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# White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Black Lives Matter movement

Sean Jackson (Class of 2017)

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Jackson (Class of 2017): White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Blac

White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Black Lives Matter movement

Sean M. Jackson

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December 15, 2016

*Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*

### **Abstract**

Attitudes towards the Black Lives Matter movement have proven to be divisive since its inception in response to the Trayvon Martin verdict in 2012. This research attempts to explore what factors shape public opinion of #BlackLivesMatter. Specifically, how do White racial attitudes impact perceptions of this 21<sup>st</sup> century Black liberation movements. Based on survey sampling of 150 white university students [Sacred Heart University, and other colleges including Harvard University, Ithaca University, Curry College, University of Wisconsin in Madison, and Columbia] findings indicate that white racial awareness as measured by Colorblindness and Aggrieved Whiteness significantly impact perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement. Categorical variables including political affiliation and presidential preference also played an important role in predicting favorable or unfavorable views towards the Black Lives Matter movement.

### White Perceptions of Racial Identity Politics

Jackson (Class of 2017). White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Black

*“Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.” (Garza 2014).*

As times have gotten more and more tumultuous, and people have begun to take to the streets in response to injustices, it leaves all people wondering: why? Events such as the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement, the reaction to Trayvon Martin case in early 2012, are symptoms of a larger problem. The problem of injustice begs the question of why such things happen amongst the African American community, and the same question is being posed from those on the outside, seeking to gain insight into an issue that is seemingly embedded into the culture of police and in America itself. There has been a significant increase in support from African Americans to combat these issues that they see on a day-to-day basis within their communities, taking shape in the form of protests in the streets and public discourse over these problems that weigh in heavily on the community’s mind. From those looking from the outside in, it is sometimes hard to pinpoint the exact rationale behind taking to the streets. In light of this there are still many who disagree with these actions, yielding unfavorable attitudes to these events and even discouraging these actions. With the United States’ being 63% white Americans, there has been severe backlash to the allegations of injustice and police brutality, with many discrediting the experiences of these minority groups and their claims. What exactly shapes these perceptions and perceived realities for Whites? To help better understand how Whiteness helps construct these views of racial identity movements such as Black Lives Matter, this study hopes to understand what college-aged students, the next generation of leaders in our country, believe about racial injustice and one of the most controversial topic of our times.

**Background and History***Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*

Racial inequality has always been at the forefront of issues in the United States. Standards for Whites have long been contrasted with non-Whites and have affected their life chances and ability to thrive since the founding of the United States. Many scholars have recognized the boundaries between race and furthermore its effect on society as a whole. "...although some ethnic groups have been privileged over others at various times in history, *Whiteness* – a racial category – has been consistently privileged over *non-Whiteness*, with persons of color consigned to the margins of American society and culture." (Cornell & Hartmann, 26). The institutionalization of this sentiment has over the course of time split in two the construction of the White identity versus the non-White identity. The White identity, being a part of the dominant culture, has become synonymous with 'normal' and being the benchmark of what it means to 'be American'. "Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility." (Frankenberg, 6). The unfortunate reality of the non-White and non-dominant group's cultures is they were placed at the bottom of a racial caste system, which is visually reinforced by the color of skin and upheld by institutionalized discrimination, and in return making race much less salient in regards to Whites. (Grossman & Charmaraman).

The occurrence of the authority of Whites over non-Whites has in return produced a cultural infusion of normativity to the dominant group's culture, leaving the non-dominant group's [non-White] culture to be either assimilated, or denied to reinforce social stratification. This inception has led about to the view that anything associated with the non-descript White culture is normalized into the mainstream culture of the United States. "Whiteness is everywhere in American culture, but it is very hard to see. As the unmarked category against which

difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations.” (Lipsitz, 369). With his level of societal reinforcement of Whiteness comes an inherent privilege that, albeit is most of the time unintentional, goes unnoticed or un-factored into determinations made about racialized issues in the United States by Whites. “We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the conditions I have described here work systematically to over empower certain groups. Such privilege simply confers dominance because of one's race or sex.” (McIntosh).

Because of mostly unintentional yet inherent privilege among Whites, the mis-conceptualization of what is considered to be ‘normal’ among non-White groups continues to counter momentum towards progress. What this study seeks to understand is how the White perception of racial identity politics is mis-conceptualized by Whites due to the normativity of Whiteness.

***Theoretical Framework****Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*

To better understand how White attitudes may be less sympathetic or positive towards Black Lives Matter one needs to understand how White identity formation is wrought with systematic advantages and institutionalized perks. Critical Race Theory in accordance to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2012) takes on the notion that race and society are constantly interplaying with one another, and that relations with race and society is far more nuanced than simply an acknowledgement or assimilation to it. The theory suggests that attitudinal and institutional changes are needed because the current structures in place are fashioned from a system of inequality of the past. The theory is critical of the notion of colorblindness, suggesting that a recognition of race is required for one to be able to perceive inequality otherwise one would not be able to observe how institutions perpetuate inequality for one race, while allowing the other to flourish. Institutionalized racism, according to Camara Phyllis Jones (2002), is defined as the structures, policies, practices, and norms resulting in differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. If one is brought up to believe in a certain level of colorblindness, or ignorance of the notion of institutionalized racism, it could be much more difficult for that person to be able to perceive race as something that either puts a person at an advantage or disadvantage. If someone is the dominant group and they are benefiting from systematic advantages unknowingly, they could potentially not have the ability to see that others aren't advantaging from it like they are. Due to a lack of perception of institutionalized racism and racial inequality this could potentially affect the attitudes of Whites towards identity politics movements such as Black Lives Matters. Overall this study seeks to reveal a disjointedness in regards to White racial attitudes and how it affects perception when dealing with racial identity politics movements such as Black Lives Matter.

Normativity, according to Naomi Zack (2006), captures an attitude that things ought to be a certain way and that their being that way is normal, to be taken for granted. The concept of White Normativity is that that all actions associated with the dominant culture, in this case Whites, are normalized and seen to be normal or the status quo. They are the benchmark for societal expectations and all actions associated with them are deemed to be 'normal'. Adversely, all actions associated with non-Whites are then seen to be different or 'abnormal'. In regards to this it could further be said that Whites, due to afforded advantages, have gained not only an intellectual, technological, and upper-hand in competency, but a moral and ethical sense of superiority. Since all aspects of the public sphere is dominated by Whites, Whiteness is then taken for granted and seen to be normal. This means that Whites are not aware of their Whiteness (Zack, 2006). This relates to this topic of study in that White Normativity can not only help in the creation of racial scripts that could possibly affect the attitudes of Whites when it comes to racial identity politics movements such as Black Lives Matter, but it can make the topic of race and therefore racism entirely invisible to Whites. Due to the fact that race still intersects with society through institutionalized racism it could show that Whites are less sympathetic and more negative towards racial identity movements due to the fact that race is not a large factor in White identity construction.

Colorblindness, as aforementioned, begins to develop a more prominent role when race does not play a large factor in the formation of one's identity. Due to the normalization of Whiteness and the less than significant factor it plays into a White person's ability to navigate society it becomes much harder for one to perceive that race plays any role in one's life chances as presented to them. Michael Brown (2003) delves into the topic of colorblindness with a sense of perspective of how the notion of a level playing field and a new age of egalitarianism post-

Civil-rights movement has eliminated systematic advantages for Whites and has created new opportunity for non-Whites. Brown goes into detail noting that many Whites believe that any struggle that non-Whites face are now due to their own flaws, and that institutionalized racism as well as racism as a whole is a thing of the past in regards to the forward momentum of racial minorities. This, as he puts it, is what forms the notion that we live in a post-racial society where race no longer matters. Circumstance is created through the meritocratic system, and that hard work will supersede all notions of systematic disadvantages.

Pierce (2012) continues to delve into the notion that colorblindness creates an atmosphere of aggrieved Whiteness, especially structures in place that may seemingly place non-Whites at an advantage such as college grants, affirmative action, and other legislature that attempts to address systematic disadvantage. Due to the notion that we should be colorblind and that we live in a post-racial society many Whites view these instances, as well as any sort of claims that there is inequality in the U.S., as founded only in a desire to gain power and superiority. Both aggrieved Whiteness as well as colorblindness tie into this study in that they both can affect the dependent variables that seek to answer whether or not the perception of racial inequality affects one's attitudes towards the Black Lives Matter movement.

*Existing Studies* Jackson (Class of 2017): White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Blac

The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2012) has collected data that has shown the how the perception of movements change with time; with more favor being given to movements in hindsight. For example in a 1994 Scripps Howard News Service/ Ohio University poll it indicated that 79% of Americans approved of Martin Luther King Jr. and hailed him as a hero, yet this is starkly contrasted with a 1966 Harris survey which indicated that 50% of Whites disapproved of King's cause and said he was hurting the cause for African Americans. Another example of this would be a 1971 poll conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation that indicated 64%-71% of citizens disapproved of anti-Vietnam protests, while only twenty years later in 1990 the approval and disapproval rating were equal. The Roper Center also collected data from a 1976 Gallup poll which indicated that only 6% of people thought that protests would be highly effective to incite change or influence how our government was run, while only 22% thought it was fairly effective. This study highlights the notion of skepticism towards movements and a commonality that many do not see protests or social movements to be an efficient way to bring about change.

Lawrence Bobo of the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1988) further delves into the notion of White perceptions of movements, but takes an approach that shows attitudes towards racialized Black movements. His general hypothesis was that he'd find significantly more prejudices involved in Black movements versus non-racialized movements based upon the notion that the movement originated from a socially stratified minority portion of society, whereas many Whites believe that racialized movements take on a quasi-violent nature and is pushing for change too fast; all while not taking into account the desire for political representation and an equalizing of power. Utilizing data collected from various National

Election Studies [NES] over the course of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1974 Fall Omnibus Survey, Bobo used a correlational analysis to attempt to find correlations through multiple dimensions of perception including: perceived differences in racial ideology, group political deprivation, indicators of perceived threats that led to anti-Black movement ideology, general orientation towards social protest, general opposition towards to government, and lastly the effect of these policies on respondent preference. The findings from Bobo's studies were that according to the National Election Studies that 75% of White thought that Black movements were 'pushing too fast' compared to only 9% of Blacks feeling as though this is the case. Bobo was also able to see that over the course of time from the 1960s to the 1970s that actions of minority groups shifted from a sentiment that they were 'violent and hurtful' to 'peaceful and helpful'. Bobo concluded that much of this sentiment comes from both a level of racial prejudices, as well as shifting elements of acquired power and gravitas achieved through these movements in hindsight. This study places further emphasis on not only the notion that people look favorably on movements in hindsight, but also that they are willing to accept the movement as necessary if it brings about a shift in political standing and representation of group power.

A recent PBS study (2015) released data specifying that there is a strain on race relations in the United States that shows a stark difference in perception between Black and White Americans. When asked 'Do African Americans and Whites have the same opportunity in equal justice?' 46% of White Americans indicated no compared to 87% of Black Americans when asked the same question. In regards to whether or not the respondents believed that Blacks and Whites have the same opportunity in getting a job it yielded similar results, indicating that 42% of Whites believe they do not while 76% of Blacks believe that employers are more likely to hire

their White counterparts. This study however seeks to find correlational proof between White racial attitudes and one's perception of racial identity politics.

A recent study from the Pew Research Center (2016) outlined that there is a large gap between the opinions of Blacks and Whites on the topic of whether or not equality can even be achieved. According to the study 88% majority of Blacks believe that more changes are needed to achieve racial equality in the United States compared to only 53% of White believing the same prospect. In contrast to this 43% of Blacks are skeptical that the necessary changes will be made to bring about equality while 42% believe that it will happen over time. Compared to Whites where only 11% are skeptical that the necessary changes will be made versus 53% who believe that changes need to be made, but society is heading in the right direction. Adversely 38% of Whites believe that the necessary change needed to achieve racial equality have already happened. The study continues by stating that there are wide margins between Blacks and White in regards to how Blacks are treated in certain situations in society. For Blacks there is a deficit of 42% between applying for a job, 41% for applying for a mortgage, and 34% when dealing with police. This study seeks to understand White perception of racial identity politics movements versus the difference between Black and White perceptions of day-to-day life.

This study will be different from these existing studies in that it will be measuring college students level of colorblindness towards racial identity movements insofar that it seeks to attribute levels of negativity to perception rather than simply separate social strata. This study also seeks to reinforce the notion that movements, in this case racial identity politics movements such as Black Lives Matter, generally are disapproved of as they are happening. The population sample being taken for this study will be less diversified in that it will be only college students taking the survey, and unlike the PBS article there will be dependent and independent variables

available to conduct analytical testing for correlations. Lastly this study will only include White perceptions of a single issue: the Black Lives Matters movement.

### ***Purpose of Research***

Race is a controversial yet pivotal issue in how we interact socially in the United States. There are many instances that reinforces why race matters in the United States, especially that of the perception of race, or lack thereof, can influence attitudes towards racial identity politics. The question this study raises is how perception of racial inequality for Whites affects impressions of minority racial identity politics movements such as Black Lives Matter. This study predicts that those who identify as White racially will have a much more homogenized and colorblind outlook on race. An example of this could be the response to Black Lives Matter protestors with the notion of ‘all lives matter’ and the insinuation that there are not situations that are endangering Blacks more so than Whites. This study also predicts higher levels of aggrieved Whiteness held in the belief that barriers of racial inequality have already been traversed as a society. The importance of this study is that it could help educators and theorists address how the perception from Whites can potentially adversely affect not only the forward momentum of racial equality in the face of injustice, but the forward momentum of racial minorities as a whole.

***Participants***

The participants invited for this study were college level students from different universities mostly consisting of students from Sacred Heart University in Connecticut and other colleges including Harvard University, Ithaca University, Curry College, University of Wisconsin in Madison, and Columbia. The sample was chosen from convenience to make a total of 150 respondents. I included both male and female students who identified themselves as White, all of which chosen for convenience regardless of major or academic year. Those who identified as non-White were filtered to have strictly White perceptions on the subject of racial identity politic movements.

***Research Design***

The research design is a quantitative, specifically a cross-sectional survey design.

***Measures***

The independent variable for this study is perception of racial inequality. The independent variable is made up of three separate dimension to better understand perception of racial equality. These dimensions are racial awareness, which measures the respondent's overall impression and awareness of race issues, colorblindness which measures the respondent's overall ability to perceive race and racial injustice, and lastly aggrieved Whiteness which allows one to perceive or infer that their Whiteness is actually a detriment instead of a benefit. Please see Appendix 1 for the operationalization of the independent variable.

The dependent variable for this study is attitudes towards the Black Lives Matter movement. The dependent variable is an index combining indicators on four different dimensions which include whether perception of the movements have a positive or negative impact, a sympathetic or unsympathetic demeanor, whether or not the movement is necessary or unnecessary, and lastly whether or not the movement was helping, hurting, or had no impact. The positive and negative dimension is employed to gather insight into the overall perception of the respondent's attitude towards the Black Lives Matters movement, while the sympathetic or unsympathetic better measures one's levels of sympathy towards the message of the Black Lives Matters movement. The necessity dimension is designed to measure a respondent's opinion on whether or not they believe racial identity politic movements are necessary solving social injustice, and lastly the respondent is asked whether or not they believe that the Black Lives Matters movement is helping, hurting, or has no impact on the social atmosphere of the United States. Please see Appendix 2 for the actual indicators.

Control variables for this study include the respondent's gender, socioeconomic status, college class year and major, political affiliations, attitude towards law enforcement agencies, and knowledge of the Black Lives Matters movement. Please see Appendix 3 for the questions used to measure the control variables.

### ***Procedures***

The sampling design chosen is a non-probability purposive. The selection criteria for the survey is that the respondent racially identify as White and currently are attending Sacred Heart University and other colleges including Harvard University, Ithaca University, Curry College, University of Wisconsin in Madison, and Columbia. If those who identify as non-White attempt to do the survey they may proceed with the survey, but data may or may not be used. The survey

was created using SurveyMonkey, a third party web-based survey company, and disseminated utilizing both social media and email. An informed consent statement was provided and anonymity was assured for each respondent (see Appendix 4).

**Results**  
*Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*

**Independent Samples T-Test & One-way ANOVA Results [Figure 1.1]**

	<b>Racial Awareness</b>	<b>Colorblindness</b>	<b>Aggrieved Whiteness</b>	<b>BLM index</b>
<b>Gender</b>	.316	.117	.281	<b>.032</b>
<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>.037</b>	<b>.014</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Presidential Candidates</b>	.689	.947	<b>.018</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Current Year</b>	.430	.062	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Family in Police</b>	<b>.026</b>	.194	.307	<b>.000</b>
	<b>Somewhat Significant</b>		<b>Highly Significant</b>	

The general One-way ANOVA testing [Fig. 1.1] on the categorical variables such as political parties, presidential candidate selection, current year in college, and whether or not one’s family is in the police yielded high amounts of significance across the board. Independent Sample T-Tests were run on gender. These tests were run to find initial significance for the categorical variables. The most compelling examples of this fall into the high amounts of significance between political leanings [Political Parties = .000, Presidential Candidates = .018], the current year of the respondent [Current Year = .000] and aggrieved Whiteness. The Black Lives Matter index, which is a combination of all dimensions of the independent scale variables to measure overall favorability also yielded significant figures [Gender = .032, Political Parties = .000, Presidential Candidates = .000, Current Year = .000, and Family in Police = .000]. Other figures such as Racial Awareness and Colorblindness yielded less significant results, but one dependent variable shows significance across the board.

Jackson (Class of 2017): White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Black Americans  
**Comparison of Means**

**Racial Awareness [Figure 2.1]**

<b>Which political party do you identify yourself as?</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Republican</b>	9.6471	34	1.29994
<b>Democrat</b>	10.5862	29	.90701
<b>Independent</b>	10.2759	29	1.13063
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	10.3000	30	1.34293
<b>Other</b>	10.0000	5	1.58114
<b>Total</b>	10.1732	127	1.23503

To better understand the significance of the data from the One-way ANOVA tests [Figure 2.1] comparison of means tests were run on the political party categorical variable against all dimensions of the independent scale variables of the study. According to Figure 2.1 Republicans were less likely to exhibit racial awareness [Mean = 9.647] versus Democrats [Mean = 10.5862] and Independents [Mean = 10.2759] on a range of 6 with a minimum of 7.00 and a maximum of 13.00, and a neutral score being 10.00.

**Colorblindness [Figure 2.2]**

<b>Which political party do you identify yourself as?</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Republican</b>	16.2121	33	1.86677
<b>Democrat</b>	17.5172	29	1.54967
<b>Independent</b>	16.3103	29	1.69249
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	16.2759	29	1.55601
<b>Other</b>	17.2000	5	1.48324
<b>Total</b>	16.5920	125	1.73250

In Figure 2.2 Democrats [Mean = 17.5172] were more likely than Republicans [Mean = 16.2121] and Independents [Mean = 16.3103] to be aware of issues pertaining to colorblindness

on a range of 8 with a minimum of 12.00 and maximum of 20.00, and a neutral score being a 16.00.

**Aggrieved Whiteness [Figure 2.3]**

<b>Which political party do you identify yourself as?</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Republican</b>	12.0625	32	1.77687
<b>Democrat</b>	9.9310	29	1.81129
<b>Independent</b>	12.4643	28	1.87542
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	12.0000	30	1.89373
<b>Other</b>	11.8000	5	1.30384
<b>Total</b>	11.6290	124	2.03413

Fig. 2.3 outlined that both Republicans [Mean = 12.0625] and Independents [Mean = 12.4643] are more likely than Democrats [Mean = 9.9310] to exhibit aggrieved Whiteness when reacting to the treatment of African Americans on a range of 8 with a minimum of 7.00 and a maximum of 15.00, and a neutral score being an 11.00.

**BLM Index [Figure 2.4]**

<b>Which political party do you identify yourself as?</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Republican</b>	46.2424	33	4.05455
<b>Democrat</b>	55.3333	27	6.82755
<b>Independent</b>	49.4828	29	4.71033
<b>Unaffiliated</b>	50.2667	30	6.70015
<b>Other</b>	48.0000	6	3.57771
<b>Total</b>	50.0080	125	6.34555

Figure 2.4 outlines the totality of attitudes towards the Black Lives Matters movements and exhibits higher favorability amongst Democrats [Mean = 55.3333] versus Independents

[Mean = 49.4828] and Republicans [Mean = 46.2424] on a range of 26 with a minimum of 44.00 and a maximum of 70.00, and a neutral score being 57.00.

**Bivariate Correlations**

To further test the basic hypothesis bivariate correlations were ran between the independent and dependent variables.

**Correlation Coefficients [Figure 3.1]**

	Racial Awareness	Colorblindness	Aggrieved Whiteness	Combined Independent Variable
Positivity	.223**	.138	-.353**	-.089
Sympathy	.396**	.242**	-.346**	-.069
Necessity	.306**	.223**	-.504**	-.095
Helping their cause	.307**	.215**	-.271**	.080
BLM index [favorable]	.383**	.245**	-.444**	-.003
	<b>Somewhat Significant</b>		<b>Highly Significant</b>	

Fig. 3.1 provides the correlation coefficients for the significances found between bivariate correlations with each dimension of both the independent and dependent variable. The results suggest that there are somewhat significant correlations between racial awareness, colorblindness, and aggrieved Whiteness measured against positivity towards the Black Lives Matter movement, sympathy towards the movement, whether or not there is a necessity for the movement, and whether or not the movement is seen to be helping its cause. In the aggrieved Whiteness section two of the dependent variables, necessity [-.504\*\*] and the combined BLM index [-.444\*\*] suggests much higher significance in direct comparison to the other variables. To

better gauge where this significance originates from the data was repeated while filtering for political party.

**Republicans [Figure 3.2]**

	<b>Racial Awareness</b>	<b>Colorblindness</b>	<b>Aggrieved Whiteness</b>	<b>Combined Independent Variable</b>
<b>Positivity</b>	.277	-.277	-.444**	-.367*
<b>Sympathy</b>	.578**	-.095	-.127	.128
<b>Necessity</b>	.244	.033	-.413**	-.105
<b>Helping their cause</b>	.295*	-.146	-.299	-.069
<b>BLM index [favorable]</b>	.555**	-.179	-.460**	-.118

**Somewhat Significant**
**Highly Significant**

Fig. 3.2 takes a look at only Republican respondents to the survey, yielding much higher significance between the dimensions of both variables. In the Racial Awareness category Republican respondents found a much higher significance [.578\*\*] in the sympathy category, suggesting lower levels of sympathy overall. The BLM index suggested lower favorability [.555\*\*] as well. In the aggrieved Whiteness category overall positivity [-.444\*\*], necessity [-.413\*\*], and overall favorability [-.460\*\*] suggests more negativity, feeling as though the movement is unnecessary, and less favorability respectively.

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**Democrats [Figure 3.3]**

	Racial Awareness	Colorblindness	Aggrieved Whiteness	Combined Independent Variable
<b>Positivity</b>	.207	.286	<b>-.358*</b>	-.006
<b>Sympathy</b>	.169	.221	-.312	-.017
<b>Necessity</b>	.240	.154	<b>-.423*</b>	-.108
<b>Helping their cause</b>	.213	.236	<b>-.407*</b>	-.076
<b>BLM index [favorable]</b>	.234	.221	<b>-.437*</b>	-.087

**Somewhat Significant**                      **Highly Significant**

In Fig. 3.3 only Democrat respondents were looked at which yielded no significant results in the racial awareness category compared to the Republican respondents. The aggrieved Whiteness category however yielded similar results with overall positivity [-.358\*], necessity [-.423\*\*], and whether or not the movement is helping or hurting their cause [-.407\*], suggesting that the respondents feel as though the movement is unnecessary, and that it is hurting their cause respectively.

**Discussion**

The results of the survey and interpretation of the data yielded results that suggest a definitive correlation between overall racial attitudes when viewing the Black Lives Matter movement, the correlation becoming increasingly significant when looking at strictly Republican respondents as a categorical variable. The Republican racial awareness scale variable showed low levels of sympathy [.578\*\*] and favorability suggesting that they believe Black Americans do not face institutional barriers in the same manner that they have had in the past. The Republican respondents also believe that there is a significant amount of advantage afforded to Black Americans currently, which suggests the overall unfavorable stance on the Black Lives

Matter movement as well as a belief that it is unnecessary in general. This is increasingly apparent when looking at the aggrieved Whiteness scale variable which shows low levels of favorability [-.460\*\*], as well as overall positivity on the subject of Black Lives Matter [-.444\*\*], and lastly the belief that the Black Lives Matter movement is unnecessary [-.413\*\*]. The significant correlations when it comes to identity construction of White Americans who subscribe to the Republican party shows a coupling of lack of racial awareness, in conjunction with aggrieved Whiteness, that can be highly detrimental to the forward momentum of racial identity politic movements such as Black Lives Matter. Overall the data provided suggests that lack of racial awareness and knowledge of racial issues, as well as a belief that Blacks are given systematic advantage which renders the Black Lives Matter movement as unnecessary in their view.

Democrat respondents however tend to have more racial awareness in regards to the Black Lives Matter movement which produced no significance when run against the dimensions of the dependent variable. This lack of correlation suggests that those who subscribe to the Democratic Party have much higher levels of racial awareness compared to their Republican counterparts. The aggrieved Whiteness scale variable did find a significant correlation between the necessity of the movement [-.423\*] and whether or not it was helping [-.407\*]. Overall favorability of the Black Lives Matter movement [-.437\*] was also found to be significant in that Democrats have a negative perception of the movement. Considering that when compared to Republicans, Democrats have higher levels of racial awareness, it is interesting to see that there still is a negative perception of the Black Lives Matter movement. These results suggest that even with higher levels of awareness of racial issues in the United States that White Americans do not believe that the Black Lives Matter movement is the best way to overcome issues of race.

It may also be that many White Americans believe that equity has been already achieved, and the Black Lives Matter movement is unnecessary because of that. It is interesting to see that aggrieved Whiteness is bipartisan, regardless of levels of racial awareness.

Overall the respondents to this data showed a generally negative view of the Black Lives Matter movement which can be traced back to the notion of aggrieved Whiteness being at the root cause. At the center of this sentiment is the belief that minority groups have already been provided with enough faculties to have overcome inequality. These correlations highlight theories such as White normativity insofar as it suggests that racial identity politic movements that deviate outside of the racial narratives and scripts of the dominant White culture are detrimental and unnecessary within American society. The correlations also fortify the argument that aggrieved Whiteness plays a large role in the formation of perception in regards to the Black Lives Matter movement. The implications of these findings are and have been an issue that plays into the perpetuation of race issues within our society, at the foremost being an inability to see issues through the perspective of those who dedicate themselves to these movements. Minority groups, and in this case Black Lives Matter tend to be overlooked due to preconceived notions of their strife, and the message that is trying to be sent is oftentimes drown out. Researchers, professors, policymakers, and teachers must take a moment to recognize that the experience that is lived day-to-day by them is oftentimes not the experience being had by those who believe in movements such as this. Those policymakers who are involved with policies such as Affirmative Action, college admissions officers, and other professionals who use specific policy to give equal access to minorities can benefit from these results by understanding their role in the formation of these opinions. Through thoughtful dialogue and understanding of the underlying issues can also

be employed to bridge the gap in perception between those involved in the Black Lives Matter movement and those who have negative opinions of it.

### ***Study Limitations***

One of the larger limitations on this study would be an inability to adequately acquire information on a student's socioeconomic status as a control variable. This is being accommodated by including a question about the respondent's home zip-code, but it is unclear whether or not that will accurately portray the respondent's parent's socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status can play a minor part into the formation of racial identity and not having an adequate enough measure could result in a lack of ability to see any sort of extraneous variables. Sampling is a limitation insofar as that the sample of respondents was chosen more so for convenience rather than at random, resulting in far more female respondents than male [ 25.17% Male, 73.51% Female]. The inherent design of a cross-sectional survey also brings about limitations in that causation cannot be proven. Due to the nature of the survey there may also be issues with subject reactivity in that the questions may be affected by a social desirability bias, although the risk of this is being diminished with the promise of anonymity in the beginning of the survey. The sample is also restricted to college students, most of whom are within a narrow range of age.

### ***Future Studies***

A direction that this study has shed light upon is the renewed need to view how social policy such as affirmative action has created the conditions for aggrieved Whiteness in America. Further studies should take into account how political parties play a role in the identity formation of Whites in the United States, as well as how education has plays a critical role in the formation of opinions on subjects pertaining to racial identity politic movements. Future studies should also

take into account socioeconomic status with more questions aimed at attempting to interpret that specific demographic. Future studies should also attempt to receive a larger sample from universities across different parts of the United States to ensure that the sample accurately represents college-aged students. More questions in regards to perceptions of movements in general may be conducive in concluding whether or not respondents simply dislike movements, movements that tend to be more boisterous, or specifically racial identity politic movements.

*Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*

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**Appendix 1**

Jackson (Class of 2017): White Perceptions of Racial Inequality and Attitudes towards Blac

***Independent Variable Measure****Perception of racial inequality**[Dimension 1: Racial Awareness]*

32. There are currently many instances where Black Americans face unfair treatment compared to White Americans.

33. Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as white people in the United States.

34. Racial problems in the US are isolated situations.

*[Dimension 2: Color-blindness]*

35. Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not as important an issue today

36. If people stopped talking about race then it would no longer be an issue.

37. I feel that I don't see race, I just see people.

38. Everyone who works hard, not matter what race they are, has a fair chance to succeed.

*[Dimension 3: Aggrieved Whiteness]*

39. Social policies like affirmative action discriminate unfairly against white people.

40. Due to racial discrimination, social policies such as affirmative action are necessary to help ensure equality.

41. Racial and ethnic minorities in the US have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.

42. Reverse racism against whites is a bigger problem in America today than traditional racism against racial minorities.

## **Appendix 2**

### ***Dependent Variable Measure***

#### *Attitudes towards the Black Lives Matters movement*

##### *[Dimension 1: Positive & Negative]*

17. The Black Lives Matters movement generally has a positive message.

18. I believe that the message of the Black Lives Matter movement is divisive because all lives matter.

##### *[Dimension 2: Sympathetic & Unsympathetic]*

19. The Black Lives Matter movement is important because black lives are more at risk in America.

20. The Black Lives Matter movement is helping to unveil racial injustice in the United States of America.

21. Protesters in the Black Lives Matter movement are not helping their case with their choice in tactics.

##### *[Dimension 3: Necessary & Unnecessary]*

22. The Black Lives Matter movement highlights one of the most important issues of our time.
23. The Black Lives Matter movement distracts the public from more important issues.
24. The Black Lives Matter movement isn't needed to combat racism in the United States.
25. For the United States to progress forward it is necessary to pay attention to groups like Black Lives Matter.

*[Dimension 4: Helping or Hurting]*

26. I feel that the tactics used by Black Lives Matter protesters, including the disruption of presidential rallies, are necessary to highlight the importance of the issues.
27. I feel the tactics used by Black Lives Matter protesters, including the disruption of presidential rallies, cause more harm than good.
28. The Black Lives Matter movement is bringing more awareness to racial inequality in the United States.
29. The Black Lives Matter movement is hurting race relations in the United States.
30. In recent years African Americans have been afforded unfair advantages over Caucasian Americans.

### **Appendix 3**

#### ***Control Variable Measure***

*[Demographics]*

1. What is your gender? *Academic Festival, Event 91 [2017]*
2. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)
3. Which political party do you identify yourself as?
4. Which 2016 presidential candidate do you most prefer?
5. What university are you currently attending?
6. What is your current major?
7. What year are you currently in?
8. In what ZIP code is your hometown located? (enter 5-digit ZIP code; for example, 00544 or 94305)

*[Attitudes towards police]*

9. Someone in my close or extended family is a part of law enforcement.
10. African Americans and other racial minorities receive the same treatment as Whites in the United States' criminal justice system.
11. The law enforcement in the U.S. treat African American unfairly compared to White Americans.
12. Racial profiling plays a significant role in policing.

*[Attitudes towards movements]*

13. Do you think the Occupy Wall Street movement has helped, hurt, or had no impact on its goal of promoting economic inequality?

14. Do you think the LGBT movement has helped, hurt, or had no impact on its goal of promoting gay rights?

15. Do you think the Animal Rights movement has helped, hurt, or had no impact on its goal of promoting the well-being of animals?

16. Do you think the Pro-Life movement has helped, hurt, or had no impact on its goal of shaping people's views on abortion?

*[Knowledge]*

31. How familiar are you with the "Black Lives Matter" movement?

#### **Appendix 4**

Hello, my name is Sean Jackson and I am a Junior and Sociology major at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut.

This survey that I am inviting you to participate in is designed to gain insight into people's feelings in regards to current event issues. The survey is 100% confidential, anonymous, as well as voluntary. You will not have any risks nor benefits from completing this survey. If you have any thoughts, questions, or concerns please feel free to contact me at: [jacksons161@mail.sacredheart.edu](mailto:jacksons161@mail.sacredheart.edu)

On behalf of myself and all those involved in this survey I would like to thank you in advance for taking time to complete it. By clicking next you are agreeing to continue onto the survey.