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_____   _____
Celeste N. Lee   Date

A Portrait of Black Millennials' Understanding of Racial Dynamics in the 21st Century

By

Celeste N. Lee

Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

_____
Irene Browne, Ph.D.
Co-Chair

_____
Amanda Lewis, Ph.D.
Co-Chair

_____
Robert Agnew, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Tina M. Harris, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

_____
Date

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Celeste N. Lee

M.A.T, Duke University, 2004

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Co-Chair: Irene Browne, Ph.D.

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An abstract of

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Abstract

A Portrait of Black Millennials' Understanding of Racial Dynamics in the 21st Century

By Celeste N. Lee

In the 21st century, the dominant racial ideology suggests that we live in a colorblind, post-racial society in which most people do not see color or care about racial differences. Accordingly, this ideology suggests that racial egalitarianism exists in contemporary U.S. society. The ideals of colorblindness and post-racialism have gained great traction within the last decade, despite recent scholarship that calls into question the core beliefs of colorblind post-racial ideology and documentation of persistent racial inequality in nearly all aspects of American life. Currently, the U.S. presents a structural and ideological conundrum whereby race continues to matter in determining the life chances of ethno-racial group members despite dominant ideological assumptions that articulate the belief that race is irrelevant today.

Prior research reveals that White millennials overwhelmingly embrace colorblind post-racial logic. Research on millennials of color, however, is virtually non-existent. This dissertation seeks to understand the ways in which groups of color make sense of and understand contemporary racial dynamics. Specifically, this project explores how Black millennials reconcile two competing realities: (1) an ideological reality dominated by colorblind/post-racial discourse and (2) a structural reality characterized by persistent racial inequality and disadvantage.

Drawing on data from 61 in-depth interviews with Black college students from two historically white, public, state flagship universities --- one in the southern and one in the western regions of the U.S. ---this dissertation offers a reflection of the ideological frameworks that Black millennials espouse in an effort to make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century. In stark contrast to existing data on White millennials, this research revealed that Black millennials draw upon colorblind post-racial ideology in very nuanced and contradictory ways. Nearly all of the Black millennials in this study reject the claim that the U.S. is a colorblind or post-racial society. Nonetheless, their understandings and explanations of racial inequality often draw upon colorblind post-racial ideological frameworks. Ultimately, Black millennials present conflicting understandings of racial dynamics that reflect ideological commitments to both race consciousness and colorblind post-racialism. These data revealed minimal regional difference in Black millennials' likelihood of investing in race conscious or colorblind post-racial ideologies. Early childhood and adolescence experiences with racial socialization, however, may have some influence on Black millennials' commitment to race-conscious ideological frameworks.

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Table of Contents

A Portrait of Black Millennials' Understanding of Racial Dynamics in the 21st Century

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 20th century, W.E.B. Dubois proclaimed that the most defining problem of the century would be "the problem of the color line."[1] As the 21st century ushered in, political analysts, journalists, and some scholars began to purport that the color line would no longer be an issue in the new millennium (D'Souza 1995; Cose 1998; Thernstrom & Thernstrom 2003; Dowd 2009; CBS 2010). These sentiments were further crystalized with the 2008 election of the nation's first Black president, Barack Obama. For many, his presidency represented the pinnacle of racial progress and served as definitive proof that we have entered a post-racial era (Geller 2008; Nagourney 2008; Park and Hughey 2011). As a result, today the dominant view of U.S. race relations suggests that we live in a colorblind or post-racial society (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Cho 2009; Cohen 2011; Forman 2014).

The colorblind/post-racial perspective posits that institutional and interpersonal discrimination are things of the past; that the current social context is an equal playing field whereby individuals' hard work and credentials are the central determinants of success, not race or ethnicity (Gallagher 2003). Research supporting the idea of a post-racial transformation in the U.S. comes primarily from work focused on White millennials[2] who contend they do not notice color and that racial equality, for the most

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[1] Dubois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folks*. Cambridge: University Press John Wilson and Son.
[2] Coined by Howe and Strauss (2003), "Millennial Generation" refers to persons born from 1982 to the present. They are a generational cohort distinctly different from their parents of the Baby Boomer generation and their immediate predecessors, Generation X.

part, has been achieved.[3] Likewise, White millennials' report increasingly more tolerant racial attitudes, increased patterns of interracial dating, and more cross-racial consumption of popular culture (Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Apollon 2011; Bobo 2011; Saulny 2011). Accordingly, many people believe that millennials are beyond issues of race and racism (Bai 2010; Saulny 2011). The voices and experience of millennials of color, however, have been largely absent from research and debates on contemporary race relations.

The dearth of information on youth's of color racial views reflects a larger problem in research on race and racism. Traditionally, researchers have aimed to understand racial dynamics by investigating Whites' reactions to Blacks (Pettigrew 1985). Likewise, contemporary studies, that examine youths' racial ideologies and attitudes as a barometer of the current racial climate in the United States, continue to overwhelmingly define the present racial scene from Whites' standpoint[4]. Consequently, this literature (with a few exceptions[5]) is devoid of an analysis of how youth of color think about race and make sense of their position in the larger racialized social structure. Additionally, these studies fail to address the "impact" of dominant racial ideology (i.e., colorblind, post-racial ideology) on the ways in which non-dominant ethno-racial groups understand and experience race in the contemporary context.

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[3] Gallup Polls. "Race Relations." Retrieved August 11, 2011 (http://www.gallup.com/poll/1687/Race-Relations.aspx#1).
[4] for examples see: Tuch, Sigelman, and MacDonald 1999; Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2001; Forman 2001; O'Brien 2001; Perry 2001, 2002; Andolina and Mayer 2003; Myers 2005; Blinder 2007
[5] For examples see: Apollon (2011); Cohen (2010); Maira (2002); Perry (2002); Olsen (1998); Pinderhughes (1997).

The U.S. is increasingly becoming a majority "non-White" country. In 2012, Whites accounted for less than half of all births (Tavernese 2012). Although Whites still represent an overwhelming majority of the population, the trends in birth rates suggests that future generations will be more racially diverse and ultimately, majority non-White. The change in U.S. racial demographics will inevitably lead to significant changes in U.S. racial politics. Accordingly, it is imperative that researchers gain a better understanding of the ways in in which groups of color experience and makes sense of race. As one of the largest groups of color in the U.S., it is particularly important that scholars devote more time to understanding how Black youth understand and experience race. Additionally, in the absence of information on how groups of color engage colorblind post-racial discourse, it especially useful to collect data on Blacks' racial views because Blacks and Whites occupy polar opposite positions in the U.S. racial hierarchy (Kim 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Feagin 2010)

Despite dominant claims that race no longer matters in central ways to the American experience, researchers continue to document significant differences between the social, economic, and political experiences of Blacks (as well as other ethno-racial groups) and Whites. Of all ethno-racial groups, Blacks are most likely to be unemployed, live below the poverty line, and attend under-resourced schools. On the contrary, Whites make up 94% of all CEOs, report the highest percent of

homeownership, and are more likely to attend schools that offer a full range of math and science courses[6] (Reskin 2000; Massey 2007).

The data on racial stratification demonstrates the continued salience of race in the United States. For Blacks, in particular, race continues to have major consequences for the kind of life experiences and opportunities that they face. Accordingly, race continues to matter in significant ways for Black youth's life experiences. Race impacts Black millennials' neighborhood environment, educational opportunities, socioeconomic status, and interactions with various social institutions as well as social actors. Yet, scholarship on colorblind, post-racialism and youth's racial views often presents millennials as a monolithic group. To this end, existing research provides insight into the ways in which White millennials are making sense of race in the 21st century but fails to acknowledge the fact that their peers' of color may have divergent experiences and views.

It is important to understand not only how White millennials but *also* how Black millennials reconcile two competing realities: dominant claims of U.S. colorblindness and post-racialism on the one hand and ever-present structural racial inequality on the other hand. A more inclusive understanding of millennials' experiences with and views of contemporary racial dynamics, is necessary before we can accurately assess and make claims about the U.S.' transition towards colorblind, post-racial ideals. Likewise, we must seek to understand the impact of hegemonic ideals, like colorblind post-

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[6] "Full range" refers to Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Calculus, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. 71% of Whites attend schools that these academic courses while only 57% of Blacks attend schools that offer these programs. See: http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html?src=rt/

racialism, on Black millennials' understanding of and experiences with race and racism

in the 21st Century – such an analysis is important to predicting and theorizing the

future of racial politics in the U.S. for years to come.

Purpose of the Current Study

The limited research that does investigate racial views among youth of color

tends to focus on groups' attitudes toward other groups, the government, and other

social institutions (Pinderhughes 1997; Cohen 2010; Apollon 2011). More work is

needed, however, to better understand the ideological frameworks that youth of color

draw upon to make sense of the impact of race in their daily experiences as well as

society at large. Additionally, much of what we know about youth's of color racial views

is from data collected prior to the election of President Obama (Pinderhuges 1997;

Cohen 2010).[7] As a result, existing research offers a limited analysis of how youth of

color believe race "works" in the U.S' contemporary context. It is important to

understand how millennials of color talk about and make sense of racial dynamics in the

midst of pervasive messages that paint the U.S. as a colorblind, post-racial society.

This dissertation explores the current gaps in the research literature by

investigating how Black millennials talk about, understand, and engage with race.

Specifically, I interviewed 61 Black college students at two large public, historically

white, flagship institutions – one in the southern region of the U.S. (Georgia University)

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[7] The election of President Obama is significant because his presidency defines contemporary racial dynamics; many commentators argue that his election ushered in an era where race no longer matters (Dowd 2009; CBS 2010; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011)

and one in western region (California University) of the U.S. This project explores

whether the colorblind post-racial ideological frameworks documented among White

millennials can be mapped on to Black millennials' understanding of racial dynamics.

Ultimately, this project provides a portrait of the nuanced contradictory ideological

frameworks that Black millennials draw upon to makes sense of the place of race in their

lives and the world around them.

Research Questions

This project addresses existing gaps in the literature on millennials, colorblind

post-racial ideology, and racial dynamics by investigating the racial views of Black youth.

Specifically, this project explores three main questions:

1) How do Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century?

2) To what extent do Black millennials' ideas about race and racial dynamics differ
   from dominant understandings (i.e. colorblind/ post-racial ideology)?

3) How does social context (South vs. West) impact the ways in which Black youth
   understand race and racial dynamics?

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws upon two main theoretical frameworks to situate Black

millennials' racial views and experiences within 21st century discussions of race and

racism: 1) Racialized Social Structures and 2) Colorblind/Post-racialism. I begin with a

discussion of Racialized Social Structures and its application to the current study. I

conclude with an overview of Colorblind/Post-racialism and its significance to the current study.

Racialized Social Structures

There are numerous approaches to understanding race, race relations, and racism[8]. According to the racialized social systems approach, races are socially constructed categories that reflect a very real material reality; membership in a particular racial group is directly tied to specific political, economic, societal, and psychological rewards[9]. In all racialized social systems, social relations are structured along a hierarchy; as a result, the racial group in the superordinate (dominant) position receives political, economic, societal, and psychological advantages such as: greater representation in key political roles, higher wages or access to better jobs, the power to physically or socially exclude other racial groups from particular spaces/social institutions, higher social estimation, and feelings of superiority over other racial groups (Bonilla-Silvia 2001). Once a society is racialized and stratified, a set of social relations and practices based on racial distinctions develops at all societal levels (I.e., politically, economically, socially, and ideologically). These relations and practices help to reinforce the racial structure. Collectively, this type of structuring of society along racial lines with

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[8] See Racial Formation, Internal Colonialsim, Marxist Perspective, etc.
[9] This theory acknowledges that in addition to race, societies are structured along class and gender lines; nonetheless, once a society becomes racialized, race begins to have an independent effect on social actors's life chances and experiences.

differential rewards and the accompanying social relations and practices is called a "racialized social system".

As the racialized social structure becomes institutionalized, racial ideologies simultaneously develop. Hegemonic, or dominant, ideologies serve to affirm the racial status quo while counter-hegemonic, or non-dominant, ideologies serve to challenge the racial status quo (Gramsci 1971). The dominant ideology serves to justify the superordinate group's position in the racial structure while also serving as a guide to racial meaning for all social actors. Accordingly, Bonilla-Silva (2001) defines *dominant* racial ideology as the "segment of the ideological structure of a social system that crystallizes racial notions and stereotypes. Racial ideology provides the rationalization for social, political, and economic interactions among the races." All actors buy into dominant ideological frameworks of society to some degree. Dominant ideology becomes the common sense understanding of how race works in a particular society. In this way, the ideas of the dominant racial group become the ideas that govern racial politics at large (Marx and Engels 1970).

Despite the pervasiveness of dominant ideology, opposition and racial contestation are inherent in racialized social systems. Since each racial classification is associated with differing rewards, access, and life experiences, each racial group develops different material interests. As a result, the group in the superordinate position fights to protect and maintain their position while groups in subordinate positions fight for greater access and equality. In this vein, non-dominant groups challenge aspects of the existing ideology that contradict their objective interest.

Ultimately, Racialized Social Structures Theory describes racism as the combination of both the structure of racial inequality in society and the ideology that supports said structure.

This project draws upon racialized social systems theory with its emphasis on understanding the ways in which Black millennials reconcile Blacks' subordinate position in the U.S. racial hierarchy (i.e., structure) and pervasive, dominant ideology that portrays the U.S. racial structure as racial neutral (I.e., post-racial, colorblind). Given the impact that race has on individuals and groups' lived experiences and the different material reality that Blacks face compared to their White counterparts, it is reasonable to expect that Black milennials understand the world, and racial dynamics in particular, somewhat differently than White millennials.

Colorblind/ Post-racialism Ideology

Race scholars contend that racial structures and ideologies shift over time in response to structural changes in racial dynamics and changes in social norms regarding acceptable ways of expressing racial antipathy and maintaining racial dominance (Blumer 1958; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995; Forman and Lewis 2006). For example, the rigid segregationist polices of the Jim Crow era and the overtly racist ideologies that justified them are no longer legal or socially acceptable. However, the political, economic, and social advantages that are associated with whiteness still remain. Consequently, most academics contend that that racism continues to be a defining feature of American Society (Yancy 2008; Alexander 2012).

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Today, U.S. racial dynamics reflect a change in the kind of racism that is prevalent rather than real differences in the degree to which people are racist or intolerant in society. Accordingly, race theorists argue that today racial inequality persists under a "New Racism" regime. This *new racism* is characterized by more covert and subtle forms of discrimination, appears apparently non-racial, and relies heavily on institutionalized racial inequities rather than individual experiences with "racists", making it more difficult to identify (Myers 2005; Hill 2009; Forman 2010; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011).

Scholars have discussed "new racism" under the guises of a variety of terms such as "symbolic racism" (Kinder and Sears 1981; Tarman and Sears 2005), "aversive racism" (Dovidio and Gaertner 2004; Pearson, Dovidio, and Gaertner 2009), "laissez-faire racism" (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997). Each of these concepts are related in the sense that they describe a "gentler", "kinder" form or racism; these concepts do, however, differ substantively and/or theoretically from one another. Most recently scholars have discussed new racism in terms of "colorblind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Tynes and Markoe 2010) or "Post-racialism" (Cho 2009; Forman 2014).

At their core, both ideologies suggest that racial equality has been achieved in the U.S and that the contemporary social context is race neutral. As a result, these ideological frameworks rationalize the racial status quo as the outcome of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and alleged cultural deficiencies among minority groups at the bottom of the social structure (Lipistz 2006; Cho 2009; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrech 2011; Forman 2014). Consequently, institutionalized racial

inequalities are widely accepted and/or ignored under the guise that we live in a meritocracy where all individuals, regardless of race, are free to compete. Based on their shared assumptions, I draw upon scholarship on colorblind and post-racial ideology to discuss the ideologies as a collective ideology - colorblind post-racial ideology. As a collective ideology, colorblind post-racialism reflects the hegemonic racial ideology of the 21st century.[10]

Far from a reality, colorblind post-racialism is viewed as a manifestation of the dominant racial ideologies that maintain and justify the racist status quo at the present time (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Forman and Lewis 2006; Cho 2009; Cohen 2010; Tynes and Markoe 2010; Apollon 2011; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011). Unlike the other concepts of "New Racism", colorblind/post-racialism is a theory not based on "prejudices" grounded in individual level attitudes and dispositions, rather it is a theory that highlights the group level expressions of racial meaning and understanding. In congruence with Racialized Social Structure theory, dominant ideologies are a reflection of the dominant ethno-racial groups' material reality or location in the racialzied social structure.

Bonilla-Silva (2006:74) argues, "The central component of any dominant racial ideology is its frames or set paths for interpreting information." These frames serve as guides for social actors as they navigate through racial issues or explain racial dynamics. To this end, dominant racial frames provide the psychological or intellectual foundation

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[10] Although scholars present colorblind racism and post-racialism theoretically distinct ideologies (I discuss these distinctions more in-depth in Chapter 2), I argue that their shared assumptions about racial dynamics suggests that there is more overlap than difference between the two ideologies.

for justifying White supremacy on the part of the dominant group and minimizing efforts towards racial equality on the part of non-dominant groups (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011; Bonilla-Silvia 2006). According to Bonilla-Silva (2006), colorblind racism, in particular, draws upon four frames: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization.[11]

Of the four frames, Bonilla-Siva (2006) argues, "abstract liberalism" is the most important frame because it serves as the foundation to colorblind ideology. Abstract liberalism is the belief that the U.S. is a land of opportunity; one in which everyone has a fair chance to succeed as long as they work hard. Accordingly, advantaged social positions are explained as the result of hard work while disadvantaged social positions are explained as the result of failing to work hard. Central to the notion of abstract liberalism are the concepts of choice and individualism; thus, Whites justify persistent residential and school segregation on the grounds that people should be able to "choose" where they want to live or where they want to send their children to school (Bonilla-Siva 2003).

The second frame, "naturalization", allows Whites to explain away racial phenomena, like segregation and endogamy, by suggesting that they are natural, innate, and non-racial occurrences in the social world. Beliefs in naturalization are manifested in phrases such as "Birds of a feather flock together" or "it's just the way it is." People are believed to just gravitate towards sameness, especially where racial matters are

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[11] Scholars of post-racial ideology articulate similar concepts to describe how post-racial rhetoric becomes "framed" in everyday attempts by social actors to explain, navigate, and dismiss racial phenomenon. The labels, categories, or phrasing that post-racial scholars draw upon are different but the core concepts are the same (See Forman 2014 or Cho 2009).

concerned. Third, "cultural racism" frameworks rely on cultural arguments to explain

ethno-racial groups' disadvantaged social position. Disadvantaged groups are described

as having the wrong values or morals. This frame often "blames the victim" for their

disadvantaged position. Statements such as "Blacks don't put enough emphasis on

education" or "Latinos have too many babies" aim to characterize ethno-racial

minorities as culturally inferior to the dominant ethno-racial group (Bonilla- Silva 2003:

28).

Prior research reveals that Whites often use cultural racism frames in

conjunction with "minimization" frames (Bonilla-Silva 2003)[12]. The minimization

framework posits that discrimination is a thing of the past and that contemporary race

relations are relatively unproblematic. This framework fails to recognize racism as a

structural phenomenon. Consequently, Whites believe that discrimination no longer

operates as a key factor affecting ethno-racial minorities' life chances. Likewise,

discussions of racism are characterized as non-Whites being hypersensitive or "playing

the race card" (Bonilla-Silva 2006) Research data shows that White youth, are more

likely than the White adults to acknowledge the existence of discrimination; however,

few college students believe that discrimination and institutionalized racism are the

reasons some ethno-racial groups lag behind Whites in the U.S (Bonilla-Silva 2003;

Blinder 2007).

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[12] Bonilla-Silva (2003: 40) argues that this is a "deadly" combination because if people of color say that they have experience discrimination, Whites do not believe them. Furthermore, Whites perceive such claims to be an "excuse" and a reflection of said group(s) cultural deficiencies.

In this study, I draw upon colorblind/ post-racial ideologies to describe the current context in which Black millennial's must form and shape their experiences and views of racial dynamics. Additionally the four colorblind frames (abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization) serve as a theoretical framework for analyzing how Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics, namely racial inequality, in the 21st century.

Significance of Study

My dissertation contributes to literature on Race and Ethnic Relations as well as Race Theory by exploring the relationship between youth of color, social context, and racial ideology. Very few research studies focus on young people's ideas about race. Likewise very few studies focus on the racial opinions and views of people of color. As a result, the research that does exist on youth's racial views tends to focus on the views of White youth, rendering the views and ideas of youth of color underexplored. This dissertation makes a critical intervention in racial ideology discourse on colorblind, post-racialism by giving voice to the racial views and opinions of Black millennials. In doing so, this project elevates the continued importance of social context in our understandings of what it means to be Black for youth in the 21st century.

In the absence of research on millennials of color and their racial ideologies, current research on race relations - which describes millennials as colorblind or post-racial - ultimately only provides insight into the ways in which *White* millennials are making sense of race in the 21st century. Existing research, however, fails to

acknowledge the fact that Black millennials may embrace divergent views. Recent social media campaigns which highlight students' of color experiences with micro aggression and racial inequality across numerous college campuses suggests that Black students continue to have experiences that challenge dominant views of a post-racial U.S. society. Thus, there is major tension between where people "say" we are heading with regard to race relations and where we are actually heading with regard to race relations. This dissertation contributes to the body of empirical evidence that allows us to more accurately contextualize race relations in the 21st century.

Lastly, demographers speculate that people of color will constitute the majority of the American population by 2042. Several states including, California, Texas, Hawaii, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia already have populations that are majority non-white. Given the U.S.' changing ethno-racial demography it is reasonable to assume that millennials' of color racial ideologies will play a defining role in the future of racial dynamics in the U.S. Accordingly, because Blacks are one of the largest ethno-racial groups in North America, it is particularly important that we understand how Black millennials understand, make sense of, and experience race today. Bonilla-Silva (2001:12) argues that, within a racialized social structure, *all* actors are important to the production and reproduction of the racial status quo. Therefore, the racial ideologies that Black millennials' draw upon have significant implications for the maintenance and/or contestation of the present racialized social structure.

Overview of Study

In the chapters to come, I provide more insight into studies of race, youth, ideology, and Black millennials. In chapter two of this dissertation, I begin with a review of literature on the concept of ideology and its implications for the construction and maintenance of social actors' social reality. It is in this chapter that I further explore the theoretical framework of colorblind and post-racial ideology. I also use this chapter to explore theories about alternative racial ideologies. I conclude the chapter by providing a review of literature on Blacks' racial views. In the absence of a wealth of data on Black millennials', I also review scholarship on Black adults' racial views.

Chapter three provides an overview of my methodology. In this chapter I describe my research aims, the research design, rationale for the design, the sample, and data collection procedures. This chapter also contains a description of my two the research sites – "Georgia University" and "California University". I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my data analysis procedures.

Chapter four of this dissertation is the first of for substantive chapters. In this chapter I discuss how Black millennials respond to colorblind post-racial discourse. In general, most of the Black millennials in this study adamantly refute claims that the U.S. is colorblind or post-racial. They do so based on both micro and macro understandings of what racism "is" and how racism operates in contemporary society. This chapter brings to life one side of the Black millennials ideological paradox: Black millennials believe that race still matters in significant ways.

Chapter five presents the other side of the ideological paradox: most Black millennials use colorblind post-racial logic to explain racialized outcomes in the domains of economics, education, and criminal justice. As a result, most Black millennials do not see race as a *key* factor in explaining racial disparities in wealth, high school graduation rates, and incarceration rates. This pattern is true, despite Black millennials personal experiences with race and racism and their ideological commitments to the falsehood of colorblind post-racial discourse.

In chapter six, I continue to explore Black millennials' understandings of racial inequality and ultimately the contradictory racial ideologies that they draw upon to explain racial dynamics. This chapter reveals that Black Millennials are not completely consumed by colorblind post-racial explanations of structural racial inequality. Although colorblind post-racial logic seems to dominate their understandings of structural inequality, Black millennials are often reconciling these colorblind ideologies with race conscious ideologies. Chapter six is devoted to examining the ways in which Black millennials also partially draw upon race-conscious, structural explains of racial inequality. I conclude the chapter by discussing Black millennials collective ideology regarding race and the criminal justices system – this is the domain that Black millennials were most likely to express race-conscious viewpoints.

Chapter seven represents the last of the four data chapters. In this chapter I delve deep into the racial views and experiences of a subset of my sample that I label "uniformly race conscious." These participants seemed to be unscathed by the allure of colorblind post-racial rhetoric. They do not endorse colorblind post-racial ideals at any

point during their discussions of racial inequality or more general racial dynamics. In this chapter, I explore possible factors contributing to these participants uniformly race conscious point of view. In doing so, I examine two common experiences among the uniformly race conscious participants: racial socialization and racialized moments. I conclude the chapter by presenting how these experiences play out in the biographies of the Black youth in this sample.

Chapter 8 serves as my concluding chapter. Here I revisit my initial research questions and offer a summary of how the findings of this dissertation increase our understanding of 1) how Black millennials experience and make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century and 2) the impact of hegemonic colorblind/post-racial ideology on millennials' of color. Next, I summarize the general contributions of this dissertation to study of youth, race, and ideology. I also address the limitations of the current study and offer suggestions for future research. Lastly, I provide comments regarding the broader implication of my research and findings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that follows provides a foundation for understanding the ideology

and the role of ideological frameworks in constructing social realities. Additionally, this

literature provides a base for theorizing about the ways in which Black millennials might

be making sense of contemporary racial dynamics. The discussion begins with an

overview of the theoretical development of the concept of ideology. Specifically, I

discuss traditional and contemporary theories of ideology. Next, I further unpack the

dominant or hegemonic racial ideology of the 21st century and offer a discussion of

Black political ideology as a starting point for theorizing about non-dominant or counter-

hegemonic racial ideologies. Lastly, I offer a review of existing research on Black adults

and Black millennials' racial views to provide background information on what we

already know about Blacks' racial understandings.

Rethinking Racial Attitudes to Account For Racial Ideology

Much of the existing literature on ethno-racial groups' racial views reflects a long

tradition of examining race and racism through the lens of individual attitudinal data

(see Allport 1954; Kinder and Sear 1981; Schuman et al. 1997; Martin and Tuch 1997;

Bobo 2001). Dating back to seminal text by W.E.B. Dubois (1899), Robert E. Park (1914),

Emory S. Bogardus (1928), and Gunnar Myrdal (1944), race relations scholarship has

overwhelmingly focused on individuals' racial attitudes - the degree to which individuals

are prejudiced or tolerant. More recently, however, scholars like Bonilla-Silva (2003b)

have critiqued this approach and argue for a shift from the individualistic framework of the prejudice paradigm to the group-based framework of the racial ideology paradigm.

In general, ideology refers to a set of beliefs or values that inform people's behavior. Ideology is reflected in the broad mental and moral frameworks that social groups use to make sense of their world (Prager 1982; Bonilla-Silva 2001: 62). Specifically, racial ideology refers to the frameworks ethno-racial groups use to make sense of racial inequality, group differences, interpersonal racism, and why certain groups are more advantaged than others (O'Brien 2008). Furthermore, racial ideology reflects the discursive strategies that ethno-racial groups use to explain how the world is or how it ought to be in terms of race relations (Jackman 1994; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

To be sure, the study of racial ideology is related to examinations of racial attitudes. In many ways individual level attitudes are often the product of larger societal beliefs, group-level frames, ideas, and stories about how the world works (i.e., ideology). Individual attitudes are shaped vis-a-vis dominant ideology. Likewise, dominant ideology is often codified via the interests of individuals in advantaged/dominant social positions (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Marx and Engels (1845) 1968).

Nonetheless, the two are not the same; conceptually and practically, racial ideology and racial attitudes are distinct (Bonilla- Silvia 2003a). Racial attitudes literature reflects individuals' answers to finite questions that cannot fully illuminate the complexities of people's understanding of race; consequently, racial attitudes have a limited focus. Conversely, racial ideology research allows researchers to embed racial

attitudes within the larger structure of social inequality and thereby offers a broader, more complex understanding of racial views. Ultimately, while racial attitudes are an individual level phenomenon, racial ideologies are macro-phenomena to which individuals may subscribe (Bonilla-Siva 2001).

Social theory suggests that ideology is intricately tied to the persistence of social stratification because it masks and justifies inequalities (Marx and Engels (1845) 1968; Pinderhughes 1990; Prager 1982; Bonilla-Silva 2001; Gallagher 2003). Therefore, scholars in the racial ideology paradigm argue that ideology is critical to understanding how race (and class) inequalities are perpetuated in the United States (Johnson 2006). Racial ideology research illuminates the ways in which groups' experiences in the racialized social structure directly impacts how each group collectively understands and engages with race. Scholars argue that studying racial ideology is a more legitimate approach to analyzing race relations because it addresses the construction, impact, and maintenance of a racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva 2001; O'Brien 2008).

Classic vs. Contemporary Views of Ideology

Within the study of stratification and group consciousness, scholars view ideology as fundamental to relationships of inequality. However, classic and contemporary theories of ideology present different perspectives on "how" ideology manifests itself in relations of inequality. The classic view analyzes ideology as a collectively endorsed set of beliefs that reflect the dominant group's class interest in maintaining the status quo and a specific set of attitudes toward subordinated groups

that explain and endorse their relative position (Jackman 1994; Marx 2001 [1970]). Conversely, the contemporary view analyzes ideology as a discursive practice involving dominant groups' core beliefs as well as alternative beliefs that arise within non-dominant groups (Gramsci 1971; Bonilla-Silva 2001). Contemporary perspectives speak specifically to the role of race (and gender), rather than class, in the formulation of ideology. Furthermore, this view posits that all social groups use ideology to maintain *or* challenge the racial status quo (Gramsic 1995; Bonilla-Silva 2001).

The classic view of ideology posits that groups in a dominant position in the social structure routinely create an interpretation of reality and normative beliefs that justify their advantaged social position (Marx 2001 [1970]; Dahrendorf 1959; Jackman 1994). The dominant group's ideology may or may not be calculated; its origins, however, are tied directly to group based material realities. Dominant ideology organizes the pattern of social relations; it also persuades both superordinate and subordinate groups that the current organization of social relationships is appropriate and equitable (Jackman and Muha 1984: 759; Bonilla-Silva 2006). In this regard, the dominant racial group not only monopolizes political, economic, and social resources; they also monopolize ideological resources.

Marx argues, "The rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas" (2001 [1970]: 102). Accordingly, ideologies are about "meaning in the service of power" (Thompson 1984; Bonilla-Silva 2006:74). Dominant (hegemonic) ideologies provide "meanings" that validates the superordinate group's location in the social hierarchy society and justifies the subordinate's group's location in the social hierarchy. Marx's

classical view of ideology specifically addresses class ideology; however, his perspective provides a theoretical lens for understanding the nature of racial ideology. Accordingly, the classical view suggests that dominant racial ideology serves to maintain Whites' advantaged position in the racialized social structure while simultaneously justifying and reinforcing groups of color subordinate position in the racialized social structure.

Ultimately, hegemonic ideology becomes "hegemonic" by appealing to superordinate groups' assumed "right" to their superordinate social position while also appealing (perhaps only in part) to subordinate group's common sense understanding of their subordinate position. The stability of social relations fundamentally rests on the dominant group's ability to maintain contentment and social harmony; consequently, classic scholars argue that dominant ideological frameworks are more likely to be subtle and insidious than blatant or hostile (Jackman 1994). Furthermore, a harmonious environment has the added benefit of making subordinates more productive, accessible, and invested in society (Jackman and Muha 1984). Similarly, racial ideology works to keep the subordinate ethno-racial groups relatively content as they buy into the hegemonic ideas about the meaning and significance of race in general and justifications for their subordinate positions in the social structure more specifically.

The classical view of ideology provides a clear framework for understanding the emergence and growing support for dominant racial ideologies like colorblindness and post-racialism. These ideological formations present contemporary racial dynamics as fair and equitable, thereby keeping racial inequality hidden and ultimately unchallenged. Furthermore, colorblind and post racial ideologies draw on universal

ideas of meritocracy and individualism which suggests that current relations are "rational"; therefore, if groups find themselves in disadvantaged social positions it is because of their own failures to work hard – not because of structural barriers.

The classical view of ideology also offers a theoretical framework for analyzing the relationship between the racial ideologies that White youth endorse and the racial ideologies that youth of color endorse. According to this view, we might expect that the current literature on Whites' racial views also reflect, to some degree, all ethno-racial groups' racial views. The strength of a dominant ideology rests in its ability to affect all members of the racialized social structure; albeit not necessarily in the same way. As such, it is feasible that the youth of color in this study might endorse some or all of the colorblind, post-racial ideological frames that have been identified among White youth even if they seem to be contradictory to their material interests.

The classical view of ideology presents, however, a limited analysis of the role of agency among subordinate ethno-racial groups. Subordinate groups pose little to no challenge to the status quo because they have been "duped" by the dominant group to believe that the status quo is functional, fair, and/or natural. Therefore, challenges to the social structure or racial status quo only occur when ideological divisions emerge within the dominant group. In this view, the masses have a minimal role in creating alternative ideologies, affecting ideological shifts, and/or eliciting social change.

Alternatively, the contemporary view of ideology suggests that all groups, dominant and subordinate, play a part in creating, maintaining, and challenging the racial status quo. Racial ideology is intrinsically connected to "the field of racialized"

social relations (Bonilla-Silva 2003: 64). Therefore, each ethno-racial group develops a collective consciousness that reflects group based conditions and lived experiences, of advantage or disadvantage, within the racialized social structure. Members of the dominant ethno-racial group embrace racial frameworks and ideology that explain and justify the racial status quo while members of subordinate ethno-racial groups may embrace racial frameworks and ideology that challenge the racial status quo. According to the contemporary perspective, challenges to the status quo emerge in the alternative racial frames, ideas, and stories that subordinate ethno-racial groups provide based on their relative position in the racial order (Bonilla-Silva 2001: 12; 2006: 9).

The contemporary view of ideology supports the basic assumption of the classical view, which states that the ideologies of the dominant ethno-racial group become the master ideologies in society. In contrast to the classical view, the contemporary view posits that all groups are not racialized the same way within the racial structure. As a result, ethno-racial groups internalize racial messages to varying degrees (O'Brien 2008). Accordingly, the ideological positions of subordinate ethno-racial groups may be in full support of, partial, or direct opposition to the prevailing ideology (Bonilla-Silva 2003a). The contemporary view suggests that hegemonic ideology is "hegemonic" because of the ways in which it can influence and constrain the racial frameworks that non-dominant ethno-racial groups employ - not because all ethno-racial groups (dominant and non-dominant) blindly accept it as truth. That is, dominant ideology is "dominant" because all social actors in the racialized social system must form their racial views vis-à-vis dominant ideological frameworks (Bonilla-Silva

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2006: 152). Thus, dominant ideology provides the parameters for supporting and/or challenging the racial order.

The contemporary view provides a context for hypothesizing that alternative racial ideologies or counter-hegemonic[13] ideas do exist among youth of color. Accordingly, youth of color are likely to evoke some agency, albeit constrained, by endorsing frameworks and narratives that challenge the racialized social system. As a result, in the current study, we would expect that even if youth of color embrace some of the same ideological frames and narratives as white youth, they still maintain some investment in alternative racial ideologies that reflect their own ethno-racial groups' lived experience(s) in the racialized social structure. This dissertation illuminates the degree to which Black millennials embrace alternative (or complimentary) frames, ideas, understandings, and stories vis-à-vis the dominant racial ideology of colorblind, post-racialism.

Theorizing Dominant Racial Ideology in the 21st Century: Colorblind Post-racialism

In the wake of the post-civil rights era, a new racial ideology emerged – one that reflects an investment in colorblind post-racial ideals (Gallagher 2003; Bonilla Silva 2006; Cho 2009; Forman 2014). Accordingly, dominant racial views suggest that race is no longer a defining feature of the American experience. That is, the U.S. is characterized as a society that has transcended issues of race and racism. As a result, there is wide

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[13] I use the terms dominant vs. "alternative" or "non-dominant" ideologies; however scholars have also referred to this ideological conflict as hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic ideas (see Gramsci 1971).

spread belief that racial parity in social, political, and economic spheres has, for the

most part, been achieved (Bobo 2004; Bobo 2011; Forman 2014). Although most

scholars refute assertions that the U.S. has entered a colorblind or post-racial phase in

race relations (Bonilla-Silva and Forman 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Forman and Lewis

2006; Sullivan 2006; Cho 2009; colorblind, post-racial ideology remains dominant and

pervasive in the attitudes of most Americans (O'Brien 2008; Bobo 2011; Forman 2014).

Albeit closely related, theoretically, colorblind racism and post-racialism are

pluralistic concepts described in slightly different terms. To this end, colorblind ideology

is defined by several interrelated core assumptions. The first assumption rests on the

idea that most people do not see or notice race anymore; furthermore, most people do

not care about racial differences. Accordingly, individuals drawing upon colorblind

ideology explain away racial phenomena, like segregation and endogamy, by suggesting

that they are natural, non-racial occurrences in the social world. The second assumption

is that racial equality has been achieved. This assumption minimizes the role of

discrimination and institutional racism in the contemporary context by presenting the

U.S. as a land of opportunity - one in which everyone has a fair chance to succeed as

long as they work hard. Thus, the third assumption suggests that persistent racial

inequality is the result of individual and/or group level inadequacies rather than

structural ones. The assumption invokes cultural racism frameworks that characterize

disadvantaged groups as culturally inferior to the dominant group. In this view,

disadvantaged groups are disadvantaged because they do have the right values, morals,

and/or work ethic not because social institutions systematically disadvantage them.

Finally, since inequality is not systematic, colorblind ideology assumes there is no need for institutional remedies to redress racial inequality (Carr 1997; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Forman and Lewis 2006: 177).

Post-racialism is an extension of colorblind ideology. It is defined as a belief that the U.S. has transcended or moved beyond race. Post-racialism is characterized as a "retreat from race" that is manifested in a material retreat from race-based policies, a socio-cultural retreat from race based discourse, and a political retreat from race-based collective action and political agendas (Cho 2009; Forman 2014). The retreat from all things racial is rooted in the allusion of racial progress. First, since the U.S. is colorblind, we no longer need race based decision-making, policies, and solutions. Second, in order to truly transcend race, racial discourse must be avoided; consequently, discussions of racial disparities and stratification are abandoned while discussions of racial neutrality, unity, and universalism are embraced. Lastly, race based political mobilization is portrayed as obsolete in a society that is no longer bound by racial dynamics.

The illusion of racial progress, lack of support for race based policies, opposition to race based political organizing, and outright abandonment of all things "racial" are congruent with colorblind beliefs; however, the scholarship on post-racialism provides two additional frame for understanding dominant ideology in the 21st century: race neutral universalism and racial symmetry. Race neutral universalism refers to a discursive practice of minimizing group differences and maximizing group unity.

Comments like "We are one America, not a Black America or a White America[14]" embody the essence of universalism. In this view, racial distinctions are viewed as peripheral to the American experience and antithetical to racial progress. Likewise, post-racialists reject strategies or remedies that rely upon racial identity because they believe these remedies obscure a more fundamental problem: class inequality. Thus, post-racial ideology posits that class, not race, is the most defining characteristic of the American experience today (Cho 2009; Crenshaw 2011).

Racial symmetry reflects the ideological assumption that all groups can be racist. Comments like "Everyone is a little bit racist" or claims of "reverse racism" embody the essence of racial symmetry. According to post-racial ideals, racism is a two way-street, whereby groups of color are equally as likely to be discriminatory and racist towards Whites, on an interpersonal level (i.e., anti-white sentiments) and institutional level (i.e., affirmative action), as Whites are likely to be discriminatory and racist towards groups of color (Cho 2009; Forman 2014).

Ultimately, the key concepts of colorblind and post-racial ideology contend that contemporary context is race neutral. Consequently, colorblind and post-racial discourses are dangerous because they masks, and in some ways dismisses, entrenched racial inequality as well as more subtle acts of prejudice and discrimination (Carr 1997; Forman 2014). Given the shared core assumptions and impact of colorblind racism and post-racialism, I argue that the theoretical distinctions between these concepts reflect

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[14] Taken from Baraka Obama's 2004 Democratic Convention speech; full speech available at http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/Barack%20Obama%20-%202004%20DNC%20Address.pdf – retrieved on 11/11/2011.

differences in semantics rather than substantive differences in their practical

application. Accordingly, I discuss colorblind and post-racial frameworks as a collective

dominant ideology (colorblind post-racial ideology) in the 21st century.

Theorizing Alternative (Non-Dominant) Racial Ideologies in the 21st Century

Contemporary theorists acknowledge that there is a constant dialectal

relationship between domination and resistance (Gramsci 1971; Prager 1982; Hill-Collins

1991; Jackman 1994). Accordingly, not all racial views function to support the racial

status quo; rather, some views challenge or question the existing racialized social

structure. Even in systems of total domination/ hegemony, counter-hegemonic or

alternative ideas can – and do – exist (Gramsci 1971). Ultimately, one's social position

and experiences in the social structure influences whether they will endorse dominant

ideological frames or develop alternative ones (Bonilla-Silva 2001). The rich literature on

black political ideology provides a lens for understanding how alternative ideas emerge

and develop.

In recent decades, the linkages between race, political behavior, and political

ideology have become a growing area of research within scholarship on political

ideology in the U.S. For instance, Michael Dawson (1994) argues that the factors that

influence Whites' political behavior cannot fully explain or illuminate the predictors of

Blacks' political behavior. According to Dawson, racial ideology plays a defining role in

explaining Blacks' political views and behaviors. The centrality of race to Blacks'

development of political views reflects Whites and Blacks' vastly different social

experiences in the racialized social structure. These divergent experiences led to the emergence of alternative ideas among Black political actors. Dawson (2003) labels these alternative political ideas as "black political ideology."

Black political ideology emerged out of a world view that emphasizes the moral, spiritual, and material development of the African-American community equally as much as the development of individuals (Seltzer and Smith 1985; Dawson 2003). The efficacy of community development created a political ideology whereby individuals' racial identifications play a central role in their political identification. Black political ideology provides an over-arching set of political *and* social beliefs about how the world is and how it ought to be. Just as dominant racial ideologies serve to protect the interest of dominant groups, Black political ideologies ultimately developed as a by-product of proposed strategies for combating racial oppression and facilitating the advancement of the black community's racial and political interest (Dawson 1995; Fredrickson 1995; Anderson 2010).

The political ideologies that emanate from the Black community provide an insight into Blacks' racial views about racial dynamics writ large. Dawson (2003) identifies at least six "historically important" Black political ideologies: Radical Egalitarianism, Disillusioned Liberalism, Black Marxism, Black conservatism, Black Feminism, and Black Nationalism. Each ideology poses, and to an extent answers, critical questions about "the Black experience" in America; specifically, Blacks' relationship to the U.S. government and other ethno-racial groups. These questions include: how do we explain Blacks' social position? What particular roles and meanings are assigned to

categories of race, gender, and class? What is the nature of American society and government? What are Whites' attitudes toward Blacks? And what position do Blacks' take with regard to "American Liberalism?"[15] Since Black political ideologies approach understanding the racial dynamics from the standpoint of Blacks, scholars assert these political ideologies are indeed an alternative, distinctly different ideology in relation to dominant ideology (Hill-Collins 1991; Dawson 2003; Collins 1991).

The very existence of Black political ideologies suggests that alternative racial ideologies can (and do) exist. For example, Black Nationalist ideology, one of the oldest and most enduring ideological formations endorsed by Blacks (Dawson 2003), presents America as 1) fundamentally racist. As an ideology, Black Nationalism suggests that race will always be a fundamental category for analyzing American society. Since racism is viewed as fundamental to the American social structure, Black Nationalist argue for Black self-determination through the control of homogenous Black institutions and support for Black economic and social independence in the form of self-help programs. Likewise, Black Nationalism champions for the psychological and social disentanglement from whites and white supremacist notions of black inferiority, and support for a global/ Pan-African view of the black community (Price 2009).

Thus, as an alternative ideology, Black Nationalism, and other forms of Black political ideology, supports claims that ideology develops in response to groups' positions in the racial order – dominant groups endorse political ideologies that protect

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[15] The notion of American Liberalism is rooted in the ideas set forth in the Declaration of Independence; specifically the belief that all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights such as the life liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Dawson 2003).

or rationalize their privileged political position while subordinate groups endorse political ideologies that challenge their disadvantaged political position (Bonilla-Silva 2003b; Jackman and Muha 1984). The concept of Black political ideology suggests that ethno-racial groups may embrace counter-hegemonic or alternative ideas about race (Bobo 2004; O'Brien 2008; Bobo 2011; Dawson 2011). This body of scholarship provides a foundation for understanding "how" alternative ideas emerge (i.e., based on groups relative position and experiences in the social structure).

Accordingly, it stands to reason that Black millennials will endorse distinctly different racial ideologies than their White counterparts. In order to be alternative, Black millennials' ideological formations must be race-conscious; drawing upon frames, ideas, and narratives that in some way challenge beliefs in colorblind/post-racialism[16]. To this end, alternative frames emphasize the continued significance of race and discrimination in the 21st century, acknowledge the structural nature of racism by highlighting structural explanations of racial stratification, interpret/confront (rather than ignore) racialized events as racial, or advocate for anti-racists attitudes.

Blacks' Racial Views

Due to the dearth of information on groups' of color racial ideology, I review literature on racial attitudes and racial ideology in effort to offer of a more complete

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[16] Similar to the research on adults of color, these "alternative" ideas may reflect varying degrees of resistance to dominant ideas. For example, alternative may mean sheer recognition that current racial status quo is problematic; or, alternative beliefs may reflect not only recognition of structural inequality but also a belief in adopting strategies to navigating within structure/ system; or alternative ideas may reflect recognition and a belief/desire to change the racialized social structure all together.

understanding of Blacks' racial views. Likewise, in the absence of robust scholarship on

Black youth's racial views, I expand my review of literature to include existing research

on Black adults. The research on Black adults' racial views provides a broader context for

understanding the ways in which Black millennials may be making sense of

contemporary racial dynamics. Finally, I conclude this section by offering a review of

literature that addresses the racial attitudes and ideological frameworks of Black

millennials.

Black Adults' Racial Views

Data on adults' racial views reveal that, compared to their White counterparts,

Blacks are less likely to endorse colorblind, post-racial ideas. For example, in 2000, a

nationwide survey asked "Do you think that [B]lacks have achieved racial equality, will

soon achieve racial equality, will not achieve racial equality in your lifetime, or will never

will never achieve racial equality?" The responses revealed that 34% of Whites and only

6% of Blacks believed that racial equality was a reality (Bobo 2004; Forman 2014).

Similarly, in 2009, after the election of the nation's first Black President, a national

survey revealed that 61% of Whites compared to only 17% of Blacks believed that the

U.S. had achieved racial equality (Bobo 2011). The 2009 data suggested that on the

whole, people are increasingly becoming more accepting of colorblind, post-racial ideas;

hence the increase in Whites *and* Blacks likelihood to respond that racially equality has

been achieved in 2009. Nonetheless, stark differences remain regarding the degree to

which Black and White adults invest in colorblind, post-racial ideas.

Similarly, research findings from Carr (1997), Bonilla-Silva (2003), and O'Brien (2008) revealed that that, while there is some debate regarding the degree to which Black adults' invest in colorblind post-racial frames[17], Black adults are far less likely to draw directly on the four colorblind frames (i.e., abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization) than their White counterparts. Specifically, results from the 1998 Detroit Area Study showed that a little over one-third of Blacks (35%) compared to nearly all of Whites (96%) drew upon abstract liberalism as the "foundation upon which to articulate their views about racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva 2006: 200; O'Brien 2008). Likewise, Whites (88%) were four times as likely as Blacks (24%) to rely on cultural racism to explain racial phenomenon. Whites (43%) were nearly twice as likely than Blacks (24%) to rely on naturalization as a frame. The greatest difference between Blacks and Whites racial ideological investments emerged in relation to the minimization frame. Only a mere 6% of Blacks endorsed minimization as an ideological tool while 84% of Whites endorsed the frame. Bonilla-Silva (2006) ultimately argues that only three of the frames (abstract liberalism, cultural racism, and naturalization) have impacted Blacks' racial consciousness; furthermore, compared to Whites, the impact has been marginal at best.

Data from the General Social Survey (GSS) reveal that White and Black adults hold distinctly different views about the persistence of racial prejudices and discrimination. These differences, however, have decreased overtime such that Black

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[17] Carr (1997) argues that Blacks do not draw upon colorblind frameworks. Conversely, Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that, although not directly, Blacks do indirectly draw upon some colorblind frameworks – namely abstract liberalism, cultural racism, and naturalization frames.

adults are increasingly reporting attitudes more comparable to Whites. For instance, in 1994 Black and White adults were asked to respond to the following statement: "Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors." Their responses indicated that roughly 78% of Whites and 48% of Blacks strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement.

In 2008, the same question was asked of a nationally representative sample of Blacks and Whites. The results revealed a significant rise in the percentage of Blacks endorsing the view that Blacks should work their way up with no special favors; roughly 77% of Whites strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement while 56% of Blacks strongly or somewhat agreed (Bobo, Charles, Krysan, and Simmons 2012). The differences between Whites and Blacks views of the continued significance of race (and racism) in determining social outcomes indicate that Blacks and Whites still see the world differently with regard to racial matters. However, Blacks greater likelihood to endorse the view that Blacks do not need special favors could suggest that Black adults racial views are becoming increasingly impacted by colorblind post-racial ideology, particular frameworks that present the U.S as an "equal playing field" or meritocracy in which race no longer matters for determining life chances.

Prior research also reveals that while Whites and Blacks have different views about the continued significance of discrimination, Blacks are increasingly less likely to "see" racial bias in employment, income, and housing. In 1985, the GSS asked, "On average [Blacks] have worse jobs, income, and housing than White people. Do you think

these differences are mainly due to discrimination?" In response, roughly 41% of Whites and 79% of Blacks replied yes to the question. Again, in 2006, the GSS polled Blacks and Whites about their views on racial discrimination. The data indicated significant decreases in both White and Blacks likelihood of reporting yes; approximately 31% of Whites and 59.2% of Blacks agreed that racial disparities in employment, income, and housing were the result of discrimination (Bobo et al. 2012). From 1985 and 2006 Blacks remained almost twice as likely as Whites to believe that discrimination played a role in job, income, and housing outcomes. Yet, the percentage of Blacks believing in the continued significance of discrimination decreased by 20%.

Data from the Gallup Poll substantiate findings from the GSS that suggest that Blacks are less likely today, than in previous eras, to cite racial discrimination as a contributing factor to racial inequality. In 1993, respondents were asked, "on average [Blacks] have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are mainly due to discrimination or something else?" Forty-four percent of Blacks said that the differences were due to discrimination while 48% said the differences were due to something else. In 2013, when asked the same question, 37% of Blacks responded that the differences were due to discrimination while 60% said that the differences were due to something else (Newport 2013). The decrease in Blacks who see racial bias in employment, income, and housing disparities coupled with the increase in Blacks who attribute these racial disparities to "something else" could be an indication that Black adults are embracing colorblind, post-racial ideals, like minimization, more often than they have in previous decades.

Lastly, Forman (2014) notes that more recent data from the 2010 GSS signals that a critical mass of Whites *and* Blacks are subscribing to colorblind, post-racial ideology. Specifically, an overwhelming majority of Whites and Blacks believe that race is a non-factor in current context. To this end, a little more than nine out of ten Whites (94%) and eight out of ten Blacks (86%) agreed with the statement "for the most part, I'm colorblind; that is, I don't care about what race people are." Likewise, 84% of Whites and 65% of Blacks agreed with the opinion that in order "for African Americans to succeed they need to stop using racism and slavery as excuses" which is directly tied to the colorblind, post-racial frame of minimizing past legacies of racial discrimination and prejudice. This statement also captures commitments to the belief that the U.S. is a meritocratic society where all ethno-racial groups have equal chance of succeeding if they work hard.

Considered cumulatively, the research on Black adults' racial views presents two main trends: 1) considerable differences still exist between Blacks and Whites' interpretations of contemporary racial dynamics; and 2) colorblind, post-racial ideals are becoming increasingly popular as an interpretative framework for Black adults to draw upon to make sense of contemporary racial dynamics. The variation in Black and White adults' investment in colorblind ideology reveals that Black adults do not whole-heartedly endorse the dominant colorblind, post-racial perspective to the extent of White adults. Accordingly, this scholarship suggests that alternative ideas may inform some aspects of Black adults' racial ideology. Likewise, it is quite possible that there may be substantial differences in the ideological frameworks that Black and White

millennials endorse to make sense of racial dynamics. The data on Black adults'

increased endorsement of colorblind post-racial ideals, however, also suggests that

Black millennials understandings of racial dynamics may also be directly influenced by

colorblind post-racial ideology.

Black Millennials' Racial Views

While there is limited data on millennials of color and their racial views, the

research that does exist suggests that millennials' racial attitudes vary across ethno-

racial groups. In general, Black youth are least likely to express support for claims that

the U.S. has achieved racial equality while Whites are most likely to express support for

such claims; Latinos and Asians' racial attitudes tend to fall somewhere in the middle[18].

For instance, data from the *Black Youth Project* (BYP) revealed that in 2005 61% of Black

youth agreed that "it is hard for young black people to get ahead because they face so

much discrimination." Conversely, only 45% of Latino youth and 43% of White youth

agreed with the statement. Similarly, when asked whether "black youths received a

poorer education than white youths", 54% of Black youth agreed while 40% of Latino

youth and 31% of White youth agreed (Cohen et al. 2007). Comparable patterns also

emerged on the topic of health care systems; 59% of Black youth, 52% of Latino youth,

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[18] Scholars argue that Latinos and Asians occupy a triangulated or middle position in the racial order. That is, Latinos and Asians are valorized as racially and culturally superior to blacks but ostracized as foreign and unable to assimilate when compared to whites (Kim 1999; O'Brien 2008). This triangulated or middle position is reflected in the data on racial disparities in social, political, and economic spheres. Groups' structural position ultimately influences their worldview; consequently, Asians' and Latinos' draw upon nuanced racial views vis-à-vis blacks and white; their racial views reflect their "middle" position the U.S. racialized social structure.

and 32% of White youth agreed that Blacks are treated less fairly than whites. Finally, when asked if they felt "like a full and equal citizen in this country with all the rights and protections that other people have", more than half of the respondents in each ethno-racial groups agreed; however, Blacks (60%) were the least likely to agree, followed by Latinos (70%), and then whites (83%) (Cohen 2010). The data reveal that even though the majority in each ethno-racial group feels like a "full and equal citizens", Black millennials feel more socially and politically marginalized than other ethno-racial groups.

More recent data from the *Mobilization, Change, and Political and Civic Engagement Project* (MCPCE) reflect similar ethno-racial variation as the BYP data. Seven months after the 2008 presidential election the majority of Blacks (68%), ages 18-35[19], reported that they believed that racism was still a significant problem; conversely, only 33% of White respondents believed that racism was still a significant problem. Furthermore, nearly five out of ten Whites (48%) believed that Blacks have achieved racial equality while only approximately two in ten Blacks (15%) agreed. Finally, in 2008 there remained a significant divide between Blacks and Whites' feelings of inclusion. Fifty-Five percent of young Blacks agreed with the statement that they felt like full and equal citizens, compared to 69% of Whites (Cohen and Dawson 2008; Cohen 2011).

Qualitative research sponsored by the Applied Research Center (ARC), reveals that a majority of millennials believe race does still matter - specifically in terms of outcomes and experiences in social institutions such as criminal justice, public school,

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[19] The data from the MCPCE includes respondents who are a part of the millennial generation as well as respondents who make up Generation X.

employment, healthcare, housing, and immigration. However, in accordance with previous research, the study reveals significant racial and ethnic variation in millennials' opinion of the extent to which race impacts outcomes in the aforementioned social institutions. On the issues of criminal justice and employment, millennials share cross-racial agreement that racism continues to be a significant problem. On the issue of education, however, a majority of millennials of color described the educational system as racially biased while only a minority of White millennials agreed with this viewpoint (Apollon 2011).

Overall, the ethno-racial variation in millennials' racial views, as revealed by the BYP, MCPCE, ARC data, indicate that there may be ethno-racial variation in how millennials understand race. For example, Black youths' belief in the continued significance of racism and discrimination may suggest that they are less likely to draw upon colorblind/post racial frames than their White counterparts; in fact, Black millennials may draw on alternative ideological frameworks all together. To fully understand how Black millennials negotiate between dominant and alternative frameworks, in their understandings of race and racial dynamics, more research needs to focus on racial ideology.

Summary

In trying to ascertain how Black millennials understand race, it is important to imagine them as social actors embedded in a larger racialized system that shapes meaning and understanding rather than as individual cognizers. Given the role of

ideology in maintaining (and challenging) systems of inequality by legitimizing them,

investigations of ideology have often been about how governing by consent "works". In

this vain, I contend that it is important to understand how those at the bottom of the

racialized social system are making sense of contemporary racial dynamics. Existing

research has given little attention to how ethno-racial groups at the bottom of the racial

hierarchy make sense of their position in the social structure; this is especially true for

studies on millennials and race.

Thus, in this study, I explore how Black millennials make sense of and understand

race in the current social context where the dominant ideas about race suggest the U.S.

is a post-racial society but the material reality of entrenched racial inequality in

economic, political, and social outcomes suggests that the U.S. is actually a "most" racial

society. Data reveals that White millennials are very likely to embrace dominant

messages about the meaning and significance of race in the 21st century, but what about

Black millennials? Given the vastly different social spaces that White and Black

millennials occupy, as well as and their variant experiences with racial inequality, it is

quite possible that Black Millennials do not have the same ideological commitments to

colorblind, post-racial discourse as their White peers.

Likewise, data charting racial differences between White and Black adults' racial

attitudes suggest that there may be variation in White and Black milliennials' racial

views. This data, however, also suggests that colorblind post-racial ideology is becoming

an increasingly popular ideological framework for Blacks. As it stands, however, we

have very little information about how Black millennials experience race and make

sense of racial dynamics today. Thus, the question of "how" are Black millennials

engaging with and understanding race in the 21st century is essential to fully

understanding the impact of colorblind post-racial ideology on Blacks millennials racial

views. Likewise, in answering this question, this research provides a better

understanding of how millennials as a whole are making sense of race and

contemporary racial dynamics. The next chapter details the research methods that I

employ to address these driving research questions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology employed in this study. Included in the information that follows is a description of the research aims, research design and rationale, sample, data collection procedures, and an explanation of the analytic strategy.

Research Aims

The goal of this dissertation is to understand how Black millennials experience and make sense of racial dynamics. Ultimately, this project explores how Black millennials reconcile two competing realities: 1) a material reality characterized by persistent racial inequality and disadvantage and 2) an ideological reality dominated by colorblind/post-racial discourse. In doing so, this dissertation addresses three questions:

1. How do Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century?

2. To what extent do Black millennials' ideas about race and racial dynamics differ from dominant understandings (i.e. colorblind/ post-racial ideology)?

3. How does social context (South vs. West) impact the ways in which Black millennials youth understand race and racial dynamics?

Research Design and Rationale

To understand the type of ideological frameworks that Black youth draw upon to make sense of race and racialized outcomes in the current "colorblind" racial climate, I conducted 61, face to face, semi-structured, in-depth, one on one interviews with Black

college students from two historically white institutions (HWIs) – one located in the western region and the other located in the southern region of the U.S. Social scientists argue that qualitative methods, like in-depth interviews, are the best way to capture the nuances of racial ideology (Price 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2006). In-depth, semi-structured interviews are advantageous because they allow the research to gather detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors. Additionally, in-depth interviews produce richer data by allowing the researcher to probe respondents for elaboration, explication, and examples. One-on-one interviews also provide a comfortable space for individuals to freely express their views and experiences without the fear of judgment from others and/or without the direct influence of other's idea and opinions. This is especially important when exploring sensitive, taboo, and/or difficult topics, such as race, racism, and racial dynamics (Strauss 1987).

Finally, given the contradictory climate that Black millennials inhabit - claims of a colorblind post-racial society vs. structural racial inequality – it is quite possible that some Black millennials experience tensions and hold conflicting racial views. Likewise, some Black millennials may be left without a coherent vocabulary to adequately express their understandings of racial dynamics; consequently, they may offer views that are fuzzy, incomplete, or disjointed. The only way to capture this deeper structure of understanding – with all its contradictions, gaps, and incoherence – is to conduct in-depth interviews. Ultimately, interviews present the best method for uncovering the themes, storylines, race talk, and/or racial logic that social actors use to make sense of the racialized social system in which they live.

Studying College Students' Racial Views

This project focuses on the racial views of Black millennials who are enrolled in college. The rationale for studying college students' racial views is three fold. First, for many youth the college environment represents the first time for experiences outside the purview of their parents/family's direct control - both physically and ideologically. Second, the college environment often provides youth's first opportunities to interact with people from diverse ethno-racial backgrounds. Thereby encouraging youth to consider their own racial socialization in comparison to the racial socialization processes of their peers from other ethno-racial groups. Thirdly, the college environment coupled with the cognitive development that transpires during late adolescence offers young adults a time of "insurmountable discovery, examination, and exploration" (Garrison 2014).

The college environment provides a combination of academic rigor, intellectual exploration, moral investigation, and physical maturation unmatched by any other time over the course of the human life span (Pascarella and Terezini 2005; Garrison 2014). As such, the college years allow for massive personal growth intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Values, virtues and ethical bearings that were instilled by parents, family members, and other figures of authority are challenged and often disposed of in the college context - in exchange for alternative ways of behaving and thinking (Astin 1993; Pascarella and Terezini 2005; Garrison 2014). Ultimately, the college environment offers a space in which young adults begin to develop their own worldview and make decisions regarding the ideological commitments that will shape their adult lives.

With regard to race, social scientists note that youth experience a heightened

sense of racial and ethnic identity at the time they leave home and begin to live

independently from their parents. The college experience confronts youth with the

challenge of sorting through the degree to which their own beliefs and behaviors are

unique to their family or a reflection of beliefs and behaviors shared within the general

population (Allen 1992; Tatum 1997; Solozano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000; Gallagher 2012). It

is not until individuals come into close contact with a diverse group of people that they

begin to realize the ways in which their family's racial socialization processes have

shaped their overall racial understanding, behavior, and personality (Waters 1990;

Tatum 1997).

Additionally, researchers suggest that there is a strong, positive correlation

between certain college experiences and racial understanding. Interracial friendships,

frequent discussions with students from different ethno-racial backgrounds, frequent

discussions with faculty members whose views differ from their own, and taking courses

that focus on diverse cultures and perspectives are all positively correlated with

students being more committed to and knowledgeable about racial tolerance and

equality (Jaschik 2012). Likewise, Feagin (2010) contends that certain classroom

experiences are directly tied to greater understanding of racial dynamics. Specifically,

race is often highlighted in college classrooms in a way that is vastly different from high

school classrooms. In fact, college is often the first time that students are exposed to a

U.S. history curriculum that seriously engages with and analyzes race in a meaningful

way. High school curriculum has long been a contested terrain in which conservatives

attempt to downplay or eliminate accurate portrayals of the U.S. racist history. Thus, for many, the college classroom is the first opportunity an individual has to seriously consider the true implications of race and the complicated and painful U.S. racial history and tenuous future (Allen 1991; Feagin 2010).

There is a plethora of research on the impact of race on the college experiences for students of color. Scholars note that race and ethnicity play a defining role in the experiences of students of color pursuing higher education – this is especially true for students of color who attend predominantly white universities (PWIs) (Fleming 1984; Allen 1985; Allen 1992; Feagin 1991; Feagin and Sikes 1995; Solorzano et al. 2000). Black students at PWIs often report negative interpersonal experiences with administrators, faculty, and peers (Fleming 1984; Allen 1985; Allen 1992; Davis 1994). Similarly research studies on students of color college experiences reveal that students of color often feel marginalized on predominantly white campuses – either because of acts of discrimination or lack of cultural congruency on campus (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Vera 1996). Scholars note that microaggresssions towards students of color are commonplace on college campuses (Steele and Aronson 1995; Feagin and Vera 1996; Solorzano et al. 2000; Caplan and Ford 2014). As a result, students of color are constantly forced to engage with issues of race and difference. In his study of Black college students' experiences, Aries (2008) revealed that Black students reported that since entering college, they thought about their race daily. To this end, the college context offers fertile ground for investigating Black youth's racial views and understanding how youth make sense of contemporary racial dynamics.

This is an important population to study because Black millennial college students today will most likely be among the Black leaders in business and politics of tomorrow. Accordingly, it is vital to understand how Black millennial college students make sense of structural racial inequality because they are most likely to be in positions, in the future, to directly affect changes to the racial status quo.

Regional Comparisons between Youth in the South and the West

This project focuses on the racial views of Black millennials within a Southern and Western regional context. The rationale for studying participants from different regions rests on the basic sociological assumption that race is a social construct. That is, this project endorses the view that race is not a biological fact but rather a social fact (Omi and Winant 1994). As a social fact, the criteria for inclusion in a particular racial group, the "experience of race", and what it "means" to be a member of particular racial category is dependent upon socio-historical and political processes, not genetics. Thus, racial categories are social inventions that can (and do) change across time and space (Delgado and Stefanic 2001; Omi and Winnant 1994). For example, historical analyses reveal that in the late 19th century the criteria for Black group membership, in the United States, varied across state lines. Southern states often relied on the "one drop rule"[20] while northern states and the newly developing west employed less strict criteria (Haney-Lopez 2006). Acknowledging race as a social construction suggests that social

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[20] The "one drop rule" refers to the practice of assigning black group membership to individuals with any African ancestry – even those who did not physically.

context is the key to understanding racial dynamics because racial categories and their meanings are created via social interactions and vary across time, regions, and societies. Accordingly, this project takes seriously the potential impact of geographic location on Black millennials' experiences with and understandings of race. Because of Blacks varying social histories in the south and west, what it means to be "Black" in theses spaces may differ for Black millennials in these contexts.

Due to slavery, the majority of Blacks' first entrance into the United States began in the South. At the turn of the 20th century, many Blacks migrated north in an attempt to escape the harsh racism of the south (Trotter 1991). After 1965, however, the majority of Blacks returned to the South, fleeing economic hardships in the North and Midwest. Although Blacks have a long history of migration between the Southern and Northern regions of the U.S., a mass migration of Blacks to the West has been virtually non-existent[21]. Instead, the West has long been a geographical possession of other racial minorities – namely Latinos and Asians. Due to railroad expansion, mid-west shortages in agricultural work, and the geographic location of Mexico, most Latinos and Asians entrance into the United States began in the West and to a lesser degree the North (Takaki 2008). Not until recently have Latinos and Asians begun to gain a mass presence in southern states. These varying historical patterns of migration and settlement led to different racial paradigms in the west and south.

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[21] This is not to suggest that Blacks did not migrate to the West. Rather, Blacks were less likely to migrate to the West, mainly due to geographical constraints. As a result, Blacks who lived in areas close to western boarders, such as Louisiana and Texas, were more likely to migrate westward while Blacks located in the southeast, such as Florida or Georgia, were more likely to migrate northward (Trotter 1991; Wilkerson 2010) .

In the South, although shifting, has historically been characterized primarily as Black versus White; in the West, racial lines are more complex reflecting interactions of Whites, Latinos, Asians, and to a lesser extent Blacks (Hunt and Ramon 2010). Contemporary data on state racial demographics confirm the difference in racial contexts between the West and South. According to the 2010 U.S. census, Georgia's population was approximately 60% White, 31% Black, 9% Latino, and 3% Asian. In contrast, the state of California's population was approximately 57% white, 6% black, 25% Latino, and 13% Asian.

Based on the varied demographic, social, and political contexts between the West and South, and Georgia and California in particular, it is plausible that Black youth's racial views and experiences may vary by region. Based on the demographic data alone, we know that Black millennials in the South and West are likely to have different experiences in terms of whom they interact with in their schools and neighborhoods. Likewise, there may also be regional differences in how Black millennials view ethno-racial "out-groups", racial politics, and how they see themselves within the U.S.'s racial structure. For example Black youth in California may see themselves as periphery to racial dynamics between Whites and Latinos, while Black youth in Georgia may see themselves at the core of racial dynamics. The relationship between social contexts, namely geographic region, and Black millennials racial is an empirical question that remains to be answered.

Research Site, Sample, Data Collection Procedures,

Research Sites

The participants for this dissertation were selected from two large, historically white, public, state institutions– one located in Atlanta, Georgia (Georgia University) and one located in Los Angeles, California (California University). These schools were selected based on their similarities in student body size, selectivity/prestige, and high percentages of students who are in-state residents (55%) and (72%) respectively (see Appendix A for more information on each institutions). Furthermore, these institutions were selected based on the researcher's pre-existing relationships with faculty and staff at each respective institution.

It is important to note that this project in not an investigation of the university's outlined in the study; rather, each institution served as site for recruiting research participants with "western" and "southern" roots.

Sample

My sample includes 61 college students, 30 from Georgia University and 31 from California University. The sample was limited to college students, ages 18-24, who self-identify as Black. The average age of the participants is 21; the modal age is 18. Additionally, participants had to be U.S. citizens or have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years or more. The final sample is diverse in terms of gender as well as ethnicity. 38 (62%) of the participants identify as female and 23 (38%) identify as male; 45 (74%) of the participants are "native" or Black American participants and 16 (26%) are Black

immigrants.[22] Furthermore, the sample includes students from a variety of majors, classifications (i.e., freshman – senior), and secondary education experiences (See Table 1 and Table 2 for more details regarding the sample of participants from Georgia and California University, respectively).

Finally, over half of the students from both Georgia and California University claim to have southern and western roots, respectively. More specifically, 63% of the sample of students from Georgia University[23] identified Georgia as their home state while 77% of Georgia University students identified a southern state as their home state. Similarly, 94% of the students from California University identified California as their home state. Accordingly, I am confident that the racial views of Black millennials in this sample actually reflect the views of Black youth raised in the South and West.

Data Collection Procedures

I employed a variety of recruitment strategies in efforts to recruit participants who met my specified criteria. These strategies included: classroom visits on each respective college campus, mass emails to University sponsored list-serves, advertising on University sponsored organizations' Facebook pages, and word of mouth. During the classroom visits, I identified myself as the researcher, explained the project, and distributed a recruitment survey (see Appendix B for full recruitment survey

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[22] I use the term Black "immigrant" to refer to participants who are first or second generation migrants to the United States. More plainly, the term refers to participants who were born outside or the U.S. or their parents were born outside of the United States. Accordingly, this sample includes Black immigrants from Jamaica, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cameroon, and the British Virgin Islands.

[23] One additional Georgia University student, Jessica, spent her middle school through high school years in Georgia but still claims Dolton, IL as her home town.

instrument). The recruitment survey required students to provide basic demographic information (i.e., age, sex, ethno-racial identification, year in school, hometown, citizenship, etc.); the survey also required students to include their contact information if they were interested in participating in the study.

In addition to face-to-face recruitment, I also distributed an electronic version of the recruitment survey, via Survey Monkey, through email list-serves for minority-serving campus organizations, university tutoring and academic assistance programs, multi-cultural programs, and Facebook. Once the surveys were collected (both paper and digitally), I used them to identify potential participants who meet the specified inclusion criteria. Next, I contacted these potential participants via telephone or email to schedule interviews with them. In total, I collected 184 surveys (88 from Georgia University and 96 from California University). Eighty-four percent of the surveys from Georgia University were usable, meaning they reflected potential participants who met the specified criteria for the study; two-thirds of the surveys from California were usable. Ultimately, I interviewed the first 30 participants[24] to commit to a scheduled interview and actually attend the interview.

All of the interviews for this project took place between August 2013 and February 2014. Each interview lasted between 60-90 minutes. All interviews took place on campus at the participants' respective undergraduate institution – either in a private office or library study room. Respondents were required to sign an informed consent

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[24] I scheduled more than the desired 30 interviews in both Georgia and California in an effort to account for persons who may end up cancelling their interview. As a result, my final number of California interviews is 31.

prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix C for Informed Consent Form). The interview conversation covered a variety of topics including: personal background and family information, early experiences with race, family discussions of race, the significance of race in respondent's day to day experiences, responses to colorblind/post-racial ideology, views on race relations, and explanations of racial inequality.

During the discussion of racial inequality, I showed students three separate graphs - one detailing racial disparities in net worth, another on racial disparities in high school graduation rates, and a final one on racial disparities in incarceration rates. One at a time, students were asked to review a graph, interpret the data, and then provide explanations for why the racial disparities existed (See Appendix D for full interview guide and Appendix E for data graphs). At the conclusion of the interview, students received a ten-dollar gift card of their choice to college student "friendly" retail stores. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. To protect the confidentiality, each respondent was assigned a pseudonym and all identifying information was kept separate from the interview data.

Analytic Strategy

I used a grounded theory approach to examine Black millennials' understanding of racial dynamics in the 21st century. To this end, I placed priority on discovering meaning and generating theory from the data collected during my interviews with Black millennials. Specifically, I relied on the qualitative data management software,

MaxQDA, to analyze transcripts and field notes by immersing myself in the data and

systematically coding the data for thematic patterns (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Chesler

1987; Charmaz 2006). Consistent with the accepted procedures of qualitative methods,

coding and data analysis occurred concurrently with data collection (Miles and

Huberman 1994).

In the first round of coding, I used "in vivo" coding; coding that used the

participants' own words and imagery, to analyze the transcripts line by line. In the

second round of coding, I used the initial textual inspection to develop code categories

that offered a preliminary analysis of "in vivo" codes. This process involved reducing the

wording of key phrases and organizing them conceptually into clusters or code

categories (Glaser 1978; Chesler 1987). In the third round of coding, I engaged in an

intense comparison of coding categories thereby reducing coding categories and

attaching a specific label for each cluster. In the final round of coding, I worked to make

generalizations about the phrases in each cluster, wrote memos to offer explanations

about emerging themes and patterns, and integrated theories (i.e., colorblind, post-

racialism, Black political ideologies, racial socialization theories, and literature from

identity development) to offer an overall explanatory framework for understanding

Black millennials racial ideology (Charmaz 2006). Appendices F and G offer a list of the

coding categories and a description of how the codes were applied to participants'

responses, respectively.

Summary

At its core, this dissertation is a study of racial ideology among youth of color,

specifically Black Millennials. The methodological decision to study racial ideology (as

oppose to racial attitudes), the use of individual, face to face interviews, reliance on

ground theory analytical strategies, and choice to study college students in two different

regions presents a unique entrance into the study of youth's racial views. Likewise,

these methods provide a framework for understanding how entrenched inequality can

co-exist with colorblind post-racial ideology to shape how Black millennials make sense

of and experience race in the U.S.

CHAPTER FOUR: BLACK MILLENNIALS AND THE CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACE AND RACISM

In this chapter I explore the first half of the paradox that describes the competing realities in which Black millennial's inhabit – pervasive racial ideology that suggest they live in a colorblind post racial society. Specifically, the chapter begins with data on Black millennials' views and opinions regarding colorblind-post-racial rhetoric. Followed by a discussion of the positions that Black millennials take up to defend their responses to colorblind post-racial ideology.

The findings in this chapter reveal that Black millennials overwhelmingly reject colorblind post-racial discourse. They mainly do so based on the belief that individuals still hold racial prejudices against Blacks specifically and other groups of color more generally. A moderate percentage of Black millennials, however, draw upon their knowledge of structural inequality to support their view that racism is still a key feature of American society. This chapter provides one side of the contradictory ideological frameworks that Black millennials endorse in their efforts to make sense of racial dynamics (i.e., rejection of colorblind ideology); in the next chapter I present the other side of Black millennials ideological framework (i.e., colorblind, post-racial understandings of racial inequality).

Disrupting Post-Racial Discourse: Black Millennials' Response to Colorblind, Post-Racial Ideology.

Participants were asked to respond to the following statement: "A lot of people argue that race doesn't matter anymore today; that racism is mostly a thing of the past.

What do you think about that?" Ninety-seven percent (59 out of the 61) of the Black

millennials in this study disagreed with the statement. For example, when presented

with the colorblind post-racial prompt, Clarence, a 19 year-old male in his sophomore

year at California University stated, "I believe that's false. Race is definitely an issue; it

has been an issue forever and I feel like nothing has changed really." Likewise, Jessica,

20 year-old female in her junior year at Georgia University responded, "That's some BS.

The only reason people say that is because they don't want to have to deal to with

race." Finally, when asked to offer his reaction to colorblind, post-racial logic, James, a

junior from California University, dropped his head in an exhausted manner and said, "I

am so tired of these people. No, racism is not a thing of the past. That's ridiculous.

Something racist happens like every day! Just because they say race doesn't matter

doesn't make it actually true!"

Clarence, Jessica, and James' responses to the colorblind, post-racial statement

mirror the overall sentiments of the 59 participants who rejected colorblind, post-racial

rhetoric: "We do not live in a colorblind, post-racial society; race and racism still

matter." In contrast to literature, research, and popular opinion that describe the

millennial generation as colorblind and/or post-racial, the Black millennials in this study

emphatically deny claims that the U.S. is beyond race. Black millennials cite two kinds of

"evidence" to substantiate their claim that colorblind post-racialism is far from a U.S.

reality: 1) individual racial prejudices and 2) structural patterns of inequality.

"Colorblind, Post-Racialism is a Lie Because People Still Have Negative Views of Blacks"

Some participants argued for the falsehood of colorblind, post-racial ideology

based on the assumption that race and/or racism will always be reflected in the

cognitive processes of social actors. For instance, Shanae – a 21-year-old female in her

senior year at California University – responded as follows to the colorblind, post-racial

statement:

> I mean, it's a yearning for [colorblindness or post-racialsim], wanting to have
> that, but I think we definitely don't, and we probably never will. I mean, we
> might get close, but I don't think that is completely realistic – it's not like
> everyone will stop thinking about race at all, even though it is a social construct
> and just the way we've constructed it, people are always thinking about it.

Shanae's response suggests a recognition that race is an integral part of the American

experience. She believes that race will always matter in the U.S.; she argues that the

U.S. will "probably never" be colorblind. Her rationale for her response rests in her

assumption that people will always be thinking about race. Shanae's response presents

race and racism as features of individuals' thoughts and ideas.

Similarly, Elizabeth – an 18 year old, female, Black immigrant in her freshman

year at California University – responded to the colorblind, post-racial statement as

follows:

> I think they want a perfect world. Like they want no racism, everybody to be
> equal, and it's almost like that's really nice and everything but realistically you
> can't go and change everybody's mind. That's not going to happen."

Elizabeth denies colorblind, post-racial ideology. Additionally, like Shanae, she identifies

the challenges that come along with trying to change people's views and opinions about

race and racism as the main obstacle to a achieving a post-racial reality.

Finally, Kenneth, a 23-year-old male student in his senior year at Georgia

University, offered a similar rebuttal to colorblind, post-racial rhetoric. He noted:

> There's always going to be something. Whether people act on it or not may be a different case but people are always going to somehow acknowledge the fact that there are differences between people. I mean we can make laws that everyone is equal and yada yada yada but that's not gonna change people's perceptions or people's actions or people's views. And I don't necessarily see people changing their views as it pertains to race whether it be because of perpetuated stereotypes or whether it be because of their own views that have been passed down generation to generation, whatever it is.

Kenneth rejects colorblind, post-racialism based on his belief that it is difficult to change

people's "views as it pertains to race." For Kenneth, racism stems from "perpetuated

stereotypes" or individuals "own views that haven't been passed down from generation

to generation" – both of which deal with individual level/ interpersonal racism.

Accordingly, Kenneth describes racial dynamics as the product of individuals' beliefs and

opinions but he fails to address levels of racism beyond individual social actors'

encounters. For him, the solution to racism resides in changing the hearts and minds of

individual "racists" rather than an emphasis on institutional or structural racism.

In each of these examples, Shanae, Elizabeth, and Kenneth present individual,

psychological understandings of race and racism. The psychological view (also known as

the traditional view) suggests that racism is about individuals' attitudes, opinions, and

beliefs (Wellman 1993). This view conflates understandings of prejudice and racism.

Sociologically, prejudice is defined as individual attitudes or preconceived judgments on the basis of race and/or ethnicity (Wellman 1993; Tatum 1997). In contrast, racism is defined as an ideology based on racial prejudice and a system comprised of cultural messages, institutional policies, practices, as well as individual beliefs and actions that systematically privilege one ethno-racial group over another (Tatum 1997; Bonilla-Silvia 2001). Thus, Shanae, Elizabeth, and Kenneth's psychological view of racism ignores the ways in which institutions and structures can create racial advantage and disadvantage.

This finding reflects a larger pattern in the data; most Black millennials (46 out of 61) defined racism as an anti-black attitude or negative views and opinions about another ethno-racial groups. Consequently, Black millennials have a very narrow understanding of what racism is and how it operates in society. This makes it hard for Black millennials to see and address institutional/structural racism. Despite their limited view of racism as an attitude or psychological feature, their micro understanding of race and racism still prevents them from embracing colorblind, post-racialism as a U.S. reality.

"Colorblind, Post-Racialism is a Lie Because Blacks Still Face Inequality in Housing, Schools, and the Criminal Justice System"

There were some participants who also offered more structural explanations for why colorblind, post-racial logic is a fallacy. For example, Olu, an 18-year-old freshman from Georgia University responded, "I think that's a really stupid thing to say." When asked why "it is a stupid thing to say", Olu responded,

Because it's so apparent. You see it all the time. If racism is a thing of the past, then why is it that Black people still encompass like I think it's 70% of the prison system, whereas we're only like what, 30% of the population?

Although the percentages that Olu quotes are inaccurate[25], research on incarceration and race does affirm Olu's position that race directly impacts outcomes in the criminal justice system, particularly with regard to incarceration rates. In claiming that race is central to understanding disparities in incarceration rates, Olu's response makes connections between the falsehood of colorblind, post-racial ideology and the very real structural reality of mass incarceration which disproportionately disadvantages Blacks (Alexander 2010).

Likewise, Kiyra a 21 year-old female student from California University contends that colorblind, post-racialism is false based on her awareness of institutional racism and national current events related to racial dynamics. She stated,

I feel like a lot of these institutions are still built on [racism], and it's been 50, 60 years or whatever, but I feel like the people and the feelings are still there, and I feel like it's -- I feel like it's impossible for race not to matter when it's like -- … [all these] ramifications from the Civil Rights Movement. Just because we're integrating schools and stuff, and integrating life, that doesn't mean that people don't still hold those same views. It doesn't mean that race isn't a factor when people are interacting with each other, like just because we're technically integrated – and I do mean technically, because a lot of neighborhoods and schools are just as segregated today as they were back then which is another reason why it is crazy for people to say that race doesn't exist anymore. If it were true [that race didn't matter], then I wouldn't have to check Black on all my tests and college applications and stuff like. If race doesn't matter then -- then why is it that stuff like Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis happened, you know? Someone kills another person just for playing loud music in a public place and it gets labeled a mistrial? Like I don't understand! If he [Michael Dunn] attempted to kill four people, but actually killed one, how is that a mistrial? But if it had of been the other way around, like you know, like for me it's like, if a Black guy had

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[25] According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Blacks account for nearly 40% of all persons who were in jail or prison in the United States in 2009; census data from 2010, however, reveals that Blacks only make up about 14% of the entire U.S. population.

of shot a White guy, the trial wouldn't have been more than a day, you know; there would be no mistrial, he would just be found guilty.

Kiyra's response actually reveals an understanding of racism at both an individual and institutional level. She suggests that racism is still represented in the views that certain individuals hold (i.e., traditional view of racism); likewise, she believes that race remains a factor in shaping how individuals interact with one another. Both of these sentiments capture individual or interpersonal understandings of racism.

Kiyra's concept of racism, however, goes beyond just the traditional view of racism. The opening line of her response by situates racism at the foundation of American institutions (i.e., I feel like a lot of these institutions are still built on [racism]). Kiyra notes contemporary patterns of residential and school segregation as evidence that racism still remains relevant to the American experience. Additionally, her reference to racialized current events such as the murders of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis and the subsequent outcome of court cases involving George Zimmerman and Michael Dunn reflects a belief that race impacts institutional practices within the criminal justice system (i.e., … if a Black guy had of shot a White guy, the trial wouldn't have been more than a day, there would be no mistrial, he would just be found guilty).

Similar to Kiyra, Michael, a 23-year-old male who recently graduated from UCLA, argued that residential and school segregation are common markers of the continued importance of race and racism. When asked to respond to the colorblind, post-racial prompt, Michael stated:

> I would say race definitely does matter today. I would say race is still very important to this day, because to be a certain skin color does mean that your life

chances of certain things are higher than others, so I would just do that. *["What do you mean by life chances?"*] Being Black and Latino means you go to certain schools, live in certain neighborhoods – typically schools and neighborhoods that don't have as many resources as White schools and neighborhoods.

Michael's response suggests that race continues to matter in the United States because one's racial identification directly affects the types of schools they are likely to attend and the types of neighborhoods in which they are likely to live. Michael's comments reflect an understanding that race is more than just a descriptor of Black, White, Asian, etc. and instead one's racial classification marks of a particular kind of lived experience of advantage (i.e., Whites) and/or disadvantage (i.e., people of color) in the United States.

Finally, Stephanie, a 21 year old female student in her Senior year at Georgia University, responded to the post-racial statement as follows:

Race can only not actually matter to you maybe if you're White because then you don't have to worry as much. I mean unless you just throw yourself in the middle of somewhere where you are then the minority, you shouldn't have to worry about your race. Whereas [when] I walk around and I'm always a minority. I always have to be mindful of my race because people are always judging me by whatever they perceive me as. It's easy for you to be like race doesn't matter because you don't have issues with your race. For the most part White is seen as normal.

Stephanie's rebuttal to colorblind, post-racial rhetoric reflects an understanding of White privilege. White privilege refers to the unearned advantages that Whites consciously or unconsciously benefit from simply because they are White (McIntosh 1988; Gallagher 2003). In her response to claims that race doesn't matter anymore, Stephanie suggests that endorsing colorblind, post-racial rhetoric is an element of White

privilege, whereby Whites can afford for to "think" that race doesn't matter because being White does not bring on racial consequences or barriers in the same that it does for people of color.

Olu, Kiyra, Michael, and Stephanie move beyond interpersonal understandings of racism in their articulations of why post-racial, colorblind rhetoric is false. Overall, nearly one-third (18 out of 61)[26] of the sample offered an understanding of racism as more than just individual's attitudes or anti-black attitudes. Like Olu, Kiyra, Michael, and Stephanie, these participants reject colorblind, post-racial ideology based on their beliefs that racism still operates at the institutional and structural level in the United States.

Summary

This chapter explores Black millennials' response to colorblind, post-racial rhetoric. Nearly all of the Black millennials in this study rejected colorblind, post-racial ideology rhetoric that contends that the U.S. is a colorblind or post-racial society. These findings parallel previous research on the impact of colorblind ideology on people of color (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Apollon 2011). Based on interpersonal as well as institutional understandings of racism, Black millennials shun colorblind post-racial discourse. They suggest that colorblind post-racialism is more of an ideal than a reality. Likewise, they believe that the likelihood of the U.S. truly becoming a post-racial society is slim to

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[26] The percentage of students who reported an interpersonal understanding of racism and those who offered an institutional/ structural explanation exceeds 100% because some students, like Kiyra, shared definitions of racism that reflected an investment in understanding racism at multiple levels.

none. Black millennials highlight the stableness of anti-black sentiments and patterns of structural inequality in racial dynamics like residential and school segregation as evidence that "colorblindness" is unlikely to be achieved in the U.S.

Further investigation into Black millennials' ideas about racial inequality reveals, however, a contradictory ideological position for Blacks. In the next chapter, I explore the tension between Black millennials rejection of colorblind, post-racial rhetoric and Black millennials' explanation of structural racial inequality.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOW BLACK MILLENNIALS EXPLAIN RACIAL INEQUALITY

This chapter explores the second half of the paradox that characterizes the

competing realities of Black millennial's social world – entrenched structural racial

inequality. Understanding how ethno-racial groups make sense of racial inequality is a

key component of unearthing their racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva 2015; O'Brien 2008). In

sharing their explanations and opinions, ethno-racial groups reveal the frameworks,

storylines, and beliefs that they use to interpret the world in which they live. As a result,

the first half of this chapter examines how Black millennials talk about and explain racial

inequality in 3 social systems: wealth (economics), education, and the criminal justice[27].

I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the impact of social context (i.e., region) on

how Black millennials in this study understand and interpret racial dynamics. To this

end, I am compare the explanations and storylines that participants from Georgia

University shared with those shared by participants from California University.

The data in this chapter reveal major contradictions in Black millennials' beliefs

regarding colorblind, post-racial discourse (chapter four) and their understandings of

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[27] I chose to focus on Black millennials' understandings of disparities in these three key systems because prior research suggests that people's understanding of racial inequality varies based on the system of interest. Prior research reports that people, and youth in particular, often cite race as a key variable impacting racialzed outcomes within the criminal justice system (Weitzer 1999; Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Cohen 2010; Apollon 2011). In contrast, based on the ideals of meritocracy and common assumptions that education acts as a great equalizer, people are less likely to argue that race impacts outcomes in education because schools are seen as an equal playing field whereby hard work and discipline has a greater influence on outcomes social markers such as race (Cremin 1957; McCleod 1987; Gonzalez 2001; Rowe and Montgomery 2003). Finally, researchers note that class inequality is often a taboo topic in American society (Massey 2007). Furthermore, when class inequality is addressed it is often through an analysis of income inequality. The data on income inequality, however, masks the grave economic disparities that shape the U.S. social structure, specifically with regard to wealth (Conely 2009; Massey 2007). The data on income and race suggest that racial groups are moving toward greater parity while data on wealth inequality suggests that the racial divide is increasing. The lack of attention to wealth inequality - in lay, media, and academic conversations - helps to further hide awareness of racial disparities in wealth (Conely 2009; Shapiro 2005; Johnson 2006; Massey 2007). I chose systems of inequality that were associated with varying levels of societal awareness as a test of reliability. Participates responses are not merely a function of knowing more about a particular social system; rather considered collectively, participants responses reveal a broader understanding of how systems of inequality work in general.

the root(s) of racial inequality. That is, although Black millennials denounce claims that

the U.S. is colorblind or post-racial, their explanations of racial inequality more often

than not draw upon non-racial, colorblind post-racial logic. While Black millennials

unanimously acknowledge that race and racism still matter in meaningful ways in their

personal lives, they often fail to make connections between their individual experiences

with race or racism and broader patterns of structural racism that lead to the racialized

outcomes reflected in the data on wealth, education, and incarceration inequality. For

the Black millennials in this study, colorblind post-racial ideology emerged as the

dominant ideological framework for understanding inequality. However, Black

millennials also offered, to a lesser extent, some explanations that drew upon more race

conscious ideological frameworks. I discuss Black millennials' race-conscious

understandings of structural inequality in the chapter six.

Explaining Racial Inequality: How Colorblind Ideology Shapes Black Millennials Racial Views

Eighty-two percent of the sample (50/61) did utilize colorblind post-racial

frameworks or storylines over the course of their interview (see Table 3); this was most

true for the discussions on racial inequality. As a result, in this section, I delve deeper

into the contradictions in my respondents' racial views, and utilize the four frames of

colorblind post-racial ideology - Cultural Racism, Abstract Liberalism, Minimization, and

Naturalization (Bonilla-Silva 2006) – as an analytical tool for examining how colorblind

ideology shapes Black millennials' understanding of wealth, education, and

incarceration racial disparities. I also discuss a fifth frame – Happenstance – that

emerges from my study and has not been addressed in the literature.

Participants were one-by-one presented with data charts that displayed

racialized outcomes in net-worth, high school graduation rates, and incarceration rates

(See Appendix C for data charts). After reviewing charts, the participants were asked to

explain why the racialized patterns exist and why Blacks, in particular, report the lowest

net-worth, lowest high school graduation rates, and highest rates of incarceration.

Respondents were encouraged to offer all of their thoughts on the most likely possible

explanations for each area of inequality; as a result, respondents often shared more

than one plausible explanation. Black millennials' responses to the data charts

unearthed a contradictory ideological position for most Black millennials in this study –

adamant disbelief in the existence of a colorblind U.S. society vs. understandings of

structural inequality that directly reflected colorblind ideals.

Chris, a 20 year old senior from Georgia University, provides a great example of

the contradictions that often emerged between participants' individual claims about the

continued significance of race in day-to-day interactions and their colorblind post-racial

understandings of macro racial inequality. Early in his interview, Chris discusses his

frustration with the negative stereotypes that surround Blacks in general, and Black

males in particular. When asked what the worst thing about being Black was, he states:

> The worst thing [about being Black] is the stereotype that Black males aren't as
> smart or that Black males are all in jail … it's perceived guilt by association—not
> every Black person is doing bad things, but some are and it is just enough to get
> people's attention to say 'you fit the description of people who are doing bad
> things. We don't really trust you because people who look like you who do bad

things.' All Blacks are associated with the few bad by default in the mind of non-Blacks.

Chris asserts that race (and gender) shapes how people perceive one another. Specifically, he notes that the experience of being Black comes along with a host of negative stereotypes such as "not smart" or "in jail" (Steele 2010). Chris's latter stereotype, "in jail", references the ways in which Black males in particular are stereotyped as dangerous or criminal (Steffensmeir, Ulmer, and Kramer 1999; Quillian and Pager 2001; Dixon and Maddox 2005; Welch 2007). He goes on to recount a personal experience with the stress and frustration of battling this very troubling stereotype. Chris shares that over the summer he held an internship with a firm in Chicago. The commute from his apartment to work required him to take the subway. He states that when was,

> … getting off the subway, getting on the subway, people would go out of their way to give me plenty of space … they would shift to the side and kind of move their stuff—most White males on the subway would shift their wife and kids away from me and I was very taken aback by that because I'm not interested in them … It's like, I am just trying to get to work on time. I am not trying to do anything to you or your family … That kind of response really shocked me and I didn't like it. [That was] one thing I hated about Chicago.

Here Chris draws connections between his belief that Black males are stereotyped as criminal and dangerous and his own personal experience of being stereotyped on the subway in Chicago. For Chris, the experience was shocking, uncomfortable, and negative. As Chris recounted the experience during the interview, his frustration and annoyance with the idea that people would be afraid of him without reason was visceral as his tone changed and he shifted his weight, threw his hands up in the air, and rolled his eyes. For Chris, his encounters on the subway in Chicago were lasting, still bothering

him months/years later; the experience had a defining impact on his understanding of how he is perceived by strangers because of his race and gender.

Despite his very real personal experience with the frustration and harm of being stereotyped as dangerous or criminal, Chris seems to endorse these very same stereotypes about Blacks in general when asked to explain racial disparities in incarceration rates. In explaining why Blacks are more likely to be incarcerated than Whites and Latinos, Chris suggests that Blacks are more criminal than other races. Specifically, he states:

> … See, I don't know. I think that I see a lot of documented Black people. Black people get documented for committing crimes. That's what I'm fed. But at the same time you just don't have that many white people getting documented for doing crimes … I would say I feel like—I don't know but—I feel like Black are involved in more criminal activity than Latinos and Whites, and then they get documented for it.

Chris's response is somewhat critical of his belief that Blacks are more criminal. This is evidence by his hesitancy, use of the diminutive phrase "I don't know," and his statement that this is what he's "fed." Despite this initial tension with colorblind post racial logic, he goes on to suggest that Blacks are more likely to be involved in criminal activity because they make "bad" choices …

> I mean I just—I really don't know if the environment—I think the environment is a big deal about how you're raised and what you see as how to solve problems. I think one of the big things for me is decisions … seeing Black people in jail is [about] the choices they made. The decisions you make in your life will determine what happens in your life, I think. That's what I believe. So a lot of it is environment and how you are raised. But you get a chance to make decisions. If you make bad decisions, things will go [bad].

The final quote highlights Chris's reliance on colorblind, post-racial ideology. He views the data on incarceration rates as an accurate reflection of something that black people

are actually doing --- "they are involved in more criminal activity", "make bad decisions", "environment", "how they are raised." Chris's first (and only) explanation draws directly on the very stereotypes that served as a source of frustration and hurt for him during his time in Chicago. He ultimately suggests that Blacks are more criminal. Chris reaches this conclusion even though the graph presented to him described arrests/incarceration rates, not criminal activity. In doing so, Chris draws directly on a cultural racism framework; he presents racial inequality as a byproduct of Blacks having poor values and/or "bad" cultural traits.

Chris's understanding of disparate incarceration rates by race, reveals a major disconnect between how he makes sense of his own personal experiences with race and his interpretation of racial inequality more generally. Despite Chris's earlier recognition of the ways in which the stereotype of Blacks as criminal are deeply flawed and negatively impact young black men like himself, he is unable to come up with any explanations for the incarceration data that relate to the ways in which Blacks may be more likely to be racially profiled as dangerous or criminals, which may lead to more arrests. Instead, he defaults to the common belief and stereotype that Blacks are actually more criminal**.**

Like Chris, many participants in this study drew upon contradictory ideologies/logics over the course of their interviews. On the one hand, the Black millennials I spoke to are clear in their belief that the U.S. is not a colorblind or post-racial nation – their racialized experiences easily convince them of this. By and large, Black millennials are able to identify the ways in which race still matters for individual

racialized moments. On the other hand, when presented with more general racial

dynamics and asked to offer explanations of broad patterns, such as national data on

racial inequality, they often fall back on colorblind, post-racial frameworks and rhetoric

– even when these colorblind, post-racial ideas directly contradict their personal

experiences.

Based on Black millennials heavy reliance on colorblind post-racial frameworks in

their discussions on inequality, the main contention in this section is that Black

millennials racial views are directly affected by colorblind, post-racial ideology -

specifically cultural racism and happenstance frameworks. In the section that follows, I

explore how Black millennials draw upon cultural racism to make sense of racial

inequality.

Insert Table 3

"Blacks Need To Do Better": Black Millennials and Cultural Racism

Of all the frames of colorblind racism, Black millennials were most likely to rely

on the frame of cultural racism in their explanations of racial inequality. Cultural racism

suggests that Blacks are culturally inferior to Whites (Bonilla-Silva 2006). These youth

explain racial inequality as primarily the natural byproduct of Blacks' failure to endorse

the "right" values and/or beliefs. This framework offers language to describe racial

inequalities as stereotypical behaviors associated with ethno-racial groups. Accordingly,

racial disparities in areas such as wealth, education, and incarceration exist because

Blacks lack motivation, have a poor work ethic, do not value education, and have weak

family structures (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich 2011; Bonilla-Silva 2015; Gallagher 2003). The essence of this frame is "blaming the victim" by arguing that minorities' lower social position is the result of their own actions rather than institutionalized historical and social processes of racial discrimination and racism. Over two-thirds of the Black millennials in this study (67%) relied on this frame to discuss contemporary racial dynamics (see Table 3). This is especially true when students were asked to offer possible explanation for racial inequality.

For example, after reviewing the data on racial disparities Elizabeth, a senior Business major from Georgia University, discusses possible explanations, offers the following:

> I mean I know a lot of African Americans will get upset when people discriminate [against] them or have prejudice against them but it's just like it was us that did this to ourselves. Like you don't ever see people thinking Asians are dumb because they've already set like a record or reputation for being good at academics. But, you know, we kind of already had like a track record for getting into criminal trouble and not doing well in school so I think if [Blacks] really want to get rid of the stereotypes, it has to be something where [Blacks] have to work on themselves instead of telling everybody to just accept them and stop thinking a certain way about them. You know, how about you just change, like just change the way you are so that they don't think that about you, like don't have the stereotypes.

Elizabeth's assessment of Blacks' current social position directly employs a culturally racist frame. She acknowledges that Blacks continue to experience discrimination and prejudice in the contemporary context (suggesting some level of race consciousness); but for her, Blacks' experiences with discrimination and prejudice are the result of something that Blacks have "done to themselves." Elizabeth places the blame for racial inequality squarely on the actions of Blacks. Given this analysis of the "problem", her

"solution" to rectifying these inequities places the onus of responsibility to change

stereotypes on Blacks themselves. Elizabeth fails to challenge why the racial stereotypes

exist in the first place. Her discussion of existing racial disparities, prejudice, and

discrimination are completely devoid of a structural critique and/or acknowledgement

of socio-cultural processes that have created and perpetuated damaging stereotypes in

particular and inequitable racial dynamics in general. When asked to response to

colorblind post-racial rhetoric (chapter four), Elizabeth rejected the notion of a

colorblind post-racial U.S. society; yet, she endorses some aspects colorblind logic (i.e.,

cultural racism) in her explanation of racial inequality. Similar to Elizabeth, several other

participants frequently relied on a cultural racism framework to explain more specific

issues of racial inequality with regard to the charts on wealth, education, and criminal

justice. I discuss participants' responses disparities in net-worth (wealth), high school

graduation (education), and incarceration (criminal justice) in the next three sections,

respectively.

Wealth disparities

In discussions of wealth disparities, Black millennials consistently argued that

Blacks reported the lowest net worth, compared to other racial groups, because Blacks

are "too materialistic," "don't plan for the future," and "lack financial literacy." While

explaining racial disparities in wealth, Ife, a female senior engineering major from

Georgia University, offers the following explanation.

> Okay, so white people have access to education on loans and debt and how to
> minimize [debt]. And they take advantage of those [educational opportunities].

That's why their net worth is so high. Blacks and Hispanics don't have that – not even that they don't have it, I'm sure it's available to them, but [Blacks and Hispanics] aren't going out to educate themselves about the risk of loans and debt. For them, having a nice fancy car is really more important … Blacks don't really think about their net worth; instead, it's like I have a new car and they're paying their car loans and credit cards off, not to [establish] wealth but because they want the next 'new' thing …; they're not [concerned with] building their future. I feel like the priorities of a lot of blacks and Hispanics are kind of skewed.

Ife's analysis of the wealth gap assumes that all groups have access to the same information to improve their financial literacy (which is a reflection of abstract liberalism) and that Whites take the initiative to educate themselves about loans and debt. As a result, she argues that whites are more likely to take advantage of or utilize financial literacy programs. Additionally, she blames Blacks' for the wealth gap by arguing that Blacks have the wrong priorities (and a lack of motivation to gain financial education). She believes that Blacks have a "buy now" mentality, and thus have little regard for building a future financially. Ife's sentiments are similar to "culture of poverty" views that claim that poor Blacks are present oriented and don't delay gratification (Banfield 1970; Bullock 2008). Ife's main argument is that the wealth gap is a reflection of Blacks' having poor cultural values with regard to saving money, securing wealth, and maintaining wealth.

Jamie, a female junior biology from California University, espouses a similar way of thinking and offers the following explanation regarding the relationship between wealth disparities and race.

I feel like for Black people, we are very -- Well, I think the whole society is materialistic, but for Blacks, I think our idea of wealth is like just getting things - the cars, the houses, and like just having all these material things. [For blacks] the material things define us as being wealthy or being like high class. I think that in turn we don't really as a -- like as a community, we don't really manage our

money the way we should, which causes like a lot of debt amongst our people, so yeah that's why we don't have a lot of wealth.

As this quote suggests, Jamie believes that wealth inequalities are a reflection of Blacks' materialism. In her explanation, she implies that Blacks are more materialistic than other ethno-racial groups. For her, Blacks' materialism leads to debt unparalleled by other ethno-racial groups and consequently, Blacks do not amass the same levels of wealth of whites.

Similarly, Dayon, a male junior Sociology major from California University, states:

I feel like Black people -- we spend our money on things that may not matter so much, so like we aren't investing it. We're spending on like -- We're just getting it and spending in different areas, or like mainly on material things like Jordans or cars and things like that, and we may not have the means to like back that up or to keep bringing it in. [We] let it come in, and then let it slip.

Serge, a freshman and undeclared major from Georgia University affirms Dayon's point of view with the following response when asked the same interview question:

I guess Whites care more about their assets and take care of making sure their accounts are well balanced and making sure they don't spend too much or spend money that they don't have and eventually have to pay it back. I guess Blacks really – even though some do, I guess more spend more than they have and eventually incur more debt than their assets.

As their responses demonstrate, both Dayon and Serge ultimately suggest that the wealth gap is the result of Blacks being too materialistic. For them, Blacks report the lowest accumulation of wealth because they are more focused on buying material goods than investing or saving. Additionally, both participants assert that Blacks have the wrong priorities in comparison to other ethno-racial groups – "we spend money on things that may not matter so much" or "whites care more about their assets." Dayon

and Chris resolve that the wealth gap is the result of something that whites are doing correctly and something that Blacks are doing incorrectly.

Kiyra, a fourth-year Sociology major from California University, focuses less on Black materialism and more on what she believes is a lack of knowledge in the Black community. She views racial disparities in wealth as a reflection of Blacks' lack of knowledge regarding the value of saving, investing, and ownership. When asked to explain wealth disparities among ethno-racial groups. She began by stating that, "Well, then I would say it's just not something that's commonly practiced, one, and –"; however, because her reference to the subject "it" was unclear, I asked her to clarify the "it" that's "not commonly practiced." Kiyra offered the following explanation.

> Like having savings accounts or buying houses and owning your cars, like that's -- That's just not a part -- I won't say not a part. Yeah, for lack of better words, it's just not a part of how, I guess, [Blacks and Hispanics] typically go about living. Like it's not -- I guess it's not a priority to own your house or own a car … you can make a six figure income, but not own any of these things, because it's just not -- I guess it's just not the norm for you or for Black and Latino people to have checking accounts, or even invest. Like I don't know many Black people that invest in stocks or even know how to go about doing these things, and so I guess that's the reason for why the chart looks like this.

Essentially, albeit not without tension (i.e., "I won't say not a part"; "I guess"), she blames Black culture for the existing disparities in wealth. She argues that investing; saving, and ownership are not prioritized in the Black community.

Annmarie, a senior African American Studies major from California University, places one of her explanations of the wealth gap within the context of social welfare. She says that, "I also think welfare plays a major role in, I guess, the net worth of households." She offers further explanation of this perception.

Well, just looking at my community, there are people who, I guess, pimp the system. They get comfortable living on welfare. They don't see this as a stepping-stone, in a way. So therefore, they rely on welfare to live their lives, to pay their bills, and give them money.

Like her peers, Annmarie blames Blacks for their current economic position. Annmarie's response suggests that Blacks would rather live off of public assistance than work, thus espousing the myth that Blacks are the largest consumers of government assistance. Her explanation of racialized outcomes draws upon dominant stereotypes characterize Blacks as lazy and welfare dependent. She evokes a kind of "welfare queen"[28] analysis of why Blacks report lower net worth than other ethno-racial groups. Embedded in Annmarie's explanation of wealth disparities is the assumption that one can live "comfortably" on welfare; she assumes that Blacks exploit the government assistance programs as a means for financial stability and/or to get rich off of the government, hence her use of the phrase "pimp the system." Annmarie's response suggests that Blacks would rather eschew work and live off of public assistance as a means to accumulate wealth.

Participants' reliance on the cultural racism frame highlights the lack of knowledge that many Black millennials have concerning institutional disadvantages that Blacks have historically and presently face with regard to economic exclusion. Students who drew upon cultural racism in their explanations of the wealth gap fail to make connections between Blacks' low net worth and exploitative institutions like slavery or

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[28] The term "Welfare Queen" refers to imagery that emerged during President Ronald Reagan's administration and demonized single Black mothers as social welfare abusers. The term welfare queen suggests that Black mothers, in particular, rely on government assistance to live a lavish lifestyle.

sharecropping during the Jim Crow era as well as the exclusion of domestic workers, a

mostly Black labor sector, under President Roosevelt's Social Security Act of 1935

(Takaki 2008). Likewise, students were unable to draw upon concepts such as redlining,

intergenerational transfers of wealth, and discrimination in banking and finance

practices (Rugh and Massey 2010; Conely 2009; Shapiro 2005).

Even when students did draw upon some form of an institutional explanation of

wealth inequality, the explanation was often intertwined with remnants of colorblind

ideology. For example, after offering her welfare explanation for racial disparities in

wealth outcomes, Annmarie offers another explanation – this one more rooted in

historical-socio-cultural processes. She begins by explaining that, "Maybe it has

something to do with the fact that Whites have generational wealth." After being

prompted to further explain, she states that

> We talked about this in my Afro Am class, it's like white people can rely on an
> inheritance that Black people don't usually have ... I mean, like the White kids
> here have an inheritance or when their parents die they might get their parents'
> house in the Will. Most Black people that I know I don't have that – not even
> here.

Here, Annmarie suggests that intergenerational wealth is another plausible explanation

for the wealth gap, but when further probed about "why" Whites are more likely than

Blacks to benefit from intergenerational transfers of wealth, she defaults to her original

investment in cultural racism.

> I guess it is hard to pass on an inheritance when you are living on welfare. Blacks
> are comfortable getting a government check and living in Section 8 Housing. But
> in the end, they have nothing to pass on to their children.

Annmarie's response highlights the direct effect of colorblind ideology on her understanding of racial dynamics – particularly as it is pertains to wealth outcomes. Even when able to offer counter-colorblind evidence (i.e., "white kids here have an inheritance"), participants – like Annmarie - rationalize said evidence from a colorblind, post-racial standpoint. Participants were more often than not unable to situate the fact that whites have more wealth than blacks (and Latinos) in a historical or social context of de jure and de facto economic exclusion. Participants by and large began their analysis with the assumption that wealth accumulation is a "fair" or egalitarian process; consequently, disparities must reflect the inadequacies of groups at the bottom of wealth chart rather than inequities in "who" has or hasn't been able to historically accumulate wealth due to institutionalized racial discrimination.

In general, a majority of Black youth (59%) in this study believe that wealth disparities reflect failures of the Black community rather than broader systems of disadvantage that have historically privileged whites over non-whites economically. In fact, cultural racism is the framework that most readily informs Black millennials' understanding of wealth inequality. Forty-one participants relied on cultural racism explanations at some point in the interview; 36 of these respondents (88%) did so in either their first or second attempt to explain the data on wealth disparities. These findings suggest that colorblind, post-racial ideology has direct impact on how Black millennials understand wealth inequality.

Education Disparities

The notion of Blacks as culturally deficient or having the wrong values was also prominent in Black millennials' understanding of educational disparities. In fact, Black millennials were most likely to offer explanations rooted in a cultural racism framework when discussing educational inequalities. Specifically, when asked to explain why blacks report the lowest high school graduation rates compared to other groups, one dominant narrative emerged – "blacks don't value/prioritize education."

Bianca, a STEM major in her third year at Georgia University, explains educational outcomes as follows:

> I guess for Whites and – I'm not completely sure, but I think – my thoughts would be, I guess, their upbringing and I guess their parents push them hard to do their best, but I guess some still take it for granted, but I guess not as much as some blacks take their education for granted.

When asked to clarify why she thought that Blacks were more likely to take education for granted than whites or the other ethno-racial group that have higher graduation rates, Bianca stated,

> I guess for some of them, I'd say it would be their upbringing. If your parents don't push you to – if their parents don't push them to strive and do their best, some might prefer to just go out with their friends and spend more time with their friends rather than focusing on their schoolwork and doing the best they can to move on.

Bianca's understanding of educational disparities suggests that Black parents do not instill the same educational values or appreciation for education in their childrearing practices as their white counterparts. According to her, Blacks are less likely to value education because of their "upbringing." Bianca contends that Blacks' low graduation

rates reflect a lack of focus on schoolwork and perhaps a greater focus on nurturing friendships.

Likewise, Ebony, a senior from Georgia University, also argues that graduation rates reflect an appreciation (or lack thereof) of education. In giving her initial reactions to the data, Ebony states that she assumed that the high school graduation rates for Asians would be similar to other groups of color. When pressed to explain why her assumption went unsupported, Ebony states:

> I guess it would tie back to the value that people place on education but I'm not sure if that would be an explanation. Like I don't really know why that is. I think that it would be the whole value of education and things along that nature.

> **Interviewer: Can you be more explicit about what you mean by value of education? So how is this [disparate graduation rates] tied to what you are saying about the value of education?**

> As the value of education I mean like people from—or culturally speaking some people do have a very strong, or hold a very strong importance of education and I guess within the Asian culture that may be the case. But I don't really know if that's why the other populations of people are lower. I couldn't really explain it. I would just say that within the Asian and Pacific Islander culture they may have a stronger value for education and they may have more motivation... So yeah, maybe just within their culture there's a higher value of education."

> **Interviewer: Than Black, Native Americans and Hispanics?**

> "And even whites because it's lower, so it might be that culturally they're [Asians} more I guess passionate about education and learning."

Ebony's explanation of educational disparities reflects an investment in the idea that Asians have a particular appreciation for education that is unmatched by other ethno-racial groups. Ebony is clear in her belief that Asians place high value on education, which translates into high graduation percentages. She is more hesitant or reluctant, however, to apply similar logic to explaining low graduation rates among other groups

of color. It was apparent that Ebony did not want to directly say that Blacks do not value education. This hesitancy is evident in her use of diminutives such as "I don't really know" or "I couldn't really explain it." Nonetheless, implicit in her explanation of Asians' graduation rates resulting from the value that they place on education is the assumption that Blacks (and other groups of color) do NOT value education in a similar manner. In effect, Ebony argues that Blacks report lower graduation rates because they do not value education as much as groups with the highest graduation rates. Despite her initial reluctance to make claims about Blacks' appreciation for education, by the end of the discussion, Ebony ultimately outright states that Blacks' low graduation rates are linked to them not being as "passionate" about education and learning as other ethno-racial groups.

Michelle, a Junior Music and History major California University, also believes that Asians and Whites have a cultural appreciation for education that is absent from Blacks. This is evidenced by her statement that, "Whites have a family structure that supports education and for Asians it's instilled in them very early on that they better do right in school." When asked if this structure was absent in the groups at the bottom, she clarified her position.

> Not absent, but maybe not as focused upon. At least from my experience, even with me, it wasn't like --- I didn't have to college. It wasn't something you had to do, but it was like you probably should go. I wanted to go from the beginning, but my sister doesn't go to school … I have friends whose parents didn't care what they were doing. Then I think it may be me leaning on stereotype when it comes to Asians. I know some, but not enough to make a good assumption on them, but what I hear and what I see at California University, education is very important and something that's instilled in them … so of course, they're going to graduate from school. Then white people in general, they just have an education

type of mentality, while I think these groups [Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans] focus more -- Well, I don't know about American Indian, because I don't know any, but Blacks and Hispanics probably focus more on [getting] money whatever way they can possible, because people that I know don't have the resources to do a lot otherwise.

Steve, and African American Studies major from California University, also argues that

Blacks are more likely to be focused on earning money rather than completing schools.

I think it's a cultural aspect also. A lot of Blacks and Latinos that I grew up with, they don't really want to be in a school environment when they could be making money selling drugs... That was a primary motive for most of my friends and I almost fell into that, but I looked long term. A lot of them did get a lot of money in high school, so it's like why go to school. A lot of that is cultural.

As their explanations demonstrate, both Michelle and Steve believe that Blacks'

economic challenges correlate with a devaluing of education. Their beliefs reflect

common stereotypes regarding Blacks' perceived lack of appreciation for education and

desires for fast money. Each explains what they see as a tension between making

money and going to school as a "cultural thing" rather than a structural outcome.

Conversely, neither of them reflects critically on "why" blacks may be more likely to

focus on addressing immediate financial needs over securing an education. They do not

express an understanding of the root causes of the financial strain that many Black

families may face and assume that the tension between money and education is a

natural part of Black culture. Inherent in their assumptions is the absence of an

awareness of the types of financial strain that other ethno-racial groups – Asians in

particular – may face as well.

Crystal, a senior Global Studies major from California University, initially suggests

that the racial disparities in graduation rates reflects the "fact" that Black and Latino

students have more pressure, than other groups, to contribute to their household financially. Essentially, Crystal argues that Black (and Latino) students are less likely to graduate from high school because they are more likely to have to work. When probed to explain "why" Black students are more likely to have to work than students from other ethno-racial backgrounds, Crystal defaults to an explanation rooted in cultural racism. She states that, "Education is really important in their [Asian and White] culture and I don't think they would have their child working, if it would hinder their schooling." When asked if she believes the inverse is true for Blacks and Latinos, Crystal responds:

> Sadly, I think it is. Education is not as highlighted within the Black community. Maybe not Hispanic either, I don't have that much experience, as far as their highlight. It just seems like as a Black person, you would get more praise as an NBA player than having a 3.0 GPA or high school basketball star versus high academic achievement. Education isn't as important or valued as much in Black community.

When pushed to explain "why" Black students would be more likely to have to work than students from other ethno-racial backgrounds, Crystal boldly states that the reason ties back to a devaluing of education in the Black community. She suggests that education is less important in the Black community than it is for other ethno-racial groups.

Ironically, during the first half of her interview, in which we discussed her family and early messages about race, Crystal spent a great deal of time discussing how important education was to her and her family. She notes that one of the earliest messages she received about race, from her father, revolved around the idea that education was the key to success for Black people. Additionally, Crystal reveals that her family always made a "big deal" about making straight A's and doing well in school.

Specifically, she states that, "Education is real big in my family. I would get in trouble, or at least a long lecture, if I didn't make straight A's. My dad, especially drove home the point that we had to work hard in school."

As demonstrated by her responses, there appears to be a disconnect between Crystal's personal experience of growing up in a Black household where education and academic excellence was valued, emphasized, and/or encouraged and her overarching belief that education is not as important or valued as much in the Black community. When asked to reconcile this disconnect, Crystal presents her family's commitment to education as an anomaly in most Black families or as she states, "the exception for Blacks rather than the rule." Crystal was prompted to think back to the [pro-education] messages she reportedly received about being Black and doing well in school from her parents and then asked how she situates her personal experiences in a household that valued education with her ideas that, in general, Blacks do not necessarily value education. She explained that,

> My dad stood out because his background is that he came from a very poor environment. He couldn't play basketball or football and school is what he did and how he pulled himself out of the environment. He was able to go to school and get a really good job. He always pushed that with us, because he saw it his own life how much better he was doing than his siblings. He's more of an exception to the rule, as far as what you see emphasized by Black parents.

The notion that Blacks report the lowest graduation rates because they are more likely to have to work to contribute to their households was common theme among participants. Likewise, participants often presented contradictory ideological frameworks in their explanations of racial disparities.

For example, Mercedes, a Psychology and Biology major from California

University, explained the educational disparities as follows:

> In a lot of Black and Hispanic households they have to drop out of school to work
> and help with the family. And then in Black households, school is not taken as
> seriously as it should be. A lot of these kids drop out to work and don't end up
> going to college.

> **Interviewer: Any other ideas about why we see differences in the percent to
> graduate on time by race?**

> "I think it's hard to focus on school when your life is a problem. A lot of Blacks
> and Hispanics [have] low SES. It's really hard to focus on the Pythagorean
> Theorem when you're worried about if the car is still there when I get home or
> are we going to have to leave in the middle of the night, because we just got
> evicted. It's hard to care about classes that seem so trivial when you have all
> these real life problems. Blacks and Latinos have low graduation rates because
> they have other things [to worry about]; their minds aren't in the place of high
> school. For Asians, it might not be a cultural thing, but the ideas have been
> passed on to them. A lot of their parents push them to do well in school, I don't
> really know what makes the parents do that, but a lot of pressure comes from
> the parents. I just think it's a general idea for whites and Asians to finish high
> school."

> **Interviewer: Do you think that idea of parents pushing their kids and that you
> have to finish HS, do you think that's absent in Black and Hispanic
> communities?**

> More so absent than other groups.

Mercedes' first explanation of the racial disparity in graduation rates rest solidly

in a cultural racism framework: Blacks do not value education, consequently they

graduate from high school at lower rates than other ethno-racial groups. When asked to

offer another plausible explanation, she suggests that socio-economic status (SES) may

contribute to Blacks' lower graduation rates. Essentially, Mercedes asserts that Blacks

are more likely to live in circumstances that can pose as a distraction for academic

success. As a result, Blacks have difficulty focusing on graduation behaviors because

they are preoccupied by their disadvantaged social and economic conditions; hence

"their minds aren't in the place of high school."

In her attempt to offer a second explanation, Mercedes appears to circle back to

a cultural deficiency argument. Although she acknowledges that Blacks may have to deal

with social and economic conditions that other ethno-racial groups do not have to

contend with, she does not connect Asians' and Whites' academic success to not having

to deal with the "real life problems" that she outlines for Blacks. Instead, she assumes

that the academic success of Asians and Whites is a reflection of the "ideas" or values to

which said groups subscribe. The consequence of this logic (i.e., Asians/Whites report

higher graduation rates because of their values) is the implication that Blacks do not

hold the same the values/ideas as Asians and Whites, regardless of their social and

economic conditions.

In summary, most of the Black millennials in this study viewed racial disparities

in education as a function of something that Blacks are doing wrong. One-hundred

percent (41/41) of the students who evoked cultural racism as an ideological frame did

so in their first or second explanation of racial disparities in graduation rates. Cultural

Racism is so embedded in the ideological frameworks of Black millennials that even

when challenged or presented with alternative information, they are reluctant to let go

of cultural racism explanations. For example, Annmarie, from California University,

states:

> [The graduation rates] are like this because Black parents aren't as involved as
> other parents. Asian parents don't play when it comes to schoolwork. My Asian
> friends were always studying because their parents made them. You don't see
> that with Black families. It's like they didn't graduate from high school so they

don't understand the value of graduating and don't stay on their children to make them graduate … Black parents don't expect their children to graduate. The expectations are low for us. Blacks don't expect blacks to graduate. **Interviewer: What if I tell you that is not true? What if tell you that there is research that shows that all parents care about their children's education. They want them to graduate. They want them to do well in school. They want them to do better than what they did.**

So do they do anything to make this happen?

Interviewer: Like what? What types of things are you thinking about in terms of doing something to make it happen?

Are they making sure that their children are on the right track to graduate or, I guess, take advantage of the opportunities that they are offered at school? I understand they want [their children to do well], but actions are different. I get that parents want their children to, I guess, gain an education, but at the end of the day, it's like, what do they do in order to make this happen? Like what's actually going on? Because, like, I can want a lot of things … Black parents want their children to obtain an education, but I guess, the reality is that the actions that are being performed aren't creating the results that they want to see happen.

When challenged on her belief that Black parents do not value education or push their children to graduate, Annmarie immediately questions Black parents' "actions." Implicit in her response is the idea that parents from other ethno-racial groups are doing something correctly. Totally absent from her perspective is the possibility that there could be factors at play that lie outside of the actions of Black parents specifically and Black culture in general. Although Annmarie is an African American Studies major, she is unable to imagine structural or institutional explanations that explore school factors such as tracking, disparate disciplinary procedures based on race, or biases of school officials (i.e., teachers, guidance counselors, or administrators). Her inability to conceive of causal factors beyond Blacks themselves highlights the direct impact of colorblind, post-racial ideology on her understanding of educational disparities. By and large, when

challenged on their beliefs about Blacks' cultural deficiencies, students remained

committed to their cultural explanations in the same manner Annmarie. Black

millennials overwhelmingly suggest that Blacks do not have cultural traits that value

education or support academic success. Furthermore, they believe that Blacks don't

value education as much their Asian and White counterparts.

Ironically, the Black millennials in this study appear to hold these problematic

views despite the fact that they themselves have graduated from high school and are

enrolled in fairly prestigious universities. It may be inferred that the interview

participants value education on some level given their pursuit of higher education. In

many ways, they are the antithesis of the very ideological frameworks that they

espouse. Their individual experiences with valuing education do not affirm the dominant

narrative that they share regarding a lack of academic/educational culture in the Black

community; yet, these Black students are unable to offer alternative ideas about why

Black students report lower graduation rates than other ethno-racial groups.

Incarceration Disparities

Out of all three areas of social inequality, participants were least likely to offer

suggestions rooted in colorblind, post-racial ideology when discussing disparities within

the criminal justice system. Specifically, students rarely used cultural racism as a

framework for explaining racial differences in incarceration rates. Most students

discussed structural or institutional factors such as racial profiling, disparate sentencing,

and bias in the criminal justice system towards Blacks. Only 32% (13 out of 41) of

students who drew upon cultural racism did so while explaining incarceration disparities. When students did rely on a cultural racism as a framework, however, they tended to characterize Blacks as more criminal than other ethno-racial groups. "Blacks commit more crimes" and references to Blacks coming from "bad environments" were the most common themes among participants.

While discussing racial disparities in incarceration rates, Kandice, a freshman from Georgia University argues that that "Black people act out more than other racial groups." When asked whether she believed that the data was a reflection of Black people "acting out" more than the Latinos and Whites, Kandice responded,

> "I think so and a lot of times, like I said, it's socially acceptable for your specific culture so if you don't see a lot of white people on the news that are doing the same things [as] Black people it's less likely that more white people are going to be inspired, I guess, to do those things. And if you recognize the stereotype ---- a lot of times people recognize their stereotype and just fall into it, like oh, I'm already expected to be this or act like this so they're just going to do it anyway."

When asked to clarify what she meant by "act out," Kandice offered the following rationale:

> Just like reckless and robbing and cheating and killing people for silly things like for material items, I guess, and feeling the need to take someone's life or just take something from someone else. I don't understand why.

Kandice's explanation of racial disparities in incarceration rates automatically assumes that Blacks commit more crimes than other ethno-racial groups, although the data merely shows the number of persons incarcerated, not the number of people who actually commit crimes. Kandice appears to believe there is a direct link between arrest and criminal activity. Implicit in her belief is the assumption that the criminal justice

93

system is fair and without racial bias. Accordingly, she believes that Blacks are arrested more because they are actually "acting out" more than other ethno-racial groups. Furthermore, she acknowledges that Blacks are often stereotyped as criminal, but she suggests that Blacks willingly "fall into" these stereotypes, just because it is what society expects of them. In her final comment, she suggests that Blacks frivolously or irrationally commit crimes such as "robbing, cheating, and killing. Her evaluation of the racial inequality data is completely devoid of any institutional analysis of the criminal justice system itself.

Similarly, Elizabeth, also from Georgia University, suggests that the incarceration data is a reflection of Blacks choosing to engage criminal activity more than other ethno-racial groups. Albeit with reservation, she offers the following explanation:

> I mean it's, you know, a lot of African Americans, they're in poverty and a lot of them don't finish school, a lot of them don't go to college, a lot of them grow up in the ghetto, so it's almost like they don't—either they don't have the motivation to like break away from that kind of behavior and turn to something positive and earn money the legal way, or it's just one of those things where—I was careful what I was going to say—but it's like how they grow up and not being able to get a job and not being able to work. They will do anything to get money and then they resort to crime."

In her response, Elizabeth acknowledges that Blacks often come from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds; however, she believes that Blacks turn to crime because they lack the "motivation" to find other means for making ends meet. Interestingly, Elizabeth mentions that she is intentionally being "careful" about how she explains the racial disparities. Her attempt to be politically correct, yet still blame Blacks for the disparate incarceration rates, is classic colorblind, post-racial ideology. The effect of this discursive technique allows Elizabeth to state explicitly racist logic (i.e., Blacks are

not motivated to earn financial security through legal means) without "sounding" anti-Black.

Finally, Shannon, a male psychology major from California, describes his reaction to the incarceration data as follows:

> I'm not surprised by the data at all. Most of the time it's—I think 100% of the time it's a Black guy who actually commits the crime. Whether it's someone getting shot - it's Black people [committing the crime] or it's robbery of a student - Black people [committing the crime]. Every time something happens on campus, the description of the suspect is always a young, Black male. So I'm not surprised really that you see so many Black people getting incarcerated …

Shannon states that he is not surprised by the data on incarceration disparities because Black males are typically the perpetrators of the crime. He believes that Black makes are more criminal – regardless of the criminal act in questions (i.e., "someone getting shot" or "robbery of a student"). Shannon is not surprised by the data because, like his peers, he assumes that incarceration directly corresponds to criminal activity. That is, if you are incarcerated, then you must have committed a crime. Additionally, Shannon fails to be critical of "why" the description of the crime suspects is "always a young, Black male;" instead, he implies that it is because Blacks are truly committing crimes.

Although some students do rely on colorblind, post-racial ideology to explain incarceration rates, most students rely upon race conscious frameworks to explain racial disparities in incarceration. In the next chapter I explore the specific ideology and themes that shape Black millennials understanding of the influence that race has on criminal justice outcomes.

"Blacks Just Happen To Be At the Bottom": Black Millennials And Happenstance

In addition to the cultural racism framework, students also frequently drew upon ideas such as "this is just the way things are" or "it just happens to be that way" in their discussions of racial inequality data. I argue that this approach to understanding racial inequality is a new colorblind, post-racial framework called "happenstance." The happenstance frame refers to racial understandings that accept the racial status quo as unplanned or incidental. More specifically, explanations that draw upon this frame tend to explain racial inequality as an accepted state of existence with no analysis of the origins of racialized outcomes.

As an ideological framework, happenstance perpetuates the idea that the existing racial hierarchy emerged out of nowhere. Those who draw upon this frame fail to question the status quo or place contemporary racial dynamics in the context of historical racial oppression. Consequently, racial inequality is believed to be "by chance" and is accepted as normal or commonplace. Racial inequality is viewed as something that exists today without any understanding or acknowledgement of the historical processes that may have created present conditions. Participants who relied on this frame were unable to explain "how" Blacks (and/or Latinos) end up at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in all three data charts; instead, they focus on "why" they are there at the present moment. When pushed to make inferences about how the racialized outcomes emerged, participants suggest, "This is just the way it is."

Forty-nine percent of the students relied on this framework during their discussion of racial dynamics; this was most true for the part of the interview that

required them to explain racial inequality. For example, when asked to explain the

wealth data, Shanae, a fourth year Social Science major from California University, said,

"It's like a cycle, a cycle that blacks just can't get out of." When asked how the cycle

initially began, she explains:

> I don't know … it is just how it is … it's like Blacks just don't have a lot of money so they don't save or invest but they also don't do anything to help them earn more money. Like I said, it's a cycle – you see your parents working at McDonalds, then you only know about working at McDonalds. And you grow up to work at McDonalds. So it is like we never really break the cycle.

Shanae's response fails to address the origins of the "cycle." She, like many of the other

participants, articulates that Blacks are in a perpetual (i.e., cycle) milieu of disadvantage,

but Shanae implies that the cycle emerged out of nowhere. She is unable to explain *how*

Blacks arrived in their current place on the U.S. hierarchy. She presents a

"happenstance" argument for why blacks have less wealth than other ethno-racial

groups (i.e., "it is just how it is"). Shanae's response is completely divorced from any

acknowledgement of the economic exclusion (via slavery, Jim Crow, FDR's Social

Security Act, redlining, etc.) that Blacks have historically faced. Ultimately, she fails to

question the status quo and instead accepts her belief that "Blacks just don't have a lot

of money" as a norm of how things just happen to be in the U.S. Lastly, Shanae's

response also reflects some reliance on cultural racism; she blames Black for their

current economic standing by stating, "Blacks don't do anything to help themselves earn

more money."

Similarly, Dayon (Junior Sociology major from California University) explains wealth disparities as a generational (or cyclical) effect that is difficult, if not impossible, to break. He contends:

> Well, I feel like [Blacks are] in these areas because they don't have -- because they were pretty much born into it, it's a generational thing in which their family hasn't necessarily progressed. They didn't have the education to like move forward and go to college and different things like that, or they were just working job-to-job or paycheck-to-paycheck. And then they brought their kids and their grandkids into that same system, so they're not moving out of that system. They're just -- They're being sort of complacent or sort of like stuck in that area, because they either don't know or they just don't care -- either way they're just not getting out.

When probed further to explain why Blacks do not progress and why they do not have the education to move forward, Dayon remarked, "From what I've seen, it's just how a lot of Blacks live. And since they never make it out, the next generation of Blacks comes up the same way." Dayon acknowledges that Blacks often live with different material realities than other racial groups – particularly whites – but he fails to connect his observations with institutional racism rooted in a long history of racial oppression. Instead, he believes Blacks' current position is the result of complacency or "lack of caring" (coded as cultural racism). When pushed to explain "WHY" Blacks do not get out of these types of areas or realities, Dayon expresses acceptance of the status quo as being by chance or happenstance occurrence: "it's just how a lot of blacks live."

Sarah, a senior social science major from Georgia University also argues that, in general, Blacks face strained circumstances. She is convinced, however, that Blacks' current social position is not related to race. Sarah states:

> I mean it's, you know, a lot of African Americans, they're in poverty and a lot of them don't finish school, a lot of them don't go to college, a lot of them grow up

in the ghetto, so it's almost like they don't—either they don't have the motivation to like break away from that kind of behavior and turn to something positive and earn money the legal way, or it's just one of those things where—it's like how they grow up and not being able to get a job and not being able to work. They will do anything to get money and then they resort to crime. I don't want to say it's something to do with [race] – like they're Black and they don't get a job, or that kind of think. It's just kind of like they just don't! Then the opportunities they do have aren't sufficient enough to compete with other opportunities that people get."

Sarah was then asked to explain "why" Blacks face the experiences that she described.

Sarah responded, "I don't know, they just aren't. I don't know what it is; it's not just because their Black – I mean all groups have their own struggle. I seriously don't know but it is sad. " Sarah combines both happenstance and cultural racism frameworks in her explanation of racial inequality. She offers that many Blacks "lack the motivation" (i.e., cultural racism) to break the cycle of disadvantage that she has observed. Additionally, she contends that Blacks grow up in strained environments that, according to her, often lead to crime. Nonetheless, she is adamant that the Blacks' social and economic conditions are not about "just because they're Black." In this sense, Sarah is arguing that race and racism do not play significant roles in Blacks' contemporary experiences, which is the core belief of colorblind ideology (i.e., minimization). More specifically, when pressed to explain why Blacks have different opportunities than other ethno-racial groups, Sarah defaults to the happenstance frame by suggesting, "they just aren't." Sarah is able to recognize that Blacks have different experiences but is reluctant to say that the said differences relate to racial politics; likewise, she is accepts her observations as normal and offers no critique or critical view of "why" Blacks don't have

opportunities "sufficient enough compete with to the other opportunities that people get." Accordingly, Sarah accepts that status quo as "by chance" and normal.

Albeit similar, the happenstance framework is distinctly different from the minimization and naturalization frameworks. Minimization is characterized by downplaying the role of racism and discrimination in contemporary racial dynamics. Racism and discrimination are viewed as vestiges of the past that have little to no bearing on ethno-racial groups' experiences today. Essentially, this frame minimizes the impact of individual and institutional racism by arguing "the past is the past." Rather than downplaying or minimizing the impact of past racial oppression on contemporary dynamics, the happenstance frame completely ignores the existence of past racial oppression or its connection to present day outcomes. Happenstance is an ahistorical understanding of racial dynamics. It reflects historical erasure in the minds of Black millennials. Students appear completely disconnected from history and racial dynamics are viewed as by chance occurrences. Accordingly, students' understandings of racial inequality are devoid of concepts such as power, privilege, and systemic racism.

The naturalization framework suggests that social phenomenon like segregation and endogamy are natural or innate. Accordingly, the naturalization frame suggests that the answer to "how" we explain racial inequality is rooted in biological processes. "Birds of a feather flock together" is a common theme within this framework. Racial outcomes are portrayed as products of biological processes. Rather than viewing racial dynamics as natural, biological occurrences, the happenstance frame presents racial phenomenon as out of the blue. Those who utilize this frame resolve to not think critically about the

100

"why" – whether the answer is biological, cultural, or otherwise – instead they are comfortable with accepting the racial status quo, as just the way things "happen" to be.

Happenstance's unique differentiation from other colorblind, post-racial frames is captured by Joy's discussion of racial disparities in graduation rates. When asked to explain "why" Blacks were less likely to graduate from high school than other ethno-racial groups, Joy, a freshman Engineering major from Georgia University, shares, "I think it is because Blacks are more likely to go to bad schools." She goes on to argue that this is due to Blacks living in predominantly Black neighborhoods. Joy argues that "Blacks usually live in super segregated neighborhoods" that have "bad schools." When asked if she had any idea "why" Blacks live in segregated neighborhoods, Joy offers the following response:

> I'm not sure. We kind of talked about it as I was coming up in like the school system. Like we kind of talked about how it's segregated. I'm not really sure why it's still as segregated as it is but it might just be because people, when they came to Chicago, they kind came to a certain area and settled and then just stayed there. So I'm not 100% sure but I'm guessing that's probably it.

Joy's response suggests that the settlement patterns and neighborhood dynamics that she observed in Chicago are random. In her view, racial groups just happened to settle together in certain areas and ultimately never moved out of those areas. Joy does not argue that settlement patterns are based on groups actively choosing to live with one another because of comfortability or an innate desire to be around groups who are similar to them (i.e., naturalization). Instead, Joy suggests that residential segregation is arbitrary and essentially offers no critical engagement with "why" residential segregation exists today. She is unable to make connections between institutional

practices (i.e., legalized segregation that characterized the Jim Crow Era or covenant agreements between homeowners to keep Blacks out of certain neighborhoods) and contemporary residential segregation. She also suggests that there is a normal connection between Black neighborhoods and bad schools, thus failing to take to task possibilities for "why" the connection may exist.

Of the 30 participants that used this frame, 29 (97%) of them drew upon the frame in their first or second attempt to explain racial inequality. Black millennials were most likely to utilize this frame to discuss racial disparities in wealth specifically and the more general economic conditions that Blacks, as a whole, tend to face. Seventy-seven percent (23 out of 30) of Black millennials draw upon this frame to explain wealth inequality. Happenstance arguments allow Black millennials to ignore or detach themselves from a racial history that serves as a source of embarrassment for many Black youth. During the course of our discussions, Black millennials repeatedly mentioned feeling disconnected from the historical experiences of Blacks (i.e., slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Panther Party). Likewise, when asked to recount some of their early experiences with race, over half of the students (54%) described experiences, either at school, church, or in youth sports, in which they felt uncomfortable, bad, or embarrassed by discussions of Black history – mainly slavery.

Black Milennials and the Other Colorblind, Post-Racial Frames

Black millennials were least likely to draw upon abstract liberalism, minimization, and naturalization as ideological frameworks in their discussions of racial dynamics (see

Table 3). This was particularly true for millennials' explanations of racial inequality. Of those students who relied on abstract liberalism during their interview, only 11 (47%) of them drew upon this frame to explain racial inequality. Abstract liberalism suggests that the U.S. is a meritocracy; a land of equal opportunity. Additionally, inequality is explained away as a by-product of choice or free will.

Students typically relied on abstract liberalism in conjunction with the cultural racism framework. Several students argued that Blacks choose to be in certain circumstances because they have the wrong values. Similarly, some students suggest that Blacks have the same opportunities as other ethno-racial groups, accordingly racial inequality is viewed as a consequence of Blacks failure to put in the effort to capitalize on opportunities available to them. For example, while explaining the racial disparities in high school graduation rates, Georgia University freshman Lisa states,

> Education is so important; it is the key to leveling the playing field. But it's like Blacks don't see it that way. It just seems to be a very big difference as far as like the culture behind [Asians and Blacks] thoughts behind education and their thoughts behind work ethic and stuff like that. It just seems to be very—it's more rigorous for Asians, it's higher standards I guess within their own community whereas I feel like sometimes within the Black community, we'll even hold lower standards for ourselves, whereas for them they always set a high standard, so then when they achieve it, it's gonna be success for them compared to us …

Lisa's belief that education is "key to leveling the playing field" is a reflection of abstract liberalism. Here, she invokes a common trope of meritocracy: 1) "if you work hard in school you will be successful" and 2) all ethno-racial groups receive or have access to the same quality education. Lisa assumes that education/school is a fair and equal playing ground; consequently, she surmises that Blacks lower graduation rates are a

103

reflection of them not taking advantage of education in the same way as Asians. Lisa argues that Blacks do not value education in the same ways as Asians (i.e., cultural racism).

Respondents utilized minimization and naturalization the least in their explanations. Of the 17 participants who drew upon minimization and the 23 participants who drew upon naturalization over the course of their interview, only 4 (24%) and 9 (39%), respectively, utilized these frames in their explanations of racial inequality. Minimization and naturalization frameworks seem peripheral in shaping their ideas about why racial inequality exists.

Regional Differences in the Adoption of Colorblind, Post Racial Frameworks

There are slight regional differences in how students understand/explain racial dynamics. Seventy-seven percent (24 out of 31) of students from California University relied upon colorblind, post-racial discourse at some point doing their interview while 26 out of 30 (87%) students from Georgia University relied upon colorblind, post-racial discourse at point during their interview. Specifically, participants from California University were slightly less likely to draw upon all of the colorblind, post-racial frames, with the exception of Happenstance during their explanations of racial inequality. In general, however, the difference between universities is small, which suggests that colorblind, post-racial frames are relatively stable across regions. Greater differences emerged between which frames Black millennials are most likely and least likely to utilize.

Cultural racism was a common frame among participants from both California and Georgia University. Over half of the students from both universities relied cultural racism, 58% and 77% respectively. These data suggest that Black millennials have internalized many of the same negative stereotypes about Blacks that influence dominant society. Similarly, approximately half of the students from both universities relied on the happenstance frame to explain inequality – 52% from California University and 46% from Georgia University. The data on happenstance suggests that Black millennials show cognitive dissonance between Black history and contemporary experiences. That is, all though Black millennials are aware of and knowledgeable of some elements of Black history (e.g. slavery), they often fail to consider this history which searching for explanations of structural inequality. Minimization was the least common frame used among participants, from either university. Black millennials' adamant denial of claims that the U.S. is post-racial or colorblind (see previous chapter) precludes them from outright minimizing the influence of race and racism today.

Insert Table 4

Summary

As the analysis demonstrates, Black millennials' understandings of racial inequality are directly affected by colorblind, post-racial frameworks. This was true for mostly all students (82%) – regardless of their gender, classification, college major, or exposure to classes on race and difference. This finding stands in contrast to research suggests that Blacks ideological commitments are only moderately or indirectly shaped

affected by colorblind, post-racial ideology – if at all (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Apollon 2011). For the Black millennials' in this study, colorblind post-racial ideology plays an important role in their development of ideas about why inequality exists. Specifically, they embraced racial ideologies that reflected an invested in cultural racism and a new framework called happenstance. Participants who drew upon cultural racism explained racial inequality as the result of Blacks having the wrong values or culture. Participants who drew upon happenstance explained racial inequality as "by chance", something that "just happens." The Blacks millennials that I interviewed were least likely to draw upon abstract liberalism, minimization, and naturalization frames in their explanations of racial inequality.

The data suggests that participants from Georgia University were slightly more likely to endorse colorblind, post-racial discourse in their discussions of contemporary racial dynamics than participants from California University. More specifically, when explaining racial inequality, Black youth from Georgia University are more likely to draw upon all of the colorblind frames with the exception of happenstance. In general, the regional differences are moderate at best, which suggests that Black millennials are similarly affected by colorblind, post-racial ideology across regions. Colorblind, post-racial ideology – cultural racism and happenstance in particular – plays a significant role in how Black millennials understand inequality. The direct effect of colorblind, post-racial ideology on Black millennials may have implications for "if" and "how" Black youth will engage in social movements surrounding issues of racial inequality. If Black millennials don't view racism as the driving factor behind racialized outcomes, then they

may be less likely to participate and/or support race center movements for equality with regard to economics, education, and criminal justice.

Thus far, I have presented the data on Black millennials' racial ideology in an either/or manner – either participants relied on colorblind, post-racial explanations "or" they relied on race-conscious explanations. In reality, many students drew upon *both* colorblind post-racial and race conscious explanations within discussions of the same phenomenon. That is, while Black millennials' initial responses were most likely to reflect colorblind post-racial ideas, their subsequent responses often reflected some investment in race conscious ideas. For example, some participants started out explaining wealth data using the cultural racism frame, but ended their explanation by talking about institutional factors such as the legacy of slavery.

In the chapter that follows, I explore how Black millennials' articulate and reconcile race-conscious ideas with their heavy reliance on colorblind post-racial frames. Specifically, I discuss how they utilize race conscious frameworks to discuss structural racial inequality. The criminal justice system (i.e., data on race disparities in incarceration rates) was the area in which participants were most likely to endorse a "race-conscious" ideological framework; as a result, I also use the next chapter to discuss Black millennials' distinct racial ideology regarding race and the criminal justice system in the U.S.

CHAPTER SIX: BLACK MILLENNIALS AND ALTERNATIVE RACIAL IDEOLOGIES

The analysis in chapter five revealed that students' initial or first explanation for

racial inequality, more often than not, relied upon colorblind, post-racial ideological

frameworks. In this chapter I examine how alternative, race conscious ideologies shape

Black millennials understandings of racial dynamics, specifically with regard to racial

disparities in wealth, education, and criminal justice. This chapter further delineates the

contradictory ideological reality that Black millennials straddle as they cognitively toggle

between colorblind and alternative race conscious frameworks to make sense of racial

dynamics.

Findings reveal that the Black millennials in this study make use of colorblind and

color conscious frameworks and storylines to interpret structural inequality. Despite the

dominance of colorblind, post-racial ideology in Black millennials initial explanations,

over half of participants (33 out of 61) drew upon race-conscious ideological

frameworks in their second, third, or more explanation of racial inequality[29]. When

asked to explain racial disparities in wealth, education, and incarceration over half of the

participants (54%) offered at least one that acknowledged or referenced the impact of

structural[30] and/or institutional[31] racism on the observed outcome. Furthermore there

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[29] As described in chapter five, I presented each participant with three charts on racial inequality (See Appendix C) and asked them to offer explanations for the observed racialized outcomes. Participants were encouraged to share all of their ideas about why racial disparities across net-worth, high school graduation rates, and incarceration. As a result, participants often offered more than one explanation for the observed disparities in each respective area.

[30] Structural racism refers to the way in which racism is built into the very fabric of the United States. It describes an conglomerate of historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal factors that advantage Whites over people of color. Ultimately, it refers to the whole system of white supremacy that permeates every aspect of our social world. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism; all other forms of racism (institutional, interpersonal, cultural, etc.) emerge from structural racism (Collins 2012).

[31] Institutional Racism refers to racism within and between social institutions, such as schools, hospitals, banks, and the legal system. Institutional racism manifest via discriminatory policies and procedures, produced within

were 11 participants who shared *only* race-conscious understandings of racial inequality. Data reveal that these 11 participants did not endorse colorblind, post-racial ideology at any point during the discussion of racial inequality or racial dynamics writ large. I refer to these Black Millennials as uniformly "race-conscious" and discuss their racial views and experiences in more detail in chapter seven.

In the first half of this chapter, I explore participants' race conscious understandings of racial inequality. In doing so, I identify common race conscious ideological frameworks that shape Black Millennials' views of how race and racism work in the 21st century. Race conscious ideological frames were most likely to emerge during the interview discussions of racial disparities in incarceration rates.

Moving beyond discussions of racial inequality and incarceration, nearly half (30 out of 61) of the participants talked candidly about the impact of racism on Blacks' experiences within the legal system. In general, participants express a distinct, collective racial awareness and race conscious ideology when referencing outcomes within the criminal justice system. As a result, in the second half of this chapter, I give special attention to Black Millennials' understandings of the significance of race and racism in explaining Blacks' experiences with the law.

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institutions, that lead to inequitable opportunities and disparate outcomes by race. Additionally, individuals or agents of these institutions can exercise institutional racism by acting in ways that privilege certain racial groups over others.

"It's The System": Black Millennials' Structural and Institutional Explanations of Inequality

When asked to explain data charts on structural racial inequality, Black Millennials, do offer some explanations rooted in race conscious frameworks. Race conscious explanations reflect an awareness of how institutional and structural racial disadvantage is an integral part the historical, cultural, political, and economic makeup of U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Feagin 2003). Participants cite mass incarceration and the "school to prison pipeline" as examples of how institutionalized racism is pervasive within U. S. culture and has a significantly adverse effect on Blacks. To that end, the structural and/or institutional explanations of inequality suggest a recognition of discriminatory practices and policies that advantage some racial groups and disadvantage other racial groups within a given social institution (Alexander 2010; Davis 2012). Participants with this kind of racial awareness or consciousness appear to have a color conscious vocabulary and conceptual framework that the other millennials do not seem to have. Black millennials who drew upon race-conscious ideologies often discussed institutional/ structural racism along with three themes: (1) intergenerational transfers of wealth, (2) educator (e.g., teachers and school administrators') racial bias towards students of color, and (3) racial profiling practices among police. Participants identify these as significant factors in perpetuating racial inequality in systems of wealth, education, and incarceration.

Unpacking Wealth Disparities

When prompted to explain the data chart on wealth disparities, 28% of the

participants (17 out of 61) offered an explanation rooted in structural or institutional

factors. For example, Anika, a 23-year-old graduate student from California University,

explains wealth disparities in the following terms:

> There is a generational transfer of wealth right there that I didn't get to have
> because my grandma's family were sharecroppers in Georgia. So my
> grandmother grew up on the same plantation that her ancestors were enslaved
> on. There was no wealth to transfer. It was just getting by. But we've all worked
> endlessly and to know that these systems, don't allow us to accumulate and pass
> on our wealth is just ridiculous. Like, I know my mom is buying a house right
> now, and it took her forever to get it. The bank just didn't -- (laughs) they didn't
> want to give her loans because of stupid things. They were like you've met all of
> the requirements, but we still don't know if we can trust you financially, so we
> want your cable bill for the last two years. Then it's, okay your cable bill passed,
> but we still don't know if we should give you a loan, so we want your phone bill
> for the last two years -- there's a very clear message in these organizations and
> these laws. They're not designed to benefit certain people, you know,
> particularly African-Americans. So it's like - I don't know, I guess White privilege
> (laughs) sums it all up.

Anika's response reflects a structural explanation and alternative ideological

investments to colorblind, post-racial ideology. Her commitment to race conscious

ideological frameworks is evident in her acknowledgement of the impact of historical

factors on contemporary wealth disparities. Specifically, Anika suggests that the legacy

of institutions such as slavery and sharecropping have stifled wealth accumulation

among Blacks and served as a catalyst for wealth accumulation among Whites (Marable

1983). Given these historical factors, Anika argues that, for Blacks, there was "no wealth

to transfer" from one generation to the next, which places them at an economic

disadvantage primarily due to race.

Additionally, Anika discusses the difficulties that her mom encountered while trying to secure a home loan. She notes that financial institutions have some level of distrust when dealing with her mom specifically, and Blacks more generally - despite meeting all of the requirements for obtaining a loan. Ultimately, Anika's comment about white privilege suggests that racism and discrimination play a key role in how financial organizations and laws benefit Whites in and prohibits Blacks from amassing wealth (Shapiro 2005; Rugh and Massey 2010).

Similarly, Olu, an 18 year old, male freshman from Georgia University, argues that racial disparities in wealth are a function of structural racism and Whites ability to pass on wealth to future generations. When presented with the wealth chart Olu responds:

> I'm really shocked that Black wealth is so low. I mean, it all comes back to racism. But I had no idea that it was this bad. It's like in White households you can borrow from family and whatnot so you don't have to worry as much about [accruing] debt and bad credit scores and whatnot. I mean [wealth] comes from a lot of things - education, the jobs you get, etc. Like I said earlier, your boss is most likely going to be a White person. The boss makes more money. More money means you can invest in getting wealth. So it is about having more people in your family that you can rely on and then also passing down wealth. You know, racism is behind all of this - I don't think racism effects it directly but it just plays a large part. [Racism] is the reason that the boss is most likely White; racism is the reason why Whites have wealth to pass down.

When probed further to explain what he means by "racism is behind all of this" Olu states that, "It all goes back to slavery. Black slaves worked for nothing in return [for their physical labor]. Meanwhile the White slave masters got wealthy off of Blacks free work." As his explanation demonstrates, Olu is able to make a connection between the historical economic exclusion of that characterized slavery and contemporary patterns

in wealth distribution (Marable 1983; Takaki 2008). He believes that Blacks' current

wealth deficiency is reflective of the history of racism that plagues the U.S. Olu's views

are overtly race-conscious, in that he believes that Whites possess and enjoy certain

advantages (i.e., generational wealth, family members who can serve as a safety net for

less well-off family members, and higher salaries) to a greater extent than do Blacks

(McIntosh 1988; Shapiro 2005; Johnson 2006; Conely 2009).

Miracle, a sophomore Biology major from California University, also espouses a race

conscious racial ideology during her explanation of wealth inequality among ethno-

racial groups. Initially, she argues "Blacks have less wealth because they don't educate

themselves about how to get wealth." However, after further probing and being asked

to offer a rationale for why she believes that Blacks don't educate themselves about

finances, Miracle goes on to say,

> I know there's systematic things that have oppressed me and people of color in
> general, but I feel like I still want to be able to prove myself just by merit, but I
> know it's a lot harder for me. I would hope (laughs) that my work ethic could
> trump my race, you know? And I don't want someone to perceive me as so and
> so, because I work just as hard as anybody else on the planet, and I would hope
> that that makes race like not a hindering factor. But I know race can be [a
> hindrance]. I don't know a Black person who has the knowledge to get into stuff
> that'll build their wealth, you know? I feel like we've never -- I've never -- for me,
> I've never been exposed to investing in stocks, and I've been interested, but I
> don't even -- Like where would I even start, you know? [Blacks] don't have the
> resources to find this stuff out. There's no stockbroker in my neighborhood. But
> why not? I've never seen a stockbroker over here, I mean, in my neighborhood,
> but I'll see them in White neighborhoods. I feel like [Blacks] are not given that
> opportunity because those companies don't even exist where we live, you know?

As her response demonstrates, Miracle offers two seemingly opposing views on the

intersection of race and wealth. Similarly, she offers an in-depth description of her

desire to be evaluated by her work ethic rather than her race. Conversely, she believes,

and recognizes, that her race plays a key role in the way that other people will perceive her. Miracle's comments suggest that she aspires to live in a colorblind society while recognizing that that it is not her current reality. Finally, Miracle is cognizant of the ways in which predominantly Black neighborhoods are perceived. She acknowledges that the racial composition of a neighborhood influences the types of resources available in that respective neighborhood such that White neighborhoods have more resources than Black neighborhoods (Massey and Denton 1993; Charles 2003; Massey 2007). Specifically, Miracle notes that White neighborhoods are more likely to have access to financial institutions and information about wealth accumulation. In doing so, she is able to make connections between knowledge, access (e.g., White privilege) and social power and how they work together to advantage Whites over Blacks (Bourdieu 1986).

When asked her opinion on why financial institutions (i.e., "those companies) do not exist in Black neighborhoods, Miracle answers, "Because they're afraid of Black neighborhoods; our neighborhoods are stereotyped as ghetto. So it is like we will never have the resources to build stuff like wealth." Her rationale for this residential disparity, relative to access and opportunity, is rooted in an ideology that places race front and center. She contends that corporations, and the people therein, often have negative connotations about Black neighborhoods solely because of their racial composition. Thus, by being "stereotyped as ghetto," Black neighborhoods are placed at an unfair disadvantage solely because they are majority Black.

Unpacking Educational Disparities

While participants were least likely to offer structural explanations when explaining racial disparities in education, 23% (14 out of 61) attributed these disadvantages to race, thus reflecting a race conscious ideology. For example, during one of her explanations, Annmarie, a Senior African American Studies major from California University, identifies this double standard that functions to "over-privilege" some, while "under-privileging" others.

> I think it goes back to the school to prison pipeline, its like Black and Brown kids are kicked out of schools for the same thing that White kids might just receive [out of school suspension]. It's like the system is stacked against Blacks kids – teachers and administrators treat them differently, you know? … It's hard to learn from someone who's afraid of you or doesn't see the value in you.

Despite her numerous commitments to colorblind ideology (see chapter five), Annmarie is also able to identify and use examples of racially biased institutional practices, such as racial disparities in school discipline, to explain racial inequality in high school graduation rates. She contends that the over-disciplining of Black and Brown students pushes them out of schools and into prisons (i.e., "school to prison pipeline") (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, Peterson 2002; Kim, Losen, and Dewitt 2010). She also identifies individual level racial bias from teachers and administrators towards Black students as another contributing factor to the observed racial disparities in education (Casteel 1998; Lewis 2003; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007). Ultimately, Annmarie suggests that Blacks' lower graduation rates are largely the result of societal factors influenced by those in positions of privilege and power.

Likewise, Tammy, a freshman Biology major from Georgia University, also attributes racial disparities in high school graduation rates to institutional racism. Specifically, she contends that Blacks have different educational experiences than their White (and Asian) counterparts. For her, graduation rates are tied to how school officials interact with and treat students of color. She offers the following response in her discussion of educational disparities:

> Schools are a reflection of society. You will have the typical White teacher, White female teacher, and then at the top your principal will be a White male, and as far as other staff in the school, you may have Blacks or Hispanics working in the lunchrooms, custodial services, things like that. So school is just a reflection of society and the way that we treat kids in school, like with the honors programs or gifted classes, advanced placement, you will see more Whites there... I've seen counselors discourage Blacks and Hispanics from taking upper level classes that will challenge you. I've noticed that there's a big difference in how white counselors advertise things - Asians and Whites, are targeted for honors classes and particularly when I say Asian, I mean the lighter skinned Asians, because I have seen the darker skinned Asians, not as much in these classes as the lighter skinned Asians.

As her statement suggests, Tammy draws upon race conscious understandings of racial disparities in educational outcomes. She has observed a pattern in which Whites and lighter hued Asians are over-represented in honors and advanced placement courses, while she believes that Blacks are actively discouraged from enrolling in academically challenging courses. For Tammy, the type of classes that a person takes in high school is directly tied to one's skin color. This is also evidenced by her comment regarding the differential educational experiences of dark and light skin Asians. Tammy suggests that darker skinned ethno-racial groups experience negative and/or disparate treatment based on the color of their skin. Finally, Tammy's assertion that school officials, or those

in position of power, are "White" serves as additional evidence of her race conscious

ideology. In recognizing, the ways in which Whites dominate systems of inequality,

Tammy acknowledges the role of White privilege and institutional power in structuring

racial advantage and disadvantage (Johnson 2001).

Finally, Toccara, a 21 year old engineering major from Georgia University,

believes that racial disparities in graduation rates is related to the ways in which schools

are funded. She states,

> I know like where I live at, my county divvies up money for schools based on tax
> money. So some people be like, "Oh, that's fair, this area pays more taxes so
> they should get more money." But you usually have one area with more upper
> class white people and their schools get all the money. Then you have another
> area that is more Black or poor and there's not as many people working so you
> don't get as many taxes and their schools gets less money. So it's usually the
> White schools with money and resources and the Black schools have nothing.
> Then you just keep the cycle going because then these kids don't have the
> money to have the resources to practice standardized testing and to be able to
> go to college so they end up back in their same communities – with no good jobs
> and still no taxes going to the schools. There are counties out there—where my
> uncle lives, they split taxes [evenly among schools] no matter what. Like all the
> schools get the same thing. So to me that sounds more fair because it's not a
> child's fault if they come from an area where people don't really have the
> money.

Toccara's explanation of educational outcomes is race conscious because she

acknowledges that the process by which some school systems are funded (i.e., property

taxes) disproportionately advantages Whites and disadvantages Blacks. In doing so, she

acknowledges the impact of institutional racism on the educational experiences of

Whites and Blacks. In addition to highlighting school funding processes as institutional

racism, Toccara also references a "cycle" of disadvantage that is perpetuated by poor

education and a lack of "good jobs" in Black communities. When asked to explain why

there are fewer good jobs in Black communities, offers the following explanation:

> Because businesses are scared to open up in Black communities. There are all
> these stereotypes about getting robbed or losing money in Black neighborhoods,
> so if you own a business you would be less likely to go into a Black neighborhood
> with it. If there are no businesses in our community then how will get a good
> enough job to be able to pay higher taxes to improve our schools?

Toccara's understanding of why there are less employment opportunities in

predominantly Black communities relies explicitly on the race conscious idea that racial

stereotypes impact large corporations and small business owner's perceptions of Black

neighborhoods. As such, there is a negative association between Black neighborhoods

and crime that makes businesses less likely to reside in predominantly Black

neighborhoods. Toccara's explanations for this organizational level resistance to

partnering with Black communities draw directly on the idea that race matters in

meaningful ways – in this case in terms of job opportunities and employment.

Unpacking Incarceration Disparities

Of the three areas of inequality, participants were most likely to draw upon race

conscious ideology in their discussions of racial disparities in incarceration rates. Fourty-

nine percent offered explanations rooted in institutional or structural racism when

discussing racialized outcomes in the criminal justice systems. By and large, participants

argued that racism is at the core of explaining racial disparities in incarceration rates.

Through their attempts to explain why Blacks are more likely to be incarcerated

than other ethno-racial groups, Black millennials reveal a very distinct, collective race-

conscious ideology regarding the influence of race and racism within the criminal justice system in general. They believe that race continues to matter in significant ways for understanding and explaining the experiences that people of color have with all aspects of the criminal justice system. Four dominant themes characterize Black millennials ideological position towards the criminal justice system: (1) racism is the root of racial disparities in incarceration rates, (2) the police over police and/or racially profile Black communities and Black people more than any other ethno-racial group, (3) Blacks receive harsher treatment than Whites who commit similar criminal acts, and (4) Black Millennials express a general distrust of the police and contend Blacks have to be careful when dealing with law enforcement and other agents of the criminal justice system.

Towards A Collective Racial Ideology: Unpacking Black Millennials' Race Conscious Approach to Understanding of the Criminal Justice System

"It All Goes Back To Racism"

Black millennials race-consciousness within the context of the legal system often centers institutional racism as a key factor in explaining racialized outcomes and Blacks' experiences within the criminal justice system. Several participants offered racism as at least one plausible explanation for racial disparities in incarceration rates. Additionally, over the course of their interview, many students expressed views or recalled experiences that situated racism as an integral component of interactions with police, lawyers, judges, and lawmakers.

For example, when presented with the data on incarceration rates, Kenneth, a 23-year-old STEM major in his fourth year at Georgia University responded:

I don't necessarily find [the data] interesting or surprising at all just because incarceration rates are something that you always kind of see publicized when it comes to racial inequalities and things like that. But my opinion on why there are so many Black people [incarcerated] is racism – point, blank, period. Just because, for one, you know, Blacks are an easy target for incarceration, especially like in inner cities. My mom grew up in Chicago and she would just tell me how it's easier and it costs less to arrest a Black person. It cost[s] less [to incarcerate] than to educate them. And in a lot of areas there are unjust laws where it makes it easier to arrest somebody that's Black. For example, crack verse cocaine and things like that. I mean it's basically the same drug but way different punishments for using it. Why is that? That's why I say it goes back to racism. And then just to look at prison, like the fact that we have judges being found guilty of sending Black children to jail specifically, like there's no way that racism isn't prevalent.

Kenneth is adamant that racism is at the root of racial disparities in incarceration rates. To substantiate his claim that racism influences incarceration rates, Kenneth cites disparate sentencing laws for crack and powder cocaine offenders. His position is supported by data and theories from social scientists, critical race theorists, and legal analysts who have long discussed the racial (and classist) implications of federal laws that assign differential penalties for two versions of the same drug (Angeli 1997; Kautt and Spohn 2002).

Federal laws mandate stricter sentences for crack cocaine possession than powder cocaine possession. In fact, prior to 2010, the penalty for possession of crack cocaine was 100 times harsher than the penalty for powder cocaine. With the advent of the Fair Sentencing Act (2010), the current federal penalty ratio for crack versus powder cocaine has been reduced from 100:1 to 18:1. Nevertheless, a sentencing disparity still remains; this institutionalized practice in turn gives rise to racial and class disparities. It is a well-known fact that crack cocaine and powder cocaine hold vastly different market

values and tend to cater to distinctly different social classes. Crack cocaine is much

cheaper and accessible than powder cocaine. As a result, the harsher sentencing

disproportionately affects lower/working class individuals – a social class that

overwhelmingly includes Blacks and other groups of color (Graham 2011). By citing

disparate sentencing as an example of racism within the criminal justice system,

Kenneth explicitly offers institutional racism as a plausible explanation for racial

disparities in incarceration rates.

Sarah, a 20-year-old Social Science major, also in her fourth year at Georgia

University, shares this perception and views the data on incarceration disparities as a

direct reflection of racism within the criminal justice system. When asked her initial

reaction to and thoughts about the data, Sarah responded "It just proves kind of what I

think about the legal system here in this country." After further probing into what she

thinks about the legal system, she offered:

> It's another form of slavery, another form of controlling minority populations. I
> mean if you think about it, in jail to a degree you can get an education. You get
> free meals, free healthcare to a degree, but you're segregated from society.
> You're put away. You're invisible so no one can see you but you're always there
> if people want to bring up negative things about your race. So yeah, I think the
> prison system is just another way of trying to control Black people. The
> incarceration rates are definitely about racism. If we're going to be honest about
> it, that's what the justice system is for - controlling people so that they abide by
> the American laws and if you're not the norm of what is American, I am talking
> about Blacks, then you're going to be placed in prison and jail more.

Sarah equates the racialized experiences of people of color within the criminal justice

system to the oppression Blacks faced during antebellum slavery. Such an explicit

comparison implicitly acknowledges the role of institutional and/or structural racism

within the criminal justice system. Sarah's response highlights the reality that, from a

race conscious perspective, the prison system is just another way of trying to control

Black people, a mode of systematic oppression for Blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Roberts

2004; Alexander 2010).

Bianca, a 20-year-old STEM major from Georgia University, also embraced this

ideology. To understand this connection, she draws upon a personal experience to

suggest that the criminal justice system is inherently racist. When asked to explain why

she believes that the disparities in incarceration rates are a product of racism, she

responded:

> It's actually bigger than incarceration. Like, the whole [system] is slanted towards one group. Take my mom, for instance, she got in a car accident with this guy who had rear-ended her and then the cops came —it was a white cop— and the guy that hit my mom [was white too]. When the cops got there, the guy blamed the whole accident on my mom. He was like, "This woman just stopped and her car smashed into mine, it was totally her fault." And then, on top of that, my parents have accents so when my mom started to explain what actually happened, the cop heard her accent, he was like, " Ma'am, I don't know how long you've been in this country, but this isn't how things work here, you're gonna have to pay for this." Then my dad came -because they were kind of new to this country - and tried to explain what my mom said happened. But the cop and the guy were like "No, this is not what happened at all. This is not how the situation went." And then they tried to work out the situation, but eventually my parents had to get a lawyer and stuff. They went to court, and when they got to court, the guy who hit my mom knew the judge. He ended up knowing the cop and the judge! So it's like this system. A system where some people, ok - White people - look out for each other. No was interested in [hearing] what actually happened. It's like the situation has already been kind of ruled on. For my mom, it's like you are Black and you have an accent so you must be the guilty one. My parents ended up having to pay a lot of money and stuff.

Although Bianca does not explicitly state that the data on racial disparities in

incarceration rates are a reflection of racism, she does imply it. Furthermore, she

suggests that her mom's experiences with the accident and subsequent court

proceeding were highly racialized. Her specific comments that "it's bigger than

incarceration" or that there is" a system where [Whites] look out for each other" are both race conscious and structural explanations of racial disparities within the criminal justice system. Rather than citing individuals (i.e., the cop) as the source of the differential treatment that her mother received, Bianca sees an entire system in which only certain persons are protected and/ or given an opportunity to plead their case.

Kenneth, Sarah, and Bianca's beliefs mirror those of other participants who believe that incarceration rates specifically, and the criminal justice system in general, are rooted in racism. Participants who argue "it all goes back to racism" often point to a "system" that disproportionately engages, oppresses, and seeks to subjugate Blacks (and other groups of color). Additionally, students who professed that the legal system is plagued by institutional and/or structural racism often drew on personal experiences or individual experiences with racism to explain how they believe the criminal justice system is structured at large.

"Blacks Have To Constantly Deal With Racial Profiling"

Participants frequently discussed racial profiling in their explanations of incarceration rates and in reference to personal day-to-day experiences. In general, Black millennials appear to embrace a racial ideology that suggests Blacks (and to some extent Latinos) are over-policed and targeted by agents of the criminal justice system much more than other ethno-racial groups. For instance, when asked to give his thoughts on the incarceration data, Blair, an 18-year-old STEM major from Georgia University, responded:

This chart confirms what people have been saying all along. It's like the police troll Black areas looking for criminals, they don't do that in White neighborhoods. It's not like Whites aren't committing crimes - they just don't get caught. They don't get caught because police aren't in those areas. Police are too busy trolling Black areas because there's this idea that Blacks are criminals. I see it all the time. Even here, it's like I'm always having to show my student ID – [campus police] don't think I belong here. But my roommate, he's White, doesn't have to deal with that at all.

Blair's statement reflects race-conscious ideas that situate race and racial stereotypes at the center of explaining incarceration outcomes. He believes that the incarceration rates are directly tied to Blacks being targeted by police more than Whites. Unlike his peers who subscribed to the post-racial, colorblind logic of cultural racism, Blair argues that Blacks are NOT more criminal than Whites. Instead, he contends that Whites merely "don't get caught" because the police do not patrol predominantly White spaces as much as they patrol predominantly Black spaces. Ultimately this framework suggests that the police are actively engaged with racially profiling Black people and Black spaces, which translates into predominantly White spaces remaining preserved, untouched.

Similar to Blair, Evan, a STEM major in his senior year at Georgia University, says racial profiling is a common feature of Blacks' experience with the criminal justice system. During his discussion of the incarceration data, Evan recounts his own personal experience with racial profiling which is captured in the following quote:

I know that—well, for instance, I was profiled and I didn't do anything wrong. I feel like I was profiled because I was Black, so it doesn't surprise me that Black people are more likely to become incarcerated because it's apparent to me that Black people are more likely to be approached by the police… It seems like in Black communities [the police are] out looking to get people and then in [mostly White areas], such as the one I was living in in suburban Atlanta, it seems more like the police were protecting - as opposed to being out trying to get you. I don't know, that's just what I always felt like … I just feel like—I don't know, I

think the main thing is like profiling. We are dubbed guilty before we even get a chance to do anything wrong – so yeah, this [data] is about profiling.

As this account demonstrates, Evan's personal experience with racial profiling inform his overall understanding of how racial profiling impacts the experiences Blacks have with police. He offers that it is a contentious relationship whereby police officers are "out to get" Blacks. Conversely, he believes that the police are out to protect and serve Whites. Given the different orientation that police have towards each ethno-racial group, Evan further argues that Blacks are more likely to be profiled than Whites in particular and perhaps other ethno-racial groups in general. He is adamant that racial profiling helps to explain the racial disparities in incarceration rates. Additionally, he believes that racial profiling is a common experience for Blacks.

Joy, an 18-year-old freshman from Georgia University, also draws upon personal experiences with racial profiling in the context of explaining incarceration disparities by race. When asked her views on why Blacks are more likely to be incarcerated than other ethno-racial groups, Joy responds:

Well, I know specifically from my neighborhood like the police harass people really bad. Like they just pull people over, stop people on the street. You always see the police harassing somebody when they didn't do anything. My little brother, my two little brothers, they're getting older and I've been able to see it specifically. My little brother has dreads now. They're getting kind of long. One time, I was walking down the street with him and the police just pulled over and said "what are you doing out this late?" I was confused because it wasn't late, like it was not even close to curfew. So I told the police officer "It's like eight o'clock and we're just walking to the store." The police was still on us asking why we were out so "late." We were like it's like eight o'clock! And he told us not to talk to the police like that. I couldn't believe it; I was like, "What is this?" It was well before the curfew time, so why was he bothering us? My brother didn't seem bothered. My brother's had that problem before. He says when he goes out, the police will just stop him and ask what he's doing? So I think police pick on young black boys, at

least in my neighborhood and a lot of other neighborhoods in Chicago. So I'm sure they probably do in other places too.

When asked if she has any other thoughts or ideas about the incarceration rates or criminal justice in general, Joy said, "No not really; I think it's just, you know, a racist system." Joy's personal experience and the experiences of her brothers have led her to believe that racism is central to understanding incarceration disparities as well as day to day experiences that Blacks may have with racial profiling. Her reference to her brother's hairstyle (i.e. dreads) highlights her awareness that certain racial stereotypes about who is dangerous and what a dangerous person looks influences how police relate to Blacks in general but Black males specifically.

Joy makes it a point to say that the police "pick on young black boys." In doing so, she articulates an understanding of how both race and gender impact experiences within the criminal justice system. She believes that Black males and females have different interactions with the police, especially with regard to racial profiling. Specifically, males are more likely to be targeted than their female counterparts. Being a female acts as buffer to the negative influence that race can have on interactions with police in particular and the criminal justice system more generally. Similar to Joy, numerous other participants embraced the ideological viewpoint that Black males have more negative encounters with police and are more likely to be subjected to racial profiling than Black females.

"If He was White, It Would Be a Different Story"

The third theme that emerged from the data is Black millennials' belief that

Blacks and Whites often face different outcomes for similar actions. This is especially

true in their views of outcomes within the criminal justice system. Students repeatedly

espoused the belief that Blacks receive harsher treatment in all aspects of the legal

system when compared to their White counterparts. For example, Kia, an 18-year-old

freshman immigrant, from Georgia University states that:

> When the police deal with Blacks it's an act now and ask questions later kind of mentality. But with Whites it's more like, "okay what's going on"; the police try to get to the bottom of what is going on before reacting. It's like Whites get more chances. I heard a case on TV where this [black] guy was running towards a policeman because he was trying to get help after having a car accident and the police just shot him. [The police] never gave the guy a chance to explain himself – they just acted. I feel like – well I don't know – but I honestly feel like if the police had seen a White person or Latino person running towards them, they would have acted differently, but it appears that there's more of an act now, ask questions later mentality for Blacks.

Kia's comments suggest that race is at the core of understanding the disparate outcomes

within the criminal justice system. She, like many of the other participants, believes that

the police react in different ways when dealing with different ethno-racial groups. She

argues that, for Blacks, the police are quick to react to a particular situation or behavior

before getting all of the necessary information; however, for Whites, the police take time

to investigate the situation and gather necessary information before reacting.

Mercedes, an 18-year-old freshman from UCLA, also contends that Blacks and

Whites encounter very different treatment within the legal system. Mercedes notes that

prior to college, she was not very concerned about race relations or racial inequality;

however, her perspective changed once she learned about racial disparities in rates of

incarceration the U.S. Mercedes states that:

> I wasn't really concerned about race because I thought it was getting more
> equal. I thought we were on the road to recovery until I found out [about]
> incarceration rates and I found out about the crimes. The ones reported and
> unreported. I found out that more and more Blacks are being incarcerated at a
> much higher rate than other races - sometimes for unjustly reasons that are
> accompanied by unreasonable sentences. The data look like this because a Black
> person can't get away with the same thing that a white person can.

Mercedes' comment suggests that Blacks and Whites have distinctly different

experiences within the criminal justice system. Mercedes, like most other participants,

believes that Blacks face harsher (and perhaps unreasonable) treatment than their

White counterparts. In order to better explain her position on this issue, Mercedes

elaborates and draws upon current events to substantiate her claims:

> Like there's that little [white] boy that killed people and he did not go to jail, they
> said he suffered from being too rich[32] and spoiled – so that means he had a
> reason to kill innocent people? But if a little black kid did something like that,
> they would try to put him in jail for years. A black kid doesn't even have to do
> anything that bad and he would've been put in jail forever but this [white] kid
> gets off because some doctor says that him growing up rich is a problem.

In addition to the disparate treatment of Black and White suspects, Mercedes contends

that this discrimination is also occurring when Blacks and Whites are the victims of

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[32] Mercedes is referencing the case of Ethan Couch, a wealthy 16 year old from Texas, who was involved in a drunk driving accident that resulted in the death of four individuals. The accident also caused serious injuries to two of Couch's friends who were in the car with him during the accident. Couch pleaded guilty to four counts of manslaughter by intoxication and two counts of assault by intoxication causing bodily injury. For his crimes, Couch faced up to 20 years in prison. His lawyers, however, argued for a less strict sentence based on information that Ethan Couch suffered from "affluenza." Albeit not a recognized illness by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association, affluenza refers to a condition in which individuals with extreme wealth, who live an overwhelmingly extravagant, materialistic, and consequence-free lifestyles are unable to understand or control their behavior. Based on the affluenza defense, Couch received 10 years probation and zero jail time for his criminal offenses (http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/12/12/the-affluenza-defense-judge-rules-rich-kids-rich-kid-ness-makes-him-not-liable-for-deadly-drunk-driving-accident/ retrieved on April 8, 2015).

crime. She believes that black victims do not garner the same sympathy and support

from the general populous that white victims often receive. According to Mercedes, this

is also evidenced in the media, whom she believes does not pay equal attention to

covering events that involve white versus black victims. Specifically, she states:

> It's not just when we commit crimes; it's also a difference when crimes are committed against us. Like, I know this may sound cliché, but Trayvon Martin - he was an unarmed kid - shot and murdered by a grown man and people still support Zimmerman. There are [internet] comments under videos, like "good job, Zimmerman... good job for shooting that little thug…shoot him before he turns into a criminal like the rest of them." It's like they don't even care that someone lost their life, someone that didn't even deserve it … the media has a hand in it too, like what's in the news and what's not in the news. A little white girl goes missing and that's everywhere in the news, but when black girls go missing, no one hears about it, when black girls are raped and murdered, you never hear about it, but when it happens to other races, you hear about it.

Mercedes suggests that institutions, like the media, help to perpetuate stereotypes and

perceptions that black bodies do not carry the same value as white bodies.

Much like Mercedes, Crystal – a 21-year-old senior from California University –

also draws upon currents events when discussing unequal treatment of Blacks and

Whites within the legal system. When asked to respond to claims that race does not

matter anymore today or is a thing of the past, Crystal responds:

> Trayvon Martin. That's how I respond. If it had been a white kid shot by a black vigilante. He would have been arrested immediately. He would have been jailed immediately and probably gotten the chair, not lethal injection, if it had been him.

When pressed to explain why she believed the outcome would be different if the race of

Trayvon Martin and George Zimmerman had been swapped, Crystal states:

> It happens all the time. You always hear about police gunning a Black person down who didn't even have a gun. There's no consequence, so why would it be any different with this? Then there was the African American woman in Florida,

whose name was Marissa Alexander, her whole case - she shot at the wall trying to get her abusive ex-husband out the house. She goes to jail for trying to protect herself and this guy [Zimmerman] goes scotch free for killing a kid. That's why I know if he had been a White kid getting shot, there would be no question about what to do. I mean, seriously! He shot an unarmed teenager and should go to jail for some amount of time but he didn't – it's like did we make any progress?

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and you did get my question, thank you. So how concerned are you, personally or individually about race relations in this country?

I'm pretty concerned about it. I mean just with the Trayvon Martin case, it really sticks out to me, because it was so cut and dry. He shot an unarmed teenager and should go to jail for some amount of time and when he didn't, it was like did we make any progress? It's pertinent and important to pay attention to, because it could have been anyone's kid getting shot.

Crystal's racial awareness and the ideological frames that shape her racial views have been heavily influenced by her knowledge of current events. Crystal's use of two timely legal cases – George Zimmerman's case compared to the case of Marissa Alexander – in which the defense argued for their client's innocence based on similar legal protocol (i.e., stand your ground law), reveals her attempt to "make sense" of racial dynamics. For her, race appears to be the most glaring distinction between the two cases. According to Crystal, Zimmerman's whiteness puts him in a position of advantage because it infers automatic innocence; in contrast, Alexander's blackness serves as a disadvantage because of its association with criminality and guilt. Lastly, In general, the racial meaning that Crystal draws from the events leading to Trayvon Martin's death, suggests that she suspects overt racism to be at the core of the interaction between Martin and Zimmerman as well as Zimmerman's experience with the legal system. Her statement reflects a belief in a race-centered approach to understanding racial

dynamics; that situates racial privilege and oppression at the core of racialized

outcomes.

"You Can't Trust the Police"

The final theme of Black millennials racial ideology as it relates to the criminal

justice system suggests that Blacks cannot trust the police. Contrary to popular

perceptions of the police as a source of protection, many Black millennials perceive the

police as a source of danger. Repeatedly, participants discussed the dangers of possibly

being stereotyped, harassed, shot, framed, and/or forced to confess to crimes that they

did not commit – all at the hands of the police. They also frequently disclosed either a

distrust of the police or concern regarding the possible consequences of negative

interactions with police. Black millennials' wariness of law enforcement is strongly

related to combative and negative personal experiences with police.

For example, while discussing his belief that Black spaces are often over-policed,

Steve - a 20 year old African American Studies major in his third year at California

University- recalls an experience in which he attended a birthday party for a friend.

Steve states,

> One year, at my friend Gerald's party – it was a regular birthday party, nothing
> happened, no fights, nothing. Not even noise complaints because all of the
> neighbors were at the party and they made sure no one would have complaints.
> But there were a lot of cops [around]. The cops were literally waiting outside the
> entire time and we kept asking, "What are you doing here?" but they [the cops]
> wouldn't answer. We were like, "Nothing is happening here, we don't need the
> police here," and the police said "Don't worry about us, just go back to what
> you're doing." Then two cops walked in the door, and they kept making stuff up.
> Like, how there were noise complaints but the neighbors were like no, we're
> here, we're at the party, so there's no way neighbors could be complaining. They

ended up bringing two helicopters, 7 police cars, and I even think they brought the canine unit.

Steve calls upon this experience to substantiate his claim that the police over-police predominantly Black spaces. His story suggests that the police invaded this space despite having no real or plausible reason, which led Steve to believe they were there because it was a party predominantly attended by Blacks. Steve made it a point to highlight his belief that the police made up false accusations of noise claims to justify their presence at that party; a claim that further substantiates Steve's belief that you cannot trust the police. Finally, Steve offers the details about two helicopters, seven police cars, and possibly even a canine unit to suggest that the police not only over-police black spaces but also that the policing can be excessive in both with regard to presence and force. It is clear that Steve perceived the experience at the party as a racialized moment, one in which race was central to the interactions between partygoers and the police.

When ask to discuss what, if anything, he took away from the experience regarding race, Steven replies, "The fact that there's nowhere we [Blacks] can be safe and that's ironic, because the police are supposed to be the ones keeping us safe. It's just like you can't trust them; I've never trusted a cop in my life." Steve goes on to explain why he doesn't trust cops. He states:

> Coming from the Bay [area], Oscar Grant and everything that happened—it was just ridiculous how it happened and how the cop got away with it. It happens so often – the police kills one of us and basically gets a pat on the back. It's happened to so many of my friends – it wasn't as big of a deal with them, I mean, they didn't get shot but they were beat up by a cop and another had a gun shoved in his face and nothing happened to the cops. When you see it from a nationwide perspective, you see how bad it is and still nothing happens, no one

tries to police the police … My uncle's a cop and I still don't trust cops … I've never had a good experience with a cop in my life. I just don't respect them. I know there may be good cops or whatever, but I still can't get away from that view of feeling unsafe when I'm around a cop. You're supposed to feel safe! But Blacks aren't safe around the cops. We're not safe anywhere … In my high school, there were 2 cases of police brutality. They ended up letting go of the cop, but then he came back and worked at the school a year later, so it's kind of like the cops can get away with anything. When I saw that, I realized that I wasn't even safe at my own school and I went to one of the better schools in my county. Eventually, the cop ended up picking on one of my friends. He made him get out of the car, told him to get face down on the ground, and put handcuffs on him – all of that just to check his license. And all my friend was doing was sitting in his car in front of the school.

Steve is adamant that he does not like the police. His disdain, however, appears to come from a place of fear. That is, Steve does not like the police because he fears that the police will use excessive force. Steve's sentiments mirror those of numerous other participants. Consistently throughout interviews, participants from both California and Georgia University spoke to a mistrust and/or fear of the police. Participants shared stories in which they personally experienced police harassment and violence or stories of friends, family members, or cases of police brutality that garnered national attention (i.e., Oscar Grant and Sean Bell) to affirm their belief that Blacks should be afraid of the police and furthermore can't trust the police.

Kwesi, a 22-year-old Nigerian student from California University, shares similar concerns or "uneasiness" when dealing with the police. While discussing his mistrust of the police, Kwesi contends:

If you're driving a car, you could get pulled over, and if the police looks at you and thinks that for some reason you're carrying something, they could waste your time and search you for no reason, and -- and it's crazy, because it creates a weird feeling of law enforcement towards certain races. Certain races are like "oh yeah, let's call the police," where I am like, "no, I can deal with this myself" because calling the police will just lead to more drama.

When asked to clarify what he meant by "more drama," Kwesi states:

> The police are not interested in hearing me out or protecting me. So that's the drama part. It's like I could easily get shot by the police just for calling for them to help me with a car accident. So that's just why I say I try to handle it myself. I don't have the time or energy to deal with the extra drama that the police bring. I don't trust them to protect me. It's more like I have to protect myself from them.

Kwesi, like many other participants, does not view the police as agents of protection or problem solving. In fact, he views them as the opposite; for him, the police are agitators, aggressors, and agents of harm/danger. Kwesi goes on to suggest that the anxiousness that surrounds police interactions for Blacks is a foreign concept for his non-Black friends. Kwesi argues:

> It's funny -- (laughs) because people of other races still do the same things [as Blacks], and it's funny how confident they are when they have to deal with the police, you know? It's just like, going to here [California University] -- kids carry weed everywhere, and it's cool, you know, I hear stories from my white friends and they're like, "so the police caught us smoking weed in the parking lot and we just told the officer, 'I'm sorry, I have a medical condition,' and the police were like okay, cool, you can go." It's ridiculous. I've seen [white] friends talk smack to the police and nothing happens to them but I've been harassed for not looking at a police officer the right way. It's just crazy how confident some of white friends are; it's like they already know that the police is not going to do anything to them.

Based on his experiences, Kwesi suggests that Whites and Blacks have distinctly different interactions with the police, which is supported and informed by his explanation of the racial disparities in incarceration rates. Kwesi believes that incarceration is a systematic way of excluding Blacks from society. Specifically, when asked to explain these racial inequities, he responds with, "we get arrested more because the police are in our areas more." Kwesi goes on to offer further clarification:

There are always more police in areas that have more black people there. Like, I was at a mall in Crenshaw the other day, and it was the first time I walked into a mall and saw like a police station in the mall. To me it's unnecessary. It's a mall not a bank, you know, so it was quite a shock, you know, - it immediately made me uneasy. And I know that the police station is only in that mall because it's mostly Black - mainly black people that live around there and shop there, you know. There's just more police in general deployed in our areas compared to others. There's always more law enforcement hanging around in Black areas. It's funny, I was having a talk about this the other day…The prison system is another form of deportation. But you can't just deport all the Black people out of the U.S. so you put them in a different land called a "prison", and they remain there. Some people stay there for the rest of their life. So it's another form of deportation that exists within the US. It's like intra-deportation - instead of sending you out, they send you somewhere else within.

Kwesi's likening of incarceration disparities to "intra-deportation" suggests that Kwesi is cognizant of the impact of institutional racism on incarceration outcomes. He believes that Blacks' greater likelihood of being incarcerated is an intentional method for maintaining the racial status quo. Furthermore, his comments suggest that he believes that incarceration is used as a means to control and exclude Blacks from society. Kwesi's comments also attribute these disparities primarily to institutional and/or structural racism in his understandings of criminal justice system.

These findings suggest that Black millennials do, to some degree, understand the impact of structural and/or institutional racism on racialized outcomes – especially with regard to understanding incarceration rates but also moderately with education and wealth disparities. Additionally, it is important to note that in the absence of knowledge about structural and institutional racism, some students did not default to the colorblind, post-racial frames. Instead, they cited their uncertainty about a plausible explanation but also maintained that there "must be something wrong with the system" or as Michael – a 23 year old political science major from California University - put it,

I honestly don't know why Blacks are incarcerated more than these other groups. I just don't get it ... there has to be something bigger going on here. I mean, I know it is not because Blacks are more criminal than these groups. You can't say that we [Blacks] just like to commit more crimes. --- It has to do something with either the police, judges, or lawyers –right?

Michael's response suggests that the incarceration data is not the result of Blacks own doing but rather a byproduct of the discriminatory actions of key figures in the criminal justice system. He explicitly rebuffs cultural racism by arguing that the incarceration rates are a not function on Blacks being more criminal. Michael's comment about "something bigger going on here" suggests an acknowledgment, albeit limited, of institutional disadvantage and structural racism.

Regional Differences in Race Conscious Ideological Frameworks

There was very little differentiation between participants from the "west" and "south" regarding the degree to which they were likely to offer explanations of racial inequality rooted in race conscious ideology. That is, students from both California and Georgia University were nearly equal in their use of structural/ institutional explanations for the racialized outcomes in wealth, incarceration, and education. Of the 33 participants who offered race conscious explanations[33], 18 were from the west and 15 were from the south. At least half of the participants from both regions offer a race-conscious response, at some point during the discussion – 50% and 58% respectively. These numbers are largely driven by students' collective race-conscious ideology

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[33] "Race- conscious" explanations refer to explanations that rely on structural or institutional racism to understand racialized outcomes in wealth, incarceration, or education. It also includes responses that don't explicitly attribute the outcomes to racism but challenge the idea of a race neutral society (i.e., Michael's response).

regarding the legal system. All of the students from Georgia University, who offered race conscious ideological frameworks, did so during discussions of the incarceration data. Likewise, nearly all of the students from California University (15 out of 18) offered race conscious explanation of the incarceration data at some point during the discussion. These data suggest that Black millennials have a somewhat race conscious understanding of how the criminal justice system works.

Participants from both regions appeared to lack this kind of racial awareness during discussions of racial equalities in wealth and education. Participants from California University are, however, slightly more likely to offer race conscious explanations for wealth and education disparities. Sixteen participants from the west and 11 participants from the south drew upon race conscious frameworks during discussions about wealth inequality. During discussions about educational disparities eight participants from the west and 6 participants from the south espoused race conscious ideals at some point.

Summary

Although Black millennials are heavily impacted by colorblind ideology, they also draw upon some race conscious ideological frameworks when discussing contemporary race relations and the racial dynamics between Whites and historically marginalized ethno-racial groups. More specifically, when asked to explain racial disparities in the domains of wealth, education, and criminal justice, a little over half of the participants offer explanations rooted in an understanding of institutional and structural racism. These data reveal that, albeit not likely to be their first response, a majority of Black

millennials do draw upon race conscious ideological frameworks when offering their

second, third, or beyond explanation for the data charts on racial inequality.

Black millennials are most likely to present a race conscious perspective when

discussing racial disparities in incarceration rates. The participants believe that the

disparities are directly tied to racial bias on the individual level (i.e., police, judges,

juries, etc.) and institutional level (i.e., stop and frisk laws; disparate sentencing; etc.). In

general, Black millennials appear to embrace race conscious ideological frameworks

when discussing the criminal justice system, which extend beyond discussions of

incarceration rates. Specifically, they articulate a collective ideology that assumes that

racism is at the core of all interactions, policies, and outcomes within the criminal justice

system.

In particular, Black millennials contend that Whites and Blacks are treated

differently for the same infractions, such that Blacks receive harsher or more rigid

treatment than Whites. Likewise, Black millennials suggest that Blacks are over-policed

or over-surveiled compared to other ethno-racial groups. The increased presence of law

enforcement in Black communities, coupled with stereotypes that criminalize Blacks,

create a heightened sense of danger for Blacks. Consequently, the participants in this

study share a common belief that Blacks need to be careful around or afraid of police

officers.

In addition to Black millennials' reliance on race-conscious ideology to explain

some aspects of racial inequality, there are a minority of participants (11) who

completely shunned colorblind ideology and embrace race conscious frameworks

throughout their entire interview. These uniformly race conscious participants are

discussed in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: UNIFORMLY RACE CONSCIOUS MILLENNIALS

This chapter explores the conditions under which Black Millennials reject

colorblind, post-racial ideology and unambiguously embrace race conscious ideas

regarding racial inequality specifically and the continued significance of race and racism

in the contemporary U.S. context more generally. Findings from chapter six reveal that

Black millennials do not rely solely on colorblind post-racial ideological frameworks in

their attempts to explain racial inequality. Rather, Black millennials' also, to a lesser

degree, utilize race conscious ideological approaches during discussions of inequality.

The data in this chapter suggests that while most Black millennials endorse

contradictory ideological frameworks in constructing their racial views, there are some

Black millennials who present a "uniformly race-conscious" understanding of racial

dynamics. That is, some Black millennials hold ideological commitments that are

counter-hegemonic and challenge colorblind, post-racial ideology.

Specifically, there were 11 participants who did not engage colorblind, post-

racial ideology at any point during the discussion of racial inequality or racial dynamics

writ large. In this chapter, I focus on similarities and differences among these uniformly

race conscious participants. Given that most of the participants (50 of 61) appear

invested in colorblind ideology, I devote this chapter to understanding the backgrounds

and experiences of the 11 race conscious participants who depart from the more

common trend. In doing so, I aim to highlight some of the circumstances that allow

Black youth to develop a race conscious, counter-hegemonic ideology; in spite of the

complex and contradictory world (i.e., pervasive colorblind post-racial discourse vs. persistent structural racial inequality) that they inhabit.

In the first section of this chapter I provide more details regarding "who" is included in the uniformly race conscious 11. Due to the significant variation in characteristics that describe theses participants, I spend the second half of this chapter focusing on commonalities among them. Two distinct commonalities emerge among the participants who embrace uniformly race conscious ideological views. First, all of the participants recall explicit racial socialization experiences with their parents and/or family. Second, they have all experienced interpersonal racism and can articulate these moments as racialized (i.e. nigger moments).

Who Are the Uniformly Race Conscious 11?

For the uniformly race conscious Black millennials in this study, colorblind post-racial ideology seems to play non-significant role in shaping how they see and experience the racial world. Throughout their interviews, these participants placed race as central to their individual experiences as a Black millennial and to the American experience as a whole. In the words of two uniformly race conscious (URC) Black youth, Evan and Anika respectively[34], race conscious Black youth believe that "[b]eing Black is

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[34] Emphasis added here for the stylistic purpose of displaying this as a collective sentiment on uniformly race conscious Black youth. Originally, when I asked Evan how he felt about being Black, he smiled and seemed to sit up straight with confidence. He then responded,"Being Black is just who I am, I take that everywhere I go." When told Anika, a graduate student at California University, that we were going to shift the conversation to discuss her views on racial inequality, she responded, "racism is the root cause of all of this stuff in the U.S. "

just who [they are]; [they] carry that every where [they] go," and Black millennials argue

that "racism is the root cause of [racial inequality] in the U.S."

The URC participants in this study vary on a myriad of variables and experiences

(See Table 5 and Table 6). Specifically, region, sex, age, and ethnicity appear to have

limited impact on Black millennials' race consciousness. Four of the participants attend

Georgia University and seven of the participants attend California University[35]. Likewise,

five URC participants identify as male and six identify as female and were most likely to

list 18 as their age. The median age of the URC sample is 20 years old. Lastly, seven of

the participants identify as African American, the remaining four are first or second

generation Black immigrants. Lastly, all but one of the race-conscious participants are

U.S. citizens.

The participants also reflect a variety of college classifications and majors. Four

of them were college freshman, two were sophomores, three were juniors, one was a

senior, and one of the participants was in their first year of doctoral studies. Five of the

participants reported majoring in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM), four

participants majored in a Social Science, and two of the participants were from

Humanities departments. Most of the URC participants (8 out of 11), however, stated

they had taken a college course that included content on race, gender, difference,

and/or inequality at some point in their college career.

Overall, vast differences in the demographic make up the URC presents

challenges to making inferences about how these factors may influence the adoption of

uniformly race conscious ideas. As a result, the next section delves into commonalities in the personal experiences, stories, and memories that the URC participants share.

Finding "The Tie That Binds": Exploring Commonalities Among the Uniformly Race Conscious

With regard to commonalities among the URC, ten of the eleven race conscious participants express experiences with some exposure to race conscious socialization patterns from their parents and/or family members. These participants state that their parents talked about race with them during their adolescent years.[36] The nature of the discussions vary across URC individuals, however, each message appears to evoke an awareness of the continued significance of racism to Black Americans experiences. In addition to shared experiences with race conscious socialization, all of the race-conscious participants shared "racialized encounters" that caused them to be keenly aware of their blackness and the consequences of said blackness in America. During the telling of each racialized encounter the URC participant argued that it was impossible to deny the centrality of race to understanding the way(s) in which events ultimately played out.

Parents, Racial Socialization, and Race Consciousness Among Black Millennials

Social scientists argue that communications between children and parents on the topic of race and ethnicity are key features of parenting within Black families (Tatum

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[36] This is not to suggest that the remaining 50 participants did not report talking to their parents/family about race; rather, I explore this as a common experience among most of the race conscious participants because it was one of the few factors that they (nearly) all share.

143

1997; Hughes et. al. 2006; Neblett et. al. 2009). This process, known as racial

socialization, involves the transmission of parents', and/or family members', views

about race and ethnicity to children through subtle, unintended mechanisms as well as

overt and deliberate mechanisms (Hughes 2003; Neblett et al. 2009). Black parents

approach racial socialization from a variety of standpoints. Some families choose an

active process of racialization in which discussions of race and racism are central

components to childrearing. Other families choose a more passive approach whereby

they only discuss race when the child brings it up or extenuating circumstances make a

discussion unavoidable. Finally some families choose to embrace a more colorblind

approach to racial socialization in which they de-emphasize the significance of race

(Neblett et. al. 2009).

Ten of the eleven race conscious participants expressed that their parents

and/or family members shared explicit messages about race with them.[37] The content

of those messages reflect a variety of themes and topics consistent with research on

themes that Black families utilize via racial socialization. Some of the most prominent

themes include racial barrier messages, racial pride messages, self worth messages,

egalitarian messages, and negative messages (Neblett et. al. 2009). For the race

conscious participants in this study, racial socialization messages tended to fall in one of

four categories: racial barriers, racial pride, negative messages, and egalitarian

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[37] Kwesi, the lone participant who shared that his parents did not discuss race, is from Nigeria and had only been in the U.S. for five years at the time of the interview. The majority of literature on racial socialization suggests that African American/ Black American families employ racial socialization strategies in efforts to help their children combat racism and protect them from the harmful effects of experiences with racial discrimination. It is quite plausible that given the greater emphasis on ethnic - rather than racial - diversity in Nigeria (Osaghae 1991; Irobi 2005), racial socialization processes do not carry the same social importance in Nigeria as they do in the U.S.

messages. Racial barrier messages emphasize an awareness of racial inequalities as well

as strategies for handling racial adversity. Racial pride messages focus on instilling

positive feelings towards the racial group and elevating the importance of Black history

and heritage. Negative messages promote and reinforce negative stereotypes about

ethno-racial groups. Finally, egalitarian messages emphasize interracial equality and

coexistence (Hughes et al. 2006; Nesbitt et al. 2009).

Tara, Evan, James, and Bumi each referenced conversations with their parents

or close family members that delved into to the topic of racial barriers. These messages

purported race as central to understanding how they specifically, and Black people in

general, should engage with the world around them. For example, when asked to

discuss some of the racial messages that she received from her family, Tara responded:

> One of the main things that my dad and grandma always told me was to work
> extra hard – work extra hard at whatever I do. It's like they say, you have to work
> twice as hard when you are Black or at least try to be twice as good. I remember
> one time when I was in the fourth grade, I wanted my grandma to come to the
> school and talk to my teacher because she didn't give me my accelerated reader
> prize. It was suppose to be me and this other girl [who was White] – we had read
> the same amount of books for the month. But when it came time to give out the
> prize, my teacher only gave the prize to the other girl. It was just a free pizza
> coupon, but I was still mad. When I asked my teacher why the other girl got it
> and not me, she told it was because the girl had read more books than me. But
> when I looked at the log that my teacher kept on the wall, I could clearly see that
> we had the same number of stars or books or whatever. When I mentioned that
> to the teacher, she told me not to worry about it because I would probably win
> the next month. I was sooo mad; I went home and told my grandma about it,
> hoping that she would say something to my teacher because the whole thing
> was unfair. But you know what my grandma said? She basically told me that I
> should have read more books than the other girl so that there wouldn't have
> been any question about who the winner should be. She was basically like you
> have to work twice as hard as White people do in order to stand out … My dad
> use to say stuff like that too. He's always telling me that I have to be twice as
> good as everyone else if I want to make it as a doctor. And then on top of being

Black, I am girl so it's like I have two strikes against me. I can't get by on just being average.

Tara's recollection of the early messages that she received from her family regarding race, illuminate a common trope in Blacks' racial ideology – "Blacks have to work twice as hard" as Whites to gain similar opportunities or outcomes as Whites. This particular message about race centers racial inequality at the forefront of what it means to be Black in America. Early in her racial socialization, Tara learned that as a Black person, her work ethnic may not be received, acknowledged, or rewarded in the same way as her white counterparts. Finally, this message about race suggests that Blacks must behave, act, or move differently than Whites, in certain spaces, in order to secure "success" specifically but more broadly as a means of self-preservation.

Evan shared a similar example of family messages in which he has been told that his behavior, effort, or attitude had to be different from Whites in order to maneuver through society successfully and safely. Evan states that "you can't get away with the same thing that white boys can" was one particular message that's always stuck with him. He recalls a time that he and a group of friends – mostly white – were being "loud and obnoxious" in a mall food court. After mall patrons complained about the noise, mall security approached the group to ask them to settle down. The incident ended with Evan and another black friend being detained by mall security while the rest of his white friends were allowed to the leave the food court. Evan notes,

> "Man, it was crazy. They made us call our parents and everything. I was scared to call my mom. I knew she would be pissed off. And she was. She had to leave work to come get me and my friend because my friend couldn't reach his mom. When she got there, security told her that we were detained for disorderly conduct. I couldn't believe it! First of all, they weren't even the real police –

could they detain us? Then they were straight up lying to my mom – we weren't being disorderly and they never told us that's why we had to stay behind. Plus, if we were being disorderly why didn't my other friends have to stay as well. I told all of that to my mom and she just said, 'You know that you can't get a way with the same stuff that Nick and AJ do, right? Heelllloooo, you are a black boy - ding, ding, ding, that means people see you as a thug or problem child.' It was like she was mad at me but I was thinking we should have both been mad at the stupid mall security people for being racist. Either way, I learned my lesson – everything I do has to be above board because I won't get a chance to explain myself like my [white] friends do. And that's with pretty much everything – cops, teachers, or whatever."

Like Tara's family, Evan's mom presents a racial message that positions racial inequality at the core of understanding Evan's experience as a black male at the mall with his white friends. This type of racial socialization acknowledges that Blacks – and black males in particular – face a kind of stigma that white males do not contend with. Furthermore, perhaps because of this stigma, Blacks experience different consequences than Whites - even when exhibiting the same behaviors. Evan's learned that based solely on skin color, he may be treated differently than his white counterparts. Evan suggests that his family's racial socialization efforts began long before his encounter at the mall. When asked if there were any other incidents that come to mind in terms of being confronted with the topic of race or having to deal with the topic of race, Evan states,

Well, my mom and dad, being from Alabama and growing up during the Civil Rights Movement, and my grandfather being involved in the Civil Rights Movement, it was, I don't know, from an early age it was brought up to me. My parents made sure that I knew about racial—at least racial inequalities that occurred in the past. So I think with that instilled in my mind I always had—I kind of always was aware that racism does exist in the world. That's just how the topic of race was introduced to me. It wasn't something I necessarily encountered myself, but it was something that was introduced to me at a very early age.

Evan presents his parents and grandparents' involvement in the Civil Rights Movement as central to his racial awareness. Their commitments to racial justice translated into an early racial socialization process that placed racism as central to individuals' lived experiences. Evan's family drew upon messages of racial barriers and racial pride (and resistance) as they introduced him to the harsh realities of racism. When asked if there were any other particular messages or talks about race from his family that stood out to him, Evan mentioned,

> Basically like, don't let anyone treat you differently just because you're black. At a very early age that was instilled in me. Or don't feel discouraged or disadvantaged because you're black… not to be discouraged or feel like I'm inferior. Those definitely are the takeaways from my parents and I feel like they really played a large role in my success. It's like, even though I know racism exists and that people will try to treat me differently, I am not going to let that stop me.

Overall, Evan suggests that the messages he received from his family regarding race were messages of race consciousness. In particular, his racial socialization involved an awareness of the barriers that race can impose on his experiences as black male. At the same time, these messages about racial barriers were coupled with messages of resistance, and to some degree racial pride. That is, Evan's family has both encouraged him to be aware that racism exists and to also challenge said racism.

Finally, James and Bumi both relay racial socialization experiences that make race central to their understanding of who they are and how the world works. Specifically, they recall messages about being told to be mindful that their behavior reflects back on the entire Black community. After getting into some legal trouble as a

teenager, James recalls a racial message that he received from his mom during one of

her trips to visit him at a detention center. James states,

> "My mom was so hurt and she was crying. I was mad at myself for putting her
> through that. She told me then that I had to do better, that she didn't want me
> to be a statistic and that she wanted me to prove the stereotypes about Black
> men being no good wrong. She was like, you already have a target on your back
> because you are a Black man, you are going to make it worst for yourself by
> adding a criminal record to it. Plus she didn't want me to be proof for the things
> they say about us, you know? Like we're lazy, criminals, dangerous – that kind of
> stuff. She was like, when you do wrong it makes us all look bad. It makes it
> harder for the next Black man."

Like James, Bumi reflects on time in which she received a very similar message, albeit

under different circumstances. Prior to starting the elite private school from which she

graduated, Bumi's parents had a talk with her about their expectations and their desire

for her to do well, give her best. She notes, "There had been some drama around me

getting into to the school." When asked about the messages surrounding race that she

received from her parents, Bumi draws upon this experience:

> "My mom and dad were both so glad that I was finally accepted. I didn't really
> care either way; I was sad about leaving my friends from my old school and then
> with all the stuff we had to go through to get in, I just wasn't into it. My parents
> could probably tell I was a kind of indifferent. They kept telling me to make sure
> that I took the opportunity serious; make sure that I represented well so that my
> brother and I guess other black kids would have a chance to get in. They didn't
> want me to fall into stereotypes about being lazy or dumb. My dad was serious
> about it; he told me that my actions were a reflection on our family, Nigerians,
> and the entire Black community. They were really stressing me out. But I
> understood why they were being like that. They want people to see me and say
> ok, so not all Nigerians are this way or not all Black people will do this and that. I
> know if I do one thing wrong, they will think that's how all Blacks are, and [my
> parents] just don't want that to happen. "

James and Bumi received racial messages that challenged them to remember that for

Blacks, the actions of the individual are often read as a characteristic of the entire racial

group. Furthermore, both of their parents invested in racial socialization processes that encourage and almost burden their children with disproving widely accepted stereotypes about the Black community. In doing so, race becomes central to how James and Bumi's parents have encouraged them to approach the world. That is, these participants have learned to always think about their individual actions in the context of what the consequences may be for the Black community writ large.

Olu, Jessica, and Anika discuss racial messages from their respective families that reveal a racial socialization that focused on racial pride and Afrocentric values. When asked about the types of messages that his parents gave him regarding race, Olu offered the following:

> "My parents always taught me to be proud of being Black. My dad is always telling me and my brother to stand tall or hold our heads up because we are Black men (laughs). My parents are very pro-Black. I went to an Afrocentric private school until second grade. In third grade I was home schooled all the way up to high school. Both of my parents were my teachers but I did some work online too. My mom is an Africana Studies professor and my dad is a Sociology professor so a lot of my homeschool work involved studying Black history or fieldtrips to the African American Museum in [omitted][38], the Black Ballet, or other cultural events around the city. It's like they want us to not only be proud of being Black to also know why we should be proud. They're real big on knowing your history and where you come from. So, yeah, that's probably the main message that I got from them - be proud of you are, be proud of being Black."

Similar to Olu, Jessica cites messages about Black pride and Black history as the content of race talks between her and family members. Jessica recalls being in the fifth grade and receiving the Autobiography of Malcolm X from her uncle who is also a former member of the Black Panther Party. Jessica states,

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[38] The name of the city was removed in an attempt to maintain the anonymity of the respondent.

"My uncle gave me the book to read after he learned that I was doing a history project on Martin Luther King, Jr. He was like, there's more to black history than MLK. The book really opened my eyes to different views and different things about black people. After that, my uncle started sharing a lot of different books with me – even though I was only like 10 or 11, I was happy to hear and read more than just about being slaves. It made me proud to know where I come from. Basically, the types of things Blacks have accomplished, things that we don't often get credit for. He gave me a book on the Black Panther Party. We talked about the Willie Lynch Papers. We even started learning about and celebrating Kwanza. It made me proud to know where I come from. The types of things Blacks have accomplished, things that we don't often get credit for … I think my uncle's message was to show me that I had a history that I could proud of – basically more than just Martin Luther King. My uncle is actually where my love for all things Angela Davis came from. I want to be a prison reform activist just like her."

Anika also discussed receiving messages about Black pride from her family at an early age. These messages, however, were imbedded in ideals about standards of beauty as well as Black history. Anika recounts an experience in Kindergarten when she came home crying because a classmate had called her Black. Anika states,

"I remember being so upset, like really upset. And my mom was like, why are you crying about that. I can't even remember what I said but I know my mom was like stop crying! Being Black is a good thing. It was like be glad that you are Black because Black people are beautiful. She asked me if I thought she was pretty and of course I said yes … then she was like, well I'm Black, your dad is Black and I think that we are pretty awesome people. Looking back on it was a stupid thing to cry about but I was just a kid. All I knew was that wasn't white like my friends. Anyway, my mom's main point was that Black is beautiful and that I should be proud of racial background."

At the core of the messages that Olu, Jessica, and Anika each received from their parents is the idea that Blacks should be proud of their history, culture, and embrace their racial identity. Their racial socialization promotes positive or "pro-black" attitudes around blackness.

Contrary to the pro-black messages that some of the race conscious participants received, Ndidi, a Black immigrant students from Georgia University, reports receiving negative messages about race from her mom. These messages revealed deep-rooted racial prejudices. When asked about the messages that she received from her parents and other family members, Ndidi reflected on conversations that she had with her mom regarding her choice of friends in middle and high school. Ndidi states,

> "The main message that I got from my mom was to stay away from black people. It's like she has all these ideas about black people, well, I guess I should say African Americans – it's like she's so racist towards African Americans. One time we got in a big fight because I wanted to have a sleepover, which she agreed to, but then later she told me that I couldn't invite any of my Black friends. She was afraid that they were going to mess up our house or be too wild. It's sad, because it's like I try to tell her that she's being racist but she doesn't want to hear it. She just wants me to do exactly what she says and find more white friends or even Asian friends. She doesn't have a problem with Whites or Asians. But it's like, how can you hate black people so much when technically I'm Black and so is she. I mean, yes, we are actually Eritrean but half the people I know don't even know what that is. When they see me, they see a black girl – not an Eritrean girl. At school my teachers, friends, and enemies (laughs) see me as a black girl. So it's like all the negative things that my mom thinks about Blacks also applies to me. But it's like, I know that those are stereotypes and not necessarily true. And if my mom would let some of that stuff go, she would see that I have black friends that are smart, respectful, and doing a lot with themselves. Honestly, some of my black friends are more together than my white friends but she's not trying to hear that."

Ndidi experiences a contentious racial socialization process in which her mother embraces her ethnic identity of Eritrean while rejecting her racial identity as Black. On the contrary, Ndidi appears to embrace her racial identity over her ethnic identity because as she states, "When they see me, they see a black girl – not an Eritrean girl." Ndidi, seems to reject her mother's prejudices towards African Americans. Nonetheless, these messages force Ndidi to engage in negotiations about her own ethno-racial

identity and dominant anti-black sentiments. This engagement brings notions of race, difference, and prejudice to the forefront of Ndidi's racial socialization and perhaps ultimately helps to shape her race-conscious views.

Similar to Ndidi, Clarence describes negative messages about race from his grandmother. For Clarence, however, these messages were not anti-black but rather prejudicial beliefs about other ethno-racial groups. When asked what kinds of messages his parents/family shared with him about race, Clarence replied:

> We really didn't talk about race a whole lot but when we did, it was usually my grandmother. She really doesn't like Hispanics. She's always talking about how they are dirty, keep messy yards, and how they need to learn English. It was really hard for me growing up because I lived in a pretty mixed neighborhood and a lot of my friends were Mexican. My grandmother knew that and one time she told me that I better not even try to bring a Mexican girl home … I have one real good friend, Pedro, we've known each other since third grade … My grandmother didn't mind if Pedro came over but she would still say really racist things. Pedro already knew how my grandmother felt so he was okay with it. Well actually, his dad kind of had racist stuff to say about black people so it was kind of like we were even."

Although Clarence states that his family didn't talk about race "a whole lot." It appears that when the topic did emerge, conversations centered on the differences between ethno-racial groups – in this case, Blacks and Latinos. Despite a racial socialization process infused with prejudicial views regarding Latinos, Clarence is still able to build a meaningful relationship with a Latino (i.e., Pedro). Similarly, Clarence's interprets his grandmother's comments as wrong and inappropriate. Clarence seems to reject many of the negative stereotypes that his grandmother endorses with regard to Latinos. This kind of racial socialization creates a space in which from a young age, Clarence has had to make sense of his own ideas about Latinos specifically and race in general vis-à-vis

the racial views of his grandmother. Consequently, Clarence has always been conscious of racial dynamics particularly with regard to negative stereotypes about ethno-racial groups.

Finally, Gwen reported experiencing racial socialization processes that were more passive than the other nine race conscious participants. When asked if her parents and/or family members talked to her about race, Gwen responded, "Sometimes but it wasn't something that came up a lot. My parents were more so concerned with my school stuff. Race didn't really seem to be a big deal with them." Gwen goes on to describe some of the messages that she received about race from her family.

> "My parents are more like 'can't we just all get along' types of people. I mean, they know that racism exists but we never really talked about it that much except when President Obama was elected and people were drawing the monkey pictures of him. My dad was like, there are still ignorant bigots in this world. But he thinks we all just need to learn how to get along. He always says, it's not like Black people are going anywhere so white people have to figure out how to deal with it. And that was pretty much it [from my parents]. My mom didn't say much more about race. She's very open minded – so for her race isn't an issue."

It appears that Gwen's racial socialization was not as overt as her race conscious peers. Gwen's account reveals that her parents rarely discussed race with her, with the exception of the racial tension that surrounded President Obama's election. The discussions on President Obama, race, and bigotry reflect a racial socialization rooted in messages about racial barriers. Nonetheless, Gwen's description of her parents' racial views as "can we all just get along" suggests, at least in part, that her racial socialization included egalitarian messages about race.

Regardless of the types of messages received, the majority of race conscious participants, ten out of eleven, expressed that their parents/ family engaged in discussion about race with them. Social Scientists have long documented the relationship between racial socialization and a host of racial attitudes, behaviors, awareness, and ideologies (Hughes and Johnson 2001; Neblett et. al. 2009). Research suggests that children who received racial socialization that emphasized racial pride, racial barriers, and/or egalitarianism, report more knowledge about their group and more favorable in-group attitudes (Hughes and Johnson 2001; Neblett et. al. 2009).

Similarly, children who receive these types of race-related messages are more likely to have strong feelings of solidarity with other Blacks and endorse Black Nationalist ideologies, such as Black separatism (Hughes and Johnson 2001). Additionally, children who receive racial socializing focused on prejudice, discrimination, and negative messages are more likely to grapple with the meaning of race in their own lives as well as the world around them (Hughes and Johnson 2001). Given the relationship between racial socialization and children's racial attitudes, ideologies, and behaviors, it is quite possible that these early familial messages that ten of the eleven race conscious received, have helped them establish a particular kind of racial awareness. I argue that messages regarding the persistence of racial inequality, racism, stereotyping, prejudice attitudes, and racial pride have help to inform a level of race consciousness among these participants that appears to be absent in the remaining 50 participants.

Racialized Encounters ("Nigger Moments") Among Race Conscious Individuals

In addition to the shared experience with racial socialization, the 11 uniformly race conscious participants all shared experiences with one or more racialized encounters. A racialized encounter is an experience in which the individual actor becomes acutely aware of their race. It is an experience that is shaped first and foremost by the individual actor's racial identity. The experience is decidedly negative, derogatory, and humiliating, thus serving as a reminder of the U.S. racialized social structure that routinely subjugates people of color to inferior status relative to whites. In his book, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life*, sociologist Elijah Anderson (2011) refers to these encounters as "nigger moments" in an effort to highlight the place of racism at the center of the experience.

Nigger moments are described as racial slights, acts of racial insult, or discrimination at the hands of Whites. These racialized encounters depict moments in which the actor is reminded of their punitive status as a Black person. In these instances, the actor is confronted with the realization that, above all other status characteristics, they are viewed as "black body," a description that brings forth a host of negative stereotypes and disparaging meanings (Anderson 2011: 253). Nigger moments have a significant impact on the individual actor's racial views and often evoke feelings of anger and frustration regarding Whites' degradation of Blacks and/or "blackness." Anderson (2011) argues that these racialized moments are reflected in personal stories of racial injury; these stories circulate through the black community and, in doing so, create and/or reinforce suspicions and distrust of wider society.

Over the course of their individual interviews, all 11 of the race conscious

participants in this study, shared experiences with one or more "nigger moments."

These experiences were most likely to come forth during interview discussions about

stereotypes, whether the participants has ever felt hindered by their race, memories of

experiences with race/racism, and/or responses to the prompt about colorblind ideals.

In each racialized encounter that the URC participants shared, every individual reflected

on the experience as a moment in which s/he felt humiliated, discriminated against,

degraded, or marginalized based solely on her/his racial group identification[39].

An example of this is from Evan. While discussing his experiences with racial

stereotypes and anti-black sentiments, he recalls a racialized encounter that occurred

during his first year at Georgia University (GU):

> It's sad to say but I've encountered more incidents [of racial bias] since I've been
> at GU than I probably have in my entire life. And I hate to say that but that's the
> truth … In my freshman year I had a bad experience that kind of set the tone for
> the rest of my college career. It was me and two of my [black] friends and we
> were just going to the bookstore to get our books. I was a freshman. Brand new
> to the campus. Going to the bookstore to get some books. We go up to the
> bookstore, up to the top floor where they sell the books. We're just sitting
> there. We see one of our friends and we just start talking. And then one police
> officer started coming up the escalator and I was like, "Oh, what's going on." And
> then another [police officer] starts coming up the other escalator - it was the down
> escalator - like he's trying to block somebody off, or something. So, I'm like,
> "What's going on? Is something going on in the bookstore?" And then they
> surrounded us. We were like, "What is going on?" And then [the police officer]
> was like, "What are you guys doing here?" And we're like, "We're just here to get
> books, this is *our* bookstore." [The police office] said, "Do y'all go to GU?" And I
> responded, "Yes, sir, I go to GU!" We had GU apparel on, mind you! I feel like it

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[39] Racialized moments are defined as "nigger moments" only when the respondent describes and/or
experiences them as such. Participants not included in the URC category also shared racialized encounters; the
difference between those accounts and these is that they were not always perceived as demeaning or having a
defining impact on the individual's racial ideology.

was obvious we went to school here. At first, I wasn't even mad. I was like, it's a mistaken identity. They got the wrong person; they need to find whoever they're looking for. So I was just like, "No, it's not me." But then when I realized that it was really us that they were after and I started to kind of understanding what was going on, then I started getting upset. And I was like, "Yes, we go to GU! Are you surprised?" And the polices says, "Yeah, I'm surprised. Even you with those dreads, you go to GU?" I couldn't believe it! I pulled out my student ID card. I showed it to him and they still surrounded us. [The police] said, "we got a call y'all were here, that someone was in here causing trouble." I was like, "I don't know why, we're just here to buy books" And that went on for about ten minutes before they figured out we were just students trying to buy books. I was pissed. We were being questioned and harassed and we weren't doing *anything* wrong. Two of the police officers were Black. One of them was White. I feel like they were harassing us for no reason. And that set the tone for my whole experience here as a Black student at GU. Just not feeling like—those are the people that are supposed to protect you and I felt like they were after me. And ever since then I still feel like they're after—I don't trust them. Why should I? Like, they don't trust me. They've thought of me as a criminal ever since I got here. It turns out the bookstore owner called the police on us because [he said] we *looked like* people that might rob the store. So that's the first experience I've had here. That's not the last experience I've had with the police here. But I've never actually done anything wrong. "

Evan goes on to say,

I've seen the same thing happen before to other people, but I never thought it would happen to me at my *own* school, at my own institution that I'm paying money to go to. Like, I could have gone to a lot of schools; I had good grades and ACT scores. I had a lot of options, but I chose to come to GU. That's what hurt the worst. That's what made it really unbelievable.

When asked what, if anything, did he take away from the experience, Evan replies,

I don't know, like, I was so angry. Honestly, I am still kind of angry about it. Man, I was so angry – pissed! The only thing I really took away from that [experience] was that it made me really not like the police. I already kind of felt some kind of way about the police because my friends and my brother -- when we were in Cobb County, similar things would happen … so I have heard incidents with encounters

with the police profiling, but I never experienced it myself. And I wanted to believe that it happens but it's rare, but now I can say that it's happened to me[40] and it's not the only time. So, it made me not like the police, and it really made me realize that no matter how much you succeed, no matter how high you go, how much you achieve, race is one thing that will never change and one thing that you have to deal with, people's perception of you. That's one thing that you can't change and you can't control, that's the one thing I took away.

As his narrative demonstrates, Evan's experience in the Georgia University bookstore was explicitly racial. His uncertainty about the extent to which race informed his experience was clarified when he learned that the bookstore owner initiated the encounter by calling the police. The owner was basing his assumption on racial stereotypes that frame Black males as criminals. It is through this encounter and several others that Evan has become personally familiar with the larger racial dynamics and criminalization processes that not only depict all Blacks, and Black males in particular, as criminal, but also as dangerous, suspicious and/or threatening, which is a common experience for Blacks (Muhammad 2010; Feagin 1991).

It is evident that Evan processes the event as racial, which he articulates as such. He uses his bookstore encounter when asked about his personal experience with stereotypes and racial bias. Additionally, he shares that one of the main ideological conclusions drawn from the encounter was an understanding of how race continues to

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[40] Evan is the same participant that shared the experience of being detained by mall security for "disorderly conduct" in the mall food court. He and another black friend were detained while his white friends were able to leave without incident. It is interesting that Evan does not/ did not process his experience with mall security as an incident of racial profiling. He labels his experience in the bookstore at GU as his first encounter with racial profiling. Perhaps his differing perspective on the two incidents is in part fueled by his belief that the "police" racially profile innocent people; Evan is clear to note, in his recounting of the mall incident, that the mall security personnel was not "real" police.

negatively shape life experiences and chances for historically marginalized groups. He concludes with the realization and belief that, regardless of his socioeconomic status, he will forever be perceived as criminal merely because he is Black *and* male.

This encounter is labeled as a "nigger moment" because it is acutely racial. This is further complicated by the fact that the police officers chose to not situate Evan and his friends as college students in the college bookstore. Instead, they used the physical markers of Evan and his friends' race and gender to stereotype them. The police "read" them as Black, which appears to have automatically eliminated them from being considered college students. The officers' (and bookstore owner's reliance negative stereotypes about blacks as criminal or dangerous led to a very negative verbal altercation between the police and the students. Sadly, the incident evoked feelings of outrage, anger, and humiliation in Evan. Now in his junior year of studies, Evan still articulates that he is angered by the situation that took place nearly two years ago during freshman year. The experience had such an impact on Evan that, later in the interview, he reports that he decided to cut his dreads in part to minimize future instances of racial stereotyping. Evan shares that,

> And even now I cut my hair and I thought maybe now people will— well, that's not why I cut my hair, but I thought now that I cut my hair people are not gonna look at me as like a thug, because I used to get labeled as a thug all the time. But they still do. And that's what I don't understand, why I still get labeled as a thug. But I've just resolved that is the way it is always going to be.

The magnitude of this extremely negative experience acts as a defining moment in Evan's construction of a race conscious ideology. Evan maintains that the experience in

the bookstore taught him that racial bias will be an ever-present battle in his life and for

the lives of Blacks in general. He states that,

> … No matter how much you succeed, no matter how high you go, how much
> you achieve, race is one thing that will never change and one thing that you have
> to deal with, people's perception of you. That's one thing that you can't change
> and you can't control …

Evan's resolve regarding the pervasiveness of racism (i.e., "I've just resolved that this is

the way that it is always going to be") is an acceptance of the belief that efforts to

strategically present his maleness and Blackness (i.e., the absence of dreads) will not

erase the negative connotations of the intersectionality of his stereotyped identity as a

"thug." The nigger moment described in the GU bookstore, coupled with future

incidents[41], leads Evan to believe that his race will always have an impact on how others

perceive him and on the types of experiences he will have throughout life. In

acknowledging the centrality of race and racism to the American experience, Evan

espouses a race conscious ideological framework.

Like Evan, the other 10 race conscious participants all shared explicitly racial

experiences that took place in historically or predominantly white public spaces. Some

of the sites of these racialized encounters included schools, neighborhoods, shopping

centers, restaurants, and professional workplace settings (Feagin 1991; Feagin and Sikes

1994; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Bylsma 2003). The racialized encounters

often reflected experiences with police, teachers, peers, and store personnel. Racial

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[41] After discussing the incident of racial profiling that took place in the GU bookstore, Evan makes it point, at
several times during the interview, to make it clear to me that the bookstore was not his last experience with
racial bias and the police.

slights often become "nigger moments" in public spaces where Whites in particular, and others more generally, do not expect to encounter Blacks (Essed 1991; Feagin 1991; Anderson 2011). Anderson notes that nigger moments are most likely to occur in public spaces. He argues that achievements of the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent racial equity politics led to a greater level of social integration for Blacks. As a result, in the contemporary context, Blacks live, work, and "play" in a variety of social spaces that were once prohibited to Blacks.

Despite greater levels of social integration, dominant racial ideology that portrays Blacks as culturally and socially inferior has remained relatively stable across time (Forman 2001). Consequently, as Blacks navigate public domains, they carry with them a host of negative stereotypes that relate to limited intelligence, poverty, the ghetto, and crime (Feagin 1991; Anderson 2011). These negative stereotypes influence interracial experiences because Black skin is continually associated with a lower caste, regardless of the individual's actual level of education, class background, or occupation. Anderson (2011: 56) argues that the nigger moment occurs because the aggressor in the racialized moment has not assimilated to or accepted the implications of social changes towards a racially egalitarian society.

For the victim of the nigger moment, the experience becomes one in which the centrality of race cannot be ignored. Among the 11 race conscious participants, these racialized encounters awaken a certain level of racial awareness and understanding of the continued significance of racism in interpersonal encounters as well as broader social and racial dynamics. As evidenced by their narratives, these moments have a

lasting impact on Black millennials' understandings of how race "works" in the U.S., ultimately shaping their race conscious ideological frameworks.

Four of the five males and two of the six females, in the uniformly race-conscious sample, report nigger moments that involve law-enforcement. Like Evan, each of these participants discussed feelings of anger, embarrassment, frustration, and hurt surrounding the racialized moment. In each instance, the participant reported a belief that the encounter was first and foremost about their race. Similarly, all of the six participants that relay nigger moments involving the police articulate that the incident either made them acutely aware of or affirmed existing beliefs about the continued significance of racism in 21st century.

Kwesi, a senior from California University, notes that his experience with campus police at a local community college marked the first time that he "actually believed that racism was a real thing in the U.S." Kwesi, a Black immigrant student, came to the U.S. for college. As a result, he did not have the same type of racial socialization experiences with his parents as the other 10 race conscious participants. His experiences were centered more on his identity as an immigrant. During his interview, Kwesi shares that he knew very little about race relations in U.S prior to his arrival at a community college in southern California. Specifically, he notes:

> Back home [in Nigeria], everyone talks about America as this great place. A place where you can do and be anything. It's like this great place of opportunity, you know. No one talks about one race being better than another or anything about racism. It's like, if you want to make a better life for yourself, then go to America.

For Kwesi, race and racism were foreign concepts and experiences prior to his arrival to the U.S. He shares that his experience with race and/or racism began five years prior to our interview, after having lived in California for a couple of months. He states that,

When I came to the US, when I started college, I started hearing things about racism and stuff and one race being favored over the other. I guess, I didn't -- I wasn't as concerned, per se, until about a year of being here. That's when it started making sense to me, you know, just coming originally, I was -- I didn't know a lot of things. I didn't even identify myself as a person of color. I was just Nigerian, you know. I didn't see myself as Black. I think it was part of the culture shock, but I think after a year I kind of started making sense of basically being this race restricts you from doing certain things versus being other races. It started to become clear to me that being this race puts you in a different position compared to being someone else of another race.

Kwesi, like many other Black immigrants, did not initially see himself as a racial subject; instead, Kwesi embraced his ethnic identity of being Nigerian (Waters 1990). However, Kwesi's perspective and understanding of race began to change after his first year in the United States. When asked what, if anything, contributed to his shift in racial understanding, Kwesi cites a specific racialized encounter (i.e., nigger moment) that changed his entire view on race. Kwesi recalls that,

It happened at community college. That was my first experience with, I guess, racism. I was coming out of the gym -- the whole thing made me think about race. It just made me think about, maybe if I wasn't this color -- if I wasn't Black, it would have been different. It made me think about it that way … When I was coming out of the gym at night, it was around 10:45pm, a sheriff's car and two sheriffs on a bicycle came up to me and my friend, who was Nigerian, too. [The sheriff] tells us, "We got a call from an informant that they saw two people that meet your description vandalizing the vending machines." I was like, "I wasn't vandalizing the vending machines. I just came from the gym." They were like, "Tell us the truth…blah, blah, blah. Where is your ID?" And the most shocking part was when my friend tried to pull out his ID from his pocket, the police like reached for his gun quickly and told [my friend] to take it slow, so it was quite a shock for me to kind of see this. The whole thing was like a movie scene happening in front of me. Then after we showed our IDs the sheriff stalled us about 45 minutes while the other two were checking the vending machines to see if the vending machines were broken. They came back and said, none of them were broken. They're like, "Okay, you guys can go," and it was just like, "Okay." They didn't give an apology or anything. So getting out of the gym late, you've kept me for 45 minutes, and all you could say is okay, we could go? I think

I deserve a little bit more than that, you know, at least an apology for wasting my time out of nowhere. I was quite upset about the whole thing. That's something I'm not used to, like random persons just wasting my time for no just cause, you know? Plus, the whole thing was quite embarrassing – it's like people from my classes all around. And they were looking like, "Kwesi what did you do?" But we hadn't done anything. So yeah, and it got me thinking, you know, maybe if I was a different color it would have not been the case, you know? Maybe they would have actually let us explain that we were just students using the gym. Maybe it wouldn't have taken that long, maybe something like that. That was the first time that I thought about race; I know now that it was all about my race. If I wasn't Black, they would not have stopped me. I am certain of that now.

When asked, what led him to be certain that the gym incident resulted because of his

racial identification, Kwesi responds,

Because I have heard stories from other Black guys – some Nigerian, some not. Plus, when you look at what's going on in the news, like the whole Trayvon Martin thing or things going on at California University. It all comes down to race, and one race thinking that they are better than another. Blacks are seen at the bottom here, that's just the way it is. And I've learned that's the way it has always been.

Kwesi's encounter is a nigger a moment, and much like the other participants, he

became acutely aware that the sheriffs – and perhaps others – perceived and treated

him like a Black person. His Nigerianness or ethnicity had no bearing on how the sheriffs

related to him. The experience led Kwesi to develop a race conscious understanding of

not only that specific interaction with the police but also of how race impacts interracial

interactions at large.

Prior to his "nigger moment," Kwesi acknowledges that he viewed America as a

land of opportunity. A place where anyone can succeed as long as they work hard. The

idea that the U.S. is a meritocracy, whereby all individuals have equal opportunity and

the choice to succeed, is a direct reflection of a colorblind, post-racial ideology. During

his interview, Kwesi states that he does think that race shapes one's ability to access

opportunities in the United States. He attributes his extremely negative encounter (i.e.,

nigger moment) with campus police as pivotal in his ideological transformation towards

a more race conscious understanding of U.S. racial dynamics, Kwesi sheds his ethnicity as

his primary identification and embraces a race centered cultural identity. Furthermore,

he articulates a clear view of the racialized social structure that characterizes the U.S., a

racial hierarchy whereby Blacks are on "the bottom" in comparison to other ethno-racial

groups. Kwesi's manifestation of a race conscious view of U.S. racial dynamics is directly

tied to his "nigger moment."

Evan and Kwesi's racialized encounters capture the intricacies, complexities, and

sentiments of the nigger moments shared by Clarence, James, and Gwen[42]. Each of

them were stopped and harassed by police officers based on the assumptions that, as a

Black person, they were 1) not supposed to be in a college setting and 2) participating in

(or planning to engage in) illegal activity. Jessica, a 20 year old in her fourth year of

studies at Georgia University, also reports a racialized encounter involving the police.

When asked to describe one of her earliest memories with race and/or racism, Jessica

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[42] Gwen is a 20 year old female from California University. Gwen identifies as queer and believes that her nigger moment with the police was due to her race and masculine appearance. After describing her encounter with the University police, Gwen went on to say, "I was definitely racially profiled. It happens to males a lot but it has also happened to me. I've had similar experiences since then. I think some of it has to do with the way I dress. [The police] see my baggy clothes and dreads and automatically think that I am some type of thug." Gwen's race consciousness emerged alongside an awareness of how her multiple identities (i.e., black and queer) intersect to illuminate racism and sexism during certain encounters with individuals and institutions.

recalls an experience in a mall department store. She and her mom were leaving the

department store when they were approached by a police officer, taken into a back

room, and forced to show their receipt for the items that they had purchased. Jessica

states that,

> My earliest memory had to be when I was about 10 and or 11. My mom and I
> had been out shopping all day. It was around the time that school was supposed
> to start, so she'd taken me back to school shopping. I remember being so excited
> because she had let me basically get whatever I wanted, even a real expensive
> pair of sneakers. So I was basically on cloud nine. But it all turned bad very
> quickly. We were leaving the department store when two cops approached me
> and my mom. One of them looked at my mom and said, "What do you think you
> are doing?" I could tell my mom was shocked; the way he spoke to her was so
> rude. My mom was basically like, "What are you talking about? I am not doing
> anything. My daughter and I are going home." Then the other cop said, "You are
> not going anywhere, we got a report that two girls were shoplifting. You are
> coming with us." Then, one cop grabbed me and the other grabbed my mom.
> They took us into a back office room. The whole time, my mom was trying to
> explain that she wasn't some "girl" and that I was her daughter – basically saying
> that I was just a kid. They didn't care, though. They were basically like, "Shut up."
> According to them, we fit the description of the shoplifters. I remember that I
> was crying and scared. And basically embarrassed. I could tell my mom was
> embarrassed, too. They basically drug us through the department store to get
> the back room. Everyone was staring at us like we were criminals. Once we were
> in the room, my mom got very angry. She was telling them that she was going to
> sue them. Basically, she was like, "I am going to have your badge." And she
> meant it. The officer made us take all the stuff we'd bought out of the bags and
> show him the matching receipts. While my mom did all that, I was just sitting
> there. But one of the cops was staring at me the whole time. Like he was trying
> to intimidate or scare me. Once the cops figured out that everything matched up
> with our receipts, they were like, "You girls can go." My mom was livid, she told
> them "We are not some girls! This is my daughter; she's only 11 years old." She
> told them they were racists, and that they were going to pay for wrongfully
> harassing us. And I remember the long walk back through the department store;
> it seemed like forever to get out that store - the salespeople were still looking at
> us the whole time, basically like we were thieves. My mom and I rode home in
> silence. I am not sure if she ever followed up to report the officers. We basically
> never talked about it again after that day. I think we were both too traumatized
> to deal with it.

When asked, what if anything, she took away from the racialized encounter, she stated:

> Basically, what I took away from the whole thing is that the police are not to be trusted. Like seriously, I hate the police. I think also what I took away is that racism is still a thing. My family had always taught me to be proud of my Blackness. I also knew a lot about the civil rights movement and all the racism that existed in the 50s and 60s, but I don't think that I was really aware that that kind of thing still existed. I think at 11, I was basically like, that's what my mom and grandmother had to go through but I wouldn't have to deal with that in the 2000's. However, after what the cops did to us in that store, I knew that I had it all wrong. Basically, racism is more subtle now. Like, no one's going to come up to you and flat out tell you that you can't go somewhere or can't do something because you are Black, but they basically do that with how they treat you or some of the hidden laws that we talked about in my [omitted] class … so basically, what I got out of it was that racism is still happening and that police have no interest in protecting me – or Black people in general – even if it is a child.

As Jessica's narrative demonstrates, this racialized encounter with the police early in her life reflects the point at which she realized "that racism was still a thing." The experience left her feeling confused, scared, and embarrassed. The traumatic event caused her considerable discomfort because of the nonverbal disapproval to which she and her mother were subjected after the police found them innocent of their allegations. She specifically notes the discomfort that she felt as she and her mom exited the store under the stares of the department store employees. Although the police did not admit their racist beliefs, Jessica and her mother completely recognized this encounter as a nigger moment, a racially charged incident that articulated for them both the salience of race in contemporary society. The experience triggered race conscious ideas in Jessica's understanding of racial dynamics at a very early age.

What is of particular importance regarding Jessica and her nigger moment is the fact that it dramatically and profoundly impacted her racial ideology. Later in her

interview she discusses that she became hypersensitive to all things race related after her encounter in the department store. Ultimately, Jessica states that she believes that her early experiences, both with family racial socialization processes and the racialized encounter, have led to her embracing a "pro-Black" identity in her young adulthood. She states, "Basically, that's probably why I am so pro-Black. It's like racism is real, we can't just sit around and wait on things to magically become equal. We've got to pushed for it." When asked to explain what she means by "pro-Black," Jessica explains that,

> I'm definitely pro-Black. Unapologetically. Basically, I believe that we should support our own Black businesses. They need to be a first priority when we think about going shopping. We need to come back to the point of circulating the dollar within our own community. Like I said, nobody is gonna love us the way we can love ourselves, and I'm not fond of White organizations, White groups, that go into lower income communities and try to feed the homeless canned food for a day or something like that. I'm not fond of them going in to tutor our kids, like we need to be the ones doing that. I guess I should add that I'm definitely a pan Africanist. Which basically means that I believe in African nationalism, so everywhere in the world where there is a Black person, a person that is of direct African descent, like we're family and we need to take care of each other.

As this theme demonstrates, over half (6 out of 11) of the race conscious participants became more aware of their race and developed race conscious racial ideological frames as a direct result of a racialized encounter involving the police. The overrepresentation of antagonistic experiences with law-enforcement in millennials' shared experiences with "nigger moments" may capture broader patterns of Black youth's experience with the law. Likewise, these findings offer significant support to sociological understandings of law enforcement and criminal justice as a means of social

control (Alexander 2010; Bonilla-Silva 2006). To this end, students' negative interactions with the criminal justice system may serve as the master or dominant "nigger moment." As a "master nigger moment," negative experiences with law enforcement and other agents of the criminal justice system are a common shared experience of racial slight and humiliation to which most Blacks can relate.[43]

The concept of negative interactions with law enforcement serving as a "master nigger moment" for Black millennials provides a context for understanding why Black millennials are most likely to espouse race conscious ideology during discussions of the criminal justice system and explanations of racial disparities in incarceration rates. The magnitude of the negativity embedded in these encounters is heightened due to the power differential between the police and the victim. The victim is rendered powerless because of the perpetrator's use of his/her professional privilege and Whiteness to exert control over both the situation and the victim. Black millennials' frequent experiences with this racialized power dynamic provide a unique lens for understanding the ways in which racism can inform racialized outcomes within the criminal justice system. Because nigger moments frequently involve agents of the criminal justice system (i.e., police, lawyers, judges, juries etc.), Black millennials are more likely either to believe that race does in fact matters or to endorse a particular kind of racial awareness with regard to criminal justice.

In addition to encounters with law enforcement, the URC Black millennials

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[43] The concept of negative interactions with law enforcement serving as a "master nigger moment" for Black millennials provides a context for understanding why Black millennials are most likely to espouse race conscious ideology during discussions of the criminal justice system and explanations of racial disparities in incarceration rates.

report nigger moments that took place in schools, restaurants, and in their neighborhood. More specifically, Tara - a freshman from California University - describes an experience in which a rival classmate's parents contested the announcement that Tara would be named valedictorian of her high school class. Tara was the first Black person to be named valedictorian in the school's history. She maintains that her status of valedictorian was challenged because the students and parents at her historically and predominantly White high school could not fathom that a Black person would be smarter than a White a person, let alone the smartest person in a class of nearly 200 students.

Ndidi – a freshman from Georgia University - shared a racialized encounter that took place at a restaurant in metro Atlanta. After being seated, Ndidi made her way to the restroom. En route to the restroom, she overheard her server complaining that Ndidi and her friends, whom the server referred to as "those niggers," had been placed in his section. When Ndidi and her friends complained to the manager of the restaurant, they were told that the decision to eat at the restaurant was theirs, and that if they felt uncomfortable, then they were more than welcome to leave. Ndidi and her friends were in shock by both the server's comments and how the manager chose to address the situation. They ultimately chose to leave the restaurant. Ndidi says that she will never patronize the restaurant or any of its affiliated chains ever again.

Lastly, Olu shares a story that involved him being followed by store employees every time he patronized a gas station/ convenience store in his neighborhood. Olu explains that he and one of his teammates would frequent the store every Tuesday and

Thursday after soccer practice. The teammate, who is Latino but looks phenotypically

White, was never followed, but Olu reports that he was frequently followed and

constantly approached by store employees to see if they could help him find something.

Olu concludes his recollection of the encounters by stating, "I felt like they were trying

to rush me out of the store because I am Black."

In each instance, the participants report incidents of racial slights that left them

feeling angered, ostracized, and/or disillusioned. Each of the URC participants described

incidents that ignited a race conscious ideology with regard to racial dynamics.

Furthermore, in each of these encounters, the race conscious participant argues that

the experience fostered an immediate distrust of Whites. For example, when asked to

recall her earliest memory of race and racism, Anika, a graduate student at California

University, recounts the following experience:

> I was in seventh grade. I had only heard the word "nigger," like, one or two times
> in my immediate space. So, one day in class, I overheard one of my friends
> talking about her neighborhood friend who happened to be a Black girl. She was
> telling a classmate that she didn't like the girl anymore. When I looked up, my
> friend who was telling the story turned to me and said, "She's not like you Anika.
> She's a nigger." At first I was super shocked, because, like I said, I wasn't even
> used to hearing that word; least of all from somebody who I considered a friend.
> I felt myself growing hot; I had a lump in my throat. I couldn't believe that
> someone who I called a friend would refer to another Black person as a nigger.
> For me, in that moment, it was a converging of two worlds – the reality that
> Black could be synonymous with nigger. That fact that the two were synonymous
> for someone that I considered a friend really plagued my psyche. I felt as if she
> only made the distinction between Black and nigger in an attempt to preserve
> my feelings and appear less racist. However, she failed on both accounts.
> Instantly, my existence became sullied because I felt like I was no longer just
> "Anika." Instead, I was Anika who was "Black," which brought along a whole host
> of stereotypes about my worth. Furthermore, I felt betrayed because my quote
> unquote friends just sat there as on lookers. They didn't say a word or come to
> my defense. Some even giggled. And the teacher, who I believe heard
> everything, did nothing to address the situation. The whole experience changed

my outlook. Before, I didn't really see myself or my friends as a race. But after that, the line was drawn. They were White, and I was Black. I ultimately ended up distancing myself from my friend that made the initial comment, but the whole incident put a stain on the rest of the year. In every subsequent interaction, I was wondering, "Are they seeing me as just Anika, Anika the Black girl, or even Anika the nigger?" I really think that's the moment that race became real for me. And if I am completely honest about it, I still enter situations with Whites wondering how they truly perceive me.

For Anika, and the other URC participants, these racialized encounters raised a level of racial awareness that did not exist prior to the nigger moment. In the development of a race conscious ideology, these Black millennials also developed an attitude of distrust and/or uncertainty in their interactions with Whites and/or police officers. Ultimately, the nigger moment situates the participants as a Black body first. The individual actor is acutely aware of the salience of his/her race during the experience. In response to the encounter, Black millennials reify, transform, or reshape their views about what race "is" and how the world "ought" to be with regard to race relations. These moments force the individual to revisit her/his personal racial views and reconcile the details of the racialized encounter. In doing so, Black millennials become "uniformly race-conscious Black millennials" because the nigger moment makes it nearly impossible for the individual to ignore the racial implications of the encounter.

Summary

This chapter reveals that my sample of Black millennials includes a minority of participants who completely shunned colorblind ideology and embrace race conscious frameworks throughout their entire interview. That is, these 11 participants express racial views that appear unaffected by dominant racial ideology. As a result, I label this

subset of the sample "uniformly race conscious" (URC). The URC participants varied in terms of age, gender, major, years of college experience, exposure to college course on race and difference, and geographic region. However, two commonalities emerged among the group. Specifically, the 11 race conscious participants all shared experiences with 1) racial socialization and 2) nigger moments.

As the Black youth recounted early experiences with racial socialization it became apparent that the lessons, stories, and anecdotes shared among Black youth and their family played a defining role in their racial views. More specifically, these experiences helped to establish race conscious ideas and alternative ways of seeing the racial world at an early age. Likewise, the nigger moments discussed in this chapter presented opportunities in which the race conscious participants had to deal with or confront race and racism head on. The feelings of dehumanization, humiliation, and discomfort that were embedded in each of these racialized encounters help to foster a race conscious worldview.

The data in this chapter provide greater understanding of the processes through which Black millennials negotiate very complex and contradictory experiences - hegemonic discourse that suggests that society is post-racial and a lived experience that draws constantly on issues of race and/or racism, to develop an alternative (counter-hegemonic) racial ideology; one that situates race as the center of the U.S. opportunity structure.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The goal of this dissertation was to understand how Black millennials experience and make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century. Ultimately, this project examined how Black millennials reconcile two competing realities: 1) the material reality of entrenched structural racial inequality and racial disadvantage and 2) an ideological reality dominated by colorblind/post-racial discourse. This dissertation moves the conversation on race, youth, and ideology one step closer to understanding how Black millennials navigate these contradictory realities by exploring the ideological frames that they draw upon to discuss racial dynamics.

In this concluding chapter, I revisit my initial research questions and offer a summary of how the findings of this dissertation increase our understanding of 1) how Black millennials experience and make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century and 2) the impact of hegemonic colorblind/post-racial ideology on millennials' of color. I conclude the chapter by summarizing the general contributions of this dissertation to studies of youth, race, and ideology. I also address the limitations of the current study and offer suggestions for future research.

Summary of Main Findings

In the section, I return to my initial research questions to organize my main findings and to frame how this dissertation contributes to our understanding of how Black millennial's racial views. This dissertation addressed three questions:

1. How do Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century?

2. To what extent do Black millennials' ideas about race and racial dynamics differ from dominant understandings (i.e. colorblind/ post-racial ideology)?

3. How does social context (South vs. West) impact the ways in which Black millennials youth understand race and racial dynamics?

How do Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics in the 21st century?

Findings from this dissertation suggest that Black millennials make sense of racial dynamics in very nuanced and contradictory ways. Furthermore, the data reveal that Black millennials actually occupy three realities: 1) the discursive reality of pervasive colorblind ideology, 2) the structural reality of institutionalized racial inequality, and 3) an individual reality of personal experiences with racial prejudice and discrimination (see Figure 1).

Initial examinations of how Black millennials talk about and understand race and racism suggests that Black millennials reject colorblind post-racial discourse and thereby embrace alternative ideological frames. Specifically, when asked to respond to overt colorblind ideology such as that captured in the following prompt: "A lot of people argue that race doesn't matter anymore today; that racism is mostly a thing of the past. What do you think about that?" Nearly all of Black millennials in this study rejected this claim (see chapter four).

However, further exploration into Black millennials' explanations of racial inequality reveals that Black millennials do embrace colorblind post-racial ideology in their efforts to make sense of structural inequality (see chapter 5). More often than not

participants' initial explanations of inequality reflected an investment in post-racial ideology, even when their personal experiences with race and discrimination proved contrary to post-racial ideals.

Nevertheless, colorblind post-racial frameworks were not the only ideologies that Black millennials drew upon to make sense of racial dynamics. Over half of the participants also drew upon race conscious ideologies to explain racial inequality (see chapter six). This was most true for discussion of inequality with the criminal justice system. Collectively, these findings suggests that Black millennials' competing realities: 1) dominant colorblind ideology and 2) structural inequality, accompanied by their intermediary reality of lived personal experiences with racism, results in most of the Black millennials adoption of contradictory ideological positions when making sense of racial dynamics. On the one hand they reject colorblind ideology, largely due to individual or micro experiences with racism. On the other hand they rely on colorblind ideology to explain structural inequality or macro racism. Ultimately, Black millennials' individual experiences shape their understanding of colorblind ideology but not necessarily their understanding of structural racism.

Finally, the findings from this dissertation reveal that a small number of Black millennials express racial views that are unaffected by dominant colorblind ideology. This subset of Black millennials articulate a particular kind of race consciousness and racial awareness that persists across all discussions of racial dynamics – explanations of structural inequality and beyond. I refer to these Black millennials as uniformly race conscious because of their unwavering reliance on race conscious and structural

ideological frameworks (see chapter 7). Uniformly race conscious Black millennials are important to our understanding of how Black millennials talk about and make sense of racial dynamics, particularly in the current "post-racial climate", because they provide a foundation for understanding how alternative ideologies can emerge and persistent (albeit among a few) in the midst of dominant ideologies. In the present racial moment, these alternative ideologies have begun to manifest themselves, in some form, in social movements like "Black Lives Matter" or the rise of race based organizations like the "New Black Panther Party."

To what extent do Black millennials' ideas about race and racial dynamics differ from dominant understandings (i.e. colorblind/ post-racial ideology)?

The fact that these data reveal that Black millennials draw upon both colorblind and race conscious ideologies in contradictory ways already suggests that Black millennials ideas about race and racial dynamics differ, to some extent, from dominant ideology. Nevertheless, (most) Black millennials' understanding of how the racial status quo "works" is directly influenced by colorblind post-racial logic. This patterns mirrors research on Black adults' racial views which reveal that although White and Black adults still hold disparate views about race relations, these views are becoming more congruent as Black adults increasing embrace ideas that racial equality as been achieved (Bobo et. al 2012; Newport 2013).

These findings is not surprising, given what we know about the "power" of ideology. Ideologies are "dominant" only to the extent to which they the shape *all* ethno-racial groups ideological positions. The impact, however, does not have to be

experienced in the same way by all ethno-racial groups. Thus, while I argue that colorblind post-racial frameworks directly affect Black millennials racial views, the ways in which Black millennials rely on these frames and storylines is quite different from their White counterparts. The analysis of these interviews reveal the hesitancy, tension, and sometimes uncertainty with which Black millennials drawn upon ideological frames that stand in contradiction to their lived experiences and material reality.

Furthermore, Black millennials do not subscribe to all the frameworks of colorblind ideology in the same way as White millennials. The findings reveal that Black millennials' racial understandings are most affected by ideas that Blacks have the wrong values and priorities (i.e., cultural racism). Black millennials are also heavily reliant on a new frame that suggests that contemporary racial dynamics have emerged out of nowhere, without connections to the historical legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, or even the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., happenstance).

Colorblind ideology also influences Black millennials understanding of racial dynamics differently depending on the domain of inequality. For instance Black millennials were most likely to draw on cultural racism frames during discussions of wealth inequality and educational inequality. They were least likely to use this frame during discussion of the criminal justice system. In fact, Black millennials were most likely to avoid using colorblind ideology, all together, during discussions of the criminal justice system. The varying ways in Black millennials rely on colorblind frames and post-racial logic to explain racial inequality suggests that the "dominance" of colorblind ideology (i.e., its ability to shape meaning and understanding for racial groups, even

when the ideology does not support groups' material interests) is domain specific. Perhaps this is why within the last year, we've seen Black millennials emerge at the helm of social movements and organizing around issues of racial inequality within the legal system. Beyond BlackLivesMatter, Black youth have been the leaders in organizing public protest such as "die-ins" and social media protest such as the #SayHerNameSandraBland. Likewise, this may also explain why we have not yet seen similar social movements emerge around issues of economic and educational reform.

Although Black millennials are affected by colorblind ideology in varying ways, the power of colorblind ideology to mask racial phenomenon is a real danger for Black millennials. The direct way in which these problematic frameworks shape how Black millennials understand the world has major consequences for not only how Black millennials understand and interpret racial inequality specifically but also how they engage with and make sense of racial dynamics more specifically. Beyond the domains of wealth and education, Black millennials' endorsement of colorblind, post-racial ideology may also have real consequences in terms of garnering support for race based policies like affirmative action[44], which aim to redress racial inequality. Similarly, Black millennials may be less critical of racialized processes like gentrification or urban renewal, which at face value appear to be "raceless" projects aimed at "improving" urban areas. Ultimately, the direct influence of colorblind, post-racial ideology on Black

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[44] The topic of affirmative action came up in 49 of the 61 interviews that I conducted. In all but 4 of these 49 interviews, the participants expressed some level of discomfort, disagreement, or personal tension surrounding affirmative action policies.

millennials racial views decreases the likelihood of Black millennials fully embracing

color-conscious or oppositional ideologies.

There is some hope, however, that Black millennials can develop uniformly race

conscious perspectives. The data from this dissertation suggests that there are a

minority of Black millennials whose ideological commitments are unaffected by

colorblind, post-racial rhetoric. These participants share childhood racial socialization

experiences and racialized encounters that make it difficult for them to embrace ideas

that the world in which they inhabit is colorblind or that racism is a thing of the past.

How do the social contexts of the South vs. West impact the ways in which Black millennials youth understand race and racial dynamics?

Ultimately, regional context had minimal impact on how the Black millennials in

this study make sense of race and racial dynamics. Well over half of the participants

from both from California University and Georgia University relied on colorblind

ideology to explain racial inequality (see chapter 5). However, participants from the

West were slightly more likely to also draw upon race conscious ideologies at some

point during their discussion of inequality (see chapter 6). Likewise, participants labeled

uniformly race conscious, were almost twice as likely to be from the West than the

South (see chapter 7).

Given the marginal regional differences among participants who draw on

colorblind and color conscious ideologies, plus the small sample size of uniformly race

conscious participants, I am cautious to suggest that these results reveal meaningful

differences. These findings could be due to an over representation of participants from

California University who majored in social science or humanities and over representation of participants from Georgia University who majored in STEM related fields (see demographic table); especially since most of the uniformly race conscious millennials report having some exposure to classes on race and/or differences.

Contribution

The findings from dissertation contribute to our understanding of Black youth, ideology, and racial dynamics in two distinct ways. First, this data contributes to the gap in literature on youth's of color racial views. From this research we gain a better understanding of how Black millennials not only interpret racial dynamics but also the ways in which they experience race and racism in their day-to-day lives. In addition to investigating the lived ideological reality of colorblind, post-racialism and structural reality of pervasive racial inequality, this project offers a third reality for Black millennials: personal experiences with racial bias, prejudice, and racism. By providing more information on Black millennials racial views and lived experiences with racism, this dissertation further troubles debates about the U.S.' transition to a post-racial society. Data on structural racial inequality and the personal accounts of racism and racial prejudice shared among the Black millennials in this sample suggest that the U.S. is "most" racial rather than "post" racial. This data ultimately provides a framework for understanding not only the impact of "dominant" ideologies on ethno-racial groups navigation of the racial world but also *how* and *why* non-dominant, alternative, and subversive ideologies emerge.

Second, by contributing to the gap in literature on Black youth's racial views, these findings also provide an interesting theoretical contribution to the study of Blacks and racial politics in general. Specifically, this research troubles the connections that other scholars have identified between individual experiences with racism and a collective racial group interests. Linked-fate, one of the seminal theories in the study of African Americans and racial politics, suggests that the historical legacy of racial circumstances, such as slavery and Jim Crow segregation, coupled with individual experiences of race, such as discrimination, create perceptions of common interests and racial group solidarity among African Americans which results in a sense of "linked-fate" (Dawson 1995). Based on racial identification, and the economic, political, and social meaning that comes along with group membership in the Black community, linked fate suggests that Blacks will see their individual interests as tied to the group interests.

Ironically, the findings from this dissertation suggest that linked fate may work in reverse for Black millennials. Despite their individual experiences with racism, Black millennials subscribe to colorblind post-racial ideologies to explain macro level or structural racial inequality in the areas of wealth, education, and the criminal justice system. That is, Black millennials rely on colorblind frames in their understandings of structural inequality, even when these frames contradict their own personal racialized experiences. Although Black millennials unanimously acknowledge that race and racism still matter in meaningful ways in their personal lives, most Black millennials often failed to make connections or "link" between their individual experiences with race or racism and broader patterns of structural racism that impact Blacks as a whole.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this dissertation are bound by two main limitations: 1) the sample is comprised of all college students and 2) there is no measure of ideological variation by class or SES. The study of Black college millennials at flagship, historically white, state universities is important because these college students are arguably the next generation in line to assume positions of privilege that may offer an avenue to affect the current racial status quo. However, the absence of Black millennials from outside of this setting make it difficult to offer insights about how Black millennials at community colleges or historically black colleges and universities may differ in their understandings of racial inequality. Likewise, Black millennials who have gone directly into the labor market or even those without access to formal educational and/or labor market opportunities may engage with colorblind ideology in different ways or espouse new ideological framework all together. Future research should expand upon the current project by incorporating Black millennials from both inside and outside of education systems.

Another limitation of this study rests on the absences of a class or socioeconomic status (SES) measure for the Black millennials in this study. The question of whether class or race matters more in the contemporary U.S. for determining Blacks life chances has long been debated amongst social scientists (Wilson 1979; Feagin 1991; Dawson 1995; Wilson 2011). At present, the current dissertation only accounts for race; however; the ideological frameworks that Black millennials draw upon may vary across

class lines. In the same way that we expect groups' position in the racialized social structure to influence the ideological positions they endorse, we might expect class identifications with the U.S. class structure to intersect with race to impact how Black millennials engage with colorblind ideology and make sense of structural racial inequality. This is an empirical question that future research should strongly consider.

Broader Implications

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this work offers a wealth of broader implications for our understandings of the future of racial dynamics in general and the place of Black youth in future racial dynamics more specifically. First, given the significant influence of colorblind frames, namely cultural racism and happenstance, on Black millennials' racial understandings, it is imperative that young people receive exposure to critical history lessons and curriculum that deal honestly with the U.S.' sordid history of racial oppression.

In the wake of curriculum and textbook debates in states such as Arizona and Texas, which aim to eliminate Ethnic Studies and minimize the significance and legacy of historical moments of racial exclusion, subjugations and domination[45] in the history of the U.S., groups of color and White allies must demand a primary and secondary education that is inclusive and accurate regarding ethno-racial experiences and realities. In order for Black millennials, and youth of all ethno-racial groups, to be able to think critically about the connections between histories of oppression and structural

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[45] Historical moments such as Native American genocide, slavery, Mexican land seizure, and Jim Crow Laws – to name a few.

inequality, they must first be aware of said history. The college setting cannot be the first time that students are presented with a more inclusive and critical understanding of history – especially when not everyone will attend college. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that those who do attend college will be exposed to courses that grapple with structural disadvantage or institutional racism. Additionally, although several colleges and universities have instituted a diversity or multicultural requirement for graduation[46], it is not guaranteed that students will experience an ideological transformation will over the course of one semester; therefore, such approaches should occur early on and throughout one's educational journey.

The data that this research provides about the commonalities among the uniformly race conscious Black millennials also suggests that families of color should devote more attention to providing youth with an intentional race conscious racial socialization. Over half of the students in this sample shared that their parents and/or family members did not talk about race with them. Based on recent research that suggests that Black adults are increasingly more likely to adopt colorblind ideologies, it is not surprising the Black millennials in this study report that they didn't talk about race with their parents and family. Participant's lack of racial socialization may be the result of their families buying into claims that race, and subsequently racial socialization, no longer matters in significant ways to the American experience.

Another plausible explanation for why parents and families talk less about race with their children could be that parents are attempting to protect their children from

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[46] The idea of a diversity and inclusion requirement still remains

the harsh realities of race and racism. This idea is evidenced in my interview with Faith,

a senior at Georgia University. She revealed that she plans to shield her future children

from discussions and experiences surrounding racism. Specifically, she stated that,

> Even though I know we don't live in a colorblind society, it is sometimes nice to believe that we do. The weight of knowing all the bad stuff that comes along with being Black is a lot to carry. Sometimes not thinking about race or trying to believe that race doesn't matter takes off some of the stress of what it means to be Black. When I have kids, I'm going to wait as long as can before I put them in situations where they might have to deal with racism. Or even before I talk to them about racism. They're going to have to bring it up to me. I just don't want them to grow up thinking that they might be treated differently or can't do something just because they are Black."

As demonstrated by her comment, Faith believed that the colorblind, post-racial myth

could serve as a barrier to some of the psychological stress and damage that may come

along with dealing with racial bias, prejudice, and racism. Accordingly, she expressed a

commitment to shielding her future children from this stress by avoiding experiences

and conversations rooted in racism. Perhaps Faith's sentiments drive the reality that

most of the participants in my sample did not explicitly talk about race and racism with

their parents. Regardless of the reason why these conversations did not happen, the

data on the uniformly race conscious Black millennials in this study reveals that

discussions of race and racial socialization experiences play an important role in youths'

development of race-conscious ideologies. In order for us to prepare future leaders who

are equipped with the tools to address racial inequality, we must begin the work of

developing their race consciousness at an early age.

Lastly, Black millennials' race conscious orientation to racialized outcomes in the

criminal justice system offers an optimistic view regarding the possibility of real,

substantive, and structural changes within our legal system. The present momentum of

the #BlackLIvesMatter movement, the influence of Blacks on social media (i.e.,

BlackTwitter), and the rise of local anti-police brutality protests across the country and

college campuses (i.e., campus die-ins) are all occurrences that suggest that Black

millennials are poised to demand an overhaul of the criminal justice system.

Table 1. Demographics of Georgia University Sample

NAME	AGE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	CITIZEN	CLASSIFICATION	MAJOR	RACE/ GENDER/ DIFFERENCE COURSE	HOME STATE	HS TYPE
Georgia University									
ELLANI	19	Female	immigrant	yes	Sophomore	STEM	NO	GA	Public
JOSEPH	20	Male	native	yes	Junior	STEM	NO	GA	Public
IFE	22	Female	immigrant	yes	Senior	STEM	NO	TN	Public
STEPHANIE	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	NO	GA	Public
CHRIS	20	Male	native	yes	Junior	STEM	NO	TX	Private
BLAIR	18	Male	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	YES	GA	Public
MICHELLE	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	GA	Public
TAMMY	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	GA	Public
OLU	18	Male	immigrant	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	PA	Homeschool
NIKKI	18	Female	immigrant	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	GA	Public
KANDICE	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	GA	Public
SERGE	18	Male	immigrant	yes	Freshman	ARCHITECTURE	NO	GA	Public
ELIZABETH	18	Female	immigrant	yes	Freshman	BUSINESS	NO	GA	Public
JOHN	18	Male	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	YES	GA	Public
NDIDI	18	Female	immigrant	yes	Freshman	STEM	YES	GA	Public
WILLIAM	19	Male	native	yes	Sophomore	STEM	YES	GA	Private
AMY	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	IL	Public
COURTNEY	21	Female	immigrant	yes	Junior	STEM	NO	*	Public
KIA	18	Female	immigrant	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	TX	Public
LISA	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	GA	Public
JOY	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	NO	IL	Public
TOCCARA	21	Female	native	yes	Junior	STEM	YES	SC	Public
EBONY	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	STEM	NO	GA	Public
SARAH	20	Female	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	GA	Public
FAITH	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	STEM	YES	OH	Public
BIANCA	20	Female	native	yes	Junior	STEM	YES	NC	Public
JESSICA	20	Female	native	yes	Junior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	IL	Public
KENNETH	23	Male	native	yes	Senior	STEM	NO	CO	Public
BRADLEY	20	Male	native	yes	Junior	STEM	YES	GA	Public
EVAN	22	Male	native	yes	Junior	STEM	YES	GA	Public

* Did not report home state.

Table 2. Demographics of California University Sample

NAME	AGE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	CITIZEN	CLASSIFICATION	MAJOR	RACE/ GENDER/ DIFFERENCE COURSE	HOME STATE	HS TYPE
California University									
GWEN	20	Female	native	yes	Sophomore	STEM	YES	CA	Public
SHANAE	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public
CLARENCE	19	Male	native	yes	Sophomore	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public
MCKENZIE	20	Female	native	yes	Junior	HUMANITIES	NO	CA	Public
STEVE	20	Male	native	yes	Junior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public
DAYON	20	Male	native	yes	Junior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public
MERCEDES	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	YES	CA	Public
JAMES	24	Male	native	yes	Junior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Alternative
CRYSTAL	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public
WENDY	20	Female	native	yes	Sophomore	STEM	NO	CA	Private
JAMIE	21	Female	native	yes	Junior	STEM	YES	CA	Public
KOFI	21	Male	immigrant	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Private
YUSSEF	22	Male	native	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public
BUMI	18	Female	immigrant	yes	Freshman	SOCIAL SCIENCE	NO	CA	Private
THOMAS	22	Male	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public
OBI	20	Male	immigrant	no*	Freshman	STEM	NO	CA	Public
CHLOE	20	Female	native	yes	Sophomore	STEM	YES	CA	International
KEN	22	Female	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public/Magnet
LAKEISHA	21	Female	immigrant	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public/Magnet
DAVIDA	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	STEM	YES	CA	Public
DEMARIO	21	Male	native	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	LA	Public/Magnet
TARA	18	Female	native	yes	Freshman	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public/Magnet
YENU	19	Female	immigrant	yes	Sophmore	STEM	NO	CA	Public
FEMI	20	Male	immigrant	yes	Junior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public
MIRACLE	19	Female	immigrant	yes	Sophomore	STEM	YES	CA	Public
ANNMARIE	22	Female	immigrant	yes	Senior	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public/Magnet
ANIKA	23	Female	native	yes	Graduate Student	HUMANITIES	YES	CA	Public
RICHARD	21	Male	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public/Magnet
KIYRA	21	Female	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public
KWESI	22	Male	immigrant	no**	Senior	STEM	NO	n/a	International
MICHAEL	23	Male	native	yes	Senior	SOCIAL SCIENCE	YES	CA	Public

*Lived in U.S. for 9 years
** Lived in U.S. for 5 years

Table 3. Black Millennials' Use of Colorblind Post Racial Frames

Cultural Racism	Minimization	Naturalization	Abstract Liberalism	Happenstance
67%	28%	38%	28%	49%

Table 4. Black Millennials' Use of Colorblind Post Racial Frames, by Region

	Cultural Racism	Minimization	Naturalization	Abstract Liberalism	Happenstance
California University	18/31 (58%)	7/31 (23%)	8/31 (26%)	7/31 (23%)	16/31 (52%)
Georgia University	23/30 (77%)	10/30 (33%)	15/30 (50%)	10/30 (33%)	14/30 (46%)

Table 5. Education Demographics of Uniformly Race Conscious Black Millennials

NAME	University	CLASSIFICATION	MAJOR/FIELD	RACE/ GENDER/ DIFFERENCE COURSE	High School Type
OLU	Georgia University	Freshman	STEM	No	Homeschool
NDIDI	Georgia University	Freshman	STEM	Yes	Public
JESSICA	Georgia University	Junior/ 4th year	Social Science	Yes	Public
EVAN	Georgia University	Junior	STEM	Yes	Public
GWEN	California University	Sophomore	STEM	Yes	Public
CLARENCE	California University	Sophomore	Social Science	Yes	Public
JAMES	California University	Junior	Humanities	Yes	Alternative
BUMI	California University	Freshman	Social Science	No	Private
ANIKA	California University	Graduate	Humanities	Yes	Public
KIYRA	California University	Senior	Social Science	Yes	Public
KWESI	California University	Senior	STEM	No	International

Table 6. Other Demographics of Uniformly Race Conscious Millennials

NAME	GENDER	AGE	CITIZEN	ETHNICITY	CITY, STATE	Mom's ED	Father's ED
OLU	Male	18	Yes	Immigrant	PA	PHD	PHD
NDIDI	Female	18	Yes	Immigrant	GA	HS	BA
JESSICA	Female	20	Yes	Native	IL*	HS	HS
EVAN	Male	22	Yes	Native	GA	BA	Associates
GWEN	Female	20	Yes	Native	CA	Some HS	N/a
CLARENCE	Male	19	Yes	Native	OK	HS	HS
JAMES	Male	24	Yes	Native	CA	HS	HS
BUMI	Female	18	Yes	Immigrant	CA	Phar.D.	PHD
ANIKA	Female	23	Yes	Native	CA	BA	Associates
KIYRA	Female	21	Yes	Native	CA	Some college	Unknown
KWESI	Male	22	In U.S. 5 yrs.	Immigrant	Nigeria	JD**	MD**

* Jessica claims IL as her home state but she attended middle and high school in the state of Georgia.
** Educated in Nigeria
[t] Green denotes Georgia University participants

Figure 1. Conceptual Map of Black Millennials' Understanding of Racial Dynamics
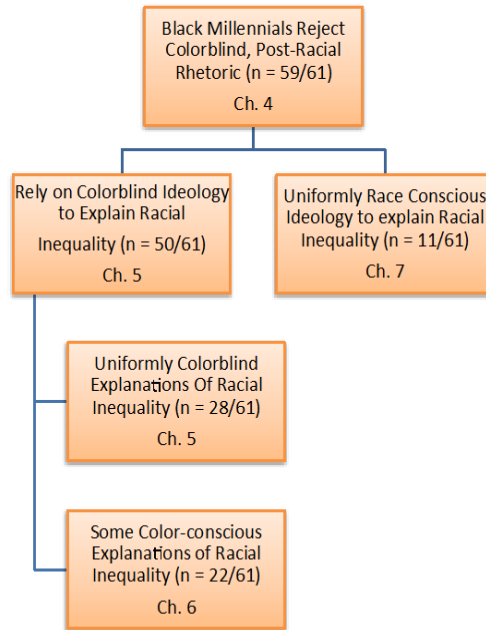
Appendix A: Institution Demographic Information

"GEOGRIA UNIVERSITY" (Fall 2012)

Student Body Description	Total Number (Percentage)
Total Undergraduate Population	*Approximately 14,600*
Black, non-Hispanic	(7%)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	(<1%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	(26%)
Hispanic	(7%)
White, non-Hispanic	57%
Unknown race	<1%
In state residents	55%

"CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY" (Fall 2012)

Student Body Description	Total Number (Percentage)
Total Undergraduate Population	Approximately 29,700
Black, non-Hispanic	4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	<1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	34%
Hispanic	19%
White, non-Hispanic	27%
Unknown	3.%
In state residents	72% *

* Statistic reflects information only on the Freshman class of 2012.

Appendix B: Recruitment Survey

Title: MILLENNIALS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF RACIAL DYNAMICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.
Principle Investigator: Celeste Lee, Emory University

RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Directions: Please answer the following questions. If you meet the inclusion criteria, you will be contacted to schedule an interview date and time.

Confidentiality Note: All files used to construct the sample and contact you for your interest in participation will be kept by the principal investigator. All the information that you provide will be kept private and will not be disclosed unless required by law. Additionally, personal identifiers will not be used in any internal reports, external reports, or publications.

1. Age _____

2. Sex: M _____   F _____

3. Are you a U.S. citizen?   Yes_____   No _____   If no, how long have you lived in the U.S.? _____

4. What is your race and/or origin? *Circle one or more option AND write in your specific race(s) and/or origin(s).*

   WHITE
   [please print origin(s) below; for example, German, Irish, Lebanese, Egyptian, and so on]

   _____

   BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
   [please print origin(s) below; for example African American, Haitian, Jamaican, Nigerian, and so on]

   _____

   HISPANIC, LATINO, OR SPANISH ORIGIN
   [please print origins(s) below; for example Mexican, Mexican Am, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and so on]

   _____

   AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE
   [please print name of enrolled or principal tribes below; for example Navajo, Mayan, Tlingit, and so on]

   _____

   ASIAN
   [print origin(s) below; for example Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Hmong, Vietnamese, and so on]

   _____

   NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER

[please print origins below; for example Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamarro, Tongan, and so on]

_____

   SOME OTHER RACE OR ORIGIN
   [please print race(s) and origin(s) below]

_____

5. List your religious affiliation (Catholic,
Protestant, Hindu, None, etc.)   _____

6. List the zip code of the residence where you grew up? _____

7. Name of the college/ university that you attend _____

8. Student Classification :   Freshman _____   Sophomore _____   Junior _____   Senior _____

9. Have you taken a college course on race,
ethnicity, diversity, and/or inequality?   Yes_____   No_____

List the course(s) you have taken on race, ethnicity, and/or inequality:

10. I agree to have the principal investigator   Yes_____   No_____
contact me for an interview.

If yes, please print your contact information below.

Name _____

Email address _____

Phone number_____

Please return your survey to the facilitator once it is complete or email it to celestenlee@gmail.com. If you know anyone else who may be interested in participating, please have them contact me at celestenlee@gmail.com. Thank you for your time!

Appendix C: Consent Form

Emory University
Research Subject Informed Consent Form

Title: Portraits of Black and Latino Millennials' Understanding of Racial Dynamics in the 21st Century.

Principal Investigator: Celeste Lee, PhD Candidate, Sociology Department, Emory University

Purpose: You are being asked to participate as a volunteer in a research study. The purpose of this research project is to better understand how young adults of color are dealing with and experiencing race in the 21st century. Questions will address your ideas about race, the importance of race in your day-to-day experiences, your explanations and understanding of racial inequality, and your views on contemporary race relations.

Procedures: This project seeks information from you about your experiences with race and opinions on race relations. The principal investigator will conduct scheduled interviews at a location convenient for the research participant. The interview will last between 60-90mins. You must be 18 years old or older and self identify as black or Latino to participate. Additionally, you must be a U.S. citizen or have lived in the U.S. for 10 years or more. All interviews will be digitally recorded. Please know that participating in the interview by answering the questions implies consent to participate.

Risks/Benefits: There are no anticipated physical, legal, or economic risks to participation. The potential psychological stress of the research questions does not exceed stress induced from casual conversations about racial identity, the significance of race in day-to-day experiences, understandings of racial inequality, and the status of contemporary race-relations. The direct benefits of participation include receiving a $10 gift card at the conclusion of the interview.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this study is completely voluntary and will in no way influence your college standing. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. If you decide to participate, you may refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. You may withdraw from the research study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw, your responses will be destroyed along with the record of your involvement with study.

Confidentiality: All personal identifiers for both you and anyone you may name will not be used in any internal reports, external reports, or publications. You will be assigned a nickname and no information that identifies you personally will be reported. All files used to construct the sample and contact you for your interest in participation will be kept by the principal investigator. All the information that you provide will be kept private and will not be disclosed unless required by law.

Contact Persons: If at any time you have questions or comments about this research please contact Celeste Lee, celestenlee@gmail.com, 678-596-1219.

Contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or irb@emory.edu:
- if you have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.
- You may also let the IRB know about your experience as a research participant through our Research Participant Survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6ZDMW75.

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent to participate. Additionally, I confirm that I have received a copy of this consent form to retain for my own records.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Principal Investigator's Signature   Date

Appendix D: Interview Guide
  I.   Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this interview. I greatly appreciate your participation. The purpose of today's interview is to try and understand how young adults of color are dealing with and experiencing race in the 21st century. The interview will last approximately 60-90mins. Over the course of the interview we will discuss the significance of race in your day to day experiences, your perception and explanation of racial inequality, and your views on contemporary race relations. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions. Furthermore, you may choose to end this interview/ withdraw from this research project at any time. Our conversation will be recorded, so that I can ensure that I capture everything that you share today. All responses, however, are confidential; that is, no one will be able to trace what you have said back to you. As stated in the consent form that you signed, no names or identifying information will be used in my dissertation or future publications.

Now that you've looked over the consent form, learned more about the interview, and heard the confidentiality information, do you have any questions before we get started?

Ok, let's begin …

  I.   Demographic Information
- Where are you from? Where did you grow up?
- Tell me about your family composition.
  - Who do you live with?
  - Parents' level of education?
  - Siblings
- Tell me about the racial composition of the neighborhood where you grew up.
  - Racial composition of your elementary/high school?
- What are your earliest memories of being confronted with the topic of race?
- How did your family talk about being (black/Latino)?
  - What were the circumstances/ subject matter/ nature of those conversations?
  - What, if any, kinds of ethno-racial clubs and organizations did you and/or your family belong to?

  II.   Racial Identity/ Experiences with Race
- How often do you think about being _(respondent's race/ethnicity)____?
- How/when is being _____ important to you? When, if ever, do you feel like it is less important to you?
  - When do you feel like your race is important to others?
  - Can you describe any experiences when you felt like it has hindered you in some way (such as getting a job, scholarship or academic award, or anything else)

- How do you feel about being _(respondent's race/ethnicity)____?
  - What do you think are the best things about being _____?
  - The worst?
- What are the stereotypes people have about what being ____ is like?
  - Which, if any, do you believe are valid? Why or why not?
- Are there certain ethno-racial groups you feel are close/similar to being _(respondent's ethno-racial group) ___? If so, which ones, and why?
  - Are there other groups you feel you/(respondent's ethno-racial groups) would have a harder time identifying with? If so, which ones, and why?

III.   Describing Contemporary Race Relations
- Which group or groups (if any) would you say face(s) discrimination now?
  - Do you think things have gotten better, worse, or about the same for these groups? How so?
- How do you / would you define racism?
- A lot of people argue that race doesn't matter anymore today. That racism is mostly a thing of the past. What do you think about that?

IV.   Understanding/ Explaining Racial Stratification
- Here is data on education, wealth, criminal justice [for example: high school graduation rates, homeownership/ wealth, incarceration rates, etc.] - How do you explain different racial outcomes in all of these systems? *SEE APPENDIX C FOR DATA CHARTS*
- In which areas of society do you feel most strongly that race does/does not matter anymore? (education, wealth, employment, criminal justice, health care, and housing)
  - When you compare these institutions to each other, do you think race matters any more or less in one institution compared to the other? How so?

V.   Closing Questions
- Thank you very much for your time. If there is anything else you would like to add, or to ask me? Please feel free do it now.
- Can you think of anyone else who is _____that might be interested in being interviewed for this project?

Appendix E: Data Charts
Wealth Statistics: Median Net Worth of Households

Median Net Worth of Households, 2009

$113,149	$6,325	$5,677
White	Hispanic/Latino	Black
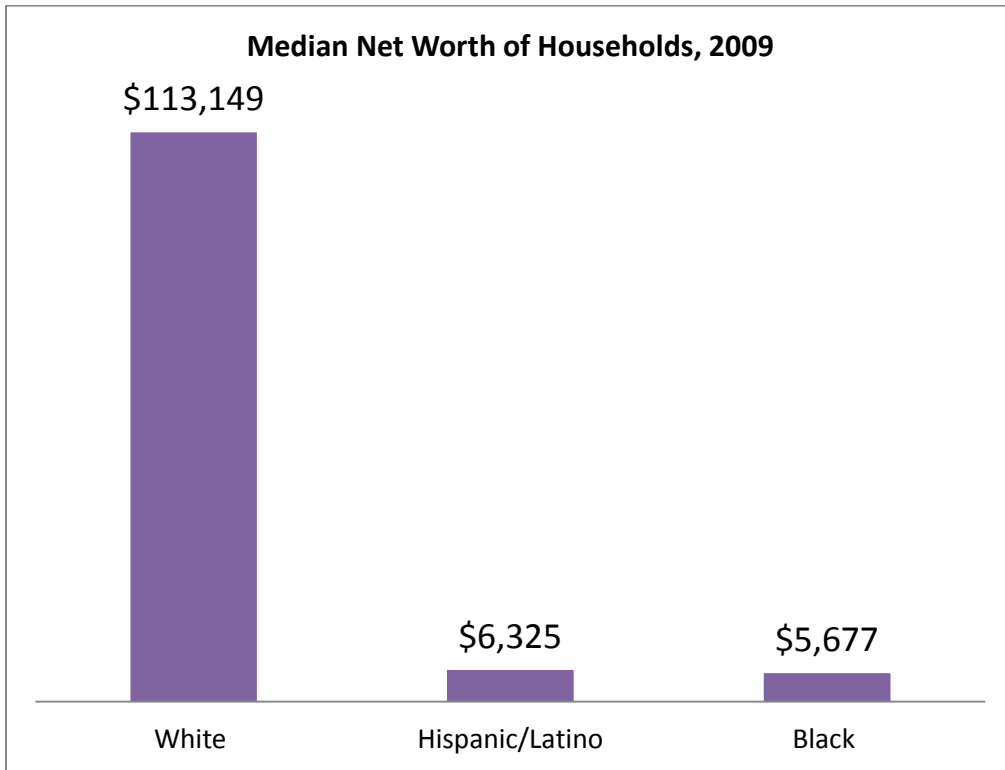
Source: Pew Research Center,
http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/, retrieved on 8/1/2013.

** Household wealth is the accumulated sum of assets (houses, cars, savings and checking accounts, stocks and mutual funds, retirement accounts, etc.) minus the sum of debt (mortgages, auto loans, credit card debt, etc.).
** The median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households.

Education Statistics: High School Graduation Rates

Average Freshman Graduation Rates, 2008-2009 School Year
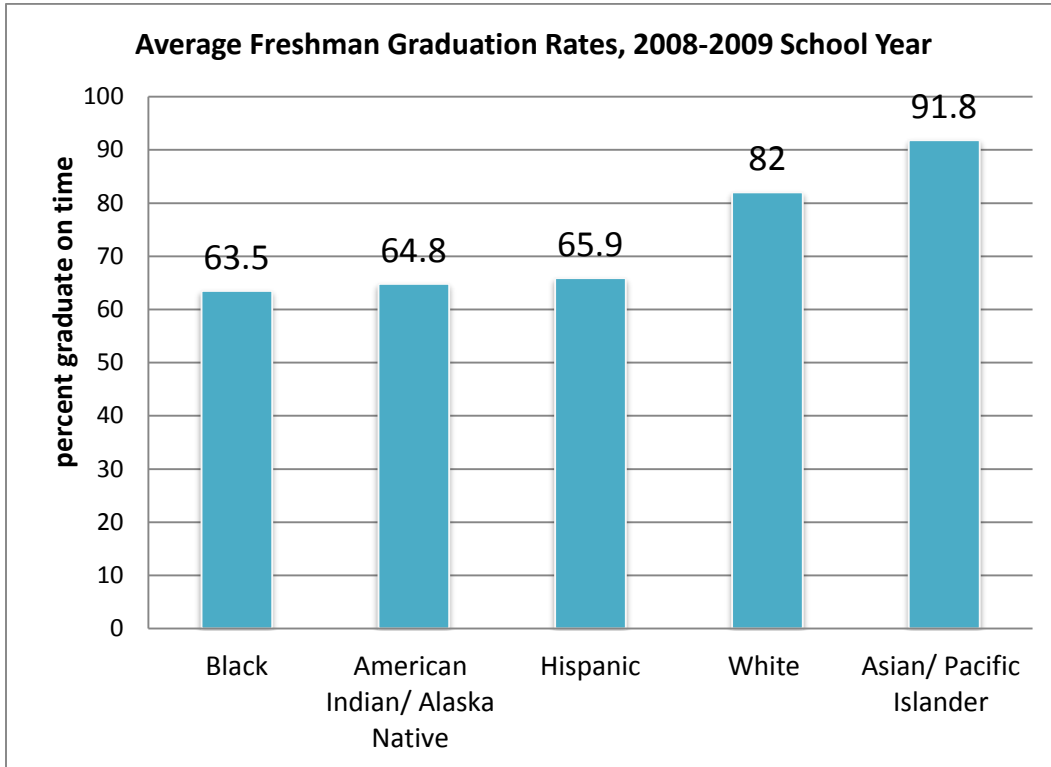
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "NCES Common Core of Data State Dropout and Completion Data File," School Year 2008–09, Version 1a.

Criminal Justice Statistics: Incarceration Rates

Incarceration Rates, 2010
(number of people incarcerated per 100,000 people in that group)
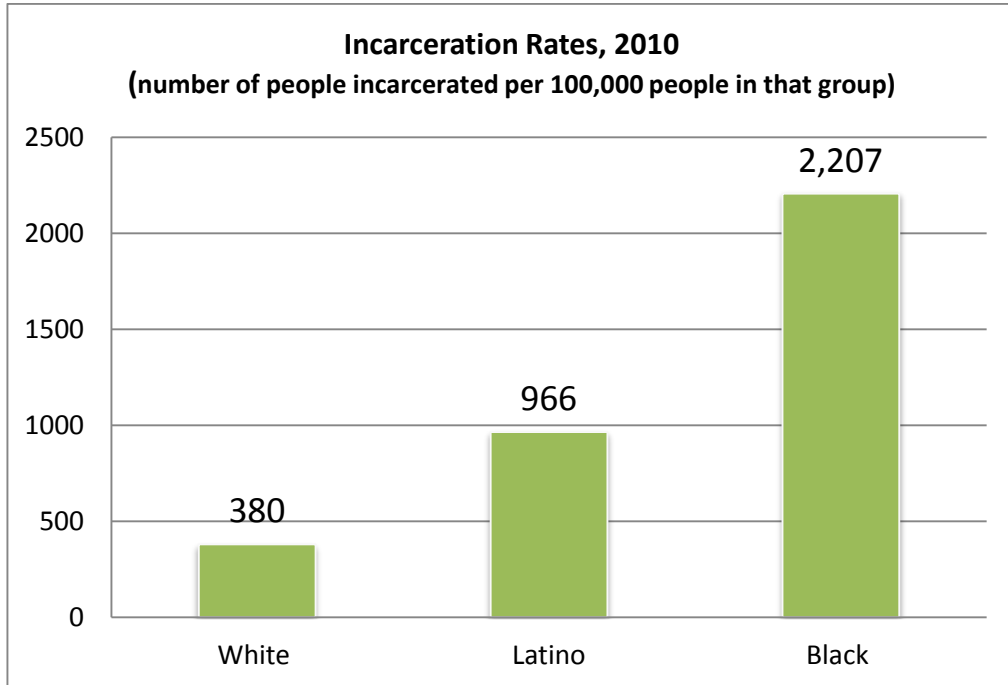
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice Statistics 2011.

Appendix F: List of Codes By Themes
Key:
BROAD CATEGORIES
- Themes
  - ➢ Codes
    - o Subcodes

BACKGROUND INFO
- *Schools*
  - ➢ diverse school
  - ➢ predominantly white school
  - ➢ predominantly Latino school
  - ➢ predominantly black school

- *Neighborhoods*
  - ➢ predominantly white neighborhood
  - ➢ predominantly Latino neighborhood
  - ➢ predominantly black neighborhood

- *Family*
  - ➢ BLK immigrant
  - ➢ family didn't talk about race
  - ➢ parents/family talked about race

VIEWS ON BEING BLACK / VIEWS ABOUT BLACKS
- *On Being Black*
  - ➢ Best thing about being blk
    - o best thing about being blk= sense of community
  - ➢ Worst thing about being black
  - ➢ being black = having a lot of struggles
  - ➢ being blk=advantage
  - ➢ being black is who I am
  - ➢ being black matters in predominantly white spaces

- *General Ideas about blacks / blackness*
  - ➢ all blacks have a common experience
  - ➢ animosity between different groups of blacks
  - ➢ Blacks don't value education
  - ➢ blacks have a legacy of resilience
  - ➢ blacks have to be careful
  - ➢ Blacks try to demphasize race
  - ➢ blk people = dehumanized
  - ➢ blks aren't monolithic group

- important for blks to stick together
- important for blacks to integrate
- intra-racial marriage important 4 blk success
- low expectations for blks
- people have negative views of Blacks
- politics of respectability
- you have to work twice as hard when blk

- *Personal experiences with "blackness"*
  - ashamed of black history
  - don't always feel like fit in w/ blks
  - don't want to make blacks look bad
  - feel pressure to represent all blks
  - havn't been hindered because of race
  - hindered by race/ being blk = hindrance
  - held/holds negative views of blks
  - I think about my race often
  - more comfortable around blk people
  - not blk enough/blackness questioned
  - Proud to be black
  - slavery issue

STEREOTYPES
- blk stereotypes=negative
- blks responsibility to disprove stereotypes
- contending w/stereotypes
- stereotype threat
- stereotypes about being black
  - blacks stereotyped as anti-education
  - blk females stereotypes as hypersexual
  - blks associated with poverty
  - blks stereotyped as aggressive
  - blks stereotyped as athletic
  - blks stereotyped as criminals
  - blks stereotyped as entertainers
  - blks stereotyped as ghetto
  - blks stereotyped as inarticulate
  - blks stereotyped as lazy
  - blks stereotyped as loud
  - blks stereotyped as not smart

IDEAS ABOUT RACE/ RACE RELATIONS/ RACIAL DYNAMICS
- *Ideology (ideas about race/racism)*
  - ➢ blacks should expect/just have to deal with racism
  - ➢ blk males and females=racialized differently
  - ➢ blks and whites fundamentally different from one another
  - ➢ blks and whites judged differently for same behavior
  - ➢ individual behavior reflects on all blks
  - ➢ Blks face marginalization in non-blk spaces/ PWI
  - ➢ blks have less opportunities
  - ➢ Blk neighbhd = bad/ wht neighbhd = good
  - ➢ good school =white/ bad school =black
  - ➢ class matters more than race
  - ➢ race matters over class
  - ➢ CB/Post-racial ideology
    - o Abstract Liberalism
    - o Cultural Racism
    - o Minimization
    - o Naturalization
  - ➢ hard to talk about race
  - ➢ have to educate others about race
  - ➢ microaggression
  - ➢ millennial generation = more racially tolerant/aware
  - ➢ not everything is about race
  - ➢ overt racism=less of an issue today
  - ➢ Psychological damage of racism
  - ➢ race = biological
  - ➢ race conscious / anti-racist
  - ➢ race = black and white
  - ➢ race trumps ethnicity
  - ➢ ethnicity trumps race
  - ➢ race/racial diff=social construct
  - ➢ race/racism still matters today
  - ➢ Racial ideology & criminal justice
  - ➢ talk white/ act white
  - ➢ things better for blks/racial progress
  - ➢ try not to think about race/ race relations

- *Concern about race relations*
  - ➢ very concerned about race relations
  - ➢ concerned about race relations
  - ➢ somewhat concerned about race relations
  - ➢ not concerned about race relations

- *About whites/ white supremacy*
  - ➢ fear of white people
  - ➢ white assimilation
  - ➢ white privilege
  - ➢ white violence
  - ➢ whites can't relate to the blk experience
  - ➢ whites have anti-black attitudes
  - ➢ whites have more resources/advantage than POC

- *Racism*
  - ➢ racism = southern issue
  - ➢ racism vs. ignorance
  - ➢ racism definition
    - o racism = actions
    - o racism=psychological
  - ➢ resistance to racism/ addresses racism
  - ➢ structural/institutional RI & racism

EXPLAINING RACIAL INEQUALITY
- ➢ Wealth Data
  - o education disparities explain wealth disparities
  - o wealth disparities reflect blacks lack of financial literacy
  - o wealth gap= explained by racism
  - o wealth gap=historically driven
  - o wealth inequality=strx issue
  - o whites have intergenerational wealth
- ➢ Incarceration Data
  - o blks=over-policed/ racially profiled
  - o education disparities lead to incarceration disparities
  - o incarceration disparities result from racism
  - o incarceration IE = strx
  - o wealth disparities explain incarceration data
- ➢ Education Data
  - o admins and teachers react diff to blk students than other
  - o education disparties result from racism
  - o education IE = strx issue
  - o parents lack of education=explanation for educ RI
  - o wealth disparities contribute to educ. disparities
  - o whites more likely to have educ. opportunities than blks
- ➢ blk's disadvantage=historical

- ➢ blks' current soc. position=result of a cycle

FUTURE OF RACE RELATIONS
- ➢ blks will never achieve racial equality
- ➢ blks will not achieve RE in my lifetime
- ➢ blks will soon achieve RE
- ➢ cohort replacement theory
- ➢ race/racism will always be a factor
- ➢ want to be optimistic about future RE

MISCELLANEOUS

- *People*
  - ➢ Obama
  - ➢ Paula Deen
  - ➢ Trayvon Martin

- *Individual/ Group Interactions*
  - ➢ interracial dating
  - ➢ interracial friendships
  - ➢ native and immigrant interactions
  - ➢ divide btwn racially conscious vs. no- conscious blk millen

- *Other*
  - ➢ college has made me more aware of racial dynamic
  - ➢ frustrated/angered by racial issues
  - ➢ I don't know
  - ➢ racial story
  - ➢ Racism in white greek life
  - ➢ role models
  - ➢ talk about race with friends

- *Coder/ Researcher Observations*
  - ➢ Contradiction
  - ➢ excellent quote
  - ➢ Interesting

Appendix G: Code Names and Descriptions – Alphabetical Order

	CODE NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	abstract liberalism	Participant comments that express a belief in the U.S. has a meritocracy or land of equal opportunity where people are rewarded for hard work/ effort; as a result, statements like "my work ethic matter more than race" or views that racial inequality can be alleviated if blacks work harder/ get an education/ do better all capture abstract liberalism
2	admins and teachers react diff to blk students than other	Participants suggest that that the RI in education data is driven by teacher/administrator bias ... they may also speak of their own personal experiences of feeling as if they were being treated different by teachers/administrators due to their race.
3	all blacks have a common experience	Participants express a belief that all blacks have something in common/ there's a shared experience among blacks people. This code captures an assumption that being black says something about the type of experiences that you've had in life.
4	animosity between different groups of blacks	Belief that there are tensions between different groups of black people (i.e. immigrants vs. native OR lower class vs. middle class)
5	ashamed of black history	Participants express being ashamed of black history OR a desire to separate themselves from black history OR discomfort with associating themselves with blacks history of oppression. Participants may also share stories/experiences in which they felt embarrassed or ashamed due to discussions about slavery/ Jim Crow/ or the Civil Rights Movement (CRM).
6	being black = having a lot of struggles	Participants suggest that being black comes with an extra burden; particular troubles/struggles attached to being black in America; being black automatically puts you at a disadvantage
7	being black is who I am	Any discussion of blackness (or being black) as a part of one's self identity
8	being black matters in predominantly white spaces	Participants discuss when being blk is important to them ... participants discuss experiences of standing out, feeling on display, not fitting in, having their blackness heightened, or being more aware of their blackness in predominantly white spaces
9	being blk=advantage	Participants express that being black is an advantage: for college opportunities in admissions and scholarships; may present itself in discussions of affirmative action; participants might comment that schools seek out black students; being black gives you a "leg up" in terms of college acceptances; "I got into XYZ because I'm black"
10	Best thing about being blk	Any discussion of the best thing about being black ... NOTE: this code usually used on participants' response to the question "What's the best thing about being black"
11	best thing about being blk= sense of community	Respondents state that the best thing about being black = sense of community; closeness among family and non-family members;
12	Blacks don't value education	Participants believe that blacks don't value education ... any discussion of blacks not valuing/liking/caring about school ... any suggestions that blacks are less likely to value/care about school than other racial groups
13	blacks have a legacy of resilience	Participants discuss blacks history of overcoming oppression; surviving slavery; "accomplishing so much despite racial oppression"; community of survivors; history of surviving and thriving
14	blacks have to be careful	Any comments that suggest that the participants believe that blacks live in constant danger; blacks have to be careful of where they go/what they say/police interactions.

15	blacks should expect/just have to deal with racism	Participants express that racism is just a part of life; the view that blacks just have to learn to deal with it
16	Blacks stereotyped as anti-education	Any discussion of blks being stereotyped as against education; not valuing education; not taking school seriously; or not viewing education as a priority
17	Blacks try to deemphasize race	Participants discuss either personal experiences OR observations of black trying to down play either their own race by trying to not stand out OR race in general by not talking about race or avoiding situations where race may come up as a topic
18	blk females stereotypes as hypersexual	Use this code for any comments about black women being portrayed and/or expected to be overly sexual; participants may even talk about their own experiences of being sexualized. NOTE: may be used in conjunction with "blk males and females racialized differently"
19	BLK immigrant	Use this code for any participants who identify themselves as anything other than African American/ Black … Examples include: Nigerian, Jamaican, Cameroonian, Ethiopian, etc.
20	blk males and females=racialized differently	The belief that black males and females have different racial experiences; idea that black men are treated differently from black women and vice/versus … some participants talk about a difference in stereotypes, experiences with the police, or interactions with school administrators.
21	Blk neighbhd = bad/ wht neighbhd = good	Participants suggest that predominantly black neighborhoods/communities/environments are bad; bad conditions; unkempt; dangerous. On the other hand, they may describe predominantly white neighborhoods as good; good environments; safe; desirable places to live.
22	blk people = dehumanized	participants discuss the treatment of black people as exhibits/ statues/ less than human; Can also refer to participants specific experiences/feelings of being dehumanized
23	blk stereotypes=negative	Participants discuss the negative nature of stereotypes about blacks; also used to code comments about other racial groups' stereotypes not being as negative as stereotypes about blacks.
24	blk's disadvantage=historical	Any discussion off blacks historically being disadvantage; whites historically having more resources/opportunities/freedoms than blacks; slavery as an explanation for blacks disadvantage/lack of opportunities; history of oppression as explanation for blacks' lack of resources/access to power
25	blks and whites fundamentally different from one another	Participants contend that blacks and whites are biologically/culturally/socially different from one another; they believe that race has real meaning for how people are built, how the behave, etc.
26	blks and whites judged differently for same behavior	Any discussion of blacks and white receiving different characterization, punishment, responses, perceptions, or consequences for the same behavior.
27	blks aren't monolithic group	Belief that not all blacks are a like; there's various in style, goals, belief systems, etc. within the black community
28	blks associated with poverty	Any discussion of blks being stereotyped as poor or often brought up in the discussion of poverty; Participants may even reference that poverty is a problem specifically in the black community. All discussions that relate blackness with poverty in some way.
29	Blks face marginalization in	Participants discuss feeling isolated, alone, and/or like they don't fit in at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

	non-blk spaces/ PWI	
30	blks have less opportunities	Any discussion of blacks having less opportunities than other racial groups ... for opportunities may include (educational opps, financial opps, political opps, wealth, housing opps, labor market/work place, opps in/with the criminal justice system, etc.).
31	blks responsibility to disprove stereotypes	Participants either explicitly state that blacks have to prove stereotypes wrong OR they discuss the ways in which they work to disprove stereotypes OR they discuss the importance of proving stereotypes wrong
32	blks stereotyped as aggressive	Any discussion of blacks being stereotyped or portrayed as aggressive, angry, or violent
33	blks stereotyped as athletic	Any discussion of blacks being characterized as athletes, better at sports than other racial groups, etc; could be expressed through personal account or general idea about the stereotypes/ assumptions that people hold about blacks and athletics
34	blks stereotyped as criminals	Any discussion of blacks being characterized as dangerous, criminal, law breakers, over represented in police descriptions of perpetrators, etc.
35	blks stereotyped as entertainers	Code most likely used when participants are asked to list/describe stereotypes about blks --- this code captures stereotypes about blacks as good dancers, singers, musicians, etc. Also relates to stereotypes about blacks being funny/class clowns.
36	blks stereotyped as ghetto	Any discussion of assumptions/stereotypes that blacks are ghetto/hood/ratchet
37	blks stereotyped as inarticulate	Any discussion of assumptions/stereotypes that blacks don't speak well/ don't speak standard English/ Have problems using correct grammar
38	blks stereotyped as lazy	Any discussion of blacks being stereotyped or portrayed as lazy, unmotivated, or lacking ambition
39	blks stereotyped as loud	Any discussion of blacks being stereotyped or portrayed as loud
40	blks stereotyped as not smart	Any discussion of blacks being characterized as not smart, in articulate, not academically inclined, not good at school or intellectually inferior to other racial groups
41	blks will never achieve racial equality	Participants express a belief that that racial equality will always exist in the U.S. ... (How does this code differ from "race will always be a factor."?
42	blks will not achieve RE in my lifetime	Participants report that they do not think racial equality (RE) will be achieved in their lifetime
43	blks will soon achieve RE	Participants express a belief that racial equality is a near for the U.S.
44	blks' current soc. position=result of a cycle	Participants suggest/mention that blacks are in a cycle of inequality, poverty, oppression, etc.; use at any mention of a "cycle", "circle", or "pattern" that can't be/needs to be broken NOTE: This code often emerges during the "explain RI" sections on wealth/education/incarceration
45	blks=over-policed/ racially profiled	Participants discuss blacks being over policed, racially profiled, targeted by the criminal justice system, harassed by police ... NOTE: You may use this code when participants are explaining the incarceration data

46	CB/Post-racial	Any comments/ discussion of the U.S being colorblind/ beyond race; Views that suggest that race is no longer an issue/ big deal in the U.S.; comments that capture the 4 themes of colorblind ideology (abstract liberalism, minimization, cultural racism, and naturalization).
47	class matters more than race	Any discussion about class being a more important factor than race in terms of life chances/ access to resources and/or explaining racial inequality
48	cohort replacement theory	Participants express belief that racism/racial tension will be less of an issue with each new generation
49	college has made me more aware of racial dynamic	Participants talk about college playing a key role in understanding race; couldn't mention classes, student organizations, campus events/lectures, friends, etc.; Might talk about not being aware of racial inequality until college; not being aware of black identity until college; or not thinking about race until college.
50	concerned about race relations	Participants response to interview question "How concerned are you about race relations" ... students can choose between very concerned, somewhat concerned, not concerned at all
51	contending w/stereotypes	Participants talk about the weight/burden of dealing with stereotypes; also used to code discussions of how students deal with stereotypes ... often found under "worst thing about being black" but doesn't have to be ... NOTE: Participants don't have to use the word "stereotype" for this code to apply - they may use "assumptions" , "ideas", "negative views"
52	contradiction	Participants express contradictions between their ideas, sentiments, feelings, about ANY issue
53	cultural racism	Participants rely on culturally based arguments to explain the standing of minorities in society - relates to ideas that suggests that black families are dysfunctional/bad OR bad values OR poor work ethnic ... sometimes described as "blaming the victim" OR blaming blacks for their disadvantaged position in the racial hierarchy ... comments that suggests that blacks are culturally inferior to other racial groups ... FOR EXAMPLE: "blacks don't value education" OR "blacks don't work hard" OR "blacks are more concerned with materialistic things than saving for the future"
54	diverse school	Participants unable to say whether they went to a predominantly (blank school) ... Participants express that there school was diverse (must refer to the dominance of more than TWO races - for example, participants who report that their school was mostly black and Latino do NOT fit under this code - instead this code is reserved for participants who believe there was no dominant racial group in their school)
55	divide btwn racially conscious vs. no- conscious blk millen	Any discussion of some millennials (young people/"friends"/"peers"/classmates) being racial aware or conscious while others are not; may also be expressed as the idea that some millennials = disconnected from what it means to be blk
56	don't always feel like fit in w/ blks	Students express feeling like they don't fit in with blacks; May also suggest that they don't see themselves as black; May also make distinctions between how they see themselves (smart, not loud, non-confrontational) and how they view other blacks (not smart, loud, confrontational)
57	don't want to make blacks look bad	Participants express fear of making blks look bad; fear of their individual actions placing a bad light on the black community; fear of confirming negative stereotypes about blacks
58	education data	Marks the start of discussions on education data
59	education disparities explain wealth disparities	Participants believe that education RI leads to wealth RI

60	education disparities lead to incarceration disparities	Participants suggest that the RI in education ultimately leads to RI in incarceration rates; they express some version of the following logic: "because kids don't go to school/ get an education; then they are more likely to be incarcerated or have interactions with police
61	education disparities result from racism	Participants explicitly state that education inequality is related to discrimination/prejudice/and or racism
62	education IE = strx issue	Participants suggests that education data reflects racial inequality because there's something wrong with education systems/ the way society is structured (i.e., because schools are funded through taxes, predominantly blk schools receive less funding; black kids less likely to be tracked into AP/IB classes; blacks students more likely to be disciplined/suspended than whites; teachers = biased against students of color; blks stereotyped as not liking school) ... this code is used for "most" responses that do not suggest that black themselves are responsible for inequality
63	ethnicity trumps race	Participants argue that their ethnicity is more important than their race AND/OR participants contend that ethnicity (i.e., Jamaican) matters more in terms of race in terms of life chances and day to day experience ... For example, "xyz happened because I am Ethiopian, not b/c I'm black"
64	excellent quote	Any quote that really captures students views in a clear/coherent/compelling/or nuance way
65	family didn't talk about race	Participants' family avoided discussions about race
66	fear of white people	Participants describe of fear of white people/ apprehension around whites/ an uneasiness around whites/ and or an uncertainty about how they will be treated by whites
67	feel pressure to represent all blks	Participants discuss pressure to represent all blacks; called upon to speak for all blacks'
68	frustrated/angered by racial issues	Participants talk about being annoyed/bothered/frustrated with dealing with insensitive comments, actions, or events centered around race; they might also discuss being frustrated by major events that seem to be centered around race (i.e., Trayvon Martin/ Paula Deen/ Jordan Davis); or frustration with racial inequality/ race relations in general.
69	good school =white/ bad school =black	Participants express personal views and/or societal assumptions that portray predominantly white schools as "good/valued/positive" educational spaces and predominantly black spaces as 'bad/devalued/negative' educational spaces .... For example, "my parents wanted me to get a good education so they sent me to (Blank) school which is a predominantly white school OR "I didn't go to my neighborhood schools because they weren't good schools"
70	hard to talk about race	Any discussion of people not talking about race/ race being a taboo topic/ etc. / race as a touchy subject
71	have to educate others about race	Participants discuss their own personal need to educate/enlightened people about race; Could also express beliefs that it is the responsibility of people of color to educate others about race / racial dynamics
72	havn't been hindered because of race	Participant does not believe that they have been hindered by their race
73	held/holds negative views of blks	Participants discuss having negative views/opinions of black people; participants may discuss these feelings in the past tense as well (i.e. I use to think that all black people were lazy, but I don't any more).

74	hindered by race/ being blk = hindrance	Participants express that they feel hindered in some way because of their race and/or that they feel like being black can hold you back in certain spaces ... NOTE: this code will mainly come in response to the question: "Have you ever felt hindered by your race" and the follow up questions: "in what ways have you felt hindered by your race
75	I don't know	Used any time participants say "I don't know" in response to a questions/prompt/ probe
76	I think about my race often	Participants admit to thinking about their race: everyday, all day, frequently, daily, all the time, etc.
77	important for blks to stick together	Participants express a belief that blacks need/should stick together; idea that blacks should have some loyalty to one another - even if they don't know each other personally
78	incarceration data	Marks the start of discussions on incarceration data
79	incarceration disparities result from racism	Participants explicitly state that incarceration inequality is related to discrimination/prejudice/and or racism ... explanations of incarceration data that suggests the racialized outcomes result from discrimination in the legal system (police, jury/judge bias, "racist individuals", etc.)
80	incarceration IE = strx	Participants suggests that incarceration data reflects racial inequality because there's something wrong with the criminal justice system/ the way society is structured (i.e., stop and frisk laws; police bias; racial stereotypes about blacks; blacks' lack of resources to secure good lawyers, school to prison pipeline) ... this code is used "most" for responses that do not suggest that black themselves (or deficiencies in the blk community) are responsible for inequality
81	individual behavior reflects on all blks	The idea that how one black person acts/behaves becomes the story/narrative for how all black people behave (e.g. If one black person steals, then all blacks are assumed to be thieves).
82	interesting	Passages that don't fit under a particular code but reflect an interesting idea/perspective on race and/or racial dynamics.
83	interracial dating	In discussion of interracial dating -- personal experiences with interracial dating; personal/societal/family views on interracial dating; and racial stories that relate to interracial dating
84	interracial friendships	Any discussion of interracial friendships
85	intra-racial marriage important 4 blk success	Any discussion of it being important for blacks to intermarry/ date within their race
86	low expectations for blks	Any discussion about people having low expectations or setting the bar low for blacks OR people/society being surprised when blacks do something well.
87	microaggression	Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their race ...Ex) being made fun because you "black hair"; being told that you are "not black enough" by white roommate; beginning called on by your professor to talk about how you feel about slavery .... NOTE: Often times, "microaggression" codes are found within racial stories BUT they don't have to be .... THIS CODE IS ALSO USED FOR ANY TIME THAT STUDENTS TALK ABOUT/USE THE TERM "MICROAGGRESSTION"
88	millennial generation = more racially tolerant/aware	Any discussion of younger generation/ participants' generation/ or millennials being less consumed with race, more tolerant of racial difference, supportive of racial diversity, or less racist than previous generations.

89	minimization	Participants suggest that race/racism isn't that big of a deal today; race is not the main thing that holds blacks back; discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting POC's life experiences/choices. Comments that suggests that "blacks play the race car" OR "try to make everything about race too much would apply here" OR "Race/racism matter but not enough to hinder black's social progress.
90	more comfortable around blk people	Participants explicitly state that they are more comfortable around blk people than other racial groups; they more also express a discomfort when in predominantly white spaces
91	native and immigrant interactions	Any discussions/stories/comments that describe/explain/or relate to interactions between native born blacks (i.e. people who identify as African American or black American) and immigrant blacks (people who born in another country (i.e. Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopian, etc.) or their parents immigrated from a country other than U.S.
92	naturalization	The CB/post-racial belief that racial occurrences (i.e., segregation, racial inequality, etc.) are just happenstance/by chance/or natural occurrences). For example: "it's natural for people to want to be around other people of their same race." OR "the data on racial disparities in wealth just happen to look this way, it's not about race." OR "It seems to just work out that most black students do not take AP or IB classes."
93	not always racially conscious	Participants discuss not always thinking about race and/or not always seeing situations as racial
94	not blk enough/blackness questioned	Participants discuss experiences where their blackness is questioned or challenged ... "you're not really black"
95	not concerned about race relations	Participants response to interview question "How concerned are you about race relations" ... students can choose between very concerned, somewhat concerned, not concerned at all
96	not everything is about race	Participants suggest that race is not as big of a deal as some people make it; they may actually state that "not everything is about race" but ultimately the sentiment is that race doesn't matter as much as people think that it does
97	Obama	Any discussion / mentioning of President Obama
98	overt racism=less of an issue today	Any suggestion that: racism is more covert; racism isn't as in your face as it used to be; racist groups are on the decline; racism is more subtle today; etc.
99	parents lack of education=explanation for educ RI	Participants suggest that education RI is the result of black parents not having the proper education; "if parents don't do well in school/value school/or go to college then their children won't"
100	parents/family talked about race	Any discussion/ statement that signifies that the participant discussed race/racial matters with his/her family (immediate or extended.
101	Paula Deen	Any discussion / mention of Paula Deen
102	people have negative views of Blacks	Participants express a belief that people (in general) hold negative views of blacks; may also emerge when participants discuss beliefs that blks have more negative stereotypes associated with their group than other ethno-racial groups
103	politics of respectability	Any discussion of blacks needing to act, dress, or behave a certain a way in order to be respected/ better received by society/ disprove stereotypes/ etc.
104	predominantly black neighborhood	Participants grew up in predominantly black neighborhood

105	predominantly black school	Participant went to predominantly blk school ... NOTE: This code was used when students report anything about predominantly black schools -e.g. "I went to a predominantly black and Latino school" would be coded "predominantly black school" and "predominantly Latino school"
106	predominantly Latino neighborhood	Participant reports growing up/ living in a predominantly Latino neighborhood
107	predominantly Latino school	Participant reports attending a predominantly Latino school
108	predominantly white neighborhood	Participants grew up in predominantly white neighborhood
109	predominantly white school	Participants attended predominantly white primary/secondary schools
110	Proud to be black	Participants discuss an affinity for or pride in being black AND/OR discussions of blackness being important to them ... ex) "being black is important to me"
111	Psychological damage of racism	Participants discuss the mental strain and/or psychological effects of dealing with racism/ racial inequality --- may elude to the stress of it; strain of it when interacting with individuals; or more generalized trauma/doubt/fear/damage of racism.
112	race = biological	Participants express belief that race/ racial distinctions have a biological component/ basis.
113	race = black and white	Participants describe racial dynamics/ relations as "black and white" - refers to racial issues centering mainly around black and white interactions; centers blacks and whites at the core of racial dynamics
114	race conscious / anti-racist	Used to describe students who appear to be aware of racial dynamics like: RI, structural/institutional racism, colorblind racism, oppression, and/or attempts to address/redress racial injustices and racial inequality
115	race matters over class	Any discussion of race being more important than class in terms of life chances; participants might state that all POC experience racial problems, regardless of their race; may also state that class/having money/prestige does not protect you from racism. Example: "Regardless of your class or how much education you have, you are still black"
116	race trumps ethnicity	Immigrant blacks (and to some extent native blacks) discuss not seeing themselves has different from native born blacks); Participants may describe themselves as "black" rather than Jamaican or Ghanaian etc.; Comments like: "people are going to see me as black, not Ethiopian" apply under this code.
117	race/racial diff=social construct	Any discussion of race as socially construct; dependent on society; not based on biological facts
118	race/racism still matters today	Participants state that race is important to how things work in society; racism still exists; something happened because of their race; etc. NOTE: they don't have to explicitly say that "race/racism" matters BUT their explanation or description of an event may reveal to you that the person thinks that race matters (i.e., "Blacks are less likely to get called back for interviews just because they are black.")
119	race/racism will always be a factor	Participants discuss their belief that racism will never be completely eliminated and/or that race will always be important in America ...
120	Racial ideology & criminal justice	Any discussion of the role that race plays in people's experiences with the criminal justice system - could be about: different racial groups and police interactions; racial patterns of crime; disparities in treatment; access to lawyers; jury bias; etc.

121	racial story	Any story where the participant discusses "race" as central to their experience; might appear under "earliest memories about race" but could appear throughout. Some examples include: being followed in a store; interactions with college roommates who are non-black; classroom discussions; etc.
122	racism = southern issue	Participants argue that racism is particular to the south/ especially bad in the south/ a "southern thing"
123	racism definition	Whenever participants offer a view/ definition of racism
124	Racism in white greek life	Any discussion of race being a problem when interacting with white greek life (white frats as racist; inclusion/exclusion form white greek sponsored events; problems at frat parties; negative membership/pledge experiences base on race
125	racism vs. ignorance	Any discussion of racism and ignorance being two different things … Racism is characterized as being knowledgeable that comments are insensitive and offense while ignorance is characterized by a lack of knowing, willingness to learn/change, and absence of malicious intent … also applies to participants descriptions of certain individuals as ignorant BUT not racist
126	racism = actions	Belief that racism is about discrimination - can be discussed as individuals discriminating based on race OR institutions discriminating against racial groups; may also be described as racial groups having access to difference resources/privileges/rewards … racism describe as acting on prejudices OR "doing something to another group simply because of race."
127	racism=psychological	Any discussion of racism as an individual problem or due to a lack of education; suggests that racism is about a few "wacky"/"warped"/"uneducated" people rather than a systemic issue
128	resistance to racism/ addresses racism	Participants discuss steps/ actions for resisting and/or addressing racism
129	role models	Any discussion/comments surrounding the importance of role models, absence of role models, and/or significance of role models in the black community
130	slavery issue	Any discussion/comments about slavery - can describe personal feelings about slavery/ experiences with talking about or being called out to discuss slavery/ embarrassment surrounding slavery/ etc.
131	somewhat concerned about race relations	Participants response to interview question "How concerned are you about race relations" … students can choose between very concerned, somewhat concerned, not concerned at all
132	stereotype threat	Participants express a fear of confirming black stereotypes; participants may also discuss actively avoiding/ refraining from certain activities in hopes of not confirming certain stereotypes …
133	stereotypes about being black	Captures participants' ideas about the stereotypes that people hold about black people
134	structural/institutional RI & racism	Any statements about institutional or structural racism --- other statements/key works include: "the system"; "ingrained in society"; "apart of society"; "built into society --- participants might also talk about laws set up to benefit some groups over others
135	talk about race with friends	Participants state that they talk about race with their friends AND/OR that they engage in conversations about race
136	talk white/ act white	Any discussion of people (or the participant) talking/acting white
137	things better for blks/racial progress	Participants believe that race relations have improved for black people … racism is not as big of a deal as it used to be … racial dynamics are better for black people … racial inequality has decreased; more equality for black people today

138	Trayvon Martin	Any discussion or mention of Trayvon Martin or the case (i.e. "the boy who was wearing a hoodie/ carrying skittles and got shot); they may also mention Zimmerman rather than stating Trayvon Martin's name
139	try not to think about race/ race relations	Participants trying not to think about race/ race relations; not thinking about race as a copying mechanism; trying to remove race from situations
140	very concerned about race relations	Participants respond to interview question "How concerned are you about race relations" ... students can choose between very concerned, somewhat concerned, not concerned at all
141	want to be optimistic about future RE	Participants express desire/effort to be positive or optimistic about where race relations are going in the U.S. ... sometimes this code emerges when participants discuss their views of when, if ever, blacks will achieve racial equality - participants often express hesitation to say blacks will "never" achieve RE because they want to optimistic
142	wealth data	Marks start of discussions on wealth data
143	wealth disparities contribute to educ. disparities	Participants suggest that educational disparities emerge because of wealth disparities ... participants explain education inequality data by referring back to wealth data or discussing POC economic problems
144	wealth disparities reflect blacks lack of financial literacy	Participants suggest that wealth data reflects racial inequality because blacks are financial liberate --- blacks don't know how to save; blacks don't know about stocks/bonds; lack knowledge about homeownership; they don't know about banking and finances ... NOTE: Used on sections where students explains wealth data
145	wealth gap= explained by racism	Participants explain wealth RI as the result of racism
146	wealth gap=historically driven	Participants discuss the historical exclusion of blacks from economic opportunities - slavery left blacks out of wage labor markets; sharecropping/tenant farming prevent blks from acquiring wealth/income; redlining/discrimination in home loan allocation ... Also explained as "blks have been historically excluded from econ. opportunities"
147	wealth inequality=strx issue	Participants suggest that wealth data reflects racial inequality because there's something wrong with education systems/ the way society is structured (i.e. Intergenerational wealth, redlining, home loan discrimination, history of exclusion from economic opportunity, discrimination in employment opportunities, occupational segregation) ... this code is used for "most" responses that do not suggest that black themselves are responsible for inequality
148	white assimilation	Participants discuss assimilating to "white standards" of speech, dress, activities, etc. -- Discussions of "code switching" fit here -- discussions of having to "fit in with whites to make it" fit here as well.
149	white privilege	Participants might explicitly use the term "white privilege" OR they might talk about whites having certain advantages/privileges that other racial groups don't have
150	white violence	Any discussion of whites as violent; violent towards groups of color; KKK
151	whites can't relate to the blk experience	Any talk of whites not being able to understand blacks, the black experience OR racial dynamics (i.e., racism, discrimination, structural inequality)
152	whites have anti-black attitudes	Participant beliefs that whites don't like blacks; whites are afraid of blacks; whites don't want to be in same spaces as blacks; whites have negative views of blacks; whites hold stereotypes (negative) about blacks

153	whites have intergenerational wealth	Participants acknowledge that whites are able to pass down wealth to their children/ younger generations ... may actually use the term "intergenerational" ... the term wealth may be interchanged with "money", "houses/homes", "stocks", or other indicators of wealth
154	whites have more resources/advantage than POC	Belief that whites have more opportunities/ resources/ advantages than people of color
155	whites more likely to have educ. opportunities than blks	Participants suggest that whites have more educational opportunities (i.e., better schools, AP classes, better teachers, scholarships, access to tutors, SAT prep) that black students/students of color
156	Worst thing about being black	Any discussion of the worst thing about being black ... NOTE: this code usually used on participants' response to the question "What's the worst thing about being black"
157	you have to work twice as hard when blk	Any discussion of blacks having to work twice as hard as whites to achieve the same prestige, rewards, status, acknowledgements as whites
158	wealth disparities explain incarceration data	Participants suggest that wealth disparities explain the data on incarceration rates... participants explain incarceration data by referring back to wealth data and/or discussing POC economic problems/ distress
159	important for blacks to integrate	Views that blacks should make an effort to join/lead/participate in non-predominantly black spaces

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