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WHO'S AFRAID OF WHITENESS? WHITE PRIVILEGE, WHITE RACIAL
IDENTITY, AND THE MOTIVATED DEFENSE OF WHITE SUPREMACY

BY

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Abstract

Racial inequality pervades American society, yet this reality is largely denied or misattributed by many White people (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). Why are White Americans so resistant to acknowledging their privilege as unearned and therefore illegitimate? While some research suggests nominal benefit of raising awareness of White privilege (e.g., decreases in modern racist beliefs), other work indicates outright defensive reactions (e.g., increased hardship claiming). System Justification Theory conceptualizes these defenses as attempts to legitimize the current social order and resist change. In this dissertation, I sought to address the inconsistencies in the literature by identifying factors that affect the type of reactions White people have to being reminded of White privilege. Using an experimental paradigm comparing a condition in which participants read a paragraph about White privilege to a control paragraph about chairs, in a sample of 500 White Mechanical Turk participants, we investigated the degree to which White racial identity, social dominance orientation, and self-regard affected defensive or non-defensive reactions, as measured by racial system justification, colorblind racism, and affirmative action attitudes. We found significant condition x White racial self-regard interactive effects on racial system justification, colorblind racism and affirmative action attitudes. Individuals low in White racial self-regard defended the racial status quo in response to evidence of White privilege, whereas those who were racially secure were able to incorporate information about White privilege and acknowledge systemic racism. Thus, interventions geared toward maintaining racial self-regard *while* interrogating the ways White people perpetuate racial inequality may be necessary to sustain White engagement in dismantling racism.

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Chapter I: Introduction

“As long as White Americans take refuge in their whiteness—for so long as they are unable to walk out of this most monstrous of traps—...and will be manipulated into and surrender themselves to... a racial war. They will never, so long as their whiteness puts so sinister a distance between themselves and their own experience and the experience of others, feel themselves sufficiently human, sufficiently worthwhile, to become responsible for themselves, their leaders, their country, their children, or their fate.” – James Baldwin (1971)

The legacy of Whites’ social construction of race continues to pervade American society, where systemic racial inequality remains deeply entrenched. On average, Black families have approximately one tenth the wealth of the average White family (Dettling et al., 2019). Moreover, Black people own approximately 1.5% of all of the wealth in the United States, compared with 0.5% in 1863 when the civil war ended (James, 2019). Even among educated elites, racism is perpetuated. A recent study found that medical students and residents believed Black people’s skin was thicker than that of White people and that they therefore had higher pain tolerance (Hoffman et al., 2016). Similarly, doctors provided fewer and lower dose pain medications to Black patients (Singhal et al., 2016). So, how does such racism, on both systemic and individual levels, persist and perpetuate?

Studies such as these take their place among an enormous body of literature examining innumerable disadvantages of being a person of color in America (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Harris & Lieberman, 2015; Hwang, 2015; Masterson et al., 2017; Western & Pettit, 2005). The mere existence of this literature may, paradoxically, reflect the heart of systemic White privilege. Legal scholars have also noted the perpetual and motivated discounting of racial privilege in the judicial system with judges often writing off suggestions of racial hierarchy by defendants of color as “transcendental nonsense” (Sundquist, 2011, p. 121). Systemic White privilege is perpetuated in part because people of color are looked down upon and become the focus of intervention as the victims of oppression, while the White populace’s resistance to dismantling their self-created system of advantages is insufficiently studied (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Leach et al., 2002).

On some level, it is understandable that White people would be reluctant to give up the advantages of their White identities. Some scholars have argued for a “binary definition of Whiteness” that alternates between vague nothingness (the absence of racial identity) and terrible awfulness (Painter, 2015). Such a definition sheds some light on various experiences of being White but neglects the widespread collusion of White people in upholding the social structures that reinforce racial inequality. Thus, perhaps it is also useful to consider “Whiteness” as a kind of system serving this reinforcing function. Bearing these dynamics in mind, one primary goal of this dissertation will be to understand the essence of the rigidity and ambivalence endemic in Whiteness.

Another aspect of Whiteness is the role it has played in creating and perpetuating racism. Unsurprisingly, there continues to be immense controversy when it comes to the

measurement of racism (e.g., Blanton & Jaccard, 2006; Ditonto et al., 2013; Greenwald et al., 2006; Nosek & Sriram, 2007). Many social scientists have posited that because explicit or blatantly racist attitudes are socially undesirable, biased attitudes have become more covert or disguised, resulting in, among other things, a “color-blind ideology” (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011; Sears & Henry, 2003). The theory of color-blind racism suggests that modern racism “rationalizes the [lower] status of minorities as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and their alleged cultural deficiencies... providing the ideological armor for the ‘new racism’ regime” (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011, p. 191). Essentially, through the perpetuation of color-blind ideology, the experience of being White becomes increasingly disguised and invisible to White people themselves.

One palpable example is FDR’s New Deal, which was heralded for uplifting the American economy. But, for whom? A *Washington Post* from 2017 article detailed the racist undertones of the legislation, citing home loan stipulations discouraging loan disclosure to “areas infiltrated by inharmonious racial or nationality groups,” leading to increased racial segregation and income inequality (Lane, 2017). The goal of such stipulations was to protect government spending and the property values of White neighborhoods, setting the groundwork for future redlining. Even when jobs were created that allowed Black people to work, the relocation sites were racially segregated and gave preferential housing for White people.

In contrast, the Green New Deal attempts to take an actively anti-racist position to address the historical inequalities caused by colorblindness. The primary policy developer is a 29-year-old Black, female Rhodes Scholar named Dr. Rhiana Gunn-

Wright. Approaching the issue from an intersectional perspective, Gunn-Wright's plan centers the way that individuals' lives will be disproportionately impacted by both climate change and climate policy as a function of economic, racial, and gendered oppression (Hockett & Gunn-Wright, 2019). Thus, the Green New Deal explicitly integrates solutions to inequity caused by color-blindness by providing interventions tailored to each of several diverse communities. That many of those spearheading the legislation and the actual policy-writer are people of color provides a real-time glimpse into how Whiteness itself can impede racial progress: if the plan were color-blind, meant to combat climate change and provide for "everybody," racial inequity would be perpetuated.

The heart of Gunn-Wright's platform is actively anti-racist and is itself a force for dismantling the system of racial equality. As such, it is obvious why there is such widespread resistance to it, for attacking entrenched systems is something individuals are loathe to do on a general level, and especially resistant to doing if they feel threatened, as White people clearly are by the implication of the "terrible awfulness" of their identity. Thus, in addition to exploring the nature of White people's ambivalence to recognizing the role of Whiteness in perpetuating inequality, the second major goal will be to understand how White people's defensive reactions to the prospect of systemic change can take the form of legitimization of the system and their role in it as fair and just, a state of affairs predicted by System Justification Theory (Jost, 2018, 2020).

Because so little research has focused on the experience of Whiteness as a contributor to ongoing discrimination and institutional oppression, I will attempt to outline an approach to understanding systemic racism in America that centers Whiteness

as a cause and conceptualizes it as an inherently defensive cultural identity with measurable racist consequences. To do so, I will integrate literatures on White Privilege, social dominance orientation, system justification, White racial identification, and psychological entitlement.

Chapter II: Literature Review

White Privilege

“[Whiteness] is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural sort of being”

- Butler, 2002, p. 43 quoted in Appelbaum, 2017, p. 7

In 1988, Peggy McIntosh wrote a seminal essay on White privilege in which she analogized it through the metaphor of an invisible knapsack of unearned assets that White people carry and cash in on unknowingly (McIntosh, 1988). By virtue of greater access to resources and power, Whites, secure in their higher status, can afford to take their privilege for granted. In the past decade Robin DiAngelo (2018) expanded on McIntosh's theory, exploring the types of defensive reactions White people have to grappling with their unearned privilege. She posits a theory of White Fragility to explain how Whiteness's association with America's horrific history of slavery and segregation makes White people averse to considering their Whiteness and that ultimately makes them highly defensive, thereby incidentally perpetuating White privilege and racism through its ignorance. However, the empirical literature on the effects of White privilege awareness has produced somewhat equivocal findings to this end.

In the early 1990's, education scholars, struggling to teach White students about racism and privilege, began to study the defensive consequences of making Whites aware of their undeserved privilege (Steele, 1990; Tatum, 1992). It suggested that, implicit in belonging to the White racial group, is the nascent awareness that one is lucky to be White because of “ill-gotten” advantage (Steele, 1990, p. 499). This usually unconscious

notion results in feelings of guilt, particularly collective guilt. Collective guilt is, notably, not the result of actual individual culpability (as guilt is typically conceptualized) but a sense of responsibility evoked by the awareness of the White group's privileged status, and the implications of that.

Prosocial consequences. The first empirical work investigating White privilege awareness took place just 20 years ago (Swim & Miller, 1999). With particular emphasis on Tatum's conclusion that awareness of White privilege results in feelings of White guilt, Swim and Miller explored two sets of hypotheses. The research examined possible antecedents of White guilt such as beliefs in the existence of White privilege, negative identification with the White racial group, and racial discrimination toward blacks, as well as low levels of prejudice. The work also sought to understand the consequences of White guilt, namely attitudes toward affirmative action. Ultimately, they attempted to test whether the White guilt was a causal factor in the relationship between these antecedents and consequences.

In their analyses, Swim and Miller reported some limited preliminary evidence of concurrent validity, finding significant correlations between White guilt and belief in White privilege and "private" Collective Self-Esteem, an indicator of feelings about the "goodness" of the White social group (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, p. 304). However, the other domains of Collective Self-Esteem, "public" and "identity," as well as the feelings thermometer toward White people were either not significant or marginally significant. Analyses of construct validity were more successful, finding in a principle components analysis that White guilt was statistically differentiable from beliefs in White privilege

and racial discrimination, racial prejudice, political orientation, and support for affirmative action.

On a theoretical level, the study is sophisticated and well supported. Swim and Miller do evaluate their hypotheses in both student (three studies) and non-student (one study) samples albeit using generally small samples (under 100) with the exception of Study 3, which examined 364 college students. The non-student sample was collected from an airport, thus likely biasing their sample toward a high SES, educated sample of White adults. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited to this subsample of the general population, notably omitting swathes of the population who would tend to be more politically conservative and supportive of anti-egalitarian policy (e.g., Whitley Jr & Lee, 2000). Moreover, from a measurement perspective, there are some potential red flags. White guilt, beliefs in White privilege and the existence of racial discrimination were all measured using heretofore unvalidated measures with only moderate internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha in the 0.7 range).

Overall, these findings are useful as an initial attempt to empirically link White guilt to a number of outcomes, finding in particular that White guilt does partially mediate the relationship between belief in the existence of White privilege and racially progressive and empathic social attitudes. However, the authors do not report a relationship between belief in the existence of White privilege and any of the other variables measured. Furthermore, because the design is cross-sectional, the data are insufficient to provide evidence that White guilt *results* from belief in White privilege, but merely that the two are correlated. To demonstrate the mediation they describe, they would need to experimentally induce awareness of White privilege rather than simply

measure general beliefs about it. Moreover, the fact that they measure belief in White privilege *after* they measure White guilt leaves open the possibility for systematic priming effects from asking participants to consider feelings of White guilt prior to assessing their beliefs in White privilege. Given the literature on White fragility, such an effect could reasonably be suspected to have occurred.

More recently, empirical work has evaluated the consequences of exposure to the concept of White privilege (Powell et al., 2005; Schmitt et al., 2003; Stewart et al., 2012). In one study, framing of White advantage versus Black disadvantage was manipulated. One hundred ten White undergraduate participants read 24 statements based on Peggy McIntosh's list of privileges that were framed either as Whites having unearned privileges or Blacks having systematic illegitimate disadvantages and then they rated the degree to which they agreed with each. The researchers then measured White guilt using a five-item Likert-based measure with high reliability and racism using items adapted from the Modern Sexism Scale, which appear nearly identical to those from the Modern Racism Scale and were only moderately internally consistent. The data suggested evidence of the mediating role of White guilt on the relationship between the privilege framing and decreases in racism. Essentially, framing inequality in terms of White advantage was found to lead to greater experience of White guilt, which caused White participants to report lower racism toward Black people. They attribute this finding to the White privilege condition involving the ingroup and therefore implicating the self in the perpetuation of inequality, causing guilt, which then caused a more sympathetic view toward the outgroup, i.e., Black people.

A second study, also examining White psychology undergraduate used a different framing manipulation (Powell et al., 2005). In the White privilege condition, 122 White participants were instructed to generate a list of ways in which they had been advantaged because they were White. In the Black disadvantage condition, they were instructed to generate a list of ways in which Black people been disadvantaged because of their race. Again, the intent here was for the White privilege condition to implicate the self and hence cause White guilt, their hypothesized mediator. In addition, the authors measured belief in White privilege as well as extent of White racial identification. As in the initial study, those in the White privilege condition exhibited lower levels of racism than those in the Black disadvantage condition, and that this effect was purportedly due to increased White guilt caused by awareness of White privilege. Additionally, the manipulation did not influence belief in the existence of White privilege. White racial identification partially mediated the relationship between framing and racism such that the White privilege condition caused less White identification (i.e., distancing from the implicated group) and thereby less racism. However, when White guilt was also included in the model, White identification dropped below significance.

On the face of it, these two experiments may seem to provide evidence to the contrary of the White Fragility hypothesis, that individuals, when confronted with their own illegitimate White privilege, would bristle defensively and deny racist attitudes or engage in other defensive maneuvers. On closer examination, it seems possible that participants actually may be reacting defensively, i.e., denying that they are racist. The Modern Racism Scale, though designed to be less susceptible to image management issues, was decades old when implemented in this 2005 study and includes items such as,

“Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.” After having just completed a task in which they were asked to describe ways in which they had benefited from illegitimate advantage, it makes perfect sense that they would *say* that discrimination is an ongoing issue in the United States. This itself may be an artifact of image management that is disproportionately fostered by the implication of the self in this inequality, as the authors do argue. To this end, it seems the use of this particular measure of racism, may not have been the best tool to measure White Fragility, not that these authors were attempting to do so. However, it does certainly raise questions as to what in fact was actually measured, and whether it was in fact, racism itself.

Indeed, considering that the manipulation did not affect belief in the existence of White privilege but *did* affect modern racism, it seems the effects of framing on modern racism may be partially due to image enhancement and, essentially, defensive. As it relates to the finding of a partially mediating effect of White racial identification, it seems a distinct possibility that decreased White identification constituted a distancing process. Moreover, it suggests the presence of a shame reaction associated with identifying as White following the consideration of one’s own privilege i.e., shame caused individuals to de-identify with their Whiteness. Similar to the guilt reaction, shame is often associated with defensiveness.

Finally, there is also the possibility that use of White identification as a mediator was simply not a theoretically astute approach, as perhaps a moderation approach would make more sense. Essentially, it seems more likely that White group identification is not a consequence of awareness of privilege but rather should be viewed as less situationally malleable and more like an individual difference variable. That is, it is possible that

differences in identification with one's Whiteness, may lead individuals to different responses to awareness of their White privilege such that for those who identify strongly with their whiteness, awareness of privilege constitutes a greater epistemic threat than for those who identify less with Whiteness.

Two studies partially respond to the criticism regarding a potential defensive reaction to awareness of White privilege (Iyer et al., 2003; Stewart et al., 2012). The first examined a White, undergraduate sample, utilizing Swim and Miller's measures of belief in racial discrimination, belief in illegitimate White privilege, White guilt, and a measure of compensatory affirmative action. Using a structural equation modeling approach, the authors reach similar conclusions to those of Powell et al. (2005). White guilt partially mediated the relationship between beliefs in White privilege, which was termed a "self-implicating condition," and support for compensatory affirmative action whereas White guilt did not play a significant mediating role in the other-focused condition examining the relationship between belief in the existence of racial discrimination and support for compensatory affirmative action. They conclude that support for compensatory affirmative action is likely somewhat less related to image management issues compared to modern racism.

Another experiment examined data from 77 White undergraduates using a very similar manipulation and found that heightened awareness of White privilege led to greater positive regard for Black people, as measured with the Social Distance Scale, a measure of one's comfort with Black people, though such a scale would also be subject to image management effects (Stewart et al., 2012). Additionally, they found that greater White ingroup identification led to decreased regard for Black people.

White defensiveness. To the contrary, some evidence exists suggesting the consequences of confronting one's own privilege can be less prosocial and can involve defensiveness through deceit and racial malice (e.g., Branscombe et al., 2007; Phillips & Lowery, 2015). From a social identity perspective, such defensive responses to awareness of illegitimate privilege can be thought of as efforts to maintain group innocence and therefore self-esteem. To this end, perhaps "one strategy of defense against the threatening suggestion that the ingroup illegitimately obtains benefits at the expense of another group would be to challenge the deservingness of the disadvantaged group" (Branscombe et al., 2007, p. 204). This might indicate that modern racism would *increase* following confrontation with evidence of one's White privilege, though in this study the privilege condition was compared with considering ways in which White people may be systematically disadvantaged, an obviously false position (Branscombe et al., 2007). That is, modern racism would be seen as a form of defensive outgroup derogation. The defensive reaction can be explained through the moderating role of White racial identification. Specifically, there may be greater stakes for social identity and group self-esteem among those with strong White racial (ingroup) identification, and these individuals would tend to respond defensively through increased modern racism.

To test this hypothesis, participants were either tasked with considering White privilege versus White disadvantage (Branscombe et al., 2007). In the first experiment, again assessing White undergraduates, in contrast to the 2005 study, when participants were instructed to consider illegitimate White privilege, they showed *increased* modern racism compared with those in the White disadvantage condition. Because there was no Black disadvantage condition, as in the prior study, it is unclear whether the earlier

findings were replicated and no direct comparison or discussion is made. In a second experiment, which included a measure of White racial identification in the same manipulation, in the White privilege condition, those who identified more strongly with Whiteness endorsed greater modern racism, i.e., were more defensive. This is in line with the criticism outlined above regarding the moderating rather than mediating role of White racial identification. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the standardized beta coefficients were in the .10 range, indicating small effect sizes for both direct effects and the interaction. The authors suggest that those lower in White racial identification may have been more likely to experience White guilt. However, because White guilt was not measured, the evidence for such a mediating role is based solely on one past confirmatory study. Moreover, a direct comparison with Powell et al.'s 2005 study is not possible because the comparison condition (White disadvantage) is different (Black disadvantage). Thus, it is a possibility that, compared with a control condition, White Privilege awareness could still be decreasing racial prejudice though this is impossible to determine without control condition.

Indeed, acutely induced awareness of White privilege has been found to induce feelings of collective guilt, which could potentially lead to either increased prejudice via a defensive reaction, or reconciliatory motivation via outgroup sympathy, though this has not been directly tested either (Ferguson & Branscombe, 2014).

Phillips and Lowery (2015) examined the defensive consequences of grappling with White Privilege. Using two samples of White participants recruited using Amazon's MTurk platform, they conducted an experiment in which participants in a White Privilege condition were asked to read a paragraph detailing widespread agreement among social

scientists about the existence of illegitimate White privilege while those in the No Privilege condition did not read this paragraph. Subsequently, participants completed the Belief in White Privilege scale used by Swim and Miller (1999) and then a five-item measure of “Life Hardships” in which they were asked about the degree and intensity of hardships in their lives. This was a newly developed measure that, in this sample was used with a high degree of reliability. The data indicated, in both samples, that White people claimed greater personal hardships in their lives following the White privilege condition by about 10% (Phillips & Lowery, 2015). However, they did not measure attitudinal defensiveness by measuring racism or opposition to egalitarian policy.

To demonstrate that this greater hardship-claiming was indeed a defensive response, the same manipulation was implemented in a third study but a self-affirmation condition designed to decrease defensiveness was added (Phillips & Lowery, 2015). In the affirmation condition, participants were asked to rank 12 values provided in the survey and then to write why their 1st ranked value was most important to them, a procedure loosely based on one initially validated to decrease dismissiveness toward disconfirming evidence (Cohen et al., 2000). To measure decreased defensiveness, both hardship claiming and support for affirmative action were measured. Additionally, belief in White privilege and belief in personal privilege were measured, though this second measure was only moderately reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$). Despite clear conceptual overlap between the two, the belief in personal and White privilege were only correlated at the .66 level, suggesting less multicollinearity than might be expected given the similarity of the two constructs, though the surprisingly low correlation could also be an artifact of the relatively low reliability of the measure.

Phillips and Lowery replicate their finding that individuals in the Privilege condition respond defensively to White privilege with greater hardship-claiming. However, in the self-affirmation condition, the direction of the effect was actually *reversed* and was significant in the opposite direction, i.e., that confronting White privilege actually led to *decreased* claiming of personal hardship, thus suggesting that awareness of White privilege leads to substantial, motivated defensive reactions to protect one's self-image and sense of personal responsibility. Although certain aspects of their statistical approach are dubious, such as the fact that they report certain analyses to be "marginally" significant, when in fact p was not less than .05 and zero was actually in the confidence interval for an indirect effect, the findings related to defensive hardship-claiming do appear statistically and methodologically robust. Moreover, they found a significant mediating effect of hardship-claiming on the relationship between the affirmation x white privilege (experimental conditions) on belief in personal privilege and subsequently, support for affirmative action. Essentially, this finding provides support for the idea that hardship-claiming, a system justifying process, actually serves to ameliorate some amount of dissonance caused by awareness of illegitimate privilege. Interestingly, they found that when White people are able to claim hardships, they are able to deny the existence of privilege more. Nevertheless, the lack of an active control condition indicates room for improvement in the experimental approach.

More evidence of defensive hardship claiming was obtained in a White British sample (Murdoch & McAloney-Kocaman, 2019). When White participants were asked to read a list of ten of Peggy McIntosh's White privileges, they evidenced greater hardship-claiming and lower beliefs in the role of personal privilege in their lives. In contrast to

Phillips and Lowery's studies however (and those of Swim & Miller, 1999), belief in the existence of White privilege actually *decreased* in the exposure condition compared with their control condition, suggesting outright defensive denial of White privilege following mere exposure to its possibility.

The relatively scant literature to date on the acute effects of making White people aware of their White privilege has been somewhat equivocal, some studies suggesting that White people may become more egalitarian and less racist when they become aware of their privilege, while other research suggests they may tend to become defensive, less supportive of egalitarian policy, and actually hold fast to more entrenched racist views, in line with the theory of White fragility. So, what might account for these discrepant consequences of White privilege awareness? Although it seems White guilt and White racial identification may partially explain why some White people respond differently to awareness of their privilege than others, these explanations, measured using non-standardized, unvalidated instruments, as well as problematic statistical approaches suggest a lack of broad empirical foundation, and fail to situate such a process within the larger literature on White outgroup prejudice. Perhaps the answer lies, in part, in individual differences. To that end, I will examine social dominance orientation, a stable worldview related to the security individuals derive from anti-egalitarian hierarchical structures and needs for power.

Social Dominance Orientation

One explanation for why some White people might react more defensively to White privilege awareness is an individual difference construct known as social dominance. On a trait level, social dominance orientation (SDO) is one of the most highly

studied predictors of systemic prejudice, discrimination, and anti-egalitarian attitudes and behavior (see Ho et al., 2012, 2015 for reviews). SDO has been empirically demonstrated to be a causal influence on anti-egalitarianism (Kteily et al., 2011). SDO is composed of two central tenets: (1) a fundamental belief in the validity and importance of social hierarchies i.e., intergroup dominance (SDO-D) and (2) a motivation to maintain or enhance these group-based hierarchies, referred to as intergroup anti-egalitarianism (SDO-E; Sidanius et al., 2016). Thus, those White people who are more sensitive to threats to social hierarchies that they see as legitimate and valuable may be more likely to react defensively to evidence of their unearned privilege.

A good deal of literature suggests that members of higher status groups tend to be higher in SDO, e.g., males (Lee et al., 2011; Pratto et al., 2000; Sidanius et al., 2000), heterosexuals (Stones, 2006; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000), and the rich (Bernardo, 2013). Such findings provide theoretical validation for the defensive nature of White fragility. Indeed, in several American, Israeli, and British samples, the dominating aspect of SDO (SDO-D) predicted blatant prejudice, zero-sum competition, dehumanization, and intergroup aggression while the motivation toward hierarchy enhancement (SDO-E) predicted more subtle legitimizing ideologies (such as finding hierarchy-enhancing jobs appealing and support for immigrant persecution) and opposition to redistributive policy (Ho et al., 2012, 2015). In five studies of White students, consistently strong associations were found between SDO and prejudice toward Latinx Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans and immigrants to the U.S. (Levin et al., 2012). Another, more recent study of White participants recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) found that higher SDO-E predicted colorblind ideology, i.e., the denial of

systemic racial oppression (Chow & Knowles, 2016). Moreover, this relationship was even stronger when participants were made to believe that societal hierarchy was under threat (system threat), suggesting that, as Branscombe et al. found (2007), threats to Whiteness actually result in *increased* support for the legitimacy of racial hierarchies, indicating evidence of a defensive reaction to being confronted with their Whiteness and privilege.

Other work suggests that those high in social dominance would be most sensitive to the threats to their superiority over subordinate groups i.e., that increased sensitivity to intergroup hierarchies would make them more likely to perceive threats to their status and thus more likely to hold prejudicial attitudes and engage in discriminatory behavior toward minority groups (Duckitt, 2006). If social dominance orientation is motivated by a chronic sense of competition and sensitivity to status threat, then those who are highly dominance oriented are likely most insecure about their position.

Given the insecurity inherent in social dominance orientation, consider the substantial evidence suggesting that these highly social dominance-oriented individuals would be particularly de-motivated to challenge systems which uphold their privileged positions. Those more driven by social dominance tend to have lower motivation to confront White privilege, awareness of White privilege, lower White privilege remorse, lower empathy toward people of color, lower White guilt, higher White fear, higher colorblind racism, and higher modern racism (Pinterits et al., 2009). Interestingly, SDO has been found to interact with White racial identification in predicting support for the Black Lives Matter movement such that antipathy toward the movement was related to greater social dominance and White identification (Holt & Sweitzer, 2018). This may

perhaps be because White people feel entitled to their status and believe that such hierarchies are actually just, and even valuable. They may therefore be uninterested in racial explanations of inequality.

Some evidence suggests there are certain circumstances under which dominance-oriented White people may appear to go against their dominant group interest and support redistributive policy (Chow et al., 2013). In these studies, in samples of White participants recruited from an online panel maintained by a private California university, when pro-hierarchy (i.e., high SDO-D) White people perceive that a minority group holds them in low regard (thereby posing a threat to the status quo), they are more likely to support redistributive policy. However, White people only appear to react to threat in this way if they are primed with a system threat to see the hierarchy as unstable. Although these findings may appear counterintuitive in light of the literature reviewed above, such findings actually provide evidence that, when White people experience threat, they do in fact react to protect the integrity of the status quo racial hierarchy by working to appease minority group members, thus actually protecting group status. Counterintuitively, “support for policies that appear to attenuate the existing hierarchy might actually be motivated by a desire to maintain the hierarchy” (Chow et al., 2013, p. 342). Thus, although these individuals may appear to be behaviorally attenuating the hierarchy, their *motivation* is actually to protect the status quo through diminishing intergroup discord.

In summary, SDO, a stable disposition, is useful as a predictor of prejudice and anti-racial-egalitarianism, though the authors themselves suggest that it is only one part of a multilevel process (Sidanius et al., 2016). There exists a vast literature in social psychology, conceptualized as “motivated social cognition,” that explores individual

needs and situational factors that increase motivation to defend inequality. Essentially, there are a network of personality differences that make change to the status quo feel more threatening and that unconsciously drive anti-egalitarian behavior and belief systems.

System Justification Theory

“If invulnerability entails closure and not wanting to know, epistemic vulnerability begins with being open and an acknowledgment of uncertainty. This... is the precondition for learning and growth. Epistemic vulnerability involves “the ability to put oneself in and learn from situations in which one is the unknowing, foreign, and perhaps uncomfortable party.... Without an acceptance of the genuine value of discomfort the real necessity of immersing oneself in situation in which one does not normally find oneself, learning does not happen.”

– Barbara Applebaum, 2017, p. 9

Phillips and Lowery described a systemic mechanism for what they term the “herd invisibility” of White privilege that functions to perpetuate White supremacy (2018). The herd invisibility hypothesis suggests that White people are motivated to retain a sense of innocence and merit, and thus ignore and deny evidence of privilege on an individual and systemic level because if any aspect of one’s lot in life were not perceived to be legitimately “earned,” it would cause direct conflicts with meritocratic ideology, i.e., “the American way.” Though to date, there is limited empirical evidence to support this innovative claim, this conception of the maintenance of White privilege is

supported by the vast literature on system justification theory, a theory created specifically to understand why individuals are motivated to resist social change.

John Jost and collaborators, over the past three decades, have published a great deal of empirical research validating a theory of system justification, which posits that all individuals, to varying degrees, are motivated to defend the systems in which they live i.e., to believe that the extant state of society is fair, just, and good (Jost, 2020a). These beliefs themselves have been found to ameliorate cognitive dissonance aroused by the awareness of inequality and poor conditions that exist in society (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Thus, these system justifying beliefs serve a palliative, coping function.

Situated within the relatively recent and somewhat limited body of empirical literature on privilege, I propose that White Fragility can be conceptualized as a system justifying process. System justification theory posits that we are motivated to hold certain beliefs and selectively attend to information that verifies our worldviews because they serve to ameliorate various kinds of anxiety. Specifically, Jost and colleagues have studied three types of motivations (epistemic, existential, and relational) that function on three levels individual, group, and system (Jost, 2017). Epistemic motives drive people to desire order, certainty, and closure; existential motives lead people to seek security, safety, and avoid threat; relational motives cause individuals to seek ingroup harmony and agreement and to avoid the acknowledgement of difference. Within these definitions, it is then understandable that political conservatives have stronger motives toward these ends across the board (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003; Jost, 2017, 2018; Jost et al., 2018). And yet individuals' drives to satisfy these needs can be thwarted at various levels. For example, an individual's own sense of safety can be threatened, their sense of security

within their group (e.g., sense of belonging or even the very integrity of groups to which they belong), or their safety in the context of the system (e.g., wellbeing of the American geo-social-political order). These levels may function simultaneously, or individuals can be threatened on one or multiple levels.

For example, consider the system-justifying function of color-blind ideology, the belief that someone “does not see race” and that it is an irrelevant factor in their and other peoples’ lives. If one views racial inequality as a consequence of meritocratic forces rather than racial oppression (consistent with color-blind ideology), one can maintain a worldview in which the (White-constructed) system one lives in is fair, just, and good. Challenging colorblind ideology would constitute both a group- and system-level threat as it threatens the position of the White group’s position within the larger American system. Worthington and colleagues found in a racially diverse sample of 144 university students that higher color-blind attitudes led people to view racial climate on campus more positively (Worthington et al., 2008). Color-blind racial attitudes were assessed using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) and measured campus climate in two ways: general campus climate (which examined 6 bipolar dimensions such as respectful-disrespectful and concerned-indifferent) and racial-ethnic campus climate (which examined how accepting students felt campus climate was toward six different racial and ethnic group). Controlling for racial-ethnic identity, these researchers found that higher scores on the CoBRAS was associated with more positive perceptions of racial climate, and that this relationship was partially mediated by unawareness of racial privilege, a subscale of the CoBRAS. In this case, individuals’ relational, existential, and epistemic motives are threatened, as the status, integrity, and security of themselves

within their group is at stake. Essentially, the findings suggest that the mere act of *holding these beliefs* serves as a kind of rose-colored lens – it allows individuals to maintain a sense of order and reduce cognitive dissonance regarding their position and the position of their racial group. Conversely, these authors also found that awareness of White privilege mediated these effects, indicating to some degree that acknowledgement of the illegitimacy of racial inequality serves to lift the veil of these rose-tinted glasses. Such findings could also be seen to indicate openness to systemic change and therefore lower intensity of epistemic and existential motives. Taken together, this study provides empirical evidence that system justifying processes serve to protect people from the discomfort aroused by awareness of illegitimate privilege.

Another set of studies found an interaction between Whites' system-justifying beliefs and perceived racial progress in predicting belief in anti-white bias (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014). Recruiting White participants from Amazon's MTurk platform, these authors measured system-justifying beliefs with Levin et al.'s Status-Legitimizing Beliefs Scale (1998), they measured perceptions of racial progress using five proprietary Likert-scale items ($\alpha = .76$), and measured perceptions of anti-White bias using eight Likert-scale items ($\alpha = .87$). In their analyses, system justifying beliefs played a significant moderating role such that, for those high in system-justifying beliefs, the more they perceived increased racial progress in America, the more they perceived anti-White bias, while for those low in system-justification motivation, there was no relationship, meaning that they did not perceive anti-White bias differently regardless of perceived racial progress. Essentially, White people were more likely to view themselves as victims of discrimination to the extent that they believed the American system is fair and just and

that racial progress has been made. In a second experiment, these authors also found evidence for the defensive function of system justifying beliefs insofar as the addition of a self-affirmation condition (in which White people wrote about values important to them) successfully reduced beliefs in anti-White bias even when individuals strongly believed in the legitimacy of the system. That is, by decreasing how threatened White people felt by affirming them (specifically ameliorating relational and epistemic threats), the experimenters showed that White people were less defensive (i.e., less paranoid about anti-White bias).

An analogous interaction was found in another study examining evaluations of a fictitious White target who claimed to have not received a raise due to either (a) a belief that a Black person was given the job because of organizational “workforce diversity” values or (b) uncertainty about why he did not receive the raise (Wilkins et al., 2013). When White individuals held strong system-legitimizing beliefs, they tended to evaluate the target more positively in the “workforce diversity” claim condition. Together, these findings suggest that holding beliefs in the legitimacy of the system allow privileged individuals to see themselves as more disadvantaged and agentic, as victims rather than as illegitimate beneficiaries, let alone part of the oppressive class. This work also implies that feeling victimized is actually somehow preferable to feeling guilty or ashamed of one’s privilege, and that system justification motivation predicts a self-preserving bias motivating protection of self-esteem and group-esteem.

Even when applied to Phillips and Lowery’s studies (2015, 2019) reporting increased life hardship claiming when individuals are confronted with privilege (i.e., confronted with a threat to a perceived fair and just systemic status quo), one can see how

attempts to legitimize their own merit through hardship claiming may actually be a form of system justification. Hardship-claiming can be read as an implicit strategy that privileged individuals utilize to deny the reality of their privilege. Claiming hardship within the context of the system is a way of further vesting oneself in it, as it is a way of claiming meritocratic victory within the system, but defensively denying the ways in which privilege effectively lowered the barriers of those hardships. That is, overcoming something like a surgical recovery is much easier if one has access to good healthcare, financial resources, or paid leave, benefits already afforded more liberally and accessibly to those with more privilege.

Individual's needs to reduce system-threatening anxiety vary based on numerous dispositional, identity, and situational factors, e.g., needs to reduce uncertainty, anxiety, or protect a privileged identity (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003). One recent study examined the degree to which White individuals react defensively to evidence of privilege as a function of their level of Symbolic Racism, one type of system justifying belief indicating veiled racism (i.e. beliefs that "It's only a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as Whites;" Henry & Sears, 2002; Puryear, et al., 2019). In a sample of White MTurk workers, individuals with higher status-legitimizing beliefs (Symbolic Racism) reacted with increasing defensiveness when faced with increasing evidence of White privilege, whereas individuals low in status-legitimizing beliefs were relatively impervious to these threats, as they were more open to evidence of White privilege i.e., less epistemically insecure (Puryear et al., 2019). In contrast, these individuals low in status-legitimizing beliefs were much more susceptible to feelings of guilt following the presentation of increasing

levels of White privilege whereas individuals high in status-legitimizing beliefs were relatively impervious to guilt reactions, suggesting, as Applebaum (2017) and Gilson assert (2011), that individuals become more defensive when they are less able to meaningfully engage with status-threatening material. In particular, they suggest that some people become less defensive because they experience guilt (self-focused) rather than anger or aggression (other-focused).

When an individual perceives that a system that they are a part of is under threat, they often react to protect the status quo. For example, in a recent study of White Amazon MTurk workers, subjects were primed with a paragraph detailing the projected racial-ethnic demographics in America for the year 2042 (when it is predicted America will become “majority-minority”) or a control condition in which they read about current racial-ethnic demographics in America (Craig & Richeson, 2014a). Exposure to changing ethnic-cultural demographics in the United States caused individuals to indicate greater racial bias and discomfort with non-White individuals, according to the Evaluative Bias Scale ($\alpha = .88$), an explicit measure, and the race IAT, an implicit measure. Such evidence could be extrapolated to explain the existential terror reported by ardent White supremacists who believe with conviction that the very survival of White people is at stake.

Similarly, exposing participants to the fact that California is less than 50% White (racial shift condition) compared with a control condition caused unaffiliated participants to endorse more conservative identity measured with an item assessing which party they “lean” toward and another item indicating political ideology on a liberal-conservatism Likert scale (Craig & Richeson, 2014b). These findings were replicated in a study that

found that that a sense of White existential threat (White population decline) explained the relationship between the majority-minority threat and defensive reactions (Bai & Federico, 2019).

In one analysis of American National Election Survey data, they found that, following Obama's election, racial resentment increased and support for welfare policy decreased even after controlling for socioeconomic status, further substantiating the hypothesis that racial threat caused defense of status quo race relations (Wetts & Willer, 2018). Similarly, exposing White people to graphs that made salient the projected decreased proportion of White people in American society (compared with more stable data) caused decreased support for welfare policy (Wetts & Willer, 2018). In confirmation of these findings, several studies found that when the legitimacy of Whites' status in the racial hierarchy is threatened, their support for welfare policy decreased, and their support for entitlements for Whites increased (Outten et al., 2012)

The impact of White racial identification on these relationships between racial status threat and defensive, conservative policy shifts was recently further interrogated (Major et al., 2018). Again examining participants recruited from Amazon MTurk, White Americans high in White identification (measured using the four-item Identity Centrality Scale, a social identity-based scale with items such as "The ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am", $\alpha = .91$) demonstrated increased support for candidate Trump (in 2016), support for anti-immigration policy, and opposition to political correctness compared to those lower in White identification, suggesting that proximity to White identity causes increased relational threat sensitivity among Whites. Additionally, when applying the same majority-minority racial threat manipulation used by Richeson

and Sommers (2014b), the effect of ethnic identification significantly interacted with the manipulation to amplify these effects such that the racial shift system threat caused increased support for candidate Trump compared with the control condition, in which no difference was observed. This suggests that White people who are more closely identified with their Whiteness are more sensitive to threats to the racial status quo.

Although on the face of it, knowledge of demographic shifts may not seem to necessarily indicate threats to White privilege, on a more unconscious level, it might. It would make sense that awareness of shifts in racial demography incite insecurity about White people's place in the social hierarchy, making White people (unconsciously) fearful of change to their (unearned) status, a group and system level threat. Such results bolster Phillips and Lowery's theory of herd invisibility (2018), that awareness of threat to an individual's place in the racial-social hierarchy (epistemic threat, or status threat) leads to motivated defense of the status quo hierarchy due to epistemic insecurity, i.e., fear of change and comfort/security derived from the status quo.

For instance, high status individuals, e.g., White men, who have the most (privilege) to lose, have been found to espouse zero-sum beliefs, i.e., that progress for one social group must necessarily come at the cost of another, to a greater extent than women and people of color, i.e., individuals with less privilege (e.g., Norton & Sommers, 2011; Wilkins et al., 2015). On the surface, this may seem to make perfect sense: the more you have, the more you are afraid to lose it. However, upon closer inspection, one can see the palliative role that *holding* such beliefs has for the maintenance of a privileged individual's self-esteem. Similar to the finding that belief in racial progress was inversely related to perception of anti-White bias among White people (Wilkins and

Kaiser, 2014), for men recruited from Amazon MTurk, holding zero-sum beliefs was related to higher perceived bias against men whereas men held equivalent views of perceived prejudice toward women regardless of their level of zero-sum beliefs (Wilkins et al., 2015). This suggests that the threat of women having more social equity (a threat to the status quo social hierarchy) was particularly salient for men who believed they would suffer if the gender hierarchy shifted toward more egalitarian relations. In the second study, participants were primed with articles detailing either increased societal discrimination against men, decreased anti-female bias, or a control condition. Zero-sum beliefs were greatest for men primed with anti-male discrimination, indicating that threat to male privilege caused men to increase zero-sum beliefs whereas there was no difference in zero-sum beliefs for men in the control versus decreased anti-female bias condition (Wilkins et al., 2015). In essence, these findings suggest that threat to men's privilege causes them to claim greater risk of lost privilege than when told the relative status quo was improving for less privileged groups. Hence, threat to privilege causes men to become increasingly vested in and defensive of status quo conditions.

In considering the notion that responses to various kinds of system threat are enacted psychologically in similar ways to threats to self-esteem and merit, one can see how individuals' defensive responses to evidence of their own privilege serves a self-preservation function vis-à-vis status quo preservation. Ignoring worldview disconfirming evidence preserves social relationships with ingroup members and provides a sense of certainty and security in the world (appealing to relational and epistemic motives respectively), but also might result in a greater sense of subjective wellbeing (Napier & Jost, 2008) and decreased psychological distress (Osborne & Sibley,

2013) i.e., palliative functions. Analogous to the function of self-affirmation to reduce perceptions of anti-White bias (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014), such work provides additional evidence that system justification serves a defensive function. System justification allows for the perpetuation of racial inequality through defensively dismissing evidence of it and also by “helping” people “feel” better about themselves, *especially* for higher status groups (Jost & Thompson, 2000).

To conclude, in this section, I have made the case for viewing White Fragility as a system justifying process. White Fragility, the defensive reaction that ensues among White people when their Whiteness and/or privilege are made salient to them, is a way for White people to deny their implication in an unjust, un-meritocratic system, a reality deeply contrary to culturally engrained myths of the value of hard work. Here, I have reviewed a number of ways in which holding system-legitimizing beliefs appears to placate the anxiety aroused by such cognitive dissonance. Several authors have demonstrated that holding system-justifying beliefs about race relations seems to serve an anxiety-reduction role (Major et al., 2002; Major & Kaiser, 2017; Worthington et al., 2008) and is associated with increased subjective wellbeing (Napier & Jost, 2008) and decreased psychological distress (Osborne & Sibley, 2013). Indeed, the greater a White individual’s system justification motivation, the more likely they were to view themselves as victims of racial discrimination, thereby defensively projecting their own racial anxiety or animus on to others (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014). Moreover, this effect dissipated when individuals’ self-esteem was affirmed. Several research teams found that when White people were confronted with changing demographic proportions in the United States in the future, their racial status was threatened and they responded with

greater racial prejudice (Craig & Richeson, 2014a), a conservative shift and decreased support for welfare policy (Craig & Richeson, 2014b; Wetts & Willer, 2018). These kinds of defensive reactions were observed more strongly in individuals who identified more strongly with privileged groups e.g., as White (Major et al., 2018) and male (Wilkins et al., 2015).

However, in these studies, White privilege itself was not directly assessed, as there were no measures of White privilege nor manipulation checks assessing whether processes of White Fragility were activated. White Fragility is activated when an individual's White identity is in some way threatened or perceived to implicate an individual in racism. Thus, we turn to the literature on White racial identification.

White Racial Identification

If White people are motivated to ignore and minimize their Whiteness, one can easily see why its study has been somewhat elusive, especially when as of 2013, 83.6% of active psychologists are White (American Psychological Association, 2015). In fact, it seems that Whiteness studies did not really begin until the very end of the 20th century, and even in the last several decades of work, the vast majority has rarely been qualitative or theoretical rather than empirical (Hartmann et al., 2009). The fact that the empirical study of White racial and cultural identification is barely 20 years old is consistent with the herd invisibility hypothesis. Several studies have found that White people tend to think about racial identity less and view it as less important to their identity than do people of color (e.g., Bush, 2004; Hartmann et al., 2009). Indeed, the less White people were aware of or identified with their Whiteness, the more racist attitudes they held (Sue & Sue, 2012). Based on data from several thousand Americans, White people were more

likely to view racial inequality as a valid consequence of meritocracy, i.e., a form of colorblind racism (Hartman et al., 2009). Essentially, for White people to even discuss racism seems to be threatening to their sense of deservingness of their status and, by extension, their sense of self, not to mention their role in systemic racism. However, like much of the literature on White racial identification, even in this large-scale study, its measurement was based on four non-scalar items used previously to understand the racial identities of non-White ethnic and racial minorities. Its psychometric properties were not statistically explored with White people and readers were encouraged to interpret the results with caution.

The majority of work that has been done to understand White racial identification has been conducted in the context of multicultural counseling education (Sue & Sue, 2012). In this work, the goal has been to help training clinicians to develop a nonracist, and ultimately, antiracist White identity (Helms, 2015). Helms theory of White racial identification development tracks identity from obliviousness and dismissal, through a series of conflicts grappling with owning one's White privilege, to ultimately reduced experiences of guilt and increased acceptance of one's role in White supremacy along with a renewed motivation to dismantle it (Helms, 1984). However, this theory has come under severe criticism because its primary measure, the White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale also largely lacked psychometric and external validity (e.g., Behrens, 1997; Cokley, 2007; Tokar & Swanson, 1991).

One prominent conceptualization of White racial identification views it through the lens of Social Identity Theory (Knowles & Peng, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Created to address the discomfort White individuals tend to experience when entertaining

their own Whiteness, this body of work eschewed such face valid measures of White racial identification. In this conceptualization, White racial identification represents the lexical proximity of the social category of the “White racial group” with the self-concept. The closer the association, the more an individuals’ White racial identification is interpreted to be central to their overall identity (Knowles & Peng, 2005). Based on this definition of White racial identification, these authors created a well validated measure called the White Identity Centrality Implicit Association Test to measure the degree of merging between an individual and the White ingroup. Indeed, they were able to demonstrate convergent validity through a comparison of White self-concept and White group concept as well as divergent validity with an implicit measure of White preference, a distinct concept, as well as an implicit measure of White identity centrality. Unfortunately, only one paper was found that utilized this measure of identity and will be discussed (Marshburn & Knowles, 2018).

For the past ten years, Aleksandra Cichocka and colleagues have been studying collective narcissism, which also has roots in Social Identity Theory (e.g., Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). This body of work considers group identity as one which is valued to various degrees and is protected to the extent that individuals vest esteem in this identity. They conceptualize a type of ingroup idealization in which individuals’ self-esteem is deeply tied to an inherently unstable ingroup e.g., national identity or in this case White identity. That is, Whiteness, which is inherently an illegitimate system, as race is socially constructed to benefit White people, rests on faulty foundations and is thus highly susceptible to threat. Therefore group-level narcissistic defenses are marshaled to protect the status of the group. Because the “greatness” of Whiteness is a fantasy, threats to it are

constant, and so defensiveness is easily provoked. Within this model, group-based aggression and hostility may be related to group-level self-esteem. Indeed, in a study of Americans, collective narcissism is associated with social dominance orientation, right wing authoritarianism, blind patriotism, ingroup identification, private collective self-esteem, unforgiveness, support for war, anti-Black antagonism, racial resentment, anti-Semitism, interpersonal aggression, and belief in conspiracy theories against the dominant ingroup (Cichocka, 2016; Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Golec de Zavala & Cichocka, 2012). Moreover, when group status threats are perceived by those in the dominant group, group member group members try to legitimize their advantages to counteract collective guilt and restore group pride (e.g., Harth et al., 2008).

Another useful definition of White racial identification conceptualizes it not only in terms of its centrality to one's self concept, but also in terms of the level of awareness of the meaning and social import of Whiteness itself (Goren & Plaut, 2012). Goren and Plaut asked White participants to describe what their ethnic/racial identity means to them and then coded their responses into one of three categories: *weakly identified* (e.g., "My racial identity does not play a large role in my life and is not something I think about"), *prideful* (e.g., "My race provides me with values and responsibilities and is an important part of who I am"), and *power-cognizant* (e.g., "I am aware of the ways in which my racial identity protects me from the harms of racism"). This categorization makes room for the fact that, if one does identify with their Whiteness, it can manifest in various ways. Based on this measure of White racial identification, White people who take pride in their racial identity tended to display the most negative outgroup attitudes (Goren &

Plaut, 2012). Importantly, both prideful and power-cognizant White people did not differ on a quantitative 4-item measure of White racial identification based on collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), suggesting that Whites may strongly identify as White but may differ markedly in the social and behavioral consequences of this identification.

Similarly, individuals can deny or distance themselves from their racial identity or identify with it in such a way that they are motivated to dismantle racial power structures (Knowles et al., 2014). Like the weakly identified and prideful identities, the denial and distancing identities are congruent with the “herd invisibility hypothesis” while the dismantle identity is more consistent with an anti-racist White identity, i.e., power-cognizant. However, they also posit the possibility that some White individuals who were socialized in a “color-blind” culture may genuinely be low in White racial identification. Their Whiteness is not invisible to them; they just don’t believe it matters.

More recent work related to White privilege awareness and systemic racism has utilized new, questionnaire-based, highly face valid measures that have not been rigorously empirically validated. Indeed, two of the most cited studies assessing both awareness of White privilege and White identification utilize the same five-item proprietary “White racial identification measure” which includes items such as “I am comfortable being White” and “I believe White people have a lot to be proud of.” Such items clearly conflate the various dimensions of White identity described in the previous paragraphs. However, using this simple, but largely unvalidated measure, White racial identification was found to moderate the relationship between White privilege awareness and racist attitudes such that stronger White identity predicted greater modern racism,

especially when thoughts of White privilege were evoked prior (Branscombe et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2012). Indeed, for White people who identified strongly with the White ingroup, a multiculturalism prime caused increases in SDO-group-based-dominance but not for those who did not identify strongly as White, further suggesting that threats to the racial status quo result in system-justifying tendencies (Morrison et al., 2010). Together, these studies suggest that, for those who do not explicitly identify strongly as White, awareness of privilege may be useful for decreasing racism. Such a finding is consistent with social identity theory: for those who are less vested in their ingroup identity as White, they have greater capacity to distance themselves from it enough to take a new perspective.

However, for those who do identify strongly and syntonically as White, privilege awareness is threatening and may cause them to be more defensive when confronted with White privilege. There are limitations to these findings due to the simplicity of the measure of White racial identification such as the fact that it does not capture the power-cognizant orientation to identity, thereby convoluting the findings. It is possible, for example, that the group of individuals who identify more strongly as White may be comprised of both the prideful and power-cognizant orientations, meaning there would be different reasons they might appear more defensive. For instance, for those with a power-cognizant orientation, they may appear “defensive” because their “racism” does not change if they are already aware of it.

Some research using implicit measures of White identity has also found that acute White privilege awareness was experienced as a threat to ingroup image and status and resulted in experiences of shame, embarrassment, and White guilt (Knowles & Peng,

2005). In this model, there are multiple types of threat to White identity, which each have different consequences (2014). Similar to the system justification perspective, one can see how White identity might be managed differently when Whiteness is perceived as a meritocratic threat. When White people interpret White privilege as a threat to their agency, effort, and deservingness, they manage their Whiteness through denial or distancing, but when they interpret White privilege as threatening to their group image and collective esteem, they manage this threat either through distancing themselves from their White identity or by attempting to dismantle the racial hierarchy. One study of over 1,000 White individuals found evidence that greater implicit White ingroup preference led to motivated disinterest in obtaining further information about White privilege and decreased desire to change White privilege in society (Conway et al., 2017). Essentially, this suggests that the more vested a White person is in their ingroup image and status, the more they defend the system when their group is threatened in some way.

Because these studies have not examined situationally acute awareness of White privilege and identity nor directly tested these various pathways, it leaves open the possibility that these discrepant findings may be related to the probability that White racial identification may be both situationally dependent (i.e., that individuals moderate how much they identify with the White ingroup based on whether they feel threatened) and also that more chronic White racial identification may affect proneness to disidentify from the social group. Indeed, some evidence does exist to this end. When White people expected a conversation about race with a Black person, their self-White association on and IAT decreased (Marshburn & Knowles, 2018). In a second study, the authors measured implicit self-White association after they had told the White participants that

they would not actually be having this interracial conversation, and their self-White associations “rebounded,” indicating a suppression of their social identity when they were anticipating this conversation. Consistent with this finding, some research even suggests that White people who live in racially diverse areas in the United States tend to believe race plays a less important role in people’s lives, suggesting that the presence of racial diversity may, counterintuitively, cause White people to distance themselves from this social identity (Croll, 2007). These studies lend credence to the social identity conceptualization of White racial identification.

The literature reviewed here on the role of White racial identification in willingness to engage with ideas related to White privilege generally suggests that it plays a powerful role. In line with the Social Identity Theory, the literature suggests White racial group identification plays a self-and group-esteem preserving role. From a psychodynamic perspective, one could consider the experience of Whiteness as serving a self-esteem-preserving function (Miller & Josephs, 2009). To this end, I will examine the role of psychological entitlement, a narcissistic defense that functions to bolster and protect self-worth and potentially as an antecedent of reactions of White fragility.

Psychological Entitlement

“White defensive grandiosity generates an unconscious need to omnipotently control black people, in fantasy and in reality, so that black people can readily serve as the passive receptacles of the repudiated wishes and fears of white people.”

– Arianne E. Miller & Lawrence Josephs (2009, p. 98)

A third as yet untested factor that would likely affect the defensive reaction to acute White privilege awareness is psychological entitlement, a stable personality trait (Campbell et al., 2004). Entitlement is related and part of, but distinct from narcissism, a defensive characterological position that functions to protect self-esteem in the face of threats to the self and the group (Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013; Campbell et al., 2004; Lange et al., 2018). Entitlement does not reflect a sense of earned deservingness, e.g., “I deserve an A on this paper because I worked hard, did my best, and my professor thought it was well done,” but instead entails an inherent sense of entitlement that is independent of the situation. Entitlement in this context can also be decomposed into two constructs: entitlement and deservingness. Deservingness entails the “the expectation of a reward in exchange for one’s own efforts or character, whereas entitlement typically reflects the expectation of a reward as a result of a social contract” (Adelman, 2013, p. 59). It is often associated with a lack of empathy and a proneness toward aggression and violence in the face of threats to self-esteem (e.g., Reidy et al., 2008).

If the defensive function of psychological entitlement is self-esteem preservation, it makes sense that it may help to assuage the guilt that arises following awareness of unearned White privilege. The motivating function of this guilt may be “the redemption of innocence, the reestablishment of feeling good about oneself” i.e., the recuperation of self-esteem when faced with doubt (Steele, 1990, p. 501). White fragility can be seen as a *performance* of invulnerability i.e. a denial of vulnerability, weakness or changeableness (Applebaum, 2017). That is, the performance of invulnerability is defensive and inherently shuts down the capacity for White people to be moved; in essence, they may become psychologically removed (i.e., distanced) in their attempts to save face and

maintain their sense of esteem, rather than open themselves up or make themselves vulnerable to hearing the perspective of the victims of Whiteness or acknowledging the role of Whiteness in providing them an illegitimate advantage in meritocratic culture.

In line with its proposed defensive function, some research does suggest that entitlement leads to greater system-justifying beliefs, specifically among higher status individuals, and even more so when system justification motivation was primed with meritocratic content (O'Brien et al., 2012). If psychological entitlement is a dynamic process that protects one's sense of self-esteem, perhaps this finding represents a group-status analog wherein individuals who experience themselves as more entitled – a narcissistic process – have more fragile self-esteem and are therefore more sensitive to threats to their group's status. High status individuals, who experience themselves as entitled to their (unearned) status, also may feel they have more to lose. Thus, system justification may function via narcissistic system-enhancement when vested system members' sense of system-based identity are threatened. Indeed, a core aspect of entitlement is the belief that one is *inherently* deserving, regardless of merit (Redford & Ratliff, 2018), a proposition that is core to defending against the dissonance evoked by awareness of unearned privilege (Moeller et al., 2009) and the invisibility of Whiteness.

Although less empirical work has been conducted pertaining to racial privilege specifically, more research exists as it relates to other kinds of privilege such as class and male privilege, which are analogous narcissistically defended phenomena that preserve systems of oppression. Psychological entitlement has been shown to increase with subjective social class (Piff, 2014) and has been linked to prejudice toward immigrants and Black people (Hodson et al., 2009). Similar to the process of herd invisibility,

psychological entitlement has also been positively associated, in both undergraduate and an MTurk samples, with ambivalent sexism, an analogous set of beliefs to color-blind racism that characterizes women as the “fairer sex” or as “better suited” to feminine work/roles (Grubbs et al., 2014; Keiller, 2010). Another study of undergraduates also found that, among males, psychological entitlement was significantly predictive of prejudice toward gays and lesbians, Blacks, and opposition to gender equality (Anastasio & Rose, 2014). Furthermore, these authors found that psychological entitlement was negatively predictive of favorability of competitive outgroups but not toward non-competitive outgroups, further indicating the role of the self and the function of entitlement toward self-esteem preservation. In fact, entitlement was unrelated to ingroup identification or favoritism, suggesting that entitlement is more than just self-centeredness but in fact a general propensity for devaluation of others and an associated decrease in the capacity for vulnerability, consistent with theories of narcissistic defense (Anastasio & Rose, 2014). To this end, Schnieders and Gore found that narcissistic entitlement was associated with prejudice toward immigrants (2011).

Psychological entitlement is key to narcissistic defenses. Experimental data exists suggesting that if self-esteem is managed, the negative consequences of entitlement can be, to some extent, mitigated. For example, when self-esteem is affirmed, individuals are *less* threatened, are better able to recognize White privilege, and are more supportive of redistributive policy (Lowery et al., 2007). In a predominantly White MTurk sample, when egalitarian values were induced, it caused participants to perceive themselves as less privileged, which was related to greater support for redistributive policy (Piff, 2014).

Thus, it seems a virtual certainty that Whites' sense of entitlement is at least partially responsible for defense and denial of their White privilege.

Chapter III: Statement of the Problem

Given immense extant racial inequality in America and the proliferation of color-blind racism, it is somewhat remarkable that there continues to be a relative paucity of research on White Privilege awareness in the general White public (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Leach et al., 2002). What research does exist has largely been conducted in the context of training multiculturally competent White counselors (Sue & Sue, 2012). When White privilege has been studied, the findings have been somewhat equivocal. In line with system justification research, some studies suggest that, when confronted with unearned White privilege, White individuals become defensive, exhibiting *increased* prejudice and support for the racist status quo (e.g., Branscombe et al., 2007; Murdoch & McAloney-Kocaman, 2019; Phillips & Lowery, 2015) although other studies have found acutely induced privilege awareness to decrease prejudice (e.g., Powell et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2012).

These mixed findings about the relationship between White Privilege Awareness and racial attitudes suggest there are certain circumstances in which certain individuals for whom awareness of White Privilege leads to egalitarian responses and other cases in which it leads to colorblind attitudes and defensive reactions. Some research suggests that those who strongly identify as White are prone to more defensive reactions via increased prejudice and defense of the systemic racial hierarchy (e.g., Branscombe et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2012). However, White racial identification is more complicated than simply strong or weak identification dimensions utilized in these studies. “Strong” identification is comprised of “prideful” and “power-cognizant individuals (Goren &

Plaut, 2012). As such, it is vitally important to elucidate the nature of the type of racial identification with its effect on White privilege defensiveness.

Other research has suggested that White guilt mediates the relationship between White privilege awareness and defensive reactions (e.g., Powell et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2012). Guilt around awareness of White privilege could be defended against through narcissistic processes such as entitlement (Brunell et al., 2011), although this has not yet been demonstrated in the empirical examination of White privilege. Additionally, some literature exists suggesting that another personality trait, social dominance orientation and anti-egalitarianism, is linked with unwillingness to confront White privilege (e.g., Pinterits et al., 2009).

Finally, the process of defense against White privilege, known as White fragility, should be conceptualized within system justification theory. In this theory, a great deal of empirical evidence exists suggesting that individuals defend against threats to themselves, their group, and the system at large with increased support for the status quo, in this case, extant racial inequality. Individuals high in system justification motivation tend to believe that status in America is earned meritocratically, and therefore so is *their* status (Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003; McCoy & Major, 2007). Therefore, they would tend to react defensively because they perceive the existence of White privilege as a direct threat to their belief that they have earned their lot. In the present framework, this denial is defensive, and causes White individuals to double down via *increased* regard for the racial status quo as fair, just, and good (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014b; Wetts & Willer, 2018).

Thus, the thrust of the present research will build on the foregoing studies in several ways. Firstly, we will seek to empirically validate White Fragility as a system justifying process. That is, we will examine the hypothesis that White people become defensive regarding their meritocratic worth when confronted with evidence of their illegitimate White privilege *because* they are highly motivated to defend the American system as fair and just. Second, the mixed findings as to the consequences of making White people aware of their White privilege suggest there are likely moderating factors that explain why some individuals tend to become more defensive than others. In attempting to identify these factors, we will test the hypotheses that individuals who identify more strongly as White, who are higher in psychological entitlement, and who value hierarchy and dominance to greater extents will tend to get more defensive when presented with evidence of White privilege and systemic racial inequality.

Variable List

Independent Variable. Manipulation of acutely induced White privilege awareness. White privilege awareness will be induced through the use of a manipulation created based on system threat induction studies (see Jost et al., 2015, for a review). The manipulation itself can be found in Appendix 1.

Dependent Variables. Dependent variables include: color-blind racism (measured using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; Neville et al., 2000), support for the racial status quo (measured using the Race-Specific System Justification Scale; Saunders et al., 2019), racial prejudice (measured using the Evaluative Bias Scale; Wolsko et al., 2006), support for federal affirmative action (measured using a set of ten items used by Kugler et al., 2010), and support for reparations for slavery.

Moderating Variables. Moderating variables include: White racial identification (measured using the Branscombe and colleagues' White Racial Identification Scale (Branscombe et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2012), social dominance orientation (measured using the SDO₇ Scale; Ho et al., 2015), psychological entitlement (measured using the Psychological Entitlement Scale; Campbell et al., 2004), collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

Covariates. Covariates include gender (measured using a single item), perceived social class (measured using the Subjective Social Class Ladder; Adler et al., 2000), and objective social class (measured using a single-item measure of familial and individual wealth).

Exploratory Variables. Exploratory variables include implicit affect (measured using the Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test (Quirin et al., 2009), explicit affect (Crawford & Henry, 2004), age (measured using a single item), the Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult; Knowles & Peng, 2005; Worrell et al., 2017) and White Racial Affect (Grzanka et al., 2020).

Hypotheses

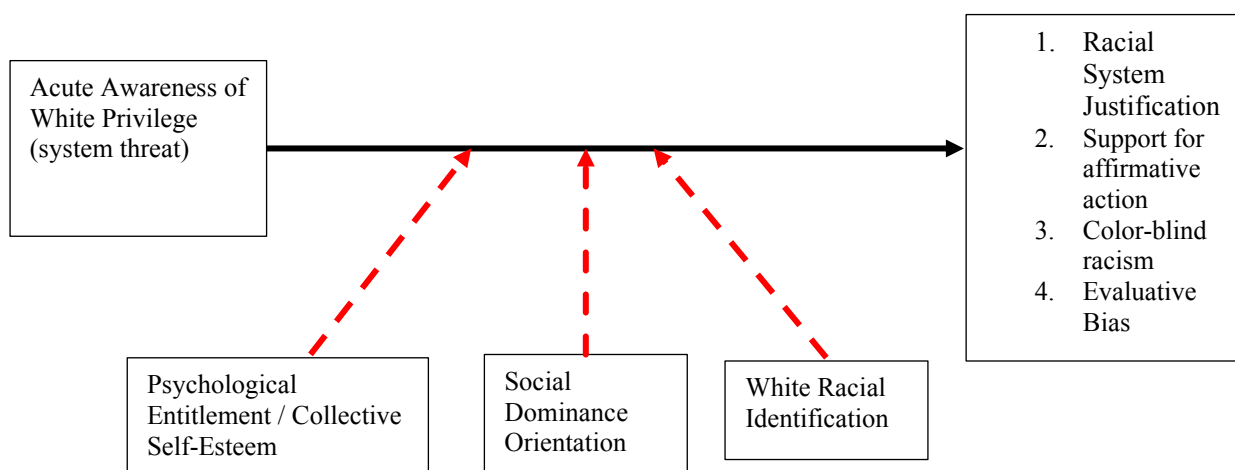
1. System Justification Theory suggests that when individuals' meritocratic status, group image, or system esteem are threatened, they would respond defensively to protect these sources of esteem and the systems that uphold them. Work in motivated social cognition suggest that White people respond to status threat by defending the systems in which their status is situated (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; 2014b; Wetts & Willer, 2018). In the present study, defending the system as color-blind and racially just, as well as the denial of a need for affirmative action would constitute evidence of a

- defensive reaction. Thus, in this study, we hypothesized that White adult individuals who are made acutely aware of White privilege (WP condition) would endorse greater color-blind racism, racial prejudice, and support for the racial status quo to significantly *greater* degrees and support federal affirmative action significantly *less* than those in the control condition.
2. However, we hypothesized these effects would be significantly moderated by individual differences. As in Branscombe et al.'s 2007 paper, we predicted that the defensive consequences of acute awareness of White privilege would be greater for those whose self-concept is strongly associated with the White racial group on an explicit level. Similarly, research on social dominance orientation predicts that individuals who believe in and value the social hierarchy and are more anti-egalitarianism tend to react more strongly to system threat so would tend to exhibit greater defensive reactions than those low in SDO (e.g., Chow & Knowles, 2016). Lastly, the empirical investigation of psychological entitlement indicates that more entitled individuals tend to also respond more defensively to system threat than less entitled individuals (e.g., O'Brien et al., 2012). Therefore, we hypothesized that the effects investigated in Hypothesis #1 would differ based on an individual's degree of White racial identification, social dominance orientation, and psychological entitlement. Specifically, those with *higher* White racial identification, social dominance orientation, and psychological entitlement would exhibit the patterns of attitudes in Hypothesis #1 *more strongly* than those who are less racially identified and lower in social dominance orientation and psychological entitlement (See Figure

1 for hypothetical model). Essentially, these moderators were meant to ascertain which “types” of participants are more or less defensive.

Figure 1

Theoretical moderation model of hypotheses



Note: Solid lines indicate direct effects. Dashed red lines indicate moderated effects.

Chapter IV: Method

Participants

Participants were recruited online using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. Additionally, this study made use of TurkPrime, which added additional security such as an IP address and geolocation checker, as well as additional layers of verification for ensuring participant qualifications such as inclusion criteria (Litman et al., 2017). The study itself was hosted on Qualtrics, a survey platform that produced a unique "completion code" that participants used in order to receive payment for their services through MTurk. The study was divided into two parts to ensure that the proposed moderators are unaffected by the experimental manipulation (see Appendix 2 for schematic of measures in each part). Participants were paid the equivalent of \$10/hour for their participation, thus complying with generally accepted ethical standards. Part 1 was estimated to take 10 minutes and participants were paid \$1.75. Part 2 was estimated to take 15 minutes and participants were paid \$3.00 for their participation. Based in part on a G* Power analysis (Faul et al., 2014) of small effect sized findings (e.g., the pilot study for the present project) with four predictors and review of similar research in the system justification literature, 500 participants were recruited, 250 for each condition, a conservative estimate given that some participants data would not be used following data cleaning of failed attention checks and IP address hacking. Inclusion criteria necessitated that participants self-identify their race as White or Caucasian, they be American citizens, be over 18 years of age, and that they have achieved a 95 percent job acceptance rate to help ensure high quality responses.

Materials

Experimental Manipulation. Acute awareness of White privilege was manipulated. Based on previous studies of system threat within the system justification literature (see Jost et al., 2015, for a review), two pilot studies were created and run in order to ascertain and verify the efficacy of a manipulation. Both will be briefly summarized to provide rationale for use of the second for final data collection.

The first pilot study combined methodology from Phillips and Lowery's (2015) and Branscombe et al.'s (2007) studies. In it, 50 participants read a detailed paragraph exploring agreement among social scientists about the reality of White privilege and the various ways it manifests in society. Participants were then asked to generate a list of at least two ways in which White people have benefitted from White privilege in America. In the control condition, 50 participants read a paragraph about chairs and were asked to generate a list of at least two different types of chairs they could think of. As a data quality measure and a manipulation check, two independent coders checked that the task was completed, and reasonably appropriate items were generated. Analysis of this manipulation indicated no significant differences in primary dependent variables – Racial System Justification and Colorblind Racism – between experimental and control conditions. It was concluded that the demand characteristics elicited by the paragraph and task may have led participants to endorse responses they deemed more desirable by the experimenter. We also concluded that it was likely the manipulation was not sufficiently specific in targeting individual level defenses, and instead likely triggered a host of defenses at various levels including group and system.

In an attempt to minimize the impact of demand characteristics, the system justification literature on threat primes was thoroughly reviewed and the manipulation revised. In the second iteration of the pilot, 30 participants read a short paragraph detailing agreement among social scientists about the reality of White privilege and the fact that awareness of White privilege among many Americans has done little to ameliorate the deleterious effects it has on racial inequality. The paragraph was specifically designed to target threat at the group and systemic levels in accordance with the theory of motivated social cognition. A second version of the experimental condition was included and was identical but also included a text box in which 30 participants were instructed to “write about ways in which society is systematically set up so that White people are unfairly privileged and non-White people are unfairly disadvantaged.” In the control condition, 30 participants read a paragraph about chairs. As a manipulation check, participants were asked a simple multiple-choice question about the topic of the paragraph. All participants successfully completed the manipulation check question. See Appendix for full procedure.

In the version where there was no writing component, both racial system justification ($t(59) = 3.15, p < .01$) and unawareness of racial privilege ($t(58) = -.93, p < .05$) were significantly higher in the experimental condition compared with the control, as hypothesized. Moreover, consistent with the broader literature on system justification, there was a significant conservative shift in terms of political and economic issues in the experimental compared with the control condition ($t(59) = 2.27, 2.56, p < .05$). Therefore, this version of the experimental manipulation, which did *not* include the writing task was implemented for the full study (see Appendix 1 for the task itself).

Filler Task: Following the completion of the manipulation, participants either completed (due to randomization) a measure of implicit affect, the Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test (IPANAT, see Appendix 4 for scale items; Quirin et al., 2009) or explicit affect, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; (Watson et al., 1988).

The IPANAT asks participants to read a series of six nonsense words (e.g., “SAFME”). After they read each word, they were asked to assess how well each of six emotions words “fit” what the nonsense word meant (three positive and three negative emotion words). As a projective measure, the test assesses the presence of implicit positive and negative affect, the assumption being that individuals tend to attribute more negative emotions to words if they are in a negative affective state compared to if they are in a neutral or positive affect state. Calculation of mean scores entailed first finding means of each of the six emotions (happy, helpless, energetic, tense, cheerful, and inhibited) for the nonsense words. Next, means were calculated for each of the three positive words, and each of the three negative words. In the present sample, internal consistency was demonstrated for both positive ($\alpha = .90$) and negative implicit affect ($\alpha = .64$). See Table 1 for summary of all measure reliabilities, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis.

The positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS) is a 20-item, five-point Likert scale measure that asks participants to rate the degree to which they feel twenty different emotions, from which positive and negative activation subscales were calculated (for full measure, see Appendix 3). It has been validated in its ability to distinguish clinical

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Study Measures

Scale	Alpha	Mean (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis (Excess)
Part I				
SDO Combined	.937	2.40 (1.22)	0.78	-0.05
SDO Anti-Egalitarianism	.907	2.55 (1.39)	0.75	-0.19
SDO Dominance	.890	2.25 (1.22)	0.87	-0.02
White Racial Identification	.886	5.24 (1.14)	0.67	0.54
Psychological Entitlement	.887	3.14 (1.10)	0.19	-0.06
Collective Self-Esteem-Race				
CSE Overall	.869	4.62 (0.87)	0.13	-0.30
CSE-Membership Self-Esteem	.683	5.06 (1.01)	-0.17	-0.52
CSE – Private CSE	.846	5.24 (1.22)	-0.52	-0.24
CSE- Public CSE	.749	4.93 (1.05)	-0.39	0.03
CSE – Importance to Identity	.836	3.25 (1.41)	0.32	-0.43
CERIS				
Assimilation	.864	5.47 (1.27)	-0.97	0.74
Miseducation (after deleting item 18)	.776	3.98 (1.26)	-0.28	-0.01
Self-Hatred	.888	2.64 (1.50)	0.65	-0.69
Anti-Dominant (log)	.805	0.23 (0.21)	0.54	-0.77
Ethnocentricity	.715	3.29 (1.14)	-0.01	-0.49
Multiculturalist Inclusive	.831	5.22 (1.2)	-0.80	0.53
Ethnic-Racial Salience (log)	.781	0.36 (0.20)	-0.13	-0.63
Part II				
Implicit Positive Affect	.904	1.87 (0.44)	0.30	0.14
Implicit Negative Affect	.640	1.74 (0.42)	0.67	1.07
Racial System Justification	.874	63.97 (22.89)	0.00	-0.83
Evaluative Bias	.854	2.92 (1.27)	0.59	0.14
WRAS – Guilt	.835	3.34 (1.00)	-0.44	-0.60
WRAS – Shame (log)	.696	0.19 (0.18)	0.51	-0.94
WRAS – Negation	.801	2.38 (0.91)	0.30	-0.76
COBRAS Overall	.946	3.07 (1.31)	0.12	-0.85
COBRAS Unawareness of Racial Privilege	.894	3.45 (1.29)	0.032	-0.87
COBRAS Unawareness of Institutional Discrimination	.862	3.18 (1.24)	0.10	-0.84
COBRAS Unawareness of Blatant Racial Issues	.865	2.51 (1.15)	0.48	-0.67
Federal Affirmative Action	.865	4.39 (1.21)	-0.22	-0.55

depression from anxiety (Dyck et al., 1994; Jolly et al., 1994). It has been extensively psychometrically validated as well as validated for concurrent and divergent validity (Crawford & Henry, 2004). The present sample of participants used both subscale with excellent reliability ($\alpha = .91-.92$).

The use of these measures served two functions. First, they allowed for a novel, exploratory test of the hypothesis that individuals will experience more negative emotions (e.g., guilt) when confronted with their White privilege. Second, because the IPANAT is an implicit measure, participants were less likely to draw a connection between the experimental manipulation and the subsequent dependent measures. Finally, it allowed for an exploration of the extent to which individuals may or may not be aware of the emotions that arise from awareness of White privilege.

White racial identification. White racial identification was measured in in two ways. Primarily, it was measured using Branscombe and colleagues' White racial identification measure (See Appendix 5 for items; Branscombe et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2012). An example item is, "I am comfortable being white." In these studies, White racial identification was associated with higher prejudice toward African Americans, modern racism, and political conservatism, and moderated the relationship between White privilege awareness and (1) prejudice and (2) modern racism. Because the present study constitutes a partial replication of these studies, this measure was used as the primary racial identification measure. After reverse coding appropriately, in the present sample, the measure demonstrated very good internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$).

However, because this measure was only used in these two studies, another measure was included as well to provide concurrent validity and support exploratory post

hoc analyses. Recently, Worrell et al. built on decades of work on racial identity and updated the Cross Racial Identity Scale to include ethnic identity, creating the Cross Ethnic-Racial Identity Scale-Adult (CERIS-A, see Appendix 6 for items; Worrell et al., 2017). The entire scale contains 29 items and measures seven aspects of identity. Sixteen items will be included that measure: (1) degree of assimilation into American culture, i.e., American-centric outlook (items such as: “I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American”), (2) miseducation, i.e., endorsement of ingroup stereotypes (items such as: “people should relax about being too politically correct because some stereotypes about our group are true”), (3) self-hatred (items such as: “I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my group”), (4) ethnic-racial salience, i.e., a measure of the degree to which an individual tends to see race/ethnicity in everyday life (items such as “During a typical week in my life, I think about ethnic and cultural issues many time”), (5) anti-dominance, i.e., antipathy toward the dominant racial group i.e., White people (items such as, “I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for the majority culture), (6) ethnocentricity i.e., belief in the importance of one’s ethnicity informing daily behavior and attitudes (items such as “We will never be whole until we accept our ethnic/racial heritage”), and (7) multiculturalist inclusive (items such as, “I believe it is important to have both an ethnic identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Whites, Jews, gays and lesbians, American Indians, etc.).”). This fourth construct, ethnic-racial salience is likely most closely related to the construct presented here of White racial identification. A mean score for each subscale was computed for analysis, as was done by

scale authors. In the present sample, all subscales demonstrated good to very good internal consistency ($\alpha = .72-.89$).

Social dominance orientation. Social dominance orientation was measured using the psychometrically re-validated SDO₇ Scale, a 16-item self-report measure with two factors: anti-egalitarianism and group-based dominance (See Appendix 7 for items; Ho et al., 2015). The items utilize a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly oppose” to “strong favor.” A sample item for anti-egalitarianism is, “It is unjust to try to make groups equal,” and a sample item for dominance is, “An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom.” As in Ho’s work, a mean score was computed for analysis after recoding eight items requiring reverse scoring (Ho et al., 2015). In six samples of over 1,500 White participants recruited online from several sources including MTurk, SDO₇ was extensively evaluated for criterion validity. It was significantly associated with old-fashioned racism, nationalism, support for immigrant persecution, support for war and its legitimacy, support for the torture, and militarism. In addition, it was significantly associated with several relevant ideologies such as political conservatism, system justification, and unequal distribution of university resources. In the present sample, the measure was used very highly reliably ($\alpha = .89-.94$).

Psychological entitlement. Psychological entitlement was measured on the individual and group levels. On the individual level it was measured using the Psychological Entitlement Scale, a nine-item self-report measure with a single factor structure seven-point Likert items ranging from “strong disagreement” to “strong agreement” (See Appendix 8 for items; Campbell et al., 2004). One sample item reads, “Things should go my way.” A mean score was computed for analysis, as has been

precedent in previous work. The scale was extensively studied for criterion validity and longitudinal stability. It was significantly associated with self-esteem, narcissism, authority, exhibitionism, the entitlement subscale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), exploitative, vanity, and a self-focus on the Me-versus-Other Scale. Additionally, one might wonder why the NPI's entitlement subscale will not be used; to this end, substantial discriminant validity research has been conducted and generally indicates that the NPI is more useful for capturing personality pathology but less useful for understanding higher functioning individuals (see Pryor et al., 2008 for a review). The present sample used the measure with a very high degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$).

Secondarily, collective self-esteem was measured using the Collective Self-Esteem Scale – Race-Specific Version (CSE-R, see Appendix 9 for items; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The measure is a sixteen-item self-report that uses a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” and containing items such as, “I am a worthy member of my race/ethnic group.” The scale is comprised of four subscales: (1) membership self-esteem (how good one feels about their group membership and group contribution); (2) private self-esteem (personal feelings toward being a member of the group); (3) public self-esteem (beliefs about how non-group members feel about the group); (4) identity self-esteem (how group membership impacts one's self-esteem). A mean score for each subscale was computed for analysis. The measure and its subscales demonstrated adequate internal consistency in this sample ($\alpha = .75-.89$) with the exception that one subscale, Membership Self-Esteem, demonstrated moderate-low reliability and was omitted from analyses for this reason ($\alpha = .68$).

Dependent Measures

Color-blind ideology. Color-blind racism was measured using the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (COBRAS; Neville et al., 2000). The measure is a 20-item self-report that uses a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” and contains items such as “It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American” and reverse coded items such as “Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.” A mean score was computed for analysis, as has been done by study authors. Evidence for convergent validity in White adult samples lies in significant positive correlations with racial fear and significant negative correlations with White guilt, insensitivity to racial discrimination, and anger and sadness about the existence of racism (Apfelbaum et al., 2012; Neville et al., 2000). Divergent validity also exists in so far as White people generally tend to endorse colorblind ideology to a greater extent than people of color (Manning et al., 2015). Predictive validity has also been indicated by such findings as colorblind ideology being predictive of White people proclivity to ignore microaggressions (Tynes & Markoe, 2010). The current sample used the measure with a very high degree of reliability for all subscales ($\alpha = .86-.95$).

Evaluative bias. Evaluative bias toward Black people was measured using the Evaluative Bias Scale, a six-item self-report measure that is rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” and includes items such as

“I would prefer to live in a neighborhood with people of my same ethnic origin” (See Appendix 11 for items; Wolsko et al., 2006). The scale evidenced acceptable convergent validity, as it was significantly correlated with beliefs that non-Whites should assimilate and negatively correlated with belief in the value of multiculturalism. The present sample used the measure with a high degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$)

Racial system justification. Support for the racial status quo was measured using a recently developed instrument called the Racial System Justification Scale (RSJ, see Appendix 12 for items; Saunders et al., in preparation). The measure is a 16-item self-report that uses a 9-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” A sum score was computed for analysis. One sample item is: “In America, different racial groups deserve to be where they are.” In three different samples of over five hundred total participants including undergraduates and MTurk workers, RSJ has been found to be associated with racial resentment, general system justification, political conservatism, support for Black Lives Matter (negatively), All Lives Matter, the Muslim ban, as well as epistemic needs, authoritarianism, and White racial salience. When only White participants were examined, these relationships remained significant and were often even more pronounced. In the present study, participants used the measure with a high degree of reliability ($\alpha = .87$).

Sociopolitical attitudes. Support for federal involvement in affirmative action (FAA; see Appendix 13 for items) was measured using the mean of ten seven-point Likert items taken from Kugler and colleagues work on social dominance (Kugler et al., 2010). When taken together, these items formed a scale with adequate reliability once item six was deleted ($\alpha = .87$).

Additionally, participants completed a number of single item Likert scale questions pertaining to their support for social movements such as All Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter, toward the degree to which the country is on a positive trajectory, support for President Trump, how fair they believe the criminal justice system is, feelings toward undocumented immigrants and DACA, support for building a wall on the Mexican border, support for family separation policy, the Muslim Ban, belief in global warming as well as attitudes toward certain social figures such as Colin Kaepernick (see Appendix for exact items and wording). Additionally, ideology was measured using three separate seven-point Likert items inquiring about political, social, and economic ideology on a liberal to conservative scale.

Finally, subjective social class was measured with a single item in which individuals ranked themselves on a “ladder” (see Appendix 14 for items; Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000). During piloting, this subjective social class measure was significantly affected by the manipulation, so it was therefore be including as an exploratory dependent variable.

White guilt, shame, and negation. White guilt, shame, and negation were measured using the White Racial Affect Scale (WRAS, see Appendix 15 for items; Grzanka et al., 2020). The measure is comprised of six different scenarios involving race relations in America. After a participant reads each one, they answer a series of three questions measuring the degree to which they feel White guilt, White shame, or deny the racial component of the scenario. White guilt and negation were used highly reliably ($\alpha = .84$ and $.80$ respectively), while White shame only demonstrated moderate reliability ($\alpha = .70$).

Covariates. Using a standard demographic measure from this lab, gender, sexual orientation, age, and objective social class was assessed (Saunders et al., in preparation). Gender was assessed using a forced choice format item with choices including: female, male, non-binary/third gender, genderqueer, prefer to self-describe (with a space for participants to fill in their preferred gender identity). Objective social class was measured using a forced choice indicator of individual and familial wealth. Of these, age and gender were specified as a priori covariates.

Attention check. Based on Curran’s article (2016) on attention check methodology, a total of nine attention check items were interspersed throughout the different scales at locations selected purposively through research team collaboration. They were equally distributed throughout the questionnaire. Example items are “I am paid biweekly by leprechauns” and “Please select agree.” Participants were required to pass a minimum of two thirds of attention checks for inclusion in final dataset.

Procedure

Amazon MTurk workers who identified as White and were U.S. citizens with greater than 95 percent acceptance rate on MTurk were eligible for Part I of the study and were redirected to the Qualtrics study, where they first completed an informed consent followed by the study measures (see Appendix 2 for study schematic). After their completion code for MTurk was cross-referenced with that randomly generated by Qualtrics, participants were compensated for their participation. Six days after participants completed Part I, they were emailed an invitation to complete Part 2. Emails were sent out each morning as more participants surpassed the six-day mark. If a participant did not complete Part II, they were retained in the daily emails until either

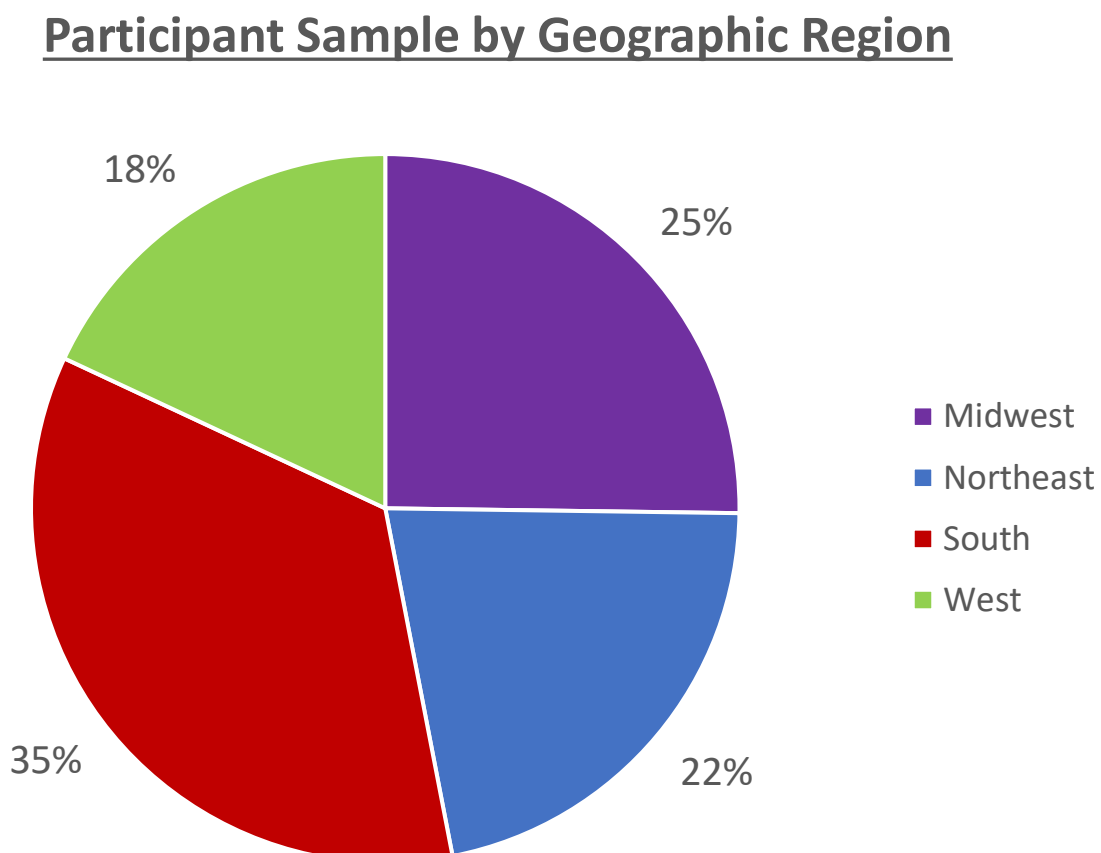
they completed Part II, or the study was taken down. In Part II, participants were randomly assigned to either the acute White privilege or control conditions and completed the manipulation task. Next, they completed the filler task followed by the dependent measures. Following completion of these measures, participants were compensated via the same mechanism as in Part I.

Chapter V: Results

Preliminary Analyses

Data Cleaning. A total of 537 participants completed Part 1 (i.e., the moderators and demographic variables) while 477 participants completed both parts of the study (See Table 1 for schematic outline of study scales). All participants who completed the manipulation section passed the manipulation check question asking them the main idea of the short paragraph they read (either white privilege or chairs). Analysis of attention checks indicated that 98.5% of participants passed four of six attention checks in Part 1 while 97.2% of participants passed two of three attention checks in Part 2. Seventeen participants who failed two thirds of attention checks were removed from the final dataset. Additionally, IP addresses were checked using an external web utility and it was verified that all computers were located within the domestic United States, consistent with participant self-report. Following these preliminary data cleaning procedures, 460 participants remained. All subsequent analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 26.0 and Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018).

Participants. The sample was predominantly female (57.6%), and two participants identified as nonbinary/genderqueer. The age of the sample ranged from 18 to 76, averaging 37.93 years old ($SD = 12.45$). The mode for annual combined household income was \$60-\$75,000, with 51% of the sample earning less than \$60,000 per year. Approximately 11% of the sample earns more than \$125,000 per year while 10% of the sample earns less than \$20,000 per year. Seventy percent of the sample own the home in which they live. Geographically, the sample is quite diverse and there was roughly national representation from each region (see Figure 2). In terms of education level, 32%

Figure 2*Participant Sample by Geographic Region*

of the sample had no college degree while 17% have a masters or doctoral level degree, indicating a wide range of education. The sample is also ideologically diverse with nearly 20% indicating they were centrist (a score of 4 on a 1-7 Likert Scale), 45% leaning liberal and 35% leaning conservative. The mean (and standard deviation) for political, social, and economic ideology, on the seven-point Likert scale are as follows: 3.71 (1.79), 3.42 (1.86), and 4.05 (1.85).

Missing Data and Normality Analyses. Next, analysis of missing data was conducted by running descriptive statistics for primary study variables and examining number of missing datapoints for each item. It was determined that there was just one participant for whom data was missing for a number of study variables. Because so little data was missing from the dataset, the participant was retained for subsequent analyses but excluded from analyses for which their data was missing. Normality was initially assessed by skewness and kurtosis analysis, which revealed no scales that violated assumptions of normal distribution, according to Kim's criteria of absolute skewness values of 2 and excess kurtosis values of 3 (Kim, 2013). Additionally, visual analysis of Normal Q-Q plots of all primary study variables suggested normality, as approximately equal data lay above and below the derived expected value line. However, visual inspection of histograms indicated potentially problematic skewness in the positive direction for the Anti-Dominant (AD) subscale of the CERIS (skewness = 1.44), the Shame subscale of the White Racial Affect Scale (skewness = 1.137), and the Negative Activation subscale of the PANAS (skewness = 1.63). Additionally, skewness (0.96) and kurtosis (1.08) were suboptimal for the Ethnic-Racial Salience subscale of the CERIS. Inverse transformations were attempted and, with one exception (Negative Activation),

although skewness was substantially improved, kurtosis increased dramatically, and these transformations were not retained in data analysis. However, for the Negative Activation subscale of the PANAS, when an inverse transformation was applied, both skewness and kurtosis were dramatically improved to values of -0.45 and -1.09 respectively.

Logarithmic transformation was effective in improving skewness for the Anti-Dominance subscale of the CERIS and the Shame subscale of the WRAS to values of 0.54 and 0.51 respectively without having such a detrimental impact on kurtosis. Additionally, for the Ethnic Racial Salience subscale of the CERIS, skewness was reduced to -0.13 and kurtosis to -0.63. As such, these transformations were retained for subsequent analyses. Although a number of outliers were detected across many scales, they were retained in the dataset because they were determined to constitute true measures of that individual's placement in the construct. General descriptives and reliabilities are summarized in Table 1 above.

Manipulation of Affect. Both implicit and explicit affect changes were measured following the manipulation itself to determine whether individuals were emotionally affected by the manipulation. To reiterate, they were first administered an implicit affect measure (the IPANAT), which lacks face validity, followed by the PANAS, which is an explicit measure of the extent to which individuals are feeling various emotions. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to ascertain differences in positive and negative affect across the two conditions. Although no significant differences were found in either implicit positive ($t(458) = 0.33, p = .74$) or negative ($t(458) = -0.82, p = .41$) affect between the control and experimental conditions, several significant differences were found on the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS). On a broad level,

participants in the experimental condition reported significantly greater negative affect, $t(458) = 3.84$, Cohen's $d = 0.36$, $p < .001$, compared with the control condition. More specifically, greater shame ($t(458) = -3.69$, Cohen's $d = 0.34$, $p < .001$), irritability ($t(458) = -2.42$, Cohen's $d = 0.23$, $p < .001$), and guilt ($t(458) = -3.86$, Cohen's $d = 0.36$, $p < .001$), subscales of the measure, affect. See Table 2 for a summary.

Covariates. Participant age and gender were tested as possible covariates, as hypothesized. To evaluate the relationship between age and primary dependent variables (racial system justification, colorblind racism, evaluative bias, and support for federal affirmative action), bivariate correlations were conducted. Indeed, there were significant correlations across three comparisons in the hypothesized directions: the older the participant, the more they tended to endorse colorblind racism ($r(456) = .19$), racial system justification ($r(456) = .18$), and evaluative bias ($r(456) = .14$). Similarly, older participants tended to oppose federal affirmative action, though this association was not significant ($r(456) = -0.09$). Because so few participants identified as trans/non-binary or other, they were eliminated from the analysis. With regard to gender, significant differences were found between men and women in terms of racial system justification ($F(1,455) = 4.20$, $p = .04$) and evaluative bias ($F(1,455) = 4.51$, $p = .03$) wherein men tended to endorse higher race-specific system justification and evaluative bias. Indeed, they also endorsed higher color-blind racism and lower support for affirmative action, as hypothesized, though these associations were not statistically significant. Based on these covariate analyses, age will be included as a covariate in analyses involving racial system justification, colorblind racial attitudes and evaluative bias, and gender will be used as a

Table 2*Differences in Affect Across Conditions*

	Control (<i>n</i> = 227)		White Privilege (<i>n</i> = 233)		<i>t</i> (458)	<i>p</i>
Implicit	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Negative	1.72	0.39	1.75	0.44	-0.82	.413
Positive	1.88	0.45	1.86	0.43	0.32	.744
Explicit						
Positive	27.77	8.77	26.45	8.55	1.64	.103
Negative	14.20	5.82	16.29	7.06	-3.47	.001
Guilty	1.21	0.56	1.48	0.90	-3.88	.000
Irritable	1.68	0.93	1.91	1.08	-2.42	.016
Ashamed	1.17	0.51	1.41	0.84	-3.71	.000

Note: bold font indicates significance.

covariate for analyses involving racial system justification and evaluative bias. No covariates will be included for analyses involving support for federal affirmative action.

Primary Analyses

To evaluate the first hypothesis, that participants who were exposed to White Privilege will defensively respond with increased racial prejudice, colorblind racism, support for the racial system status quo, and lower support for affirmative action, I ran a hierarchical multiple regression with dependent variable regressed on covariates in the first block and condition in the second block. None of these models were statistically significant. The effect of the manipulation, controlling for gender and age, on RSJ was not significant ($b = -2.09$, $SE = 2.11$, $p = .32$), F -change = 0.98 ($p = .32$), and R^2 change = .002. Similarly, the effect of the manipulation, controlling for gender and age, on evaluative bias was marginal ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .082$), F -change = 3.04 ($p = .32$), and R^2 change = .006. The effect of the manipulation, controlling for age, on COBRAS was not significant ($b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .16$), F -change = 1.95, and R^2 change = .004 ($p = .16$). Finally, the effect of the manipulation on attitudes toward federal affirmative action was not significant ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = .19$), $F(1,458) = 1.70$, $R^2 = .004$; see Table 3 for summary of analyses). These results indicate there was no direct effect of the White Fragility manipulation on race-specific system justification, colorblind racism, racial prejudice, or attitudes toward federal affirmative action. Thus, for hypothesis 1, that reminding white participants about their white privilege would result in system justifying defenses, the null hypothesis could not be rejected.

Table 3*Testing Effect of Manipulation on Primary Dependent Variables Including Covariates*

Dependent Variable	Predictors	β	p (predictor)	R^2	ΔR^2	Significant Change (p)
Racial SJ						
	Gender	-0.10	.03			
	Age	0.17	.000			
	Condition	-0.05	.32	.040	.002	.32
Evaluative Bias						
	Gender	-0.10	.02			
	Age	0.14	.004			
	Condition	-0.08	.08	.030	.006	.08
Colorblind Attitudes						
	Age	0.19	.000			
	Condition	-0.06	.16	.040	.004	.16
Affirmative Action						
	Condition	0.06	.19	.004	n/a	n/a

Note: Significant change column refers to whether there was a significant difference in the F-value between the model using only covariates as predictors compared to the same model with Condition as an additional predictor i.e., hierarchical, two-block regression. White privilege condition coded as 1 and control coded as 0.

Next, prior to evaluating potential moderation, bivariate correlations were run to ascertain preliminary relationships between variables downstream of the manipulation, including potential moderators and dependent variables (summarized in Table 4)¹. Consistent with hypotheses, significant positive associations were found between Social Dominance Orientation and RSJ, COBRAS, evaluative bias, and a negative association was found with federal affirmative action. Also as hypothesized, significant positive associations were also found between psychological entitlement and RSJ, COBRAS, evaluative bias, and a significant negative association with federal affirmative action. Significant positive associations were also found, as hypothesized, between collective self-esteem and RSJ, COBRAS, evaluative bias, and federal affirmative action. Lastly, as hypothesized, significant associations were found between white racial identity and RSJ, COBRAS, evaluative bias, and federal affirmative action. See Table 4 for correlations of all study variables.

Moderation analyses. Using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS, Model 1 (simple moderation), four sets of four moderations were run to test the hypotheses that (1) white racial identity, (2) social dominance orientation, (3) psychological entitlement, and (4) collective self-esteem would moderate the relationship between condition (white privilege vs. control) and the four primary dependent variables: (1) racial system justification, (2) colorblind racism, (3) evaluative bias, and (4) support for federal affirmative action such that those higher in white racial identity, social dominance, psychological entitlement, and collective self-esteem would, following exposure to the white privilege manipulation, endorse greater racial system justification, colorblind

¹ Note: henceforth in results racial system justification will be referred to as RSJ and colorblind racial attitudes as COBRAS

Table 4

Intercorrelation of Primary Study Variables (numbers represent Pearson coefficients)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Social Dominance	-										
2. White Racial Identity	.35**	-									
3. Psychological Entitlement	.29**	.30**	-								
4. Public CSE	.04	.36**	.03	-							
5. Racial System Justification	.72**	.52**	.27**	.14**	-						
6. Colorblind Racism	.66**	.50**	.21**	.12*	.90**	-					
7. Federal Affirmative Action	-.60**	-.37**	-.11*	-.05	-.75**	-.80**	-				
8. Evaluative Bias	.46**	.41**	.32**	.13**	.48**	.42**	-.41**	-			
9. WRAS-Guilt	-.60**	-.37**	-.25**	-.01	-.63**	-.66**	.63**	-.46**	-		
10. WRAS-Shame	-.33**	-.44**	-.09	-.17**	-.47**	-.55**	.48**	-.27**	.51**	-	
11. WRAS-Negation	.62**	.48**	.28**	.10*	.76**	.81**	-.67**	.46**	-.65**	-.47**	-

*Note: ** indicates significant at the .001 level, * indicates significant at the .05 level*

racism, evaluative bias, and lower support for affirmative action compared with those in the control condition. Although the original hypotheses were not supported by the data analysis directionally, it remains noteworthy that most of the interactions between experimental condition and the hypothesized moderating variables reached statistical significance. Significant moderations were probed using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Carden et al., 2017).

Moderation models testing racial system justification, colorblind racism, and support for federal affirmative action as dependent variables indicated significant moderations when using White racial identity and public collective self-esteem (a subscale of collective self-esteem; see method section for description) as moderators.

When examining racial system justification as the dependent variable with gender and age as covariates, interaction terms for white racial identity by condition ($F(5,450) = 36.81$, $R^2 = 29.03\%$, $b = -4.72$, $SE = 1.61$, $LLCI = -7.87$, $ULCI = -1.56$) and public collective self-esteem by condition were significant predictors ($F(5,450) = 25.72$, $R^2 = 14.52\%$, $b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.09$, $LLCI = 0.01$, $ULCI = 0.37$). Indeed, the main effect of the manipulation became significant in the hypothesized direction when the moderators and interaction terms were included in the analyses. See Table 5 and Table 6 for detailed statistics, and Figures 3 and 6 for graphical representations.

When probed using the Johnson-Neyman technique, the effects can be more clearly elucidated. Specifically, when the mean for white racial identity was below 4.30 (i.e., 0.82 standard deviations below the mean), exposure to white privilege led to significantly increased racial system justification compared with the control condition. On the other hand, when mean white racial identity was above 6.34, exposure to white

privilege led to significantly decreased racial system justification (see Figure 3). When viewed in terms of slope, one can see that the slope of the line for the control condition was significantly more positive than the slope of the line for the white privilege condition.

The same significant moderating effect of white racial identity was found for predicting colorblind racial attitudes. When an individual's mean white racial identity score was above 6.24, after they were exposed to evidence of white privilege, they tended to show significantly decreased colorblind racial attitudes compared with the control group. On the other hand, when an individual's mean white racial identity score was below 3.66, the reverse was true: when they were exposed to evidence of white privilege, their scores on colorblind racial attitudes increased significantly compared with the control group (see Figure 4). When viewed in terms of slope, one can see that the slope of the line for the control condition was significantly more positive than the slope of the line for the white privilege condition. Finally, white racial identity also significantly moderated the relationship between the experimental white privilege manipulation and support for federal affirmative action. However, there were no statistically significant Johnson-Neyman transition points (see Figure 5). The analysis also indicated that the slope of the line for the control condition was significantly more negative than the line for the white privilege condition. See Table 6 for summarizing statistics for moderations involving white racial identity.

Figure 3

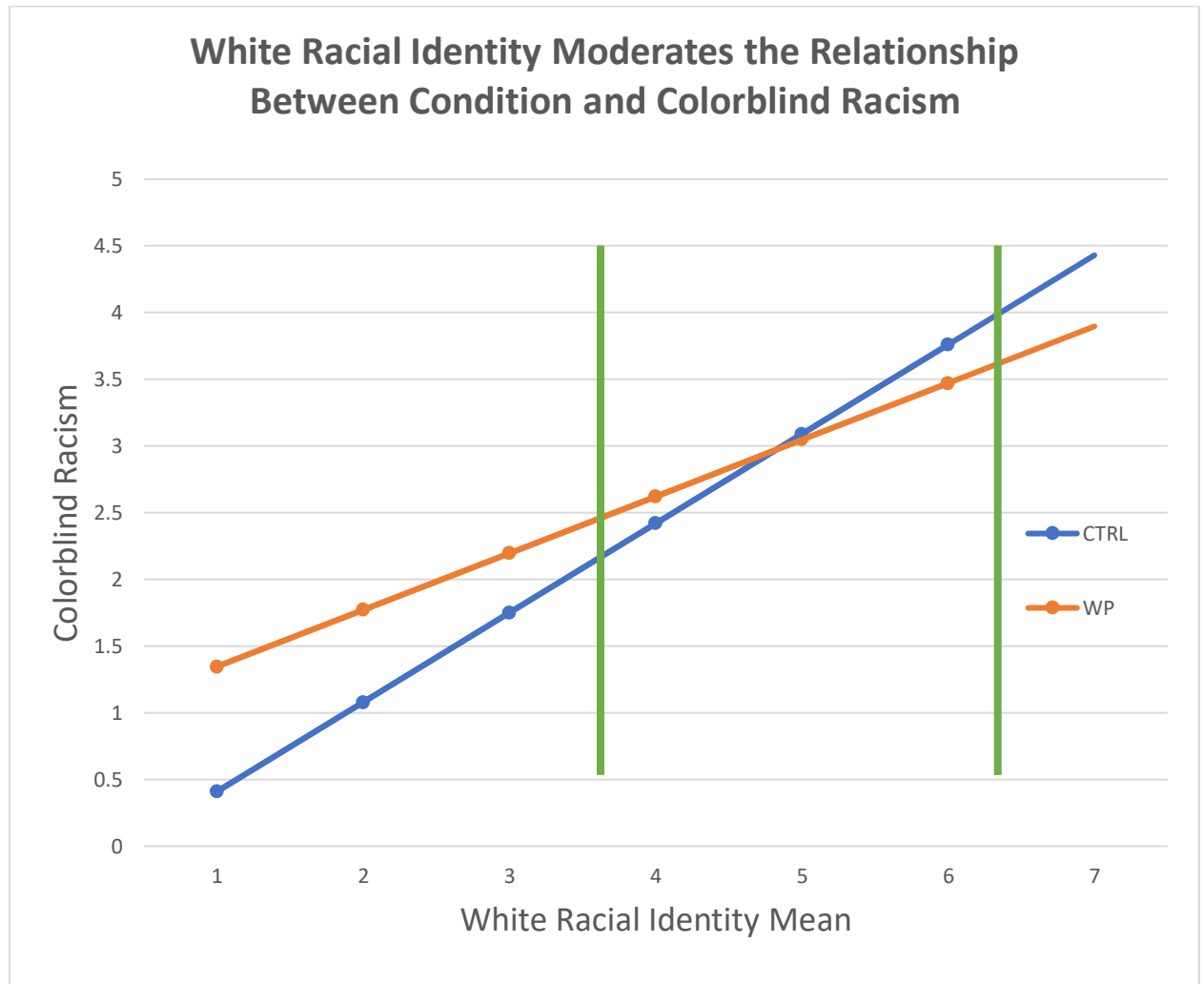
White Racial Identity Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Racial System Justification



Note: Vertical green lines indicate significant Johnson-Neyman regions, i.e., significant differences in racial system justification can be found above White racial identity scores of 6.34 and below 4.30.

Figure 4

White Racial Identity Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Colorblind Racism



Note: Vertical green lines indicate significant Johnson-Neyman regions, i.e., significant differences in colorblind racism can be found above White racial identity scores of 6.24 and below 3.66.

Table 5

The Moderating Effects of White Racial Identity (WRI) on Primary Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Predictor	Unstandardized Beta (SE)	Confidence Interval	p-value	Model R^2
Racial SJ ¹	Condition	1.56(0.54)	[0.50, 2.62]	.0035	.29
	WRI	0.78(0.07)	[0.64, 0.93]	.0000	
	Condition x WRI	-0.29 (0.10)	[-0.49, -0.10]	.0031	
Evaluative Bias ¹	Condition	0.56 (0.51)	[-0.45, 1.57]	.25	.18
	WRI	0.50 (0.07)	[0.37, 0.64]	.0000	
	Condition x WRI	-0.13 (0.10)	[-0.32, 0.06]	.17	
Colorblind Attitudes ²	Condition	1.09 (0.43)	[0.24, 1.94]	.0099	.27
	WRI	0.59 (0.06)	[0.47, 0.71]	.0000	
	Condition x WRI	-0.22 (0.08)	[-0.37, -0.06]	.0062	
Affirmative Action ³	Condition	-0.96 (0.50)	[-1.94, 0.02]	.055	.15
	WRI	-0.49 (0.07)	[-0.62, -0.36]	.0000	
	Condition x WRI	0.19 (0.09)	[0.01, 0.37]	.0402	

Note: All models significant at the .001 level.

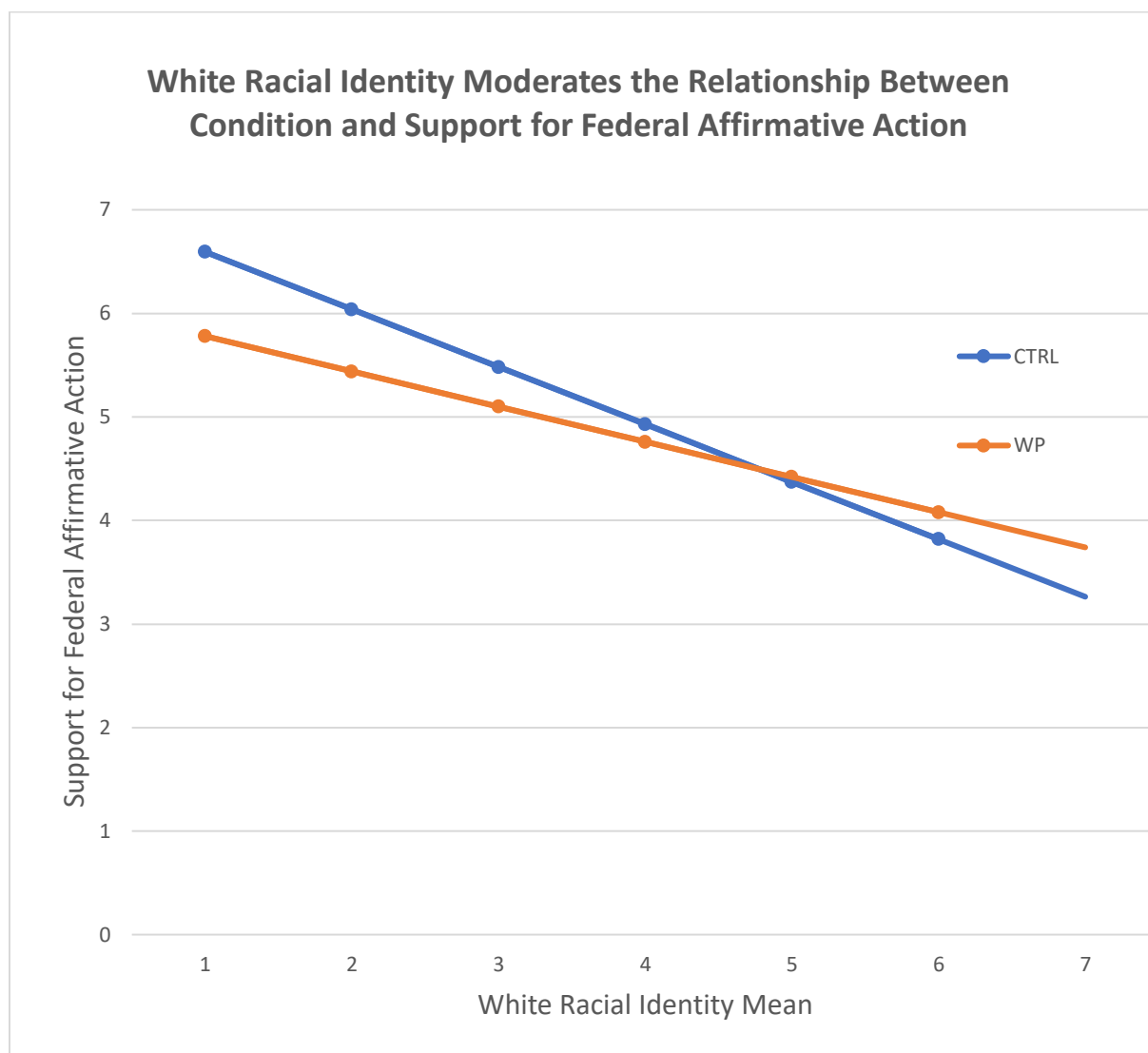
1. Gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

2. Age entered as covariate for this model.

3. No covariates entered in this model.

Figure 5

White Racial Identity Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Support for Federal Affirmative Action



Note: No significant Johnson-Neyman regions. Interaction term was statistically significant.

Table 6

The Moderating Effects of Public Collective Self-Esteem (PCSE) on Primary Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Predictor	Unstandardized Beta (SE)	Confidence Interval	p-value	Model R^2
Racial SJ ¹	Condition	1.49 (0.63)	[0.25, 2.72]	.014	.065
	PCSE	0.31 (0.09)	[0.13, 0.48]	.0006	
	Condition x PCSE	-0.32 (0.12)	[-0.57, -0.08]	.0073	
Evaluative Bias ¹	Condition	0.16 (0.56)	[-0.95, 1.27]	.77	.046
	PCSE	0.16 (0.08)	[-0.004, 0.32]	.060	
	Condition x PCSE	-0.07 (0.11)	[-0.29, 0.15]	.51	
Colorblind Attitudes ²	Condition	1.10 (0.49)	[0.12, 2.07]	.026	.063
	PCSE	0.22 (0.07)	[0.08, 0.36]	.0022	
	Condition x PCSE	-0.25 (0.10)	[0.007, 0.02]	.011	
Affirmative Action ³	Condition	-1.56 (0.54)	[-2.21, -0.51]	.0036	.040
	PCSE	-0.23 (0.08)	[-0.86, -0.86]	.0025	
	Condition x PCSE	0.34 (0.11)	[0.13, 0.55]	.0011	

Note: PCSE = Public Collective Self-Esteem. All models significant at the .001 level.

1. Gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

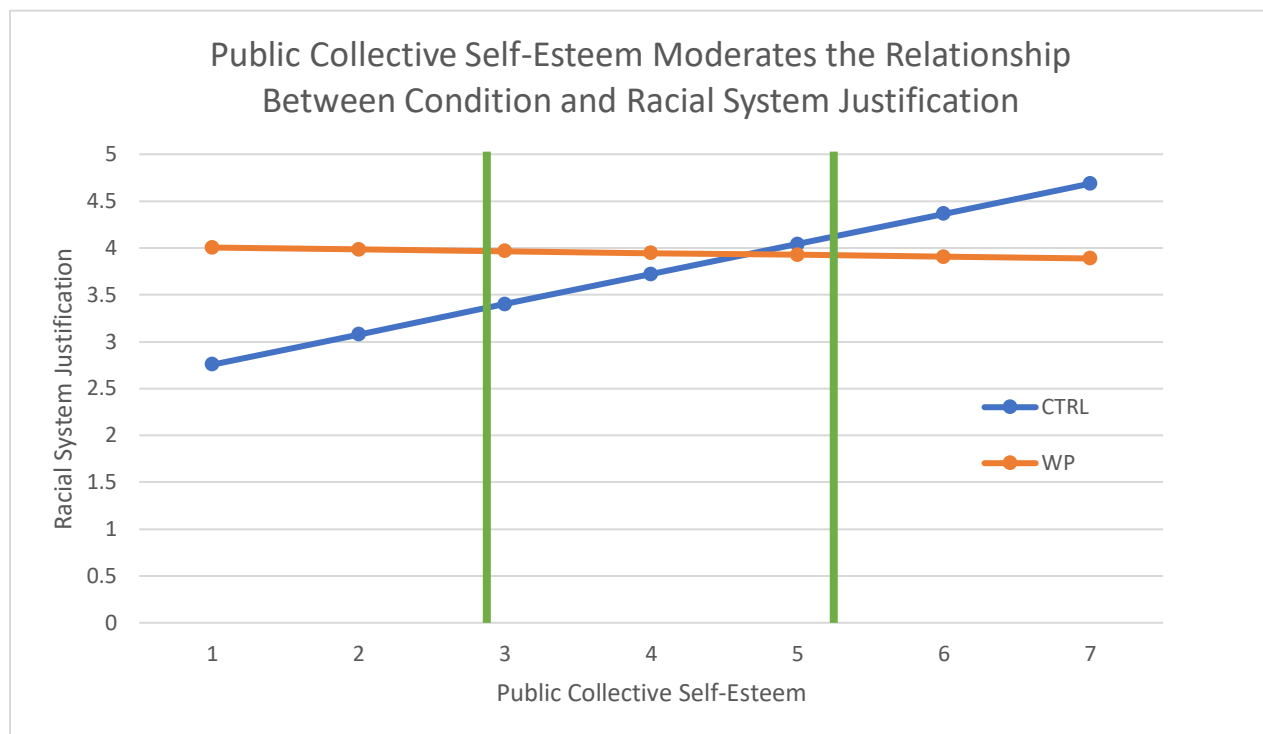
2. Age entered as covariate for this model.

3. No covariates entered in this model.

Similarly, at low levels of public collective self-esteem (mean below 2.98), exposure to white privilege led to increases in racial system justification while for those high in public collective self-esteem (mean value above 5.23), exposure to white privilege led to decreases in RSJ (see Figure 6). These same patterns of significant moderations were also found for colorblind racial attitudes and support for federal affirmative action but were not statistically significant for evaluative bias. For those with a mean public collective self-esteem value above 5.21, exposure to white privilege led decreased colorblind racial attitudes compared with the control condition. On the other hand, for those with mean collective public self-esteem values below 1.97, exposure to white privilege led to significantly increased colorblind racial attitudes (see Figure 7). For each of these analyses, the slopes of the lines for each condition were significantly different from each other wherein the line for the control condition was positive while the line for the white privilege condition was nearly zero. Similarly, for individuals whose white racial identity mean scores were above 5.15, exposure to white privilege led to significantly increased support for federal affirmative action policies while if their mean score for white racial identity was below 3.39, exposure to evidence of white privilege led to significantly decreased support for federal affirmative action policies (see Figure 8).

Figure 6

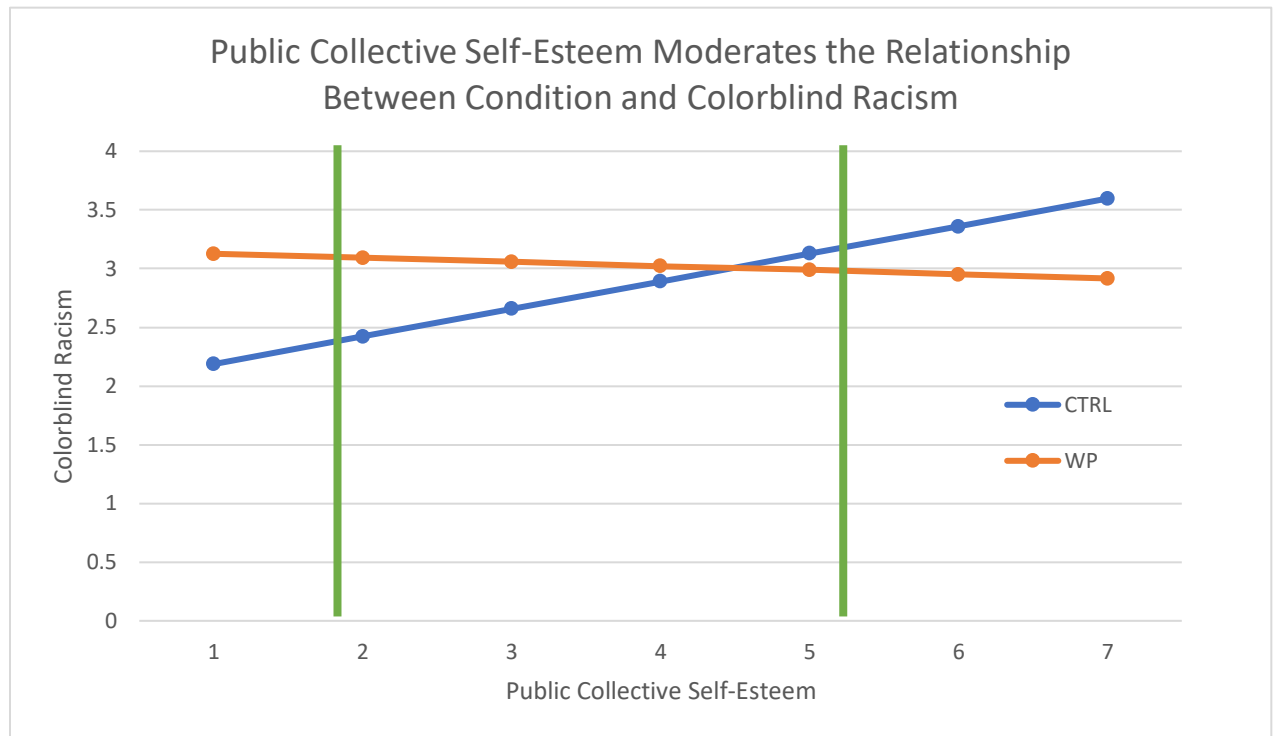
Public Collective Self-Esteem Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Racial System Justification



Note: Vertical green lines indicate significant Johnson-Neyman regions, i.e., significant differences in racial system justification can be found above public collective self-esteem scores of 5.23 and below 2.98.

Figure 7

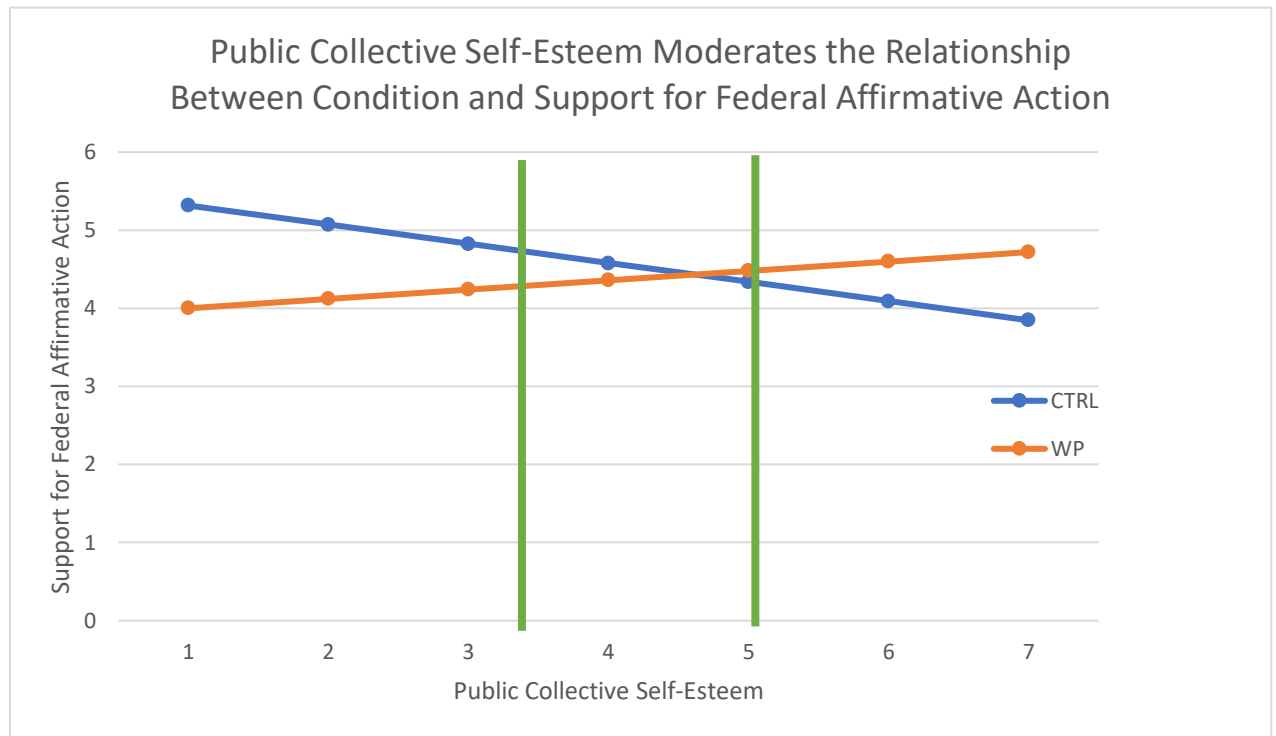
Public Collective Self-Esteem Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Colorblind Racism



Note: Vertical green lines indicate significant Johnson-Neyman regions, i.e., significant differences in colorblind racism can be found above public collective self-esteem scores of 5.21 and below 1.97.

Figure 8

Public Collective Self-Esteem Moderates the Relationship Between Condition and Support for Federal Affirmative Action



Note: Vertical green lines indicate significant Johnson-Neyman regions, i.e., significant differences in colorblind racism can be found above public collective self-esteem scores of 5.15 and below 3.39.

Interestingly, in this analysis, the slopes of the lines for the white privilege and control conditions were significantly different from one another, the line for the control condition being positive while the line for the white privilege condition being negative. See Table 6 for comprehensive summary statistics of moderation analyses involving public collective self-esteem.

However, no significant moderating effects were found for social dominance x condition nor psychological entitlement by condition on the relationship between condition and any of the four primary dependent variables using the PROCESS approach. See Tables 7 and 8 for summarizing statistics.

In summary, none of the moderation hypotheses were supported by the present data analysis and, for two of the hypotheses tested – moderating roles of white racial identity and public collective self-esteem – significant results were found in the opposite direction than were hypothesized. When exposed to the white privilege condition, those high in white racial identity and public collective self-esteem, tended to evidence lower racial system justification, colorblind racism, and greater support for federal affirmative action. In contrast, the reverse was true for those low in white racial identity and public collective self-esteem. That is, when exposed to evidence of white privilege, these individuals, tended to endorse greater racial system justification, colorblind racism, and lower support for federal affirmative action.

Table 7

The Moderating Effects of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) on Primary Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Predictors	Unstandardized <i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	Confidence Interval	<i>p</i> -value	Model <i>R</i> ²
Racial SJ ¹					.54
	Condition	-0.30 (0.20)	[-0.70, 0.10]	.16	
	SDO	0.77 (0.05)	[0.67, 0.87]	.0000	
	Condition x SDO	0.13 (0.08)	[-0.02, 0.28]	.095	
Evaluative Bias ¹					.23
	Condition	-0.20 (0.23)	[-0.66, 0.25]	.35	
	SDO	0.45 (0.06)	[0.33, 0.56]	.0000	
	Condition x SDO	0.06 (0.09)	[-0.14, 0.20]	.69	
Colorblind Attitudes ²					.47
	Condition	-0.29 (0.17)	[-0.62, 0.05]	.098	
	SDO	0.56 (0.04)	[-0.47, 0.64]	.0000	
	Condition x SDO	0.10 (0.06)	[-0.03, 0.23]	.12	
Affirmative Action ³					.36
	Condition	0.09 (0.20)	[-0.30, 0.48]	.66	
	SDO	-0.58 (0.05)	[-0.68, -0.48]	.0000	
	Condition x SDO	-0.02 (0.07)	[-0.17, 0.12]	.79	

Note: All models significant at the .001 level.

1. Gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

2. Age entered as covariate for this model.

3. No covariates entered in this model.

Table 8*The Moderating Effects of Psychological Entitlement on Primary Dependent Variables*

Dependent Variable	Predictor	Unstandardized Beta (SE)	Confidence Interval	p-value	Model R^2
Racial SJ ¹					.11
	Condition	0.07 (0.39)	[-0.69, 0.83]	.88	
	Psychological Entitlement	0.38 (0.09)	[0.21, 0.55]	.0000	
	Condition x Psychological Entitlement	-0.07, (0.12)	[-0.30, 0.16]	.57	
Evaluative Bias ¹					.13
	Condition	-0.39 (0.34)	[-1.06, 0.27]	.24	
	Psychological Entitlement	0.32(0.08)	[0.17, 0.48]	.0000	
	Condition x Psychological Entitlement	0.06 (0.10)	[-0.15, 0.26]	.58	
Colorblind Attitudes ²					.09
	Condition	0.26 (0.31)	[-0.34, 0.87]	.44	
	Psychological Entitlement	0.28 (0.07)	[0.15, 0.42]	.0000	
	Condition x Psychological Entitlement	-0.14 (0.09)	[-0.32, 0.05]	.16	
Affirmative Action ³					.03
	Condition	-0.20 (0.34)	[-0.87, 0.47]	.73	
	Psychological Entitlement	-0.17 (0.08)	[-0.32, -0.02]	.028	
	Condition x Psychological Entitlement	0.11 (0.10)	[-0.09, 0.31]	.38	

Note: All models significant at the .001 level except for affirmative action, which was significant at the .05 level.

1. Gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

2. Age entered as covariate for this model.

3. No covariates entered in this model.

Alternative analytic approach to moderation. There are two potential limitations to the PROCESS approach implemented above. One limitation is that PROCESS does not allow for simultaneous analysis of multiple moderators, with the result that multiple tests must be conducted if numerous moderators are to be evaluated. Indeed, with a greater number of tests comes increased risk of Type 1 error. In addition, testing each potential moderator in a separate model renders it impossible to separate shared variance among the moderators. Both of these problems are resolved by evaluating potential moderators within the context of a single multiple regression model. For this reason, we explored the same moderation hypotheses using multiple regression and then compared the results to those of the PROCESS approach.

The multivariate analysis regressed racial system justification on all four moderating variables (White racial identity, public collective self-esteem, social dominance orientation, and psychological entitlement) as well as condition x moderator interaction terms for each, and the condition variable. The overall model was significant and explained 61.9% of the variance in racial system justification ($F(9,447) = 77.42$, $p < .001$). In this model, significant effects were found for the condition x White racial identity interaction term ($b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .002$) as well as the condition x social dominance orientation interaction term ($b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .010$), the latter constituting a departure from the PROCESS approach. Also differing from the PROCESS approach, the public collective self-esteem x condition interaction term was not statistically significant ($b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .48$). Finally, consistent with the original PROCESS approach, the psychological entitlement x condition interaction term was not significant in the multivariate model ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .28$).

Thus, as with the PROCESS approach, the moderating effect of White racial identity on the relationship between condition and racial system justification remained highly significant and of nearly identical size, i.e., the unstandardized beta in the PROCESS model was -0.30 and in the multivariate model was -0.28. The very small change in the effects across the two models indicates that the additional variance explained by the other moderators in a simultaneous model did not meaningfully detract from the explanatory power of White racial identity as a moderator.

There were two major differences between the two analytic approaches. Firstly, in the PROCESS model, the interaction term for public collective self-esteem x condition was a statistically significant predictor of racial system justification whereas in the multivariate approach it dropped below statistical significance. In the PROCESS model, the unstandardized beta for the interaction term for public collective self-esteem x condition was much larger ($b = -0.32$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .0072$) than that found using the simultaneous regression approach ($b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .48$), suggesting the possibility that the variance explained by conditional effects of public collective self-esteem was not unique and was better explained by other moderator variables included in the multiple regression model. Moreover, given the large number of tests required for the PROCESS approach, it is also impossible to rule out the possibility that the significant finding was due to Type I error.

The second major difference between the PROCESS and multivariate approaches was that while the interaction term for social dominance orientation x condition was not statistically significant using the PROCESS approach, it was significant using the multivariate approach. To elucidate the moderating effect of social dominance x

condition detected in this multivariate analysis, the interaction was probed further using the Johnson-Neyman technique. Model 1 of the PROCESS macro was implemented using RSJ as the dependent variable, condition as the independent variable, SDO as the moderator variable, and four covariates: White racial identity and White racial identity x condition (to replicate the multiple regression described above) as well as age and gender. Although the overall multiple regression model was significant ($F(5,452) = 141.59$, $R^2 = 61.03\%$, $p < .001$), the effect of the manipulation on RSJ remains significant at all levels of social dominance when accounting for the moderating effect of White racial identity, indicating that there is, in practice, no significant moderating effect of SDO in our sample, consistent with the results from the PROCESS analysis. At an SDO value of 1 (on a scale of 1-7), the effect of the manipulation on RSJ is significant ($b = 1.02$, $p = .011$) while at the maximum SDO value of 6.5, the effect remains positive and significant ($b = 2.25$, $p = .0002$; See Table 9 for summary of the Johnson-Neyman technique). Indeed, an SDO value of 6.5 is more than three standard deviations from the mean and is actually the maximum in our sample. Thus, with a participant sample with greater variability in SDO, the effect might be visible. Thus, the moderating effect of SDO, as found in the multivariate analysis, must be viewed as speculative and inconclusive without further research.

Table 9

Johnson-Neyman Technique Probe of the Moderating Effects of Social Dominance on Racial System Justification Controlling for White Racial Identity x Condition Interaction

SDO Value	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1.00	1.02 (0.40)	2.54	0.0113
1.28	1.08 (0.40)	2.68	0.0077
1.55	1.14 (0.41)	2.81	0.0052
1.83	1.20 (0.41)	2.92	0.0036
2.10	1.26 (0.42)	3.03	0.0026
2.38	1.33 (0.42)	3.13	0.0019
2.65	1.39 (0.43)	3.22	0.0014
2.93	1.45 (0.44)	3.30	0.0010
3.20	1.51 (0.45)	3.38	0.0008
3.48	1.57 (0.46)	3.44	0.0006
3.75	1.63 (0.47)	3.50	0.0005
4.03	1.70 (0.48)	3.54	0.0004
4.30	1.76 (0.49)	3.59	0.0004
4.58	1.82 (0.50)	3.62	0.0003
4.85	1.88 (0.51)	3.66	0.0003
5.13	1.94 (0.53)	3.68	0.0003
5.40	2.00 (0.54)	3.70	0.0002
5.68	2.06 (0.55)	3.72	0.0002
5.95	2.13 (0.57)	3.74	0.0002
6.23	2.19 (0.58)	3.75	0.0002
6.50	2.25 (0.60)	3.76	0.0002

Note: WRI x condition, WRI, gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

Next, for proof of concept, we compared the PROCESS approach to the multivariate approach for examining the effects of the four moderators on the relationship between condition and colorblind racism. We used the same multivariate regression approach described previously for racial system justification but changed the dependent variable to colorblind racism. We found a similar pattern of results: the multiple regression model was significant overall ($F(9,447) = 55.85, R^2 = .53$) and the interaction terms were significant for White racial identity x condition ($b = -.20, SE = 0.08, p = .010$) and social dominance x condition ($b = 0.17, SE = 0.07, p = .011$), whereas the interaction term for public collective self-esteem x condition again dropped below statistical significance ($b = .05, SE = 0.08, p = .48$). As with racial system justification, the interaction term for White racial identity x condition in the multivariate model was nearly identical to the results of the PROCESS model, where $b = -.19, SE = .08, p = .0066$.

The moderating role of social dominance orientation (SDO) in this model (with color-blind racism as the dependent variable) was again probed using the Johnson-Neyman technique in Model 1 of PROCESS. Although the overall PROCESS model was significant ($F(6,451) = 87.25, R^2 = .54$) and the interaction term for SDO x condition was significant ($b = 0.18, p = .0051$), the Johnson-Neyman technique revealed that the effect of the manipulation (controlling for the moderating effect of White racial identity) remained positive and significant across all levels of SDO (See Table 10 for summary of Johnson-Neyman technique), indicating no conditional effect in our sample. Thus, when the White racial identity interaction term is included in the multivariate regression model, the effect of our manipulation on colorblind racial attitudes is not moderated by SDO within the range of the present dataset, consistent with the initial PROCESS analyses.

Table 10

Johnson-Neyman Technique Probe of the Moderating Effects of Social Dominance on Colorblind Racism Controlling for White Racial Identity x Condition Interaction

SDO Value	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1.00	1.02 (0.4)	2.54	0.0113
1.28	1.08 (0.4)	2.68	0.0077
1.55	1.14 (0.41)	2.81	0.0052
1.83	1.2 (0.41)	2.92	0.0036
2.10	1.26 (0.42)	3.03	0.0026
2.38	1.33 (0.42)	3.13	0.0019
2.65	1.39 (0.43)	3.22	0.0014
2.93	1.45 (0.44)	3.30	0.0010
3.20	1.51 (0.45)	3.38	0.0008
3.48	1.57 (0.46)	3.44	0.0006
3.75	1.63 (0.47)	3.50	0.0005
4.03	1.7 (0.48)	3.54	0.0004
4.30	1.76 (0.49)	3.59	0.0004
4.58	1.82 (0.5)	3.62	0.0003
4.85	1.88 (0.51)	3.66	0.0003
5.13	1.94 (0.53)	3.68	0.0003
5.40	2 (0.54)	3.70	0.0002
5.68	2.06 (0.55)	3.72	0.0002
5.95	2.13 (0.57)	3.74	0.0002
6.23	2.19 (0.58)	3.75	0.0002
6.50	2.25 (0.6)	3.76	0.0002

Note: WRI x condition, WRI, gender and age entered as covariates for this model.

In summary, the multivariate regression approach revealed some important areas of correspondence with the PROCESS approach, but also some points of departure. In particular, in both analytic approaches, White racial identity significantly moderates the effect of condition on both racial system justification and colorblind racism. That the moderating effect of White racial identity does not change in size or significance depending on the type of model run or with the addition of six other variables is evidence of the meaningful role White racial identity plays in affecting how individuals respond to evidence of White privilege. Similarly, the multivariate approach confirms that psychological entitlement was not a significant moderator of this relationship between condition and racial system justification nor colorblind racism.

In contrast, the results for the two other potential moderators – public collective self-esteem and social dominance orientation – differed between the two analytic approaches, and as a result, the conclusions regarding their role must remain more tentative. Firstly, the moderating role of public collective self-esteem dropped below statistical significance when all four moderators were tested simultaneously likely because the interaction term failed to explain unique variance once the other moderators were included in the model. It is also not possible to rule out the possibility that the findings of the PROCESS model regarding public collective self-esteem were due to Type I error caused by running numerous tests (though these were accounted for in the original power analysis). The discrepancy in findings as a function of the analytic approach indicates the need for caution in interpretation and the necessity of further research into the possible role of public collective self-esteem in moderating relationship between exposure to evidence of White privilege and defensive reactions. Secondly, the

interaction term for social dominance x condition became statistically significant in the multivariate model, whereas it was not significant when using PROCESS approach. However, the Johnson-Neyman technique did not reveal a moderating effect of social dominance in our sample's distribution (see Tables 9 and 10).

After comparing the results of two regression approaches to the moderations hypothesized, it is likely that White racial identity moderates the relationship between exposure to evidence of White privilege and defense of the racial status quo. However, the moderating roles of public collective self-esteem and social dominance orientation are less conclusive, as the two different analytical approaches yielded different results, indicating the need for caution in interpretation and further research into their roles in predicting defensiveness.

Exploratory Analyses. To determine the possible effects of the four moderators on the relationship between the manipulation and explicit negative affect, a multiple regression was conducted including condition, RSJ, SDO, psychological entitlement, White racial identity as well as interaction terms for each condition x moderator variable. No interaction terms approached significance, indicating a general tendency toward experiences of negative affect following exposure to White privilege not moderated by individual differences measured here ($F(9, 447) = 4.24, R^2 = 7.7\%, p < .001$). Specifically, although the direct effect of psychological entitlement was significant ($\beta = -.19, p = .012$), the remaining effects were all nonsignificant ($p = .23-.56$) and ranged from $\beta = -.25 - .23$.

To investigate a possible mechanism for the moderating effect of white racial identity, the White Racial Affect Scale was analyzed. Preliminary analyses indicated that

white guilt and white shame were significantly negatively correlated with racial system justification ($r(458) = -.63, -.47$ respectively; $p < .001$), colorblind racial attitudes ($r(458) = -.66, -.55$ respectively; $p < .001$), evaluative bias ($r(458) = -.46, -.29$ respectively; $p < .001$), and significantly positively correlated with support for federal affirmative action ($r(458) = -.63, -.48$ respectively; $p < .001$). These results are all maintained even after Bonferroni correction for experiment-wise error, as these were exploratory analyses. For white negation, the opposite effects were found, as it was very highly correlated with racial system justification ($r(458) = .76$; $p < .001$), colorblind racial attitudes ($r(458) = .80$; $p < .001$), moderately correlated with evaluative bias ($r(458) = .46$; $p < .001$), and highly negatively correlated with support for federal affirmative action ($r(458) = -.67$; $p < .001$).

Next, mean scores for white shame, guilt, and negation were compared across the two conditions and no significant differences were found ($t(458) = -1.72-1.39$, $p = .09-.47$). The biggest difference was found in white shame, wherein, as expected, individuals in the white fragility condition evidenced greater shame, although this did not reach statistical significance ($p = .085$). Subsequently, the potential moderating effect of white racial identity on white guilt was tested. Although white racial identity did not significantly moderate the relationship between condition and white guilt ($b = .09$, $se = .07$, $CI = -0.06, 0.24$) or condition and white shame ($b = .01$, $se = .01$, $CI = -0.01, 0.04$), it did significantly moderate the relationship between the manipulation and white negation ($b = -0.13$, $se = .07$, $CI = -0.26, -0.003$). Specifically, those higher in white racial identity tended to respond to the manipulation with *less* negation while those lower in white racial identity tended to respond with increased negation. This finding is useful

for informing a potential explanation of a mechanism for the primary analysis. Namely, engaging in racial negation could be a precursor to defense of the racial status quo by leading to downplaying of racial issues more broadly. Such a possibility will be further explored in the Discussion.

Chapter VI: Discussion

General Discussion

In the past year, with the outbreak of the coronavirus, and the police violence against George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and more recently, Jacob Blake and Daniel Prude (among too many others; Sinyangwe, 2020), America has seen widespread civil unrest. On the one hand, a historically diverse group of people have come out in support for the Black community, who have been victimized by the police since slavery and reconstruction. Meanwhile, on the other hand, there have been protests against the Black Lives Matter movement and in support of the police. Compared with past protest movements, the present moment has been notable for dramatic increased involvement of White people in support of Black lives. Nevertheless, with the massive resistance, it remains clear that many White people take great offense to those attempting to call out ongoing racism in America.

In the present research, we have attempted to understand, primarily through the lens of System Justification Theory (Jost, 2018) and White Fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), why some White individuals respond to evidence of racial inequality and White privilege defensively, while others respond more openly with support of anti-racist ideas and policies. White Fragility refers to the common discomfort White people experience during discussions of racism and racial inequality, and the subsequent defensiveness they often engage in when asked to think of their White privilege or how they either contribute to or perpetuate racism. System Justification Theory describes a potential mechanism underlying this discomfort. It suggests that when systems we value are threatened (e.g., if America is racist, it is bad), people tend to respond by defending the very system being

threatened, in this case America and American values of “equality,” “equal opportunity,” and “the American dream.”

The literature examining the consequences of providing White people with information on racial inequality and White privilege has been mixed. Some research suggests that it leads to prosocial, non-defensive outcomes (inconsistent with system justification and White Fragility; e.g., Iyer et al., 2003; Powell et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2012; Swim & Miller, 1999). Other work has found evidence of defensive reactions (Branscombe et al., 2007; Murdoch & McAloney-Kocaman, 2019; Phillips & Lowery, 2015). In the present study, we hypothesized that these inconsistencies are due to previously unmeasured individual difference factors such as levels of White racial identity, collective self-esteem, psychological entitlement, and social dominance orientation.

Experimental Manipulation Main Effects

While our analyses provide mixed support for these hypotheses, they provide interesting and meaningful insights into White Fragility. Our first hypothesis, rooted in System Justification Theory, posited that after exposure to information about White Privilege, White individuals would be more likely to become defensive by showing greater support for Racial System Justification, colorblind racial attitudes, evaluative bias, and decreased support for federal affirmative action policy. These hypotheses were not supported, as no significant differences were found between the White Privilege condition and the control condition in any of these outcomes. However, when our hypothesized individual difference variables were included in the analyses, the main effect of the manipulation did become significant in the hypothesized direction,

consistent with System Justification Theory. Essentially once White racial identity and public collective self-esteem were accounted for in the model, exposure to White privilege did increase racial defensiveness as measured by increases in racial system justification, colorblind racism, evaluative bias, and decreased support for affirmative action policy. Our results are consistent with a pattern of mixed findings in the past and do indeed provide support for the premise that individuals react differently to evidence of White Privilege based on individual differences, particularly differences in White racial identity and public collective racial self-esteem.

Attitudinal Patterns

Before reviewing the findings of the moderation, it is important to note that the pattern of associations between variables assessed were largely consistent with past literature and offered some new findings as well. Racial System Justification was significantly positively associated with Social Dominance Orientation, colorblind racism, evaluative bias, and negatively associated with support for affirmative action. This means that the more individuals believe the extant American system is fair and just for people of all races, the more they believe in group-based dominance and anti-egalitarianism, the more they believe that race does not matter in society, the more racially prejudiced they are, and the less they support federal policy designed to rectify racial inequalities in employment. Although not an entirely original finding, this validates the premise that the fairer White people believe the world is for people of color, the more prejudiced they are against them.

Additionally, the greater an individual's White racial identity (i.e., the better they feel about being White. See Appendix 5 for items), the more globally entitled they are,

the more they believe America is a good place to live for people of color, the less they believe race plays an important role in peoples' lives, the more racially prejudiced they are, and the less they supported federal affirmative action. These findings indicate that White people who feel more positively about their racial group tend to believe they are more inherently entitled to better lives, tend to deny the role of race in everyday life, and tend to believe that federal policies toward racial equity in hiring practices are unnecessary.

Though not a causal relationship, the associations outlined substantiate a fundamental tenant of the herd invisibility hypothesis of Whiteness (Phillips & Lowery, 2018) as well as of System Justification Theory (Jost, 2019): there appears to be a tradeoff between feeling good about being White and being able to see racism in American society. This is also consistent with the cognitive dissonance postulate of system justification theory, wherein individuals tend to believe the system is even better and fairer when there is information that threatens that very goodness i.e., systemic racism and illegitimate White privilege.

Individual Differences Affect Responses to Evidence of White Privilege

Although not confirming the directionality of our original hypotheses, there is clear evidence that individuals respond differently to evidence of White Privilege as a function of individual differences. Several of our primary moderation analyses were significant, particularly those involving White racial identity. Primarily, the extent to which individuals feel explicitly positively about their White racial identity played a large and significant role in their reactions to evidence of White privilege, as evidenced by two different analytic approaches to the data. The extent to which individuals believed White

people are generally held in high regard by others may have played a much smaller role in their responses to evidence of White privilege. Although impossible to say with certainty, the disparate findings of two different analytic approaches with regard to this construct (public collective self-esteem) indicate the need to consider its role with caution and lead us to regard the role of White racial identity as the primary moderator among those tested here.

However, the conditional effects of white racial identity and public collective self-esteem only impacted White individuals who were on the outer extremes of the sample distribution, meaning it impacted only people who felt very positively about their White identity and/or believe others do also or those who felt particularly negatively about their White identity and/or believe others felt similarly negatively about White people.

However, these results were in the opposite direction from those we hypothesized. Specifically, defensive reactions, operationalized here as increased support for the racial status quo, increased colorblindness, and decreased support for federal affirmative action, were evidenced in those with the lowest regard for their Whiteness and who believed others also felt negatively about White people. In contrast, those who felt positively about their Whiteness and believed others do also were non-defensive, showed increased support for federal affirmative action compared to the control condition as well as decreased support for the racial status quo and decreased colorblind racism. Nevertheless, consistent with hypotheses, those who feel more positively toward their White identity tend to have much higher support for the racial status quo, greater belief in colorblind racial attitudes, and much lower support for federal affirmative action policy than those who do not feel positively about their White identity.

Now, why might this have been? Perhaps it is most useful to conceptualize White identity as a facet of self-concept or self-esteem. Feeling positively about one's racial identity and feeling that others also feel good about it provides a sense of security and confidence in oneself. There is substantial research from the attachment literature on how experimentally primed attachment security can result in decreased outgroup bias toward such groups, including immigrants and Muslims (e.g., Han, 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Other research suggests that priming security leads to increased self-soothing capacity, increased heart rate variability (i.e., capacity to slow one's heart rate in the face of threat), and decreased amygdala activation (S. Baldwin et al., 2019; Chugh et al., 2014). The theory underlying these findings is that secure individuals (who likely also have higher self-esteem; e.g., Rice & Lopez, 2004) may be more impervious to threats to their identity. Han's research suggests that self-esteem actually mediates the relationship between security and openness to diversity (2017). Although we were not measuring self-esteem directly, it stands to reason that the items within the White Racial Identity Scale tap into an aspect of self-esteem (e.g., "I feel good about being White" and "Being White is an important part of who I am"). These kinds of items seem to tap into what we might tentatively refer to as White racial self-worth or White racial self-regard.

Thus, we can conceptualize two different processes for those high and low in White racial self-esteem. Since the American civil rights movement of the 1960's, the cultural zeitgeist has shifted toward a general view that it is unacceptable to be explicitly racist (e.g., Henry & Sears, 2002). Individuals with higher White racial self-esteem tended to endorse greater denial of the role of race and racism in America, while the opposite was true with regard to individuals low in White racial self-esteem. Through this

lens one sees how those low in White racial self-regard may have already incorporated, to a larger extent, the role of unmerited privilege into their worldview and therefore already have a more fragile sense of racial self-regard because of the way they are implicated in that injustice. One may see this as a “cost” of “wokeness” for White people. They are then rendered more susceptible to racial identity threat, and thus to becoming more defensive, as operationalized here by support for the racial status quo, and purporting the irrelevance of race to a greater extent than those also low in racial self-regard who were not confronted with their White privilege (the control group).

This is consistent with Robin DiAngelo’s assertion that “White progressives are my specialty” as it relates to those most threatened and defensive in her workshops (Jackson, 2019). As such, it may behoove future researchers of Whiteness to investigate the effects of ideology on racial defensiveness and the possibility that liberals and conservatives might react differently to evidence of White privilege due to different interpretations of sociopolitical outcomes, indicating the possibility of a three-way interaction with condition x racial self-regard x political ideology.

In contrast to those with low racial self-regard, those who have managed to preserve their White racial self-regard tend to deny the role of White privilege and racism in American society. As a result, the sense of security they have due to their positive regard for their racial identity seems to actually allow them to be more empathic and non-defensive when confronted with evidence of their White privilege compared with those low in racial self-regard. After reading about White privilege, those high in racial self-regard consequently endorse more racial unfairness and injustice in society, report a greater role of race in day-to-day life, and state greater support for federal hiring practices

to promote equity. Notably, this increased openness to seeing racial injustice in America is evident only when compared to individuals with similarly high racial self-regard in the control condition; when compared to those low in White racial regard, they still endorse much greater colorblindness (see Figures 3-8). As a result, even when confronted with White privilege, those high White self-regard do not yet appear actively aware of the negative consequences of White privilege or the widespread impact of White racism, but instead their attitudes have shifted slightly toward relative indifference rather than outright, active denial. Moreover, it seems that when they read about White privilege, they are able to incorporate the information into their worldview and change their thinking to some degree, though the extent to which it remains over time is unclear on the basis of the present evidence, and would be a fruitful opportunity for future research.

Ultimately, although our hypotheses about the role of White racial identity and public collective self-esteem were in the opposite directions than predicted, it is certainly clear that they play a major role in determining who enacts White Fragility by becoming defensive, specifically who becomes defensive of the system, thus perpetuating White supremacy. Because the systemic racism of both groups of individuals is ultimately driven toward the mean when presented with evidence of White privilege, one can see how, on a broad scale, eliminating racism is profoundly difficult, on an individual level, an interpersonal level, a systemic level, and a policy level.

This is exemplary of why Whiteness itself resists change, and on a grand scale why White people are basically unable, at present, to give up their racial privilege. When they *are* psychologically secure enough to non-defensively incorporate racially threatening information, the changes in beliefs and attitudes are small, leaving attitudes

toward inequality still on the racist side of the mean while folks actively grappling with problematic aspects of Whiteness become defensive, causing them to increase support for racist ideologies. In summary, when confronted with the reality of White privilege, and thus a threat to their desire to see themselves and their systems as moral, just, and good, White individuals both high and low in White racial self-regard respond by suppressing the extremity of their beliefs about the role of race in American society.

Implications for theory. Consistent with system justification theory, this defensive shift toward more centrist, indifferent attitudes toward racial dynamics would serve to preserve the status quo and increase resistance to change. Nevertheless, we did not hypothesize this mechanism. Instead, derived from system justification theory, we had originally hypothesized the reverse, which was essentially that those high in White self-regard, would defensively bolster their colorblind beliefs and support for racial hierarchy and then those low in White self-regard would be non-defensive and incorporate information about racial inequality more openly. These hypotheses were made with the assumption that those who feel positively about their racial identities, and thus their place in the racial system, would be more defensively triggered by information inconsistent with their worldview and respond by bolstering their support for the status quo, i.e., the belief that America is fair and just for members of all racial groups (even if that is factually inaccurate). On the other hand, we also hypothesized that those who felt badly about their racial identification would be less vested in the system and more open to rejecting the status quo. However, yet again, our hypothesized mechanism was incorrect. Nevertheless, the end result is in fact more sinister for the prospects of racial equality in the near future because we found that White people in this group, for whom

there was greater internal racial conflict, were those who defensively justified the system. In summary we found the reverse of our hypotheses: when confronted with system dystonic evidence of White privilege, White people responded with a global shift toward more centrist attitudes. This provided further indication of just how difficult it is to disrupt the racial status quo and how resistant White dominance is to change.

Exploratory Analyses. Analyses of the White Racial Affect Scale provided some preliminary evidence for understanding *why* individuals with high White self-worth appeared non-defensive while individuals low in White self-worth were more defensive. As one might expect, the more individuals experienced White shame and guilt, the less fair they believed the racial status quo to be, the less they endorsed colorblind ideologies, the less racial prejudice they endorsed, and the more they supported federal affirmative action policies. This is consistent with Swim and Miller's early work (1999). Additionally, White negation (i.e., denial of racial relevance, disavowal of responsibility and intent in microaggression interactions) was related to these constructs in the inverse direction: greater racial denial was associated with more racist ideas. Interestingly, we found that individuals high in White self-regard (White racial identity and public collective self-esteem) evidenced lower negation while individuals low in White self-regard responded to evidence of White privilege with greater negation. This is particularly interesting because the negation measure shares theoretical underpinnings with colorblind racism, but is operationalized in a more applied way, providing some evidence for a behavioral implication above and beyond abstract beliefs, ideologies, and policy-related outcomes. Indeed, it suggests that when confronted with White privilege,

White people who are more insecure about their White identities deal with threat by unconsciously *avoiding* racial dynamics in interpersonal interactions.

These analyses provide a possible mechanism for *how* individuals become defensive when confronted with evidence for their White privilege, although of course further research would be required to further elucidate this. Some recent clinical theory introduces an idea called “dirty pain”, which is what individuals experience when unhealed racial trauma is enacted (Menakem, 2017). Menakem describes the centuries long period leading up to slavery in which (pre-White) Western Europeans brutalized each other publicly and privately, leading to intergenerational trauma that never fully healed. Because of the difficulty of survival, he posits that that trauma led to widespread denial and diminished empathic abilities in favor of raw utilitarianism and survival. In turn, White people then enacted that trauma on others by brutalizing Africans and indigenous peoples, creating the social construct of race, and then subsequently denying responsibility. In a sense, he is putting words to the racial negation process examined in the present work. In it, he also provides clues as to how White people might have the potential for healing. As evidenced by the present work, it is clear that simply providing information about racial inequities is woefully insufficient for creating widespread systemic change, and the trauma interventions are pre-requisite. Until that trauma is addressed, dirty pain, and White Supremacy, win out.

Limitations and Null Results

As discussed in the literature review, there are possible limitations to the use of the White Racial Identity scale. In particular, because it measures conscious self-concept around white identity, it is unclear of the extent to which it was able to tap into the

construct of White Fragility as a defense. Because White defensiveness often functions unconsciously (DiAngelo, 2018; Menakem, 2017; Miller & Josephs, 2009), this measure may fail to tap into the underlying process as well as other measures which are more attentive to non-conscious experiences of identity. As a result, in retrospect, it is possible that a measure such as collective narcissism may have helped to measure these aspects of White identity. Although originally eschewed for this project due to its lack of race-specificity, the extent to which it taps into *unrealistic* self and group representations indicates it as an extremely important tool for understanding White defensiveness in future work. Collective narcissism was designed in order to gauge emotional investment in a grandiose fantasy of group identity (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009). Indeed, within clinical theories of narcissism, it is understood as a defense against an vulnerability and an unconscious dearth of esteem (Miller & Josephs, 2009). Through measuring a more unconsciously derived experience, we may have been able to tap into another important aspect of racial security. Specifically, it seems that individuals low in White racial self-regard were behaving as collective narcissists would in terms of racial system defense. This is consistent with the possibility that White racial identity, as measured in this project, was tapping into a defensive posturing of racial self-regard, but not the unconscious, fragile core of Whiteness.

Another important critique is of the manipulation itself. In retrospectively reviewing the language of the White privilege condition, it was evident that there was actually a somewhat pessimistic portrayal of the value of understanding White privilege. The actual verbiage includes the statement that, “even though many everyday Americans are aware of the existence of White privilege, this awareness has done nothing to improve

inequality.” Thus, it is possible that we unintentionally introduced other demand characteristics by suggesting awareness of White privilege is actually unimportant. Participants may have then adjusted their attitudes to a more centrist position caused by the doubt introduced by the manipulation. As a result, this may have contributed to our finding that the manipulation caused our dependent variables to “regress to the mean.” This is to say that the White privilege condition may have unintentionally introduced doubts, which led people to hold less strong attitudes at both extremes, thus possibly shifting their scores toward the center of the distribution.

Another major limitation of the present research is that it was conducted during the initial peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection for this research project began on February 23, 2020, just one week after the cruise ship *Diamond Princess* was evacuated following 20 confirmed cases. Halfway through our data collection, on March 16th, the largest school district in the country – New York City – was closed and President Trump limited gatherings to under ten people. By the time data collection was complete, on April 9th, 2020, there were already 3,170 deaths and 164,620 confirmed cases in the USA (See Appendix 16 for timeline of relevant pandemic-related events, as compiled through Wikipedia review).

The pandemic circumstances, being so new, so surprising, and so dangerous, resulted in widespread fear, an experience highly relevant to the present project because when people are afraid, they feel threatened, thus effectively layering the threat individuals were feeling based on where they were in the country and the date they completed the experiment. Jost writes, “When people see their social systems threatened, they often cling to them defensively, seeking to return to and solidify the status quo—

even if they had previously questioned some aspects of the system and were open to the possibility of change” (Jost, 2020b). Thus, it is possible that the threat created by the COVID-19 could partially explain why a main effect of the White privilege threat was nullified.

As it relates to racial and ethnic prejudice specifically, there is a great deal of research linking threat to outgroup derogation and ingroup favoritism, which is particularly relevant to the present study, as many of the dependent variables relate to perceptions of BIPOC people by White people. There is both historical and current evidence for such trends. For example, one study found evidence that when White people were reminded of their own mortality they rated a White Nationalist as less racist than in a control condition and also rated an explicitly racist employer as less racist in the mortality salience condition (Greenberg et al., 2001). In the context of disease-related existential threat, Faulkner and colleagues found that chronic worry about infectious disease led to increased xenophobia, especially when the risk was salient (Faulkner et al., 2004). Navarrete and Fessler built on this work and found that perceived trait and experimentally induced disease vulnerability predicts greater ethnocentric attitudes (Navarrete & Fessler, 2006). There was also some evidence that during the Ebola pandemic, implicit bias against gay men increased, suggesting increased prejudice toward minority groups (Inbar et al., 2016). With this in mind, it is unclear exactly how such psychological findings would have impacted our results given our lack of a main effect if not by exacerbating downstream threat consequences.

While consistent with the defense of the racist status quo we found in those low in racial self-regard, the COVID-19 related findings summarized here do not explain the

apparent non-defensiveness of those high in racial self-regard, who also tended to be more politically conservative. The literature on motivated social cognition suggests that existential threat leads to a global shift toward more conservative ideologies and beliefs (Jost et al., 2017; Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003). In the present dataset, we found evidence of this conservative shift in more liberal participants but not in more conservative participants. However, when viewed through the lens of our conceptualization of these individuals as less racially insecure, there is a clear theoretical rationale: if one is more racially secure, one is less susceptible to threat, and therefore less defensive. This is certainly consistent with Jost's theory of conservatism as motivated social cognition.

Psychological Entitlement and Social Dominance. Lastly, one must consider why differences in social dominance and psychological entitlement did not affect reactions to evidence of White privilege. Based on our findings, it seems likely that psychological entitlement, on a global level, may not capture the defensiveness specific to White Fragility. To the contrary, our results suggest that there is something uniquely specific about racial self-worth and racial identification that influence defensiveness of the racial system, a relationship that is either not captured or simply too broad to be captured by psychological entitlement, as operationalized in the Psychological Entitlement Scale. This fits with Menakem's conceptualization of White racialized trauma, which suggests that enactments of racism and racial defensiveness are specifically White racialized processes caused by generations of intraracial violence within the White Western European cultural hegemony (2017). That is, the ways in which racism is carried out by White people is specific to the activation of their own White racialized trauma. This is also consistent with Miller and Joseph's

conceptualization, who posit that White grandiosity is specifically the displacement and projection of White people's fear and pain (2009). Although Whiteness broadly carries with it a generalized sense of deservingness, it seems possible that White defensiveness specifically is primarily related to White racial self-regard.

Moreover, within this framework of racialized deservingness, one can better understand the experience of relative deprivation of the "disenfranchised" White people of the modern conservative movement (Pied, 2018). Pied observed a sense of betrayal among this cohort of White, rural, working class people – likely people with high White self-regard. Such a depiction is consistent with Norton and Sommers' work suggesting such White people are increasingly holding attitudes that racism against Whites has worsened enormously over time (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

In the present study, consistent with past literature reviewed (e.g., Ho et al., 2012, 2015), social dominance orientation was a highly significant independent predictor of attitudes toward the racial status quo. High social dominance orientation, in terms of both hierarchical and anti-egalitarian beliefs, predicted greater support for the racial status quo, greater colorblind racial attitudes, greater racial prejudice, lower support for federal affirmative action policies, lower White racial guilt and shame, and greater White racial negation. However, it did not moderate the relationship between the manipulation and these outcomes. One likely reason could be related to distribution of the variable itself, which had a mean, median, and standard deviation of 2.40, 2.06, and 1.22 respectively on a 7-point scale. Thus, in this sample, it seems there may have been an insufficient distribution to test the hypothesis that those high in social dominance might respond differently because there was insufficient power to examine this group.

Future Directions

The present research lays the groundwork for a number of avenues for future work. Perhaps one of the most fruitful directions for further examination relates to our conceptualization of racial self-regard – the combination of White racial identity and White public collective self-esteem – as a form of “racial security.” Indeed, further analysis of the cross-racial ethnic identity scale could add richness to such endeavors as well. In 2015, Phillips and Lowery conducted a 2-by-2 study in which they used a White privilege prime similar to ours versus a control, all of which was preceded by either a self-affirmation condition or a control condition. They found that, when White people were affirmed, they were less defensive, as measured by claiming fewer life hardships than when they were not affirmed. This work is consistent with the implications of the present findings, especially for White people low in racial self-regard, i.e., those who became most defensive in our study. It is also consistent with our conceptualization of those who were non-defensive because they appeared to have the most racial security. Phillips and Lowery’s study suggests that for White people who are most insecure about their White identity, supporting their self-esteem as they engage critically with White privilege is pre-requisite to non-defensive discourse. Nevertheless, this is a fraught and difficult task. Simultaneously supporting White people’s fragile self-esteem while helping them engage with their privilege would inevitably be slow-going.

This idea is also consistent with the general notion in the American cultural zeitgeist that deep engagement with racial inequality, oppression, and White supremacy is extremely precarious for White people, and activates profound insecurity. There is certainly a broad perception that “wokeness” entails extreme sensitivity, even over-

sensitivity according to many on the political right (e.g., Summa, 2017). While this may be partially an overblown stereotype, it does seem that the more that White people grapple with White supremacy, the more insecure they became in their racial identities (many in the racial activist community might also argue that this is not a bad thing since it increases racial humility, the cornerstone of a multicultural orientation; e.g., Campinha-Bacote, 2019; Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). This insecurity also likely coincides with a heightened awareness of racial dynamics in everyday life. The fundamental paradox here is that the more “woke” to White supremacy White people become, the more difficult it becomes for them to engage on deeper levels. To this end, more thorough investigation of the White Racial Affect Scale would be a great means of examining this, especially as so little research has been conducted with the measure to date. The possibility of examining the role of self-affirmation or racial group affirmation to even temporarily ameliorate or dampen insecurity could be another rich line of inquiry.

Future work examining how to provide racial security is an important first step toward this goal. It calls to mind the potential for impact of White affinity groups in which White people can engage with anti-racist examinations of collusion with White Supremacy. White affinity groups can potentially provide a more secure (i.e., “safer”) space for White people to explore their racism and complicity in White supremacy. Research on the effectiveness of affinity groups would be an important first step in examining this hypothesis.

Moreover, based on the present conclusions, it seems that to maximally engage individuals in ongoing interrogation of White privilege, they need to feel racially secure. White Fragility appears to be a manifestation of this insecurity. To return to James

Baldwin, as cited in the epigraph to this dissertation, “[White people] will never, so long as their whiteness puts so sinister a distance between themselves and their own experience and the experience of others, feel themselves sufficiently human, sufficiently *worthwhile*, to become responsible for themselves, their leaders, their country” (1971, italics added). Just as Baldwin recognized a fundamental insecurity in White people that prevents them from engaging, our results suggest that interventions geared toward maintaining racial self-regard *while* interrogating the ways White people perpetuate racial inequality is necessary to sustain White engagement in anti-racist work.

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Appendix 1: Experimental and Control Condition

White Privilege (experimental) Condition:

The following paragraph is about racial issues in America. Please read carefully. You will be asked for your thoughts about it.

Despite increased visibility of matters of racial inequality in the last 50 years, most social scientists agree that even today White Americans enjoy many advantages that Black Americans do not. Even though many everyday Americans are aware of the existence of White privilege, this awareness has done nothing to improve inequality. In fact, racial inequality is as bad as it has ever been, and shows no signs of decreasing.

- - - - -

What is the topic of this Paragraph?

- Weather Conditions
- White Privilege
- Animal Kingdom
- Sports Medicine

Control Condition:

The following paragraph is about types of chairs. Please read carefully. You will be asked some questions.

"We use chairs in many different contexts. They are in homes, offices, schools, and movie theaters. Chairs are also on buses, trains, and airplanes. They serve a functional and important purpose in our lives. Chairs are made from materials such as plastic, wood, and metal. There are numerous types of chairs, including swivel chairs, recliners, and armchairs."

- - - - -

What is the topic of this Paragraph?

- Weather Conditions
- Chair Types
- Animal Kingdom
- Sports Medicine

Appendix 2: Schematic of Parts 1 and 2

Part 1

1. Informed Consent
2. Randomized
 - a. SDO
 - b. Psychological Entitlement
 - c. Collective Self-Esteem
 - d. White Racial Identification
 - e. Cross-Ethnic Racial Identity Scale
3. Demographics
4. Debrief

Part 2

1. Informed Consent
2. Randomized
 - a. Control condition
 - b. Experimental condition
3. Randomized
 - a. Implicit positive and negative affect test (IPANAT)
 - b. Positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS)
4. Randomized
 - a. Race System Justification
 - b. Colorblind Racial Attitude Scale
 - c. White Racial Affect Scale
 - d. Evaluative Bias
 - e. Socio-political Attitudes
5. Debrief

Appendix 3: Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
(Watson et al., 1988)

Indicate the extent to which you feel this way right now.

	Very slightly or not at all (1)	A little (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
Interested (1)					
Distressed (2)					
Excited (3)					
Upset (4)					
Strong (5)					
Guilty (6)					
Scared (7)					
Hostile (8)					
Enthusiastic (9)					
Proud (10)					
Irritable (11)					
Alert (12)					
Ashamed (13)					
Inspired (14)					
Nervous (15)					
Determined (16)					
Attentive (17)					
Jittery (18)					
Active (19)					
Afraid (20)					

Appendix 4: Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test
(Quirin et al., 2009)

The following words are from an artificial language. They are intended to express various moods. In all languages, there are words that help to express their meanings by the way they sound (for example, the word rattle almost sounds like something that rattles). In poetry and literature, this is known as onomatopoeia. For each of the following words, please rate how well each artificial word expresses different moods (for example, to what extent does the sound of the artificial word FILNU convey each of the following moods: happy, helpless, energetic, tense, cheerful, inhibited)? In making these ratings, let yourself be guided by your spontaneous feelings.

SAFME

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

VIKES

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

TUNBA

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

TALEP

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

BELNI

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

SUKOV

	doesn't fit at all (1)	fits somewhat (2)	fits quite well (3)	fits very well (4)
happy (1)				
helpless (2)				
energetic (3)				
tense (4)				
cheerful (5)				
inhibited (6)				

Appendix 5: White Racial Identification Scale

(Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005)

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Disagree Somewhat (3)	Neutral (4)	Agree Somewhat (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
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1. I am comfortable being White.
2. I believe that White people have a lot to be proud of.
3. Being White is an important part of who I am.
4. I feel good about being White.
5. Being White just feels natural to me.
6. I am not embarrassed to admit that I am White.
7. I identify with other Whites.

Appendix 6: Cross-Ethnic Racial Identity Scale

(Worrell et al., 2017)

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Disagree Somewhat (3)	Neutral (4)	Agree Somewhat (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
1.	Life in America is good for me					
2.	I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of an ethnic or racial group.					
3.	I think many of the stereotypes about my ethnic/racial group are true.					
4.	I go through periods when I am down on myself because of my ethnic group membership.					
5.	It is important for multiculturalists to be connected to people from many different groups, such as Latino/as, Asian Americans, European Americans, Jews, gays and lesbians, Blacks, multiethnic, etc.).					
6.	I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for the majority culture.					
7.	I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.					
8.	I believe that only people who accept a perspective from their ethnic/racial group can truly solve the race problem in America.					
9.	I believe it is important to have a multicultural perspective which is inclusive of everyone.					
10.	When I look in the mirror, sometimes I do not feel good about the ethnic/racial group I belong to.					
11.	If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be "American," and not a specific ethnic/racial group.					
12.	When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.					
13.	When people say things about my group that sound stereotypical, I find myself agreeing with them.					
14.	We cannot truly be free as a people until our daily lives are guided by values and principles grounded in our ethnic/racial heritage.					
15.	Members of the dominant group should be destroyed.					
16.	Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my ethnic/racial group.					
17.	If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial or ethnic group.					
18.	People should relax about being too politically correct because some stereotypes about our group are true.					
19.	When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong ethnic-cultural themes.					
20.	I hate people from the dominant racial/ethnic group.					
21.	I respect the ideas that other people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think from an ethnic/racial point of view.					

22. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues.
23. I believe it is important to have both an ethnic identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Whites, Jews, gays and lesbians, American Indians, etc.).
24. During a typical week in my life, I think about ethnic and cultural issues many, many times.
25. We will never be whole until we embrace our ethnic/racial heritage.
26. My negative feelings toward the majority culture are very intense.
27. I sometimes have negative feelings about being a member of my group.
28. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (gays and lesbians, African Americans, Jews, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, etc.).
29. My ethnic/racial group shares characteristics that are reflected in the stereotypes about us.

Appendix 7: SDO₇ Scale

(Ho et al., 2016)

Instructions: Show how much you favor or oppose each idea below by selecting a number from 1 to 7 on the scale below. You can work quickly; your first feeling is generally best.

1. Some groups of people must be kept in their place.
2. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
3. An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom.
4. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
5. Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top.
6. No one group should dominate in society.
7. Groups at the bottom should not have to stay in their place.
8. Group dominance is a poor principle.
9. We should not push for group equality.
10. We shouldn't try to guarantee that every group has the same quality of life.
11. It is unjust to try to make groups equal.
12. Group equality should not be our primary goal.
13. We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed.
14. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.
15. No matter how much effort it takes, we ought to strive to ensure that all groups have the same chance in life.
16. Group equality should be our ideal.

Appendix 8: Psychological Entitlement Scale

(Campbell et al., 2004)

Please respond to the following items using the number that best reflects your own beliefs. Please use the following 7-point scale: 1 = strong disagreement. 2 = moderate disagreement. 3 = slight disagreement. 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement. 5 = slight agreement. 6 = moderate agreement. 7 = strong agreement.

1. I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.
2. Great things should come to me.
3. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat!
4. I demand the best because I'm worth it.
5. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment. ®
6. I deserve more things in my life.
7. People like me deserve an extra break now and then.
8. Things should go my way.
9. I feel entitled to more of everything.

Appendix 9: Collective Self-Esteem Scale-Race Version
(Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)

INSTRUCTIONS: We are all members of different social groups or social categories. We would like you to consider **your race or ethnicity** (e.g., African-American, Latino/Latina, Asian, European-American) in responding to the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; we are interested in your honest reactions and opinions.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am a worthy member of my race/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I often regret that I belong to my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Overall, my racial/ethnic group is considered good by others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Overall, my race/ethnicity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	I feel I don't have much to offer to my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	In general, I'm glad to be a member of my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	Most people consider my racial/ethnic group, on the average, to be more ineffective than other groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	The racial/ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	I am a cooperative participant in the activities of my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Overall, I often feel that my racial/ethnic group is not worthwhile.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	In general, others respect my race/ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	My race/ethnicity is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I often feel I'm a useless member of my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	I feel good about the race/ethnicity I belong to.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	In general, others think that my racial/ethnic group is unworthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	In general, belonging to my race/ethnicity is an important part of my self image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 10: Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale
(Neville et al., 2000)

Directions. Below is a set of questions that deal with social issues in the United States (U.S.). Using the 6-point scale, please give your honest rating about the degree to which you personally agree or disagree with each statement. Please be as open and honest as you can; there are no right or wrong answers. Record your response to the left of each item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

1. _____ Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.

2. _____ Race plays a major role in the type of social services (such as type of health care or day care) that people receive in the U.S.

3. _____ It is important that people begin to think of themselves as American and not African American, Mexican American or Italian American.

4. _____ Due to racial discrimination, programs such as affirmative action are necessary to help create equality.

5. _____ Racism is a major problem in the U.S.

6. _____ Race is very important in determining who is successful and who is not.

7. _____ Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today.

8. _____ Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S.

9. _____ White people in the U.S. are discriminated against because of the color their skin.

10. _____ Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.

11. _____ It is important for political leaders to talk about racism to help work through or solve society's problems.

12. _____ White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
13. _____ Immigrants should try to fit into the culture and adopt the values of the U.S.
14. _____ English should be the only official language in the U.S.
15. _____ White people are more to blame for racial discrimination in the U.S. than racial and ethnic minorities.
16. _____ Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against White people.
17. _____ It is important for public schools to teach about the history and contributions of racial and ethnic minorities.
18. _____ Racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.
19. _____ Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations.
20. _____ Race plays an important role in who gets sent to prison.

Appendix 11: Evaluative Bias Scale

(Wolsko et al., 2006)

(1 = strongly disagree , 7 = strongly agree)

1. I would be completely comfortable in a social setting (such as a dance club or bar) where there were very few people from my ethnic group. **R**
2. I would be completely comfortable dating someone from a different ethnic group (if I was single). **R**
3. It would bother me if my child married someone from a different ethnic background.
4. I would prefer to live in a neighborhood with people of my same ethnic origin.
5. If I were living with others in a house or an apartment, I would be more comfortable if my roommates were from my same ethnic background.
6. I would rather work alongside people of my same ethnic origin

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements from completely disagree to completely agree by filling in the corresponding bubble.

[illegible]

Appendix 13: Sociopolitical Issues

Federal Affirmative Action

Please rate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. 1-7
Likert scale from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)

1. The federal government should try to hire a diverse group of individuals.
2. The federal government should use hiring quotas to make sure that they employ a certain percentage of minorities and females.
3. The federal government should send recruiters to poor neighborhoods to give people who are less advantaged an opportunity to apply for jobs.
4. The federal government should not give special attention to job applicants based on their race or sex.
5. The federal government should set up training programs to help the unemployed make the transition to the working world.
6. The federal government should hire the best qualified applicants regardless of their background or personal qualities.
7. People should be able to find jobs without the assistance of special programs.
8. If two applicants for a federal government job are equally qualified, the government should hire the applicant whose race or sex is underrepresented in that type of job.
9. Since the sciences are heavily male-dominated, the federal government should set up special programs to encourage women to pursue a scientific career.
10. The federal government should always hire on a race-blind and sex-blind basis.

Social Attitudes

Please rate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. 1-7
Likert scale from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Agree (7)

1. ALM All Lives Matter is a phrase that has come to be associated with criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement. Some supporters use the slogan as part of a claim that Black Lives Matter overlooks the importance of other kinds of people,

- including police officers, who also die due to violence. Do you disagree or agree with the phrase All Lives Matter?
2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
The US has been on a positive trajectory in the past 4 years, since the election of President Trump.
 3. How likely are you to vote in the 2020 presidential election? (1-5 scale from (very unlikely (1) to very likely (5).
 4. The criminal justice system treats African Americans fairly.
 5. African Americans in prison earned the prison sentences they receive.
 6. Which comes closest to your view about undocumented immigrants who are currently living in the United States?
 - a. They should be allowed to stay in the United States and to eventually apply for U.S. citizenship.
 - b. They should be allowed to remain in the United States, but not be allowed to apply for U.S. citizenship.
 - c. They should be required to leave the United States.
 7. Do you oppose or support building a wall along the border with Mexico? (1-7 Likert scale from strongly oppose to strongly support)
 8. Do you oppose or support allowing undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children to remain in the United States and eventually apply for citizenship (e.g., DACA)?
 9. In an attempt to discourage families from crossing the U.S. border illegally, the Trump administration had been prosecuting the parents immediately, which meant separating parents from their children. To what degree did you oppose or support this policy?
 10. Please indicate how much you oppose or support requiring immigrants from Muslim countries to register with the federal government.
 11. Please indicate how much you oppose or support suspending immigration from "terror-prone" regions, even if it means turning away refugees from those regions.
 12. Please use the scale below to respond to the following questions about climate change based on how you feel right now (Likert scale 1-7 from definitely not to definitely).
 - a. Do you believe that global warming is occurring?
 - b. Do you believe that global warming is caused by human behavior?
 - c. Do you believe that there is strong scientific evidence that global warming is occurring and man-made?
 13. Which comes closest to your views about former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who gained national attention when he began protesting by not standing while the United States national anthem was being performed before the start of games? (1-7 Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree).
 - a. Choosing not to stand during the national anthem is protected by freedom of speech.
 - b. It is unpatriotic not to stand during the national anthem.
 - c. Not standing during the national anthem is a powerful way for an athlete to make a statement about an important issue.

- d. Colin Kaepernick should be penalized by the NFL for not standing during the national anthem.
- e. I support Colin Kaepernick's decision not to stand during the national anthem.

Political Ideology

1. Where on the following scale of political orientation (from extremely liberal to extremely conservative) would you place yourself (overall, in general)? 1-7 Likert Scale from Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative.
2. In terms of social and cultural issues, how liberal or conservative are you? 1-7 Likert Scale from Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative.
3. In terms of economic issues, how liberal or conservative are you? 1-7 Likert Scale from Extremely Liberal to Extremely Conservative.

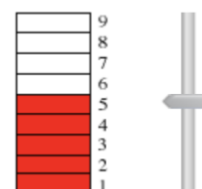
Appendix 14: Subjective Social Class

☐ SubSC



Think of this chart as representing where people stand in our society. At the top are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job.

Slide the marker to the bar that best represents where you think you stand:



Appendix 15: White Racial Affect Scale

(Grzanka et al., 2020)

Below are situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by several common reactions to those situations. As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate how likely you would be to react in each of the ways described. We ask you to rate all responses because people may feel or react more than one way to the same situation, or they may react in different ways at different times.

Here is a sample question with responses already selected:

You wake up early one Saturday morning. It is cold and rainy outside.

a. You would telephone a friend to catch up on news.

(1) not likely	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) very likely
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b. You would take the extra time to read the paper.

(1) not likely	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) very likely
----------------	-----	-----	-----	-----------------

c. You would feel disappointed that it's raining.

(1) not likely	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) very likely
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In the above practice question, the sample participant selected a “1” for answer (a) because they wouldn’t want to wake up a friend very early on a Saturday morning – so it’s not at all likely that they would do that. They selected a “5” for answer (b) because they almost always read the paper if they have time in the morning (very likely). They

selected a “3” for answer (c) because for them it’s about half and half: sometimes they would be disappointed about the rain and sometimes they wouldn’t be.

1. In a class, you are corrected for your usage of the term, “Blacks.”
 - a. You would think: “Labels don’t really matter.”
 - b. You would apologize and ask your instructor for the correct/appropriate usage of the term.
 - c. You would think: “It’s not my fault – I can’t keep up with all this political correctness.”
2. You read a news story about White students at large private university dressing in “Blackface” for a theme party.
 - a. You would think: “That’s so awful. I hope they have to face consequences for their behavior.”
 - b. You would wish you weren’t White.
 - c. You would think: “I’m sure the students didn’t mean any harm.”
3. One of your White friends uses the N-word in a joke and you laugh.
 - a. You would feel small and think about it for days.
 - b. You would think: “If Black people can use the N-word, why can’t White people?”
 - c. You would stop laughing and tell the friend that you don’t think racist language is OK, even when joking.
4. You read a news article about a recent hurricane in which wealthy White people were able to evacuate and the poorer Black majority was left behind; many people died.
 - a. You would think: “That’s not a race issue. That’s a social class issue.”
 - b. You would feel sad and send whatever money you could to the relief effort.
 - c. You would hate yourself for being White.
5. You realize that all characters on your favorite television show are White.
 - a. You would feel bad for not noticing sooner and never watch the show again.
 - b. You would think: “It wouldn’t be realistic if there were lots of minorities on the show.”
 - c. You would think: “I don’t care what the characters look like as long as the show is entertaining.”
6. You read a Civil War novel about American slavery that describes violent abuse of Black slaves by White slave-owners.
 - a. You would feel depressed and sad about the history of racism in the United States.
 - b. You would think: “I wish there was something I could do to make up for all the harm slavery caused Black people.
 - c. You would think: “Slavery was awful, but people need to get over it and move on.”

Appendix 16: Timeline of COVID-19 Pandemic

- January 21st – First recorded case in USA (Washington State)
- January 29th – Trump creates Coronavirus Taskforce
- February 6th – First US COVID-19 confirmed death in California
- February 15th – Cruiseship *Diamond Princess* evacuated with 20 confirmed cases
- March 1st – first confirmed case in NY from woman travelling in Iran
- March 10th – WHO declares global pandemic
- March 13th – Declared National State of Emergency and Trump tests negative.
- March 15th – Harvard evacuates its campus
- March 16th – NYC public schools close. Trump issues guidelines for to limit gatherings to 10 ppl
- March 20th - ~20,000 confirmed cases, 250 deaths
- March 26th – USA passes China for most COVID-19 cases worldwide. USS Comfort sent to NYC
- March 31st – average date for which stay at home orders implemented¹
- 3,170 deaths and 164,620 confirmed cases in USA
- April 9th – protests of social distancing and state-at-home begin in Ohio
- April 14th – Trump revokes WHO funding
- April 20th – Gov Kemp of Georgia announces plan to re-open on 4/24/20
- April 30th – over 60k total US deaths and over 1 million cases.