest in the US. Moreover, analyzing the data from the American Fear Surveys and comparing it between the two years, 2019 and 2021, shows evidence of increased levels of fear following the events that transpired between the 2019 and 2021 American Fear Surveys. To focus on where the fear originated from, I ran a correlation on the level of fear of civil unrest and level of fear of whites no longer being the majority in the US to understand if the fear stemmed from racism in reflection of the BLM protests in 2020 or if the increased fear could have come from a different source.

There is potential that a certain level of fear regarding potential civil unrest is expected in American society, due to America's democratic system and the accompanying civic duty of political and social activism. The findings of heightened fear following the January 6th insurrection and the summer 2020 BLM protests might serve as a cautionary signal to America, suggesting that the current system may be faltering and require change. Additionally, the fact that younger and less socio-economically stable citizens are expressing this fear implies that systemic changes within our society may be on the horizon.

Introduction to Research

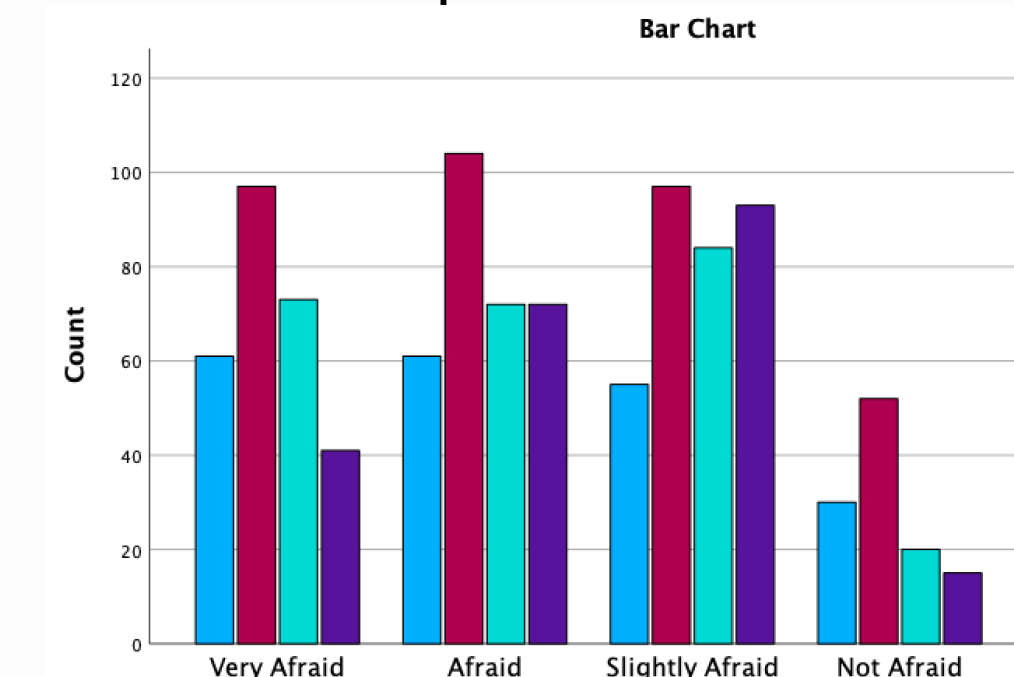
- The America Fear survey is taken by respondents in March of each year. So, there is no 2020 fear survey due to the COVID-19 lockdowns.
- There is a lot of potential factors to explain an increased level of fear for widespread civil unrest that occurred between the 2019 and 2021 fear survey, but I research focuses on the connection between the increased level of fear and whether it potentially stems from the summer 2020 BLM movement increased activity of the January 6th insurrection at the US Capitol.

- ## Hypotheses
- H1: The younger, less socio-economically well off, and more democratic leaning the respondent (R) is, the more afraid R is of widespread civil unrest.
 - H2: If the Rs who participated in the fear survey of 2019 have less fear of widespread civil unrest then those who participated in 2021.
 - H3: If R is afraid of whites no longer being the majority in the US, then they will also be afraid of widespread civil unrest.

Data

H1: Fear of Civil Unrest based on Age, Wealth and Political Party

Table 1: Graph of Crosstab of Age and Fear of Widespread Civil Unrest in 2021



n=1035 Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

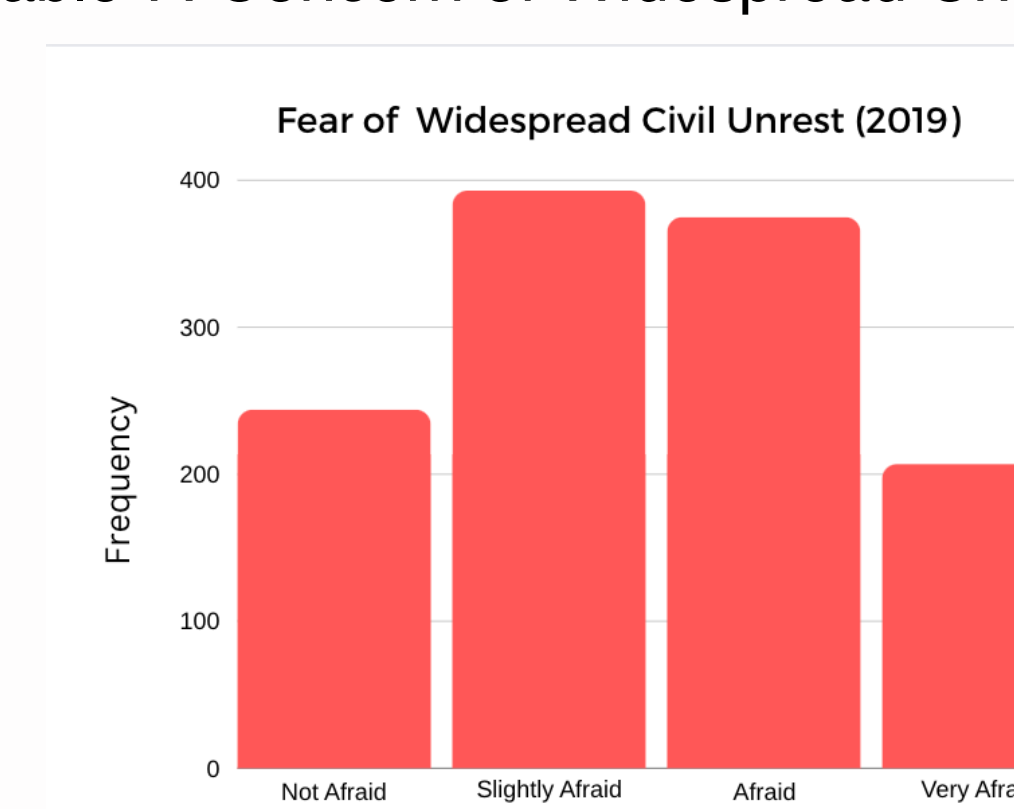
Table 2: Crosstab of Age and Fear of Widespread Civil Unrest in 2021

Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?	PAGERFINAL				Total
	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	
Very Afraid	Count: 61	Count: 97	Count: 73	Count: 41	Count: 272
	% within PAGERFINAL: 29.5%	% within PAGERFINAL: 27.7%	% within PAGERFINAL: 29.3%	% within PAGERFINAL: 18.6%	% within PAGERFINAL: 26.5%
Afraid	Count: 61	Count: 104	Count: 72	Count: 309	Count: 546
	% within PAGERFINAL: 29.5%	% within PAGERFINAL: 29.7%	% within PAGERFINAL: 28.9%	% within PAGERFINAL: 32.6%	% within PAGERFINAL: 30.1%
Slightly Afraid	Count: 55	Count: 97	Count: 84	Count: 93	Count: 329
	% within PAGERFINAL: 26.6%	% within PAGERFINAL: 27.7%	% within PAGERFINAL: 33.7%	% within PAGERFINAL: 42.1%	% within PAGERFINAL: 32.0%
Not Afraid	Count: 30	Count: 52	Count: 15	Count: 117	Count: 214
	% within PAGERFINAL: 14.5%	% within PAGERFINAL: 14.9%	% within PAGERFINAL: 8.0%	% within PAGERFINAL: 6.8%	% within PAGERFINAL: 11.4%
Total	Count: 207	Count: 350	Count: 249	Count: 1027	Count: 1035
	% within PAGERFINAL: 100.0%	% within PAGERFINAL: 100.0%	% within PAGERFINAL: 100.0%	% within PAGERFINAL: 100.0%	% within PAGERFINAL: 100.0%

n=1035 Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

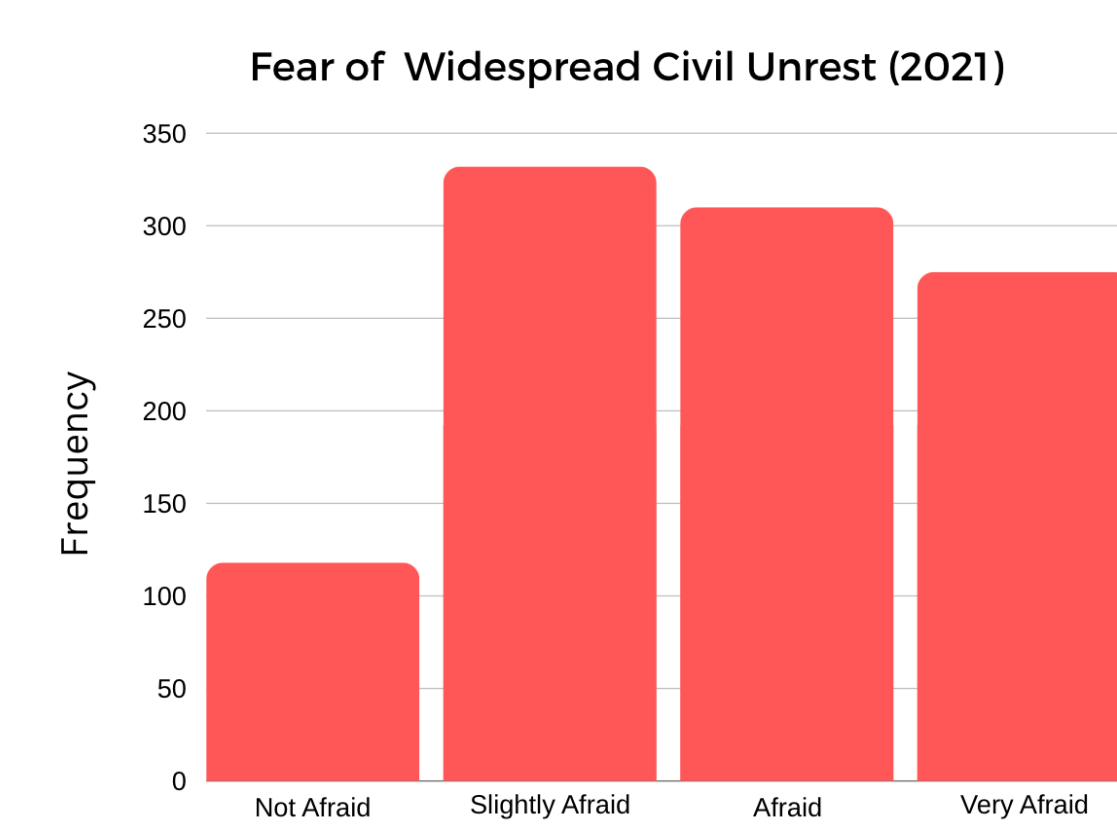
H2: Increasing Fear of Widespread Civil Unrest after 2020

Table 7: Concern of Widespread Civil Unrest in 2019



n=1219 Source CSAF, Wave 6, Chapman University

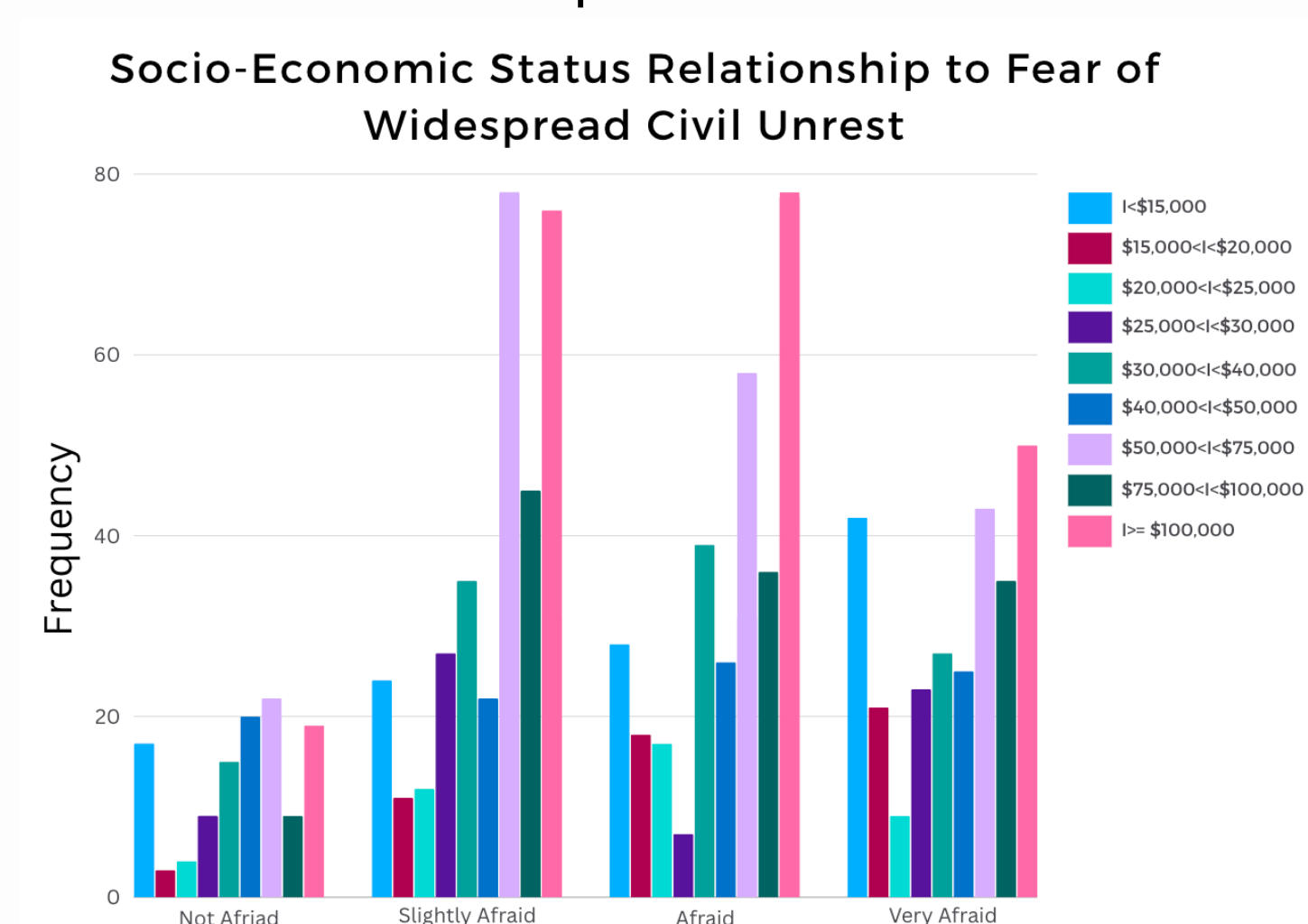
Table 8: Concern of Widespread Civil Unrest in 2020/21



n=1035 Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Hypotheses

Table 3: Graph on Economic Status and Concern of Widespread Civil Unrest



n=1035 Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Table 4: Graph on Economic Status and Concern of Widespread Civil Unrest

Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?	Q16p. What is your total annual household income from all sources, and before taxes?									
	<\$15,000	\$15,000-\$20,000	\$20,000-\$25,000	\$25,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$75,000	\$75,000-\$100,000	>\$100,000	Total
Very Afraid	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	217
	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	20.7%
Afraid	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	277
	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	24.9%	28.8%
Slightly Afraid	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	236
	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	24.7%
Not Afraid	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	136
	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	14.6%
Total	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	311	3090
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

n=1035 Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

H3: Non-White Majority and Fear of Civil Unrest

Table 9: Correlation between Fear of Civil Unrest and Whites not Being the Majority in the US in 2019

Correlations		23p. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest	23p. How afraid are you of the following events: Whites no longer being the majority in the U.S.
23n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest	Pearson Correlation	1	.206**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	1219	1219
23p. How afraid are you of the following events: Whites no longer being the majority in the U.S.	Pearson Correlation	.206**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	1219	1219

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source CSAF, Wave 6, Chapman University

Table 10: Correlation between Fear of Civil Unrest and Whites not Being the Majority in the US in 2020/21

Correlations		Q16p. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?	Q16p. How afraid are you of the following events: Whites no longer being the majority in the US?
Q16n. How afraid are you of the following events: Widespread civil unrest?	Pearson Correlation	1	.094**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	1035	1034
Q16p. How afraid are you of the following events: Whites no longer being the majority in the US?	Pearson Correlation	.094**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	1034	1034

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source CSAF, Wave 7, Chapman University

Findings

H1: Fear of Civil Unrest based on Age, Wealth and Political Party

Participants that are more middle-aged seems to have increased levels of fear. The wealthy seems to get more afraid, so R's fear increase with their economic status. Party identification shows that democrats are more afraid than republicans and independents.

H2: Increasing Fear of Widespread Civil Unrest after 2020

Comparing the data from 2019 and 2021 fear surveys showed an increase of fear of widespread civil unrest with 9.6% more people saying they were very afraid and an equal 9.6% less people who were not afraid of widespread civil unrest.

H3: Non-White Majority and Fear of Civil Unrest

While there is a statistically significant correlation between a persons fear of civil unrest and fear of a non-white US majority, the data shows that the correlation to be moderate to weak (2019-2021).

Conclusions

- Table 1 & 2 shows that age is not a large factor of why some Americans are more afraid of widespread civil unrest.
- Table 3 & 4 show that there is a significant increase of fear level with wealthier respondents.
- Table 5 & 6 show overall there is not that large of a roll that party plays in level of fear of widespread civil unrest. Though overall democrats seem to be slightly more afraid.
- The first hypothesis was mostly right, though age ended up with more middle-aged R was the more fearful they were.
- Table 7 & 8 show that there was an increased level of fear from the survey results of the 2019 fear survey and the 2021 fear survey.
- The second hypothesis was correct, there was a 9.6% increase in the amount of people who consider themselves very afraid of widespread civil unrest from 2019 to 2021.
- Table 9 shows that there is a moderate, statistically significant correlation between a persons fear of widespread civil unrest and their fear of whites no longer being the majority in the US.
- Table 10 shows a decrease in the strength of the statistically significant correlation between a persons fear of widespread civil unrest and their fear of whites no longer being the majority in the US, from the moderate to a weak correlation.
- The third hypothesis was correct but with a very weak correlations which decreased after the events of 2020.

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