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ABSTRACT

This study assesses college students from the University of New Hampshire (UNH) and their attitudes and opinions toward people of color, specifically looking at racial/ethnic identity and campus social climate. With 362 respondents from the University of New Hampshire who answered our online survey, it looked at the participants' post-racial ideologies and the participant's racial/ethnic identity. This study finds that there is a correlation between racial identity and post-racial beliefs. The study found that 82 percent of the student respondents did not believe that we, as a society, lived in a post-racial America. It was also discovered that the student respondents who did believe we live in a post-racial society (eighteen percent) were almost primarily White participants. The research also shows that in comparison to students of color, White students are more likely to believe that there is little to no racial prejudice or discrimination on UNH's campus. While this data gives important insight into the racial attitudes at UNH, having a more diverse demographic and a larger sample size would improve the research.

INTRODUCTION:

America is known as the land of opportunity, and with this opportunity comes the idea that everyone has a fair chance of acquiring success. The optimistic notion that everyone in America is equal gives credence to the idea of our society being "post-racial." According to sociologist Alexandre Emboaba (2016), the definition of post-racial is "… forms of thought, discourse, and action that evade, delegitimize, and seek to eliminate racial differences and their effects from the focus of academic scholarship, activist struggle, public debate, and state policy" (495). This idealistic belief of living in a post-racial America, compared to the ever-increasing prevalence of racial discrimination towards people of color (POC), highlights the social importance of this pressing issue. Ever since President Barack Obama took office in 2009, the word "post-racial" was used quite frequently. It was as if the election of the first Black president of the United States was the cure for all of the systemic and institutionalized racism that plagued American society since the beginning of its very creation. In as little as seven years, our society has seen the shift from cries of happiness and acclamations of racism being defeated, to cries of sorrow related to police brutality. The racial tension that the U.S. witnesses today includes the resentment towards the silence and oppression that POC have been forced to endure for centuries. In this study, I address the following question: do students who believe themselves to be "post-racial" still hold biased and prejudiced thoughts or feelings toward people of color? What this paper hopes to accomplish is to understand the mindsets of millennials, and how racial biases and prejudices are learned and socially enforced.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

In recent years, research by Drakulich (2015), Smith–McLallen (2006), Jacoby-Senghor (2015), and Bartholow (2015) have explored people's thoughts and biased feelings toward POC using various research methods.

Drakulich (2015) researched the racialized overtones of two very large social problems: labor market inequalities and crime. He studied the root of these issues by looking at people's mindset to determine whether said issues were rooted in individual shortcomings or structural and systemic inequalities. Drakulich discovered that participants with racial biases appeared to favor frames of racial labor market inequality that supported the status quo: a lack of awareness of the severity of wage disparity, a preference for justifications based on racialized character flaws rather than institutionalized inequalities or discrimination, and an anger of perceived special advantages or treatment sought by or given to Blacks (Drakulich 2015:18). Drakulich also found that those with racial biases appeared to favor frames of crime and criminal justice inequalities that support the current approach: viewing crime as a priority, a preference for explanations based on individual character flaws rather than discrimination due to racial inequalities in the criminal justice system, and high levels of anxiety over the thought of becoming a victim of crime (Drakulich 2015:19).

Smith–McLallen et.al. (2006) examined "the relation between implicit preferences for the color white over the color black and racial preferences (for White Americans and African Americans) among White participants" (Smith-McLallen 2006:50). This was done through the use of the Implicit Association Test (IAT), "a technique that is designed to measure associations between a target category and other attributes, usually positive or negative adjectives" (Smith-McLallen 2006: 47). This was done through a series of tests where participants made correlations between two racial preference IAT, which were based on photographs and stereotypic names, and a color preference IAT. The conclusion showed that White participants' implicit preferences were

for the color white over the color black. This translated to a preference for White faces and stereotypically White sounding names over Black faces and stereotypically Black sounding names (Smith-McLallen 2006:66).

Jacoby-Senghor et.al. (2015) understood that while documentation of implicit outgroup bias is numerous, information on the impact of outgroup bias on in-group affiliation is severely lacking. Traditionally, most research studied implicit bias and how it affects minority populations, yet, this study took it one step further. It studied the "implicit homophily", which is the love or attraction to in-group members, of a participant (also known as the perceiver) and looked to see how they viewed "in-group targets" (participants who shared a similar background as the perceiver) with "out-group friends" (participants who had a different background as the perceiver) (Jacoby-Senghor 2015:415). By testing implicit homophily, racial identity seen to be a key factor in response rates between "in-group targets" and "out-group friends." To study this, participants were given tests that measured implicit racial bias, explicit prejudice, and basic demographic questions. What was found, was that White participants with higher implicit anti-Black bias reported less affiliative responses toward White targets with Black friends compared to White targets with White friends (Jacoby-Senghor 2015:415).

Bartholow (2015) wanted to determine whether or not implicit bias could be influenced by "executive functions" (187). Executive functions are higher order cognitive control processes that include reasoning, problem solving, planning, and working memory (Bartholow 2015: 187). With a sample size of 485 participants, Bartholow conducted experiments that tested an individual's executive functions and their implicit racial biases. This was done through the use of multiple tests, which included an Implicit Association Test, an Implicit Measure of Racial Bias, a Weapon Identification Task (WIT), and First Person Shooter Task (FPST). Both the IAT and the Implicit

Measure of Racial Bias tested the participants by requiring them to make assessments on racial stereotypes of young Black men and their association to danger, while the WIT required the participants to make fast paced decisions when classifying objects as weapons or tools. The FPST required participants to also make split second decisions, yet the participants were to determine whether to shoot or not shoot images of armed and unarmed Black and White men. What all this discovered was that all implicit racial bias tests were efficient in evaluating implicit racial stereotyping; the association between Blacks and danger is stronger than the association between Whites and danger (Bartholow 2015:197). Furthermore, various external functions are related to the racial bias expressed on implicit and explicit measures. However, the relationships depend greatly on the type of implicit test that is used (Bartholow 2015: 211).

These studies all came to the conclusion that people have more negative associations with the color black than with the color white, which has a negative consequence on how society views people who have dark or black skin. The way that the authors reached such a conclusion was by means of either interpreting an Implicit Association Test or through surveys that measured implicit bias, however, there are limitations to the previous studies. An example of such is when the researchers tested for implicit racial bias by creating color tests, image comparisons, and racial stereotypes about one specific group; Black men. By only focusing on bias toward Black men, we tend to forget that other racial groups also face discrimination, albeit it sometimes via different forms of discrimination. Another limitation is the use of conducting experiments on specific populations. This can be seen in Bartholow (2015), where all participants were from undergraduate populations at three large universities. The example of coming from an institute of higher learning gives one the assumption that those partaking in the study would have certain advantages over the general population.

RESEARCH METHODS:

In the month of November 2016, the Sociology Research Methods Class fielded a survey to the University of New Hampshire's student population in hopes of gaining survey information that would provide data to either support or refute our hypotheses on numerous social issues. The survey was administered by an online survey program, "Qualtrics." The survey was distributed via email and on other various platforms of social media to other UNH students within the students' social networks. The respondents completed the survey anonymously and for no compensation. The students who partook in my study gave consent before participating in the online survey. The respondents were required to be 18 years of age and all had to agree to the terms and conditions laid out on the first page of the survey. By means of surveying the UNH student population, I used a convenience sample, which has the benefits of expedited data collection due to the fact that the researcher can readily use this technique to quickly poll a large population despite the fact that it is not an accurate representation of the population. However, the issue with convenience sampling is that since it may not give accurate representation of certain populations, there might be a misrepresentation of data, which in turn, might lead to an inaccurate conclusion. My data was collected anonymously and then analyzed in Qualtrics.

I had two variables that I tested in this survey. My independent variable was racial and ethnic identity and my dependent variable was the thoughts and feelings that UNH students have toward people of color. The survey question that I used to assess my independent variable was "What is your racial/ethnic background?" The survey questions that I used to assess my dependent variable were "Post-racial is defined as 'Denoting or relating to a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist' (Oxford Dictionary). Do you believe that American society is "post-racial?" and "Do you feel that racial prejudice and discrimination exist at UNH?"

The risks associated with my research are that some students may feel uncomfortable dealing with a race related topic, especially with the high polarization around the topic. Being a primarily white institution, UNH students taking my survey might feel defensive around sharing their attitudes around race and ethnicity, and might also feel uncomfortable drawing their own conclusions about their own implicit biases by the end of the survey. The benefit of my research though, is that it gives insight into the thoughts and beliefs that many students at UNH might have surrounding race and ethnicity.

My null hypothesis is that there is no correlation between students who believe American society to be post-racial and their prejudiced feelings toward people of color. My alternative hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between students who believe American society to be post-racial and their prejudiced feelings toward people of color. I hope to learn about the attitudes that many UNH students hold toward people of color, and to use such information to help combat systemic and institutionalized racism within American society.

RESULTS:

The Qualtrics survey that I used to conduct my study provided valuable information concerning my research. Beginning with 459 started surveys and ending with 362 completed surveys, we had an attrition rate of twenty-one percent. Regarding the demographics, we can see the limitations of having a convenience sample. The data collected show that while having a convenience sample was useful since it expedited the process of collecting data, it did have its drawbacks in the form of a lack of diversity in our participants. By looking at the gender of the survey participants we can see that there were a disproportionally larger number of women who took our survey. 75 percent (n=307) of self-identified women made up the majority of respondents,

whereas only 23 percent (n=95) of self-identified men took the survey and only two percent (n=9) of people who identified as neither man nor woman took the survey. This trend can also be seen in the class standing of the participants, which shows that the modal category is the junior class, with 39.5 percent (n=161) of respondents. In decreasing order, 21.8 percent (n=89) were sophomores, 18.4 percent (n=75) were seniors, 14.5 percent (n=59) were freshman, and lastly, five-point-nine percent (n=24) were "other" (non-traditional or graduate student). After analyzing both graphs, we can see that the distribution of survey respondents in the case of class standing were not as extreme as they were in the case of gender, however, there was still a category that was larger than the rest. With convenience sampling, subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher, and since Sociology Research Methods is an upper lever class that primarily has juniors and seniors, we, as the distributors of the survey, gave our questionnaire to people within our social networks. This in turn influenced how our data would look like, specifically our demographics.

VARIABLES:

My independent variable was the racial and ethnic identity of the participants. The majority of respondents were White, with 84.73 percent (n=333). With 4.33 percent (n=17), Asians were the second largest group of respondents. With 3.56 percent (n=14) each, Blacks/African-Americans and Latinos/Hispanics both tied for being the third largest group of respondents. 3.05 percent (n=12) of respondents identified as Multi-Ethnic, and 0.25 percent (n=1) identified as Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Other. One can see the overtly large number of White respondents, however, this is an accurate representation of UNH's racial

demographic. This is due to both the university's geographic location in rural New Hampshire and its status as a primarily white institution.

My dependent variable represents the thoughts and feelings that students have toward people of color. One aspect of my dependent variable is whether or not the students who were surveyed believe that they live in a post-racial America. An overwhelming 82 percent (n=294) of respondents answering that they do not believe that American society is post-racial, as compared to only 18 percent (n=64) of respondents believing that America is post-racial.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACE-ETHNICITY AND ATTITUDES ABOUT RACIAL DISCRIMINATION:

As stated in my introduction, my research question is as follows: do students who believe themselves to be "post-racial" still hold biased and prejudiced thoughts or feelings toward people of color? By creating a cross-tabulation and chart of both my independent variable and my dependent variable (*Table 1*), I can see if there is a correlation between the participants' racial identity and their belief about post-racial America. For my independent variable, I chose to merge all non-white racial/ethnic identities due to a lack of numbers (n=49) in comparison to White respondents (n=309). By doing this, we can interpret how the opinions of White respondents did in comparison to the responses from POC. Overall, the majority of people, both White and POC, do not believe that we live in a post-racial America (n=294). Out of the 64 student participants who did believe that we live in a post-racial society, 56 were White, while eight were POC. Looking at my cross-tabulation, my p-value is 0.76 and my chi-square value is 0.09. Since my p-value is greater than 0.05, the cutoff for statistical significance, I cannot reject my null hypothesis and cannot conclude that there is a relationship between the two variables.

(*Table 1: Cross-Tabulation – Racial/Ethnic Background & Post-Racial Beliefs*)

		What is your race and ethnic background?		
		White	Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Latino or Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Multi-Ethnic, Other	Total
Do you believe American society is "post-racial?"	Yes	56	8	64
	No	253	41	294
Total		309	49	358

		What is your race and ethnic background?
Do you believe American society is "post-racial?"	Chi-Square	0.09
	Degrees of freedom	1
	P-value	0.76

The majority of students who were surveyed, did not believe that they lived in a post-racial America. My research question focuses on the correlation between students who believe in post-racial ideology and their biases toward POC. Since many the survey participants chose the option 'No, we do not live in a post-racial society', I made "Post-racial is defined as 'Denoting or relating to a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist' (Oxford Dictionary). Do you believe that American society is "post-racial?" I chose to extend my research

and explore the correlation between a participant's belief in post-racial America, and their answers toward questions that deal with the issue of race and racism in the United States. Since my dependent variable was the thoughts/feelings that the participants had toward people of color, I used survey questions that assessed campus social climate.

My independent variable was post-racial beliefs and my dependent variable are views on discrimination (*Table 2*). Forty percent (n=142) of survey respondents choosing "somewhat" as an answer about racial discrimination at UNH, and thirty-six percent (n=130) believed that there was only "very little" racial discrimination, regardless of their belief in post-racial ideology. Fifteen percent (n=53) chose "not at all" to describe their belief in the prevalence of racial discrimination at UNH, while nine percent (n=31) of students felt racial discrimination "to a great extent." My p-value was 0.00 and my chi-square value was 21.31 statistical relevance. While focusing on the respondents that chose 'yes' to believing in post-racial America, in comparison to those who chose 'no', the most interesting aspect was that there were zero students who said that racial prejudice did not exist "to a great extent." Those who believe in a post-racial America, only make up 18 percent (n=64) of the participants, whereas those who do not believe in a post-racial America, make up the final 82 percent (n=292). Looking at only those who believe, participants who chose "not at all" and "very little" racial discrimination exists at UNH, made up seventy-five percent (n=48). This is a large percentage especially in comparison to the sample size (n=64). Compared to those who do not believe, only forty-six percent (n=135) chose "not at all" and "very little."

Reverting my independent variable back to racial/ethnic identity, while keeping the same dependent variable, we can see how certain racial groups differ from each other (*Table 3*) when it comes to campus climate. Despite having a disproportionate number of White participants (n=314) over POC participants (n=56), we can still compare the two. My p-value is 0.00 and my chi-square

statistic was 26.19. Both White and POC had "somewhat" as their modal category for determining if prejudice exists at UNH; White participants made up thirty-nine percent (n=124) and POC participants made up forty-four percent (n=25). Those who answered "to a great extent" prejudice exists at UNH, less than one percent (n=0.07) were White participants, whereas twenty-seven percent (n=27) were POC. The answer "not at all" was chosen by sixteen percent (n=50) of White participants, while less than one percent (.07) of POC participants felt that racial discrimination does not exist at UNH. Looking at both cross-tabulation's p-values, I can reject my null hypothesis and prove that there is a positive correlation between students who believe themselves to be post racial and their prejudiced feelings toward people of color.

(Table 2: Cross-Tabulation – Post-Racial Beliefs & Views on Discrimination)

		Do you believe American society is "post-racial?"		
		Yes	No	Total
Do you feel that racial prejudice and discrimination exist at UNH?	To a great extent	0	31	31
	Somewhat	16	127	143
	Very little	31	99	130
	Not at all	17	36	53
Total		64	293	357

		Do you believe American society is "post-racial?"
	Chi-Square	21.49

Do you feel that racial prejudice and discrimination exist at UNH?	Degrees of freedom	3
	P-value	0.00

(Table 3: Cross-Tabulation – Racial/Ethnic Identity & Views on Discrimination)

		What is your race/ethnic background?		
		White	Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Latino or Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Multi-Ethnic, Other	Total
Do you feel that racial prejudice and discrimination exist at UNH?	To a great extent	21	15	36
	Somewhat	124	25	149
	Very little	119	12	131
	Not at all	50	4	54
Total		314	56	370

		What is your race/ethnic background?
Do you feel that racial prejudice and discrimination exist at UNH?	Chi-Square	21.49
	Degrees of freedom	3
	P-value	0.00

CONCLUSION:

My study found that at the University of New Hampshire, many of the student respondents do not believe that American society is post-racial. It was also discovered that the student respondents who do believe we live in a post-racial society are almost primarily White participants. I would suggest that this highlights the White privilege at UNH and how this privilege gives White individuals the ability to navigate the world differently than a person of color. The research shows that in comparison to students of color, White students are more likely to believe that there is little to no racial prejudice or discrimination on UNH's campus.

The primary limitations to my research was the lack of diversity, specifically race and ethnicity. The majority of my survey participants were White, which had an effect on the results, since the lack of racial diversity prevented under-represented racial and ethnic groups from having a voice in this study. If I had more racial diversity, my p-value might have reached the 5% significance level needed to prove a statistical significance for my variables. Some suggestions for future research would be to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of my subjects and to also increase the sample size of my study. This would help to reveal the attitudes that people of color have about racial bias, without having the data be skewed due to a lack of minority subject's responses.

What this paper hopes to accomplish is to highlight some of America's biggest issues; racial discrimination and implicit racial bias. By showcasing such social problems, this paper can bring awareness to the general public. With racialized tensions highlighted via police brutality and anti-immigrant sentiments, I hope to bring an explanation to a growing concern that many people of color could feel helpless about. This paper also hopes to start a dialogue about race and our own implicit racial biases, in which we can look into ourselves, find our flaws, and then take the steps necessary to fix them.

RESOURCES:

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