The Role of Knowledge of Racist History and Identity in Perception of Racism

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Abstract

European Americans tend to perceive less racism in America, and see ongoing racism as a less likely source of existing racial disparities, than do African Americans. Most research that investigates group differences in perception of racism has focused primarily on motivational explanations for observed differences: specifically, that African Americans or European Americans experience ego-defensive motivations to perceive or deny racism, respectively (Adams et al, 2006) Without denying identity-relevant motivations as a source of differences in perception of racism, this study considers the additional hypothesis that differences in perception of racism can also reflect a difference in knowledge of racism in U.S. History. In the present study, African American and European American participants (N=309) indicated their knowledge of American history (positive and racist), perception of racism (isolated and systemic), and identity (ethnic and national collective self esteem). I used a signal detection measurement paradigm that included both consensually "true" events and fabricated (but plausible) events to distinguish accuracy from racism-expectant or other schema-driven responding. This study was successful at illustrating that even with a new, more stringent measure, racial differences in perception of racism can be accounted for by racial differences in knowledge of racist history. Results also support my secondary hypotheses that racial differences in perception of racism are particularly strong for perception of racism in systemic manifestations compared to isolated, individual events and that ethnic identity moderates the relationship between race and perception of systemic racism.

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Knowledge of Racist History and Identity in Perception of Racism

In November, 2008, voters elected Barack Obama as the first African American to be President of the United States. Subsequently, there was much discussion in mainstream discourse about the meaning of this event as an indicator about the state of racism in America. The willingness of the American populace to vote for an African American man is remarkable considering decades of survey data suggesting that European Americans would not be willing to vote for an African American person (Sears, 1988; Sears & Kinder 1971). Considered against this background, some observers suggest that the election of Obama is proof that racism is no longer a problem in American society.

The general good feeling that existed in the aftermath of the Obama election soon evaporated with strong opposition to his policy initiatives. Indeed, this opposition was so strong that some observers wondered whether it might itself be a manifestation of racism. For example, consider public opinion concerning President Obama's health care reform proposals. In October 2009, 58% of African Americans supported health care reform, compared to only 30% of European Americans. During the same period, survey results revealed an even larger racial divide in opinion about whether these differences in support for the reform were due to racism, with 43% percent of African Americans versus 16% of European Americans seeing racism as a major factor in opposition to Obama's policies.

How is one to explain such marked group differences in social perception? Most research that investigates group differences in perception of racism has focused primarily on motivational explanations for observed differences: specifically, that African Americans or European Americans experience ego-defensive motivations to perceive or deny racism, respectively (Adams, Thomas-Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006) Without denying this explanation, recent research

(Nelson, Adams, Branscombe, and Schmitt, 2010) has considered the additional possibility that differences in perception of racism can also reflect a cognitive or informational source: racial group differences in cultural knowledge about racism in U.S. history (Salter, 2008; Salter, 2010). In other words, African Americans may have greater knowledge than do European Americans about racism in the American past, and this knowledge difference can account for group differences in perception of racism in the American present.

Racial Disparities in the Perception of Racial Disparities

Despite the election of an African American man as president of the United States, racial inequality persists in American society. As an illustration, consider the National Urban League's Equality Index, a ratio of five weighted measures of how African Americans compare to European Americans in the areas of Economics, Education, Health, Social Justice, and Civic Engagement. The 2010 index for African American outcomes compared to European American outcomes is 71.8%. In the area of economics, African Americans are twice as likely as European Americans to live in poverty (Beavers & D'Amico, 2005), and the median household income for African Americans in 2010 is $34,218, only 62% of the median household income for European Americans ($55,530). In the area of education, European Americans are nearly twice as likely as African Americans to have completed college (25.3% versus 13.6%). In the area of health, European Americans are twice as likely as African Americans (19.1% versus 10.8%) to have health insurance (National Urban League, 2010). In the area of housing, the mortgage denial rate for high income African Americans was three times that of high income European Americans (10% to 30%, see Kochhar, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Dockerman, 2009.) Finally, in the area of treatment in the criminal justice system, African Americans are six times more likely to be incarcerated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008), receive longer sentencing (Mustard, 2001), and

are more likely to receive the death penalty than are European Americans—especially if the victim is white (e.g. Baldus, Woodworth, Zuckerman, Weiner, & Broffitt, 1998).

Many Americans would not disagree that there are systemic disparities in outcomes between African Americans and European Americans. These racial disparities are numerous and undeniable. Where disagreements arise is in people's explanations for these disparities. In particular, there is substantial disagreement in public opinion about the degree to which racial disparities in outcomes are due to racism and discrimination. European Americans tend to perceive less racism in America, and see ongoing racism as a less likely source of existing disparities, than do African Americans and people from other racial minority groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Operario & Fiske, 2001).

In the sections that follow, I review several major theoretical perspectives on the source of group differences in perception of racism. One can note both "hot" motivation and "cold" cognitive or informational processes as sources of differences in perception. Among the motivational sources, I review identification and threat to identity, implications for self esteem and well being, as well as ego defensive motivations. Among the cognitive and informational sources, I review the socialization influences that might contribute to racial group differences in historical knowledge and the intersection between historical knowledge and perception of racism.

Beyond Category Membership: Level of Identification and Racism Perception

Identity concerns not only the categorization of the self into social groups, but also the degree to which the group is valued or considered a central and meaningful part of the self. There is evidence that beginning as early as preschool, individuals express a sense of importance and happiness with their group (Patterson & Bigler, 2006). Group identification affects the

motivation to maintain a favorable image of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) or to serve as a cognitive schema for interpreting social perception or recollection of group history (Sahdra & Ross, 2007). The identity relevance of racism perception is evident not only in categorical group differences, but also in associations with identification level (weak to strong) within identity groups (ethnic or national category)and variations across different types of racism perception (systemic versus individual/isolated). Several noteworthy programs of theory and research have considered the identity implications of racism perception for both stigmatized and dominant group members.

Identity relevance of racism perception in stigmatized groups. Theory and research on the identity relevance of racism perception among stigmatized groups generally suggest a positive relationship between stigmatized group identification and perception of racism. For example, Allport (1954/1979) hypothesized that attributions to prejudice can lead to increased group identification.   Indeed, many studies have shown a positive relationship between group identity and perception of racism (Crocker & Major, 1989). Research has revealed that among stigmatized group members, higher identification levels are associated with higher likelihood of making attribution to discrimination compared to other in-group members with low identification (see Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

According to Branscombe and colleagues' (1999) rejection-identification model, perception of prejudice is the recognition of systemic rejection of one's racial group by the mainstream, which has a negative impact on well-being. However, group identification buffers this negative effect on well-being. To the extent that racism perception leads a person to identify more strongly with the stigmatized group, that identification produces positive effects that counteract the otherwise negative effects of racism on well-being. Other perspectives, such as

Sellers and Shelton (2002), acknowledge the relationship between racial identity and perception of discrimination, but question the exact mechanism by which racial identity relates to perception of discrimination (suggesting moderation instead of mediation as in the rejection-identification model).

Identity relevance of racism perception among the dominant European-American majority. Just as high identification is associated among stigmatized ethnic/racial minority groups with stronger (i.e., more positive) perception of racism, so too is high identification among European Americans associated with stronger denial (i.e., less perception) of racism. For example, Crocker and colleagues (1999) found a negative relationship between white identity and perceived plausibility of racist conspiracies. O'Brien and colleagues (2009) also found a negative relationship between white identity and perception of racism in the events that followed Hurricane Katrina.

Variation in identity relevance of different manifestations of racism. Besides level of identification, another indication of the identity relevance of racism perception concerns the distinction between two manifestations of racism. The first manifestation concerns perception of racism in individual acts of bigotry or isolated episodes of racist behavior, for which implications for identity categories are relatively small. The second manifestation concerns perception of racism as a systemic force deeply embedded in American society within institutional and cultural practices that unfairly offer advantage to the dominant group or limit the opportunities of minority groups. Institutional racism is pervasive and results in differential outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged groups within the system (Henkel, Dovidio, & Geartner, 2006).

European Americans are more likely to conceptualize racism in individual terms than systemic terms (O'Brien, et al., 2009). There is evidence to suggest that European Americans are

more willing to perceive racism in individual terms than institutional terms because perception of institutional racism threatens their self image and raises awareness of privilege (Unzueta & Lowery,2008). For European Americans, thinking about an unfair advantage or privilege in a system based on group membership has negative implications for one's group image (Branscombe, 1998).

Motivational sources of racial disparities in racism perception

How is one to understand the identity relevance of racism perception? Most discussions in mass media, everyday conversation, and even psychological science tend to emphasize motivational sources of racism perception. From this perspective, group differences in racism perception occur because people from different groups feel pressure of identity-relevant motivations to exaggerate or deny the extent of racism in U.S. society.

Perception of racism among stigmatized groups. There has been a longstanding focus on the effects of perceiving racism on well-being which infers motivation to perceive or not perceive racism. Theory and research in these traditions have yielded ambiguous conclusions. On one hand, some perspectives hold that perceiving racism has positive implications for self-esteem for stigmatized group members (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker, Major & Steele (1998); Dion, 1975). Crocker and Major (1989) concluded, based on a review of empirical findings, that stigmatized group members have as high or higher global self esteem than non stigmatized groups and that this higher esteem is a function of the stigmatized individual's tendency to deflect blame for negative outcomes away from their own personal deservingness and onto prejudice. One might interpret this pattern as evidence that people from stigmatized groups are motivated to perceive racism as a way to buffer self-esteem from the interpretative consequences of negative outcomes.

On the other hand, some perspectives hold that acknowledging one's status as a victim of discrimination may have negative implications for self esteem (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Tennen and Affleck, 1990). Several studies have shown that stigmatized group members have lower self esteem than their non-stigmatized counterparts (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey, 1999; Major, Barr, Zubek, & Babey, 1999; Miller & Downey, 1999). Accordingly, one might interpret the negative association between racism perception and self esteem to suggest that members of stigmatized groups are motivated to minimize discrimination to protect their well-being.

Some of the minimization theories suggest that stigmatized group members can be aware of discrimination in society, yet fail to perceive that they themselves are victims of discrimination (Crosby, 1984; Jost, 1995). Other researchers have found that denial of prejudice may also provide an important feeling of control over one's outcomes (Janoff- Bulman, 1989; Langer, 1975; Pyszcznski, Greenberg & Solomon, 1997; Rotter, 1966; Tennen & Affleck, 1990). Another factor affecting people's tendency to acknowledge prejudice is just world belief. Believing that the world is unjust has negative implications for well being (Lerner & Miller 1978), as it threatens one's sense of personal control (Crosby, 1982).

There are other psychological costs associated with perceiving discrimination as well (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989). For example, among African Americans and Hispanics, perception of discrimination is associated with feelings of depression and anger (Jackson, Brown, Williams, & Brown 1996; Salgado de Snyder, 1987). Kobrynowicz and Branscombe (1998) found that perception of discrimination is positively correlated with depression among women. The positive correlation between perception of discrimination and depression has also been found for gay men (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001). For

women, perception of sexism is positively correlated with higher instances of depression, anxiety, and somatization (Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000) and negatively correlated with self esteem (Swim, Hyers, Cohen & Ferguson, 2001).

Denial of Racism among European Americans

For European Americans, perception of racism can be threatening for group identity because it can link the individual with a group responsible for committing socially unacceptable behavior. (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Meertens & Pettigrew, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thinking about an unfair advantage or privilege based on group membership can evoke feelings of guilt and negatively affect one's group image (Branscombe, 1998). Moreover, for European Americans, thinking about a history of mistreatment toward another group can result in collective guilt (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, Manstead, 1998). This provides majority group members with a motive to deny that they have an advantaged position in a discriminatory system. This denial may protect their group identity and minimize psychological distress.

Evidence suggests that the distress associated with collective guilt is self-focused rather than based on concern for the welfare of the other group. When social identity is salient, dominant group members' perception of the severity and injustice of harm committed by their in-group is reduced. Another way of reducing that collective guilt is to perceive the intergroup situation as legitimate (see Branscombe & Miron, 2004). Yet another way is to minimize collective guilt is to dehumanize the outgroup (Castana & Giner-Sorolla, 2006).

To date, most studies have manipulated racism perception and inferred motivational pressure to perceive or deny racism from the effect of this manipulation on self-esteem or well-being. Few studies have manipulated motivational pressure and examined its impact on

perception of racism. In one study that has done so (Adams, Thomas, & O'Brien, 2004), researchers manipulated motivational pressure and examined its impact of perception of racism by using a self-affirmation procedure. The self-affirmation procedure allowed for the achievement of the important psychological goal of regarding the self as generally good and moral in the face of threats in specific domains. In this study, researchers manipulated self-affirmation in participants, and then had them complete a questionnaire measuring their perceptions of racism against stigmatized groups. After the exposure to the self-affirmation manipulation, European American participants were more willing to perceive racism in hypothetical and actual events (existing policies, decisions, and states of affairs). That is, after their defensive motivations were apparently neutralized, racial differences in perception of racism were reduced or eliminated.

Informational Bases: Historical Knowledge

For most psychologists, to propose a motivational source of differences in racism perception implies an ego-defensive bias whereby people delude themselves, allow their "hot" or emotional desires to color their objective perceptual processes. However, even if people manage to set aside their motivated biases and attempt to consider events in a "cool", unmotivated fashion, their judgments can still bear the influence of identify concerns to the extent that different people in different communities draw upon different sets of background information when making judgments about the possibility of racism. Of particular interest for the present research is a group's collective memory of racist incidents (Sahdra & Ross, 2007), which can influence social perception in the present (Nelson et al, 2010). People who can draw upon more examples of racism and discrimination may be better able to perceive its existence when they see it, or see it as a plausible motive for ambiguous events. Formal and informal sources have

documented many incidents of racism and discrimination in the US past, from large institutions such as slavery to individual acts of bigotry such as the Emmit Till murder. It appears, however, that Americans are unequally knowledgeable about racist incidents in U.S. history. In particular, African Americans and people from other historically stigmatized groups may have more knowledge of racism that has occurred in the past, and this group difference in knowledge of past racism may partly account for group differences in perception of present racism. The following section will examine possible sources of differences in knowledge of racism in United States history.

Group Differences in Exposure to Historical Knowledge about Racism

African Americans have more exposure to informal and formal teaching of historical accounts of racism in the United States than do European Americans. With regard to informal education, African Americans are more likely than European Americans to receive socialization from parents on the existence of racism (Stevenson & Renard, 1993). This socialization can prepare them for dealing with the same unfair treatment that other ingroup members have faced in the past.

Another source of exposure to cases of racism is the African American media. Racism and discrimination are more prominently portrayed in African American media and social discourse than mainstream media and social discourse (Turner, 1993). Consequently, African Americans, more than European Americans, may have actual cases of past discrimination readily available as references when considering potential case in the present.

With regard to formal education, African Americans have more exposure to Black History programs and celebrations in schools (in predominantly African American school districts). Many Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) require courses in

African American studies as element of curriculum for every student. These institutionalized

sources of Black history are provided to African Americans as an opportunity to learn about

themselves, and would either be absent or would be different in content in mainstream sources

(Salter, 2010).

Mainstream educational sources of US history, however, provide a different historical

emphasis. Baumeister and Hastings (1997) argue that the goal of mainstream sources is to

deliver a flattering portrayal of White America intended to shape opinion and truth (see also

Zinn, 1990). Students from kindergarten to the twelfth grade are being presented with inaccurate

"storied" history complete with omission of wrongdoings to the underprivileged by the

government in order to foster a sense of American heroism (Shafer, 1999). Indeed, the formation

of national identity has largely to do with the understanding of national events occurring in the

nation's past (Kurtis, et al., 2010; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

The Influence of Historical Knowledge on Racism Perception

While acknowledging that perception of racism may be subject to motivational

influences, my colleagues and I (Nelson, Adams, Branscombe & Schmitt, 2010) investigated the

possibility that racial differences in the perception of racism reflect differences in knowledge of

historically documented cases of past wrongdoing by the U.S. Government. In a first study,

Black and White participants read a fictional account of a present-day conspiracy, in the format

of a newspaper article. The account concerned an underground separatist group (White or Black)

that plotted to undermine elected officials (Black or White). Participants answered questions

regarding the plausibility of the conspiracy. Results revealed not only that beliefs about

credibility in the anti-Black conspiracy story were stronger among African American participants

than European American participants, but also (and more important) that this group difference

was mediated by a similar group difference in knowledge about historically documented anti-Black conspiracies.

In the second study, we manipulated historical knowledge and assessed its effects on beliefs about the plausibility of anti-Black conspiracies. Specifically, we assigned White participants at random to one of 3 conditions. In the race relevant condition, participants read about the Tuskegee syphilis study and the FBI's illegal intimidation of African American leaders. In the race-irrelevant condition, participants read an account of the Watergate scandal and the Iran-Contra affair. In the control condition, participants did not read an article. Results revealed that after learning about actual U.S. conspiracies against African Americans, European American participants perceived a new conspiracy against African Americans as more plausible than European American participants who either did [other treatment condition] or did not learn [control] about actual U.S. conspiracies against African Americans.

Although these initial studies suggest a role for accurate historical knowledge as a source of group differences in perception of racism, the measure of historical knowledge that I used in these studies was not optimal. In particular, this measure did not distinguish between accurate historical knowledge and the tendency to suspect racism in any event, past or present. Rather than historical knowledge, per se, it is possible that African Americans had a "yes schema" regarding perception of racism against their group that lead them to suspect racism in any event. In other words, the same forces that lead African Americans to suspect racism in the present could also lead them to suspect racism in the alleged past incidents, regardless of whether those events actually happened.

Present Research

One of the primary goals for the current research was to refine the knowledge of history

measure that I used in previous research and to replicate previous findings that knowledge of history can account for group differences in perception of racism using this refined measure of historical knowledge. In order to achieve this, I expanded the history measure beyond items describing incidents of racism in U.S. history to include items describing positive items in U.S. history. More important, I used a signal detection measurement paradigm that included both consensually "true" events and fabricated (but plausible) events to assess distinguish accuracy with facts from of racism-expectant or other schema-driven responding. I used this measure to test my primary hypothesis: (1A) that African American participants will have more accurate historical knowledge of history than European American participants, and (1B) African American participants will indicate greater perception of racism than European American participants, and (1C) accurate that knowledge of history will mediate the relationship between race and perception of racism.

In my previous research, I measured perception of racism by observing responses to questions about the plausibility of anti-Black conspiracies. The current research extends the measure of perception of racism beyond instances of conspiracies to include institutional policies and practices as well as isolated or individual acts of racism. As noted earlier, perception of racism in institutional terms has been shown to threaten European American self image, and because of this, European Americans tend to perceive racism in more individual terms than institutional. (O'Brien *et al.*, 2009, Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). This background suggests a secondary hypothesis that racial differences in perception of racism will be particularly strong for perception of racism in systemic manifestations compared to isolated, individual events. I also expect to find that Ethnic identity moderates the relationship between race and perception of systemic racism negatively for European Americans and positively for African Americans.

Although not the primary focus, the present research also provides the opportunity to test other hypotheses regarding different manifestations of identification. According to the ethnic asymmetry hypothesis, (Staerkle *et al.*, 2005; 2010), national and ethnic identity will have divergent relevance for African American and European American participants. European American participants will be more strongly identified with America than African American participants, and that national identification and ethnic identification will be more closely related for European Americans than African Americans.

Method

Participants

Participants were 230 European American students from the University of Kansas (KU) and 79 African American students from KU, Xavier University of Louisiana[1], and Howard University. KU students received course credit in exchange for their participation. Xavier and Howard students were uncompensated volunteers who were asked to complete surveys at the end of classes and meetings.

Procedure

A same-race experimenter administered the materials in the form of a short questionnaire booklet in the context of small groups. After participants completed the booklet, the experimenter asked them to read a debriefing form, informed them of the purpose of the study, and answered any questions.

Measures

Historical knowledge. Participants completed a 30-item Black History quiz consisting of true positive (e.g., "An African American doctor invented the process of extracting plasma from

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[1] Xavier University of Louisiana is located in New Orleans, but these data were collected prior to the occurrence of Hurricane Katrina.

whole blood."), true negative (e.g., Medgar Evers struggled for the civil rights of African Americans and was assassinated for his writings."), false positive (e.g., "Garrett Morgan invented and patented the rotary blade lawnmower."), and false negative items (e.g., "African American Paul Ferguson was shot outside of his Alabama home for trying to integrate professional football," see Appendix A) Participants indicated whether the item was true or false and indicated their level of certainty on a scale from 1 (*Guessing*) to 5 (*Certain*). The negative items all referred to potential incidents of past racism (whether historically documented or ones that I fabricated).

Perception of racism. Participants read a series of 14 items that described cases of potential racism (see Appendix B). They then rated the degree to which they personally believed that the incidents were due to racism on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*), to 7 (*Certainly*). Principle components analysis with varimax rotation revealed two factors that accounted for 54% of the variance. I computed the mean of items that loaded on each factor to create two composite scores. The first composite factor accounted for 30% of the variance and included 9 items that referred to *systemic manifestations* of potential racism (e.g., the decision of universities like California and Texas to end affirmative action programs; $\alpha = .87$). The second composite factor accounted for 23% of the variance and included 5 items that referred to *isolated, hypothetical acts* of potential racism (e.g., "Several people walk into a restaurant at the same time. The server attends to all the White customers first. The last customer served happens to be the only person of color.", $\alpha = 82$).

Racial collective self-esteem. Participants in all conditions completed the *private collective self-esteem subscale* of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; see Appendix C). Participants indicated their level of agreement with the four items (e.g., "In

general, I am glad to be a member of my racial group") on a 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 7 (*Strongly Disagree*) scale where higher numbers indicate more pride in their ethnic identity. Items were reverse coded as necessary so that higher numbers indicate greater collective self-esteem. $\alpha = .67$

National collective self-esteem. Participants in all conditions completed the *private collective self-esteem subscale* of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; see Appendix D). Participants indicated their level of agreement with the four items (e.g., "In general, I am glad to be a member of my national group") on a 1 (*Strongly Agree*) to 7 (*Strongly Disagree*) scale where higher numbers indicate more pride in their national identity. Items were reverse coded as necessary so that higher numbers indicate greater collective self-esteem. $\alpha = .82$
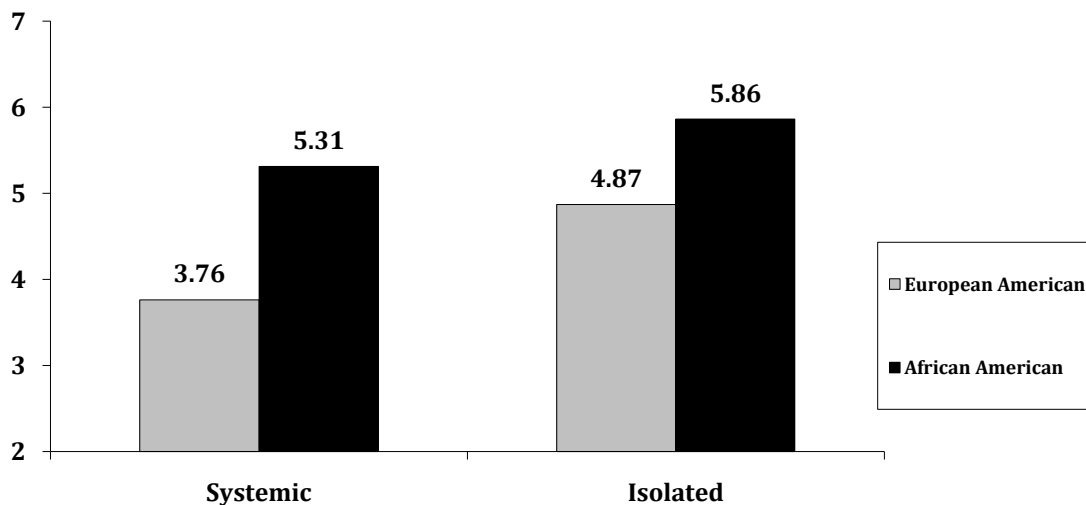
Results

To investigate results of the study, I first conducted tests for hypothesized group differences in perception of racism and the hypothesized interaction with racism type. More specifically, I expect to find larger group differences for perception of racism in systemic manifestations than in isolated instances. I also tested for the hypothesized group differences in knowledge of history. I then conducted analyses to test the hypothesis that group differences in historical knowledge mediate differences in perception of present racism. I examined hypothesized group differences in identity relevance with the hypothesized interaction that African Americans indicate greater Ethnic CSE than National CSE and European Americans indicate more National CSE that African Americans. Finally, I examined the hypothesized impact of identity relevance as a moderator of perception of racism.

Perception of Racism

To evaluate hypotheses regarding group differences in perception of racism, I conducted a mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the composite measures of racism perception

with participant race as the between subjects factor and racism type as the within-subjects factor. A visual representation of results appears in Figure 1. Results revealed the hypothesized effect of race, $F(1,274) = 90.78$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .25$ such that African Americans ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.06$) indicated greater perception of racism than European Americans ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.22$). There was also a main effect of racism type, $F(1,274) = 104.21$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .28$ such that participants perceived greater racism in hypothetical, isolated acts ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.33$) than in systemic manifestations ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.31$).

Figure 1.
Perception of Racism

In addition, results revealed the hypothesized Race X Racism Type interaction, $F(1,274) = 7.18$, $p=.008$, $\eta^2 = .03$. To interpret this interaction, I examined the group difference for each type of racism perception. The tendency for African Americans to perceive greater racism than European Americans was significant for items referring to isolated, individual events, $t(282) = 6.49$, $p< .001$, $d = 0.83$ (Ms = 5.86 and 4.87, SDs = 1.07 and 1.312 respectively). However,

this tendency was even stronger for items referring to systemic manifestations, $t(278) = -10.47$, $p < .001$ $d = 1.13$, (Ms = 5.31 and 3.76, SDs = 1.09 and 1.13, respectively).

Alternatively, one can examine the difference in perception of different types of racism within each racial identity group. The tendency to perceive greater racism in isolated events than systemic manifestations was significant among African American participants, $t(74) = 5.41$, $p < .001$, $r = .58$. It was also significant among European American participants, $t(200) = 11.67$, $p < .001$, $r = .47$. However, the interaction suggests that this significant difference was more than 1.5 times greater for European American participants ($M_{diff} = 1.04$) than for African American participants ($M_{diff} = 0.61$).

However one considers it, results indicate that European Americans tended to perceive less racism than African Americans, especially in systemic manifestations. I have hypothesized that this pattern reflects the particular relevance that this perception of systemic racism holds for experience of White and American identity. I examine this hypothesis after I consider group differences in historical knowledge

Knowledge of Racist History

To test for group differences in accurate historical knowledge, I first had to transform raw data into a usable measure. To do so, I used a measurement paradigm from signal detection theory (Feldman-Barrett & Swim, 1998; Sesko & Biernat, 2009; Green & Swets, 1966). Signal detection analysis allows for the identification of a participant's ability to correctly identify a signal from background noise while taking into account any bias the participant exhibits in his or her responses. In this study, the "signal" is an item on the history quiz that represents a well documented, consensually recognized incident in U.S. History. "Noise" is an item on the history quiz that represents a "made-up" incident that, to my knowledge, did not happen. Most of the

"false" false items were complete fabrication, (e.g. Paul Ferguson being killed for attempting to integrate the game of football) although there were some items in which I changed an essential element of the event (e.g. Garrett Morgan invented the traffic signal, but in the quiz the item states that he invented the rotary blade lawn mower).

The signal detection analysis takes into account any bias in responses (e.g. answering "true" to all items for which the participant does not know the correct answer) in order to better capture true ability to detect the signal. I coded responses as a "hit" when a participant identified historically documented item as "true" with confidence of 3 or greater (on the 5-point confidence scale)[2]. I coded responses as "false alarms" when participants incorrectly identified undocumented items as a "true" item, again with confidence of 3 or greater. Of particular interest in the present study is the participants' ability to identify the signal (documented historical fact) when it is present (a hit), without claiming to perceive the signal when it is not present (false alarm). The statistic d', which one calculates as $d' = z(H) - z(F)$, is a measure of sensitivity to the presence of the stimulus that takes into account information about rates of hits and false alarms. Table 1 shows the hit and false alarm rates by participant ethnicity.

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[2] I imposed the certainty criterion to screen guessed answers. Patterns of results are the same (although slightly weaker) without this confidence criterion.

Table 1.
Hit and False Alarm Rates by Ethnicity

	Hit Rate (Positive/Negative)		False Alarm Rate (Positive/Negative)	
	African American	European American	African American	European American
Means	.64 / .75	.25 / .50	.19 / .30	.15 / .31
SD	.25 / .21	.18 / .24	.17 / .22	.12 / .24
Main Effects	Valence, Race		Valence	
Fs	157.85, 166.19		75.59	
ps	<.001, <.001		<.001	
Interactions	Race X Valence		Race X Valence	
Fs	26.8		3.22	
ps	<.001		0.07	

I calculated separate d' sensitivity statistics for accurate detection of positive and negative historical facts. I then conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on these measures with participant race as the between subjects factor and valence as the within-subjects factor. A visual representation of results appears in Figure 2. Results revealed a main effect of race, $F(1,307) = 134.78$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .31$, such that African Americans had higher d' scores ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.85$) than European Americans ($M = .51$, $SD = 0.78$). The main effect of valence was not significant. $F(1,307) = 134.78$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .31$. There was a marginal Race x Valence interaction $F(1,307) = 3.15$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = (.01)$.

Figure 2.

Knowledge of Racist History
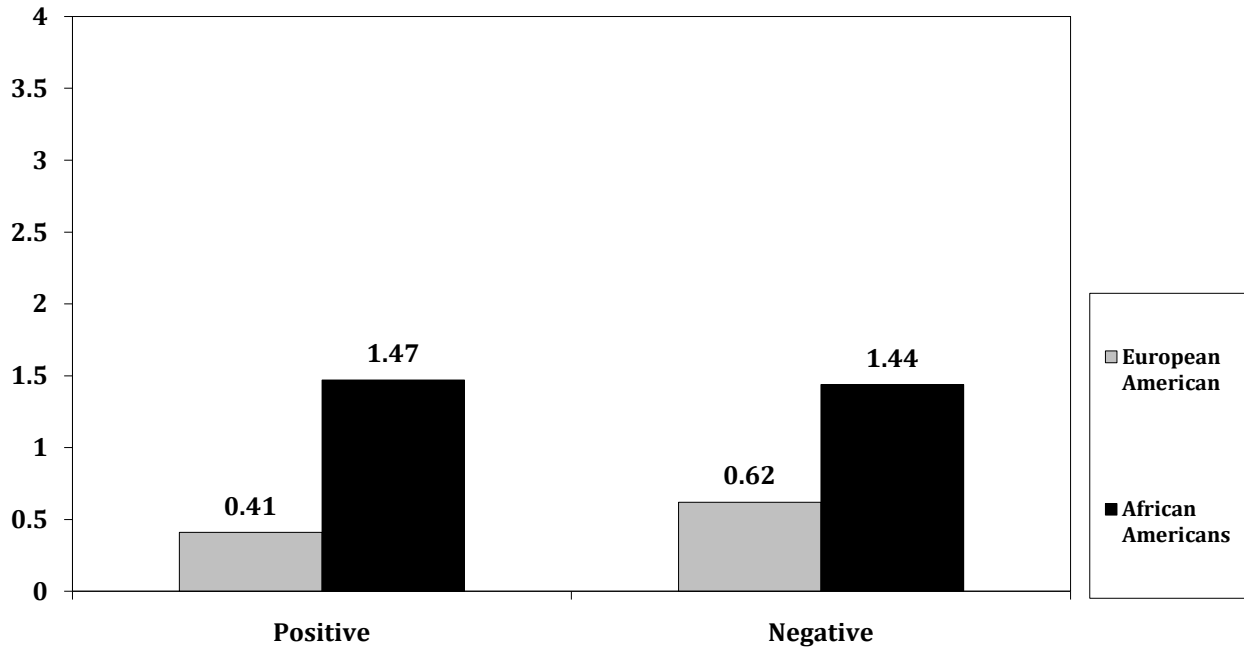
To interpret this interaction, I examined the group difference for positive and negative

historical fact detection. The tendency for African Americans to greater detect historical fact than

European Americans was significant for positive events, $t(307) = 11.45, p< .001, \ d \ = 1.42, (Ms$

$= \ 1.47$ and .41, $SDs = .81 \ $ and .68 respectively). The same tendency is present, but somewhat

smaller in magnitude, for historical fact detection of negative events. $t(307) = -7.12, p< .001 \ d \ =$

0.93, ($Ms = 1.44$ and .62, $SDs = .88 \ $ and .88, respectively). I also examined the difference in

positive and negative historical fact detection within each racial identity group. There was no

significant difference between positive and negative knowledge of racist history for African

American participants, $t(78) = .32, p = .75, \ r \ = .29$. However, among European American

participants, there is greater knowledge of racist history than knowledge of positive history.

$t(229) = -3.18, p< .05, r = .29$.

Test of the Mediation Hypothesis

All of the negative history items referenced instances of racism in U.S. History. The d' negative statistic is referred to as knowledge of past racism in the remainder of the analyses. Analyses so far reveal support for hypothesized group differences in both perception of racism and knowledge of past racism, such that African Americans both exhibit higher accuracy with regard to the identification of historically documented incidents of racism and perceive greater racism in present events than do European Americans. To test the hypothesis that group differences in accurate knowledge of historically documented incidents of racism can account for the differences in perception of present racism, I conducted a mediation analysis for each type of racism perception (isolated events and systemic manifestations) using the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986)

Perception of systemic racism. Mediation analysis confirmed reliable relationships between race and knowledge of racist history ($\beta = .38, p< .001$), between knowledge of racist history and perception of racism in systemic manifestations ($\beta= .43, p< .001$), and between race and perception of racism in systemic manifestations ($\beta = .53, p< .001$). With race and knowledge of racist history as simultaneous predictors of racism perception in systemic manifestations, the relationships of both race ($\beta = .43, p< .001$) and accurate knowledge of racist history ($\beta = .26 p< .001$) with perception of racism in systemic manifestations were smaller, but still significant. A Sobel test of mediation (Sobel, 1982) confirmed that the indirect effect of race (via knowledge of racist history) on perception of racism in systemic manifestations differed from zero, $z = 4.03, p < .001$ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.
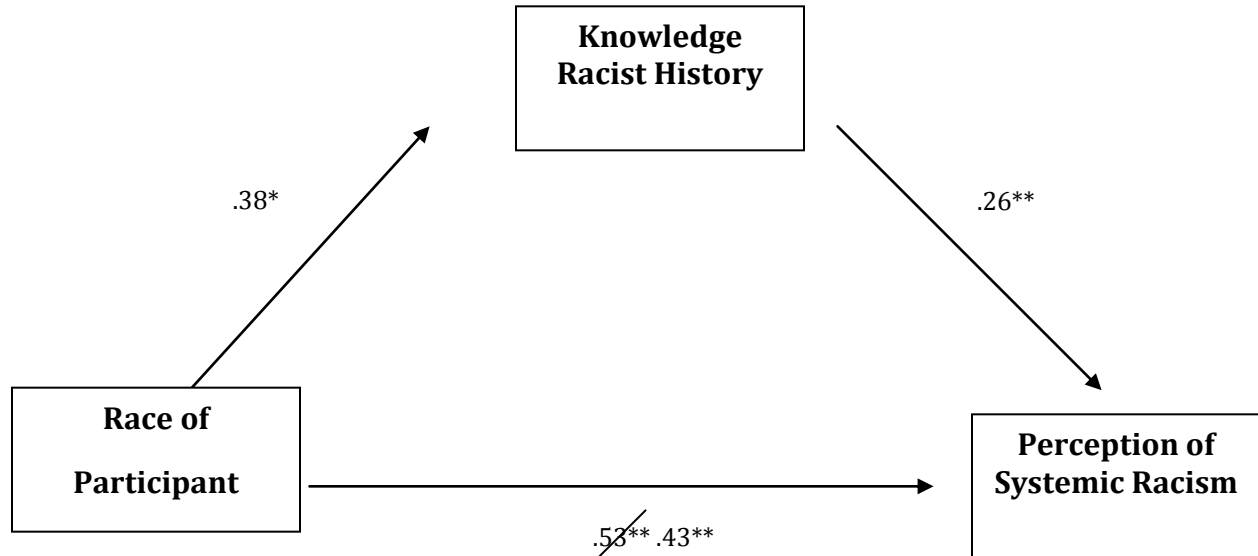
Perception of Systemic Racism- Mediation Analysis

Perception of isolated racism. Mediation analysis confirmed reliable relationships between race and perception of racist history ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), between perception of racist history and perception of racism in isolated events ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), and between race and perception of racism in isolated events ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$). With race and perception of racist history as simultaneous predictors of racism perception in isolated events, the relationships of both race ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$) and perception of racist history ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$) with racism perception in isolated events were smaller, but still significant. A Sobel test of mediation (Sobel, 1982) confirmed that the indirect effect of race (via knowledge of history) on perception of racism in isolated events differed from zero, $z = 3.57$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 4).
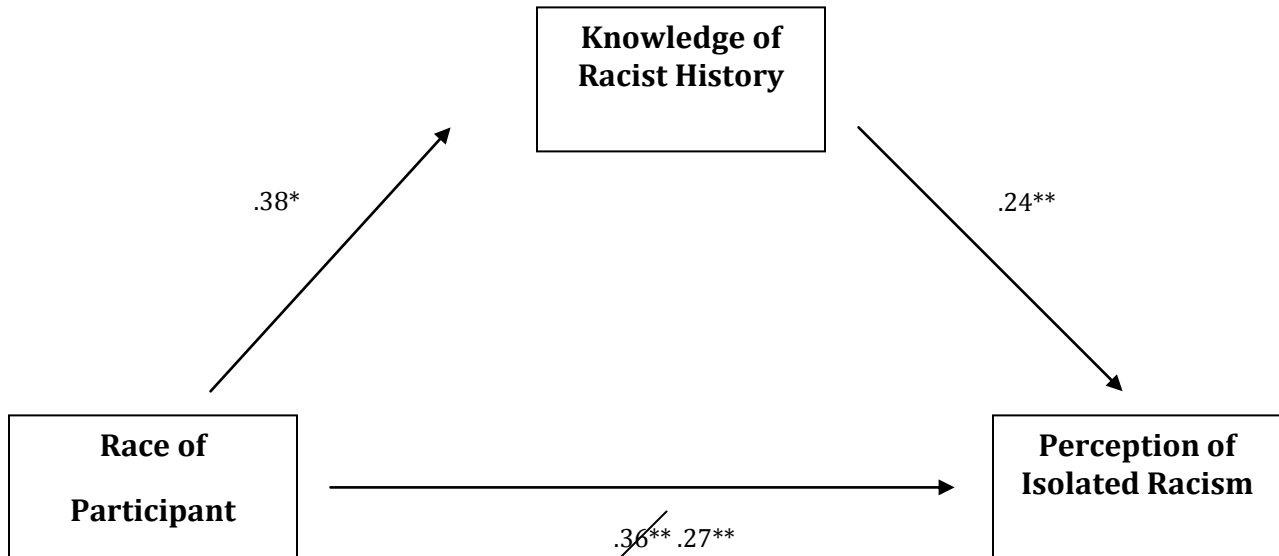
Figure 4.
Perception of Isolated Racism—Mediation Analysis


```
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │  Knowledge of   │
                        │  Racist History │
                        └─────────────────┘
            .38*        ↗                   ↘     .24**

┌──────────────┐                          ┌──────────────────┐
│   Race of    │ ──────────────────────→  │  Perception of   │
│ Participant  │                          │ Isolated Racism  │
└──────────────┘      .36** .27**         └──────────────────┘
```

Implications of Identity Relevance

The preceding analyses treat social identity as a categorical variable and examine

differences in historical knowledge and racism perception as a function of category membership.

However, the relevance of a particular group membership for personal experience varies across

individuals, and I propose that this variation has implications for historical knowledge and

perception of racism. In particular I expect to find there are group differences in ethnic and

national identity relevance and that ethnic identification moderates the relationship between race

and perception of racism.

In order to evaluate hypotheses about divergence of national and subgroup identities

(Staerkle *et al.*, 2005), I conducted a mixed-model ANOVA on private collective self-esteem

with participant race as the between subjects factor and identity type (ethnic/racial and national)

as the within-subjects factor. A visual representation of results appears in Figure 5. Results

revealed main effects of identity type, $F(1,301) = 47.37$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .14$ and race, $F(1, 301) = 5.81$ $p<.05$, qualified by the hypothesized Race x Identity Type interaction, $F(1,301) = 52.00$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2 = .15$, To interpret this interaction, I examined the difference in ethnic and national collective self esteem within each racial group. There was no significant difference ethnic and national collective self esteem for European American participants, $t(226) = -.37$, $p = .71$, $r = .65$. However, among African American participants, there was greater collective self esteem for ethnicity than nationality. $t(75) = 6.35$, $p< .001$, $r = .24$. I also examined the group difference for ethnic and racial collective self esteem. European American participants indicated greater national collective self esteem than African American participants $t(304) = 4.86$, $p< .001$, $d = .63$ (Ms = 6.14 and 5.38, SDs = 1.18 and 1.25 respectively) These results support the notion that there is asymmetry in the relationship between ethnic and national identity (Staerkle *et al.*, 2005).

Figure 5.

Collective Self Esteem (Private Regard)
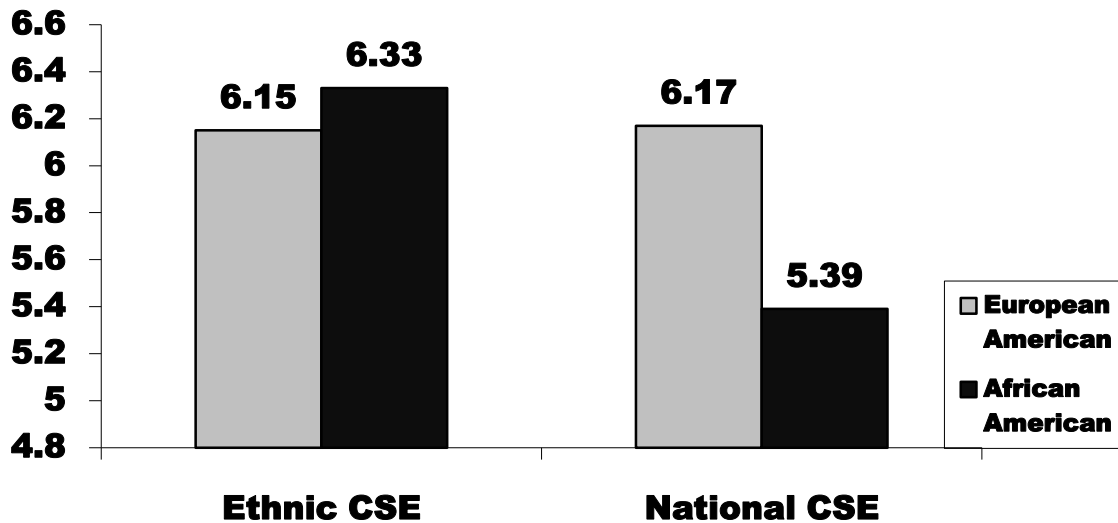
Correlations. To assess relationships of identity relevance with other dependent variables, I computed correlations coefficients within African American and European American samples for zero-order relationships of ethnic collective self esteem, national collective self esteem, perception of institutional racism, perception of individual racism, knowledge of positive Black history, and knowledge of racist history. The results of the correlation analyses appear in Table 2. I found support for my primary hypothesis that knowledge of racist history is positively related to perception of racism for both African American and European participants. I also found the predicted European American identity relevance for systemic manifestations of racism, that there is a negative relationship between perception of systemic racism and national CSE among European American participants. Among African Americans, perception of systemic racism was related in opposite directions to ethnic CSE (+) and national CSE (-).

Table 2

Pearson Correlations Between all Study Variables

	Ethnic CSE	National CSE	Isolated Racism	Systemic Racism	Positive History	Racist History
Ethnic CSE						
National CSE	.65** *.24 **					
Isolated Racism	-.03 *.07*	-.12 *-.10*				
Systemic Racism	-.22** *.29**	-.29** *-.27**	.47** *.58**			
Positive History	-.01 *-.13*	-.08 *-.13*	.08 *.17*	.10 *.07*		
Racist History	-.21** *.08*	-.33** *-.08*	.20** *.35**	.29** *.26**	.18** *.29**	

Note: Non- italicized numbers denote correlations among European American Participants. Italicized numbers denote correlations among African American Participants. * denotes significant correlation coefficient $p< .05$ level. ** denotes significant correlation coefficient at the $p< .001$ level. Grey boxes denote significant group difference in correlation coefficients $p< .05$ level.

Next I examined significant group differences in correlation between variables. I found expected group differences in identity relevance for African American and European American Participants–that ethnic and national CSE are more highly related for European American participants than for African American participants. I also found a group difference in the relationship between knowledge of racist history and CSE. Among European American participants, knowledge of racist history was negatively related to both national and ethnic CSE. For African American participants there was no significant relationship between knowledge of racist history and CSE.

Perception of Institutional Racism. As the correlation table suggests, both racial group membership, historical knowledge, and identity relevance are related to perception of systemic racism. In order to test the comparative influence of these variables, I conducted multiple regression analyses. First, I conducted a multiple regression analysis with ethnic collective self esteem, participant race, knowledge of racist history and their interaction terms as simultaneous predictors of perception of racism in systemic manifestations. Results appear in Table 3. The regression analysis for the full model indicated that the 3-way interaction was not significant, $b = -.04$, $t\,(274) = -.64$, $p = .52$. The model with two-way interactions revealed a significant Race x CSE_{ethnic} interaction, $b = .17$, $t\,(268) = 4.59$, $p = .002$. The main effect of historical knowledge remained significant, $b = .23$, $t\,(274) = 3.61$, $p < .001$.

Table 3.

Regression: Race x Ethnic CSE x Knowledge on Perception of Systemic Racism

Model and Predictors	B	SE	β	t	p
1 (Constant)	4.04	.44		9.18	.000
Ethnicity of Participant	1.27	.16	.44	8.01	.000
CSEethnic	-0.08	.07	-.06	-1.17	.245
Knowledge of Racist History	0.33	.07	.25	4.59	.000
2 (Constant)	4.67	.49		9.60	.000
Ethnicity of Participant	1.25	.17	.43	7.34	.000
CSEethnic	-0.18	.08	-.13	-2.39	.018
Knowledge of Racist History	0.31	.09	.23	3.61	.000
Race x Knowledge	-0.01	.16	.00	-0.04	.967
Race x CSEethnic	0.58	.19	.18	3.10	.002
Knowledge x CSEethnic	-0.02	.08	-.01	-0.22	.829
3 (Constant)	4.67	.49		9.59	.000
Ethnicity of Participant	1.24	.17	.43	7.29	.000
CSEethnic	-0.18	.08	-.13	-2.37	.018
Knowledge of Racist History	0.31	.09	.23	3.61	.000
Race x Knowledge	0.01	.16	.00	.03	.975
Race x CSEethnic	0.65	.21	.19	3.05	.003
Knowledge x CSEethnic	0.01	.09	.01	.08	.935
Knowledge x CSE x Race	-0.13	.21	-.04	-0.64	.523

To interpret the interaction, I regressed perception of racism in systemic forms on

CSE_{ethnic} and knowledge of racist history separately for African American and European

American participants. I conducted a multiple regression analysis with ethnic collective self

esteem and knowledge of racist history and their interaction terms as simultaneous predictors of

perception of racism in systemic manifestations. Results for African American and European

American participants appear in Tables 3 and 4.The Knowledge x CSE_{ethnic} two-way interaction

was not significant for either African Americans or European Americans, $b = .01$, $t(72) = -.67$, p

$= .51$ and $b = .01$, $t(201) = .08$, $p = .93$, respectively. The main effect of historical knowledge

remained significantly positive for both African Americans and European Americans, $b = .25$, t

$(72) = 2.24$, $p = .03$, and $b = .25$, $t(201) = 3.61$, $p < .001$, respectively. Finally, the main effects

of ethnic identity were also significant, but in opposite directions: significantly positive for

African Americans b = .27, t (201) = 2.38, p <.05., but significantly negative for European

Americans, b = -.16, t (201) = -2.38, p <.05.

Table 4.
Regression: Knowledge x Ethnic CSE on Perception of Systemic Racism for African American Participants

Model and Predictors		B	SE	B	t	p
1	(Constant)	5.05	.15		33.45	.000
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.30	.14	.24	2.17	.033
	CSEethnic	0.39	.17	.27	2.38	.020
2	(Constant)	5.05	.15		33.31	.000
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.31	.14	.25	2.24	.029
	CSEethnic	0.47	.20	.31	2.35	.022
	Knowledge x CSEethnic	-0.13	.19	-.09	-0.67	.506

Table 5.
Regression: Knowledge x Ethnic CSE on Perception of Systemic Racism for European Participants

Model and Predictors		B	SE	β	t	P
1	(Constant)	3.81	0.08		50.07	0.00
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.31	0.09	.25	3.62	0.00
	CSEethnic	-0.18	0.08	-.16	-2.38	0.02
2	(Constant)	3.81	0.08		48.66	0.00
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.31	0.09	.25	3.61	0.00
	CSEethnic	-0.18	0.08	-.16	-2.37	0.02
	Knowledge x CSEethnic	0.01	0.09	.01	0.08	0.94

I next conducted a multiple regression analysis with national collective self esteem,

participant race, knowledge of racist history and their interaction terms as simultaneous

predictors of perception of racism in systemic manifestations. Results appear in Table 5. The

regression analysis for the full model indicated that the 3-way interaction was not significant, b =

-.01, t (276) = -.07, p = .94. The model with two-way interactions revealed no significant Race x

CSE$_{national}$ interaction. However, the main effects model indicated that all three effects of

historical knowledge, b = .21, *t* (276) = 3.11, *p* = .002, race b = .41, *t* (276) = 6.61, *p* <.001, and

national CSE b = -.18, *t* (276) = 3.61, *p* =.008 were all significant. These results suggest that,

national identity functions similarly for African Americans and European Americans.

Perception of Isolated Racism. I conducted a multiple regression analysis with ethnic

collective self esteem, participant race, knowledge of racist history and their interaction terms as

simultaneous predictors of perception of isolated incidents of racism. Results appear in Table 6.

The regression analysis for the full model indicated that the 3-way interaction was not

significant. The model with two-way interactions revealed no significant Race x CSE_{ethnic}

interaction. The main effects of historical knowledge, b = .21, *t* (279) = 2.95, *p* = .003, and race b

= .26, *t* (279) = 4.07, *p* <.001. were significant. The main effect of CSE_{ethnic} was not significant.

Table 5.
Regression: Race x National CSE x Knowledge on Perception of Systemic Racism

Model and Predictors		B	Std. Error	β	t	p
1	Knowledge of Racist History	3.84	.08		51.07	.000
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.27	.07	.20	3.66	.000
	CSEnational	1.16	.16	.39	7.42	.000
	(Constant)	-0.21	.05	-.20	-3.80	.000
2	Knowledge of Racist History	3.81	.08		47.75	.000
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.28	.09	.21	3.11	.002
	CSEnational	1.22	.18	.41	6.61	.000
	Race x CSEnational	-0.18	.07	-.18	-2.69	.008
	Race x Knowledge	-0.04	.17	-.02	-0.25	.806
	Knowledge x CSEnational	0.04	.13	.02	0.34	.735
	(Constant)	-0.08	.06	-.08	-1.37	.172
3	Knowledge of Racist History	3.81	.08		46.80	.000
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.28	.09	.21	3.09	.002
	CSEnational	1.22	.19	.41	6.51	.000
	Race x Knowledge	-0.18	.07	-.18	-2.67	.008
	Race x CSEnational	-0.05	.18	-.02	-0.26	.799
	Knowledge x CSEnational	0.05	.16	.03	0.31	.756
	Knowledge x CSE x Race	-0.08	.07	-.08	-1.12	.265
	Knowledge of Racist History	-0.01	.13	-.01	-0.07	.943

Table 6.
Regression: Race x Ethnic CSE x Knowledge on Perception of Isolated Racism

Model and Predictors	B	SE	B	t	p
1 (Constant)	4.84	.09		55.16	.000
Knowledge of Racist History	0.33	.08	.24	3.96	.000
Ethnicity of Participant	0.82	.18	.27	4.55	.000
CSEethnic	0.03	.08	.02	0.36	.716
2 (Constant)	4.80	.09		53.18	.000
Knowledge of Racist History	0.29	.10	.21	2.95	.003
Ethnicity of Participant	0.79	.20	.26	4.07	.000
CSEethnic	0.01	.09	.01	0.08	.939
Race X Racist History	0.15	.19	.06	0.78	.438
Race X CSEethnic	0.14	.22	.04	0.62	.534
Racist KnowledgeX CSEethnic	-0.14	.10	-.08	-1.44	.152
3 (Constant)	4.81	.09		52.95	.000
Knowledge of Racist History	0.29	.10	.21	2.95	.003
Ethnicity of Participant	0.79	.20	.26	4.02	.000
CSEethnic	0.01	.09	.01	0.09	.929
Race X Racist History	0.16	.19	.06	0.85	.398
Race X CSEethnic	0.21	.25	.06	0.83	.406
Racist KnowledgeX CSEethnic	-0.11	.11	-.07	-1.02	.307
RaceXKnowledgeXCSEethnic	-0.15	.25	-.05	-0.62	.538

I conducted a multiple regression analysis with national collective self esteem, participant race, knowledge of racist history and their interaction terms as simultaneous predictors of perception of isolated incidents of racism. Results appear in table 7. The regression analysis for the full model indicated that the 3-way interaction was not significant. The model with two-way interactions revealed no significant Race x CSE$_{national}$ interaction. The main effects of historical

knowledge, b = .20, *t* (281) = 2.8, *p* = .005, and race b = .26, *t* (281) = 3.75, *p* <.001 were

significant. The main effect of CSE$_{national}$ was not significant..

Table 7.

Regression: Race x National CSE x Knowledge on Perception of Isolated Racism

Model and Predictors		B	Std. Error	β	*t*	*p*
1	(Constant)	4.85	.09		55.71	.000
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.32	.09	.23	3.72	.000
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.79	.18	.26	4.38	.000
	CSEnational	-0.05	.06	-.05	-0.82	.413
2	(Constant)	4.82	.09		52.06	.000
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.29	.10	.21	2.80	.005
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.79	.21	.26	3.75	.000
	CSEnational	-0.04	.08	-.04	-0.49	.622
	Race x CSEnational	0.08	.20	.03	0.41	.685
	Race x Knowledge	0.04	.15	.02	0.30	.765
	Knowledge x CSEnational	-0.07	.07	-.06	-0.96	.337
3	(Constant)	4.83	.09		51.11	.000
	Knowledge of Racist History	0.29	.11	.20	2.73	.007
	Ethnicity of Participant	0.81	.22	.27	3.79	.000
	CSEnational	-0.05	.08	-.04	-0.58	.565
	Race x Knowledge	0.04	.21	.02	0.20	.838
	Race x CSEnational	0.11	.18	.06	0.59	.555
	Knowledge x CSEnational	-0.04	.08	-.04	-0.50	.618
	Knowledge x CSE x Race	-0.09	.15	-.06	-0.58	.564

Discussion

Observing group differences in perception and understanding of racism, mainstream accounts in mass media and psychological science focus on the tendency for people in ethnic minority communities to perceive relatively high levels of racism as the deviant phenomenon that requires explanation. In contrast, the theoretical foundation for the present study emphasizes that the tendency for European Americans to perceive relatively low levels of racism is not "just natural", but instead constitutes a deviation from normative standards that also requires explanation.

Historical Knowledge and Racism Perception. Drawing on this theoretical foundation, the primary purpose of the present study was to investigate the hypothesis that group differences in perception of racism reflect group differences in knowledge about documented incidents of past racism. (Alternatively stated, but perhaps more consistent with the orientation of the work, the study investigates whether White American tendencies to deny the extent and significance of present racism reflect ignorance of documented incidents of past racism.) Although my previous research had provided some initial evidence in support of this hypothesis (Nelson et al., 2010), the ambiguous character of the measure of historical knowledge—in particular, whether it reflected accurate historical knowledge or merely the same tendency to suspect racism in plausible past cases as in plausible present cases—raised difficulties in interpreting this evidence. In the present study I attempted to address this limitation of previous work by assessing knowledge of historical racism using a more refined measurement technique. The results suggest that African American participants are better detectors of historical facts than European American participants—that is, they are better at correctly identifying documented, "signal" facts as true (i.e., hits), but are no more likely to incorrectly claim that fabricated, "noise" statements

are true (i.e., false alarms)—and group differences in historical knowledge scores partially mediate the group difference on the perception of racism measure. Therefore I was able to repeat the same pattern of findings from my previous work while using the new, more stringent measurement of history.

In addition to examining group differences in knowledge of historical racism, I also examined knowledge of positive "black history". I found similar group differences in knowledge of positive history, that African Americans participants were better at correctly identifying positive items than European American participants. Unlike knowledge of racist history, knowledge of positive history did not mediate group differences perceptions of racism. The prediction that knowledge of racist history mediated group differences in perception of racism was based on the notion that people draw upon relevant information about racism in the past to understand ambiguous situations in the present (Nelson *et al*, 2010). On the other hand, instances of positive black history show little likeness for instances of racism in the present and would therefore be an unlikely source of reference for understanding racism in the present.

As noted above, one of the goals of refining the history measure was to differentiate between accurate historical knowledge and mere tendency to perceive racism in the past. Measuring knowledge of positive black history provided the opportunity to observe whether African American participants showed a preference for racist history items over positive history items. I found that African American participants had no more knowledge of racist historical events than of positive historical events. This pattern of results lends further support to the notion that participants are drawing upon knowledge of history as an informational sources to understand ambiguous situations in the present versus having a preference for seeing racism against their group.

Identity Relevance of Racism Perception. Beyond the primary focus on differential historical knowledge as a possible source of group differences in perception of racism, a secondary purpose of the present research was to examine the moderating effect of identity concerns on perception of racism. One expression of focus was the comparison between group differences in perception of racism in broad, systemic manifestations versus isolated, individual events. Results revealed that both African American and European American participants indicated greater perception of racism for isolated events than for systemic manifestations. However, results also indicate that the tendency to perceive greater isolated racism than systemic racism was stronger among European Americans than African Americans.

Another expression of this focus was the measure of identity relevance (the private collective self-esteem subscale of the CSE) on perception of racism. I found that ethnic identity moderates the relationship between race and perception of systemic racism. Further analyses revealed that ethnic collective self esteem and perception of racism was differentially related for each ethnic group. For European Americans, greater ethnic collective self esteem indicated less perception of racism, and for African Americans, greater ethnic collective self esteem indicated greater perception of racism. The moderation effects of ethnic self esteem were only present for systemic manifestations. A different pattern of results emerged when examining the relationship between national collective self esteem and perception of racism, in which more national collective self esteem indicated less perception of systemic racism for both African American and European participants. Once again, the relationship between national collective self esteem and perception of racism is only present for systemic manifestations.

Ethnic asymmetry. Although it was not the focus of the present research, results of the study also inform discussions of the "ethnic asymmetry hypothesis," that ethnic identity holds

different meaning for majority group members than for minority group members (Molina, 2007; Staerkle, Sidanius, Green, & Molina, 2005, 2010). According to the asymmetry hypothesis, majority group members are more highly identified with their nationality than minority group members, and the relationship between national and ethnic identity is more closely related for majority group member than minority group members. The present research illustrates this effect. I found that there was a significant interaction between race and identity type. Further analyses revealed that African Americans indicated greater ethnic identity than national identity, while for European American participants, there was no difference in their level of ethnic and national identity.   European American participants indicated significantly greater levels of national identity than African American participants. This pattern reflects divergent strength of the relationship between national and racial identity relevance for African Americans and European Americans.

     Double consciousness. The ethnic asymmetry hypothesis—and particularly the weaker correlation between national identity relevance and racial identity relevance among African Americans than European Americans—is consistent with a notion that W.E.B DuBois described as "double consciousness". In DuBois' original articulation, he proposed that, as Americans, African Americans know that mainstream America perceives them in a manner consistent with negative stereotypes, but that this mainstream perception is inconsistent with how African Americans view themselves. To some extent, the experience of double consciousness is potentially applicable to any person, in that everyone in the USA potentially has consciousness of themselves as American (national identity) and in terms of racial identity. However, this potentiality does not become reality for White Americans, for whom racial identity and national consciousness are more or less the same thing (in both their own and perceivers' experience:

Staerkle *et al*, 2005). In contrast, the lower correlation between ethnic and national identification for African American participants (compared to European American participants) suggests that these forms of consciousness constitute more separate/distinct forms for African Americans. Additional evidence for the phenomenon of "double consciousness" comes from different patterns of relationship that different forms of identification (racial and ethnic) have with perception of racism. As noted earlier, the results from this study reveal that the relationship between national identification was in the same direction for both African American and European American participants. However, the relationship between ethnic identification and perception of racism was related in different directions for European American and African American participants.

Limitations

History measure. Researchers have made significant contributions toward understanding perception and denial of racism by measuring consequences of perceptions of racism and then inferring motive based on the assumption that individuals avoid negative consequences (e.g. threats to self-image and self esteem). Other researchers have manipulated motivation and measured perception of racism in order to illuminate factors that contribute to perception and denial of racism. In my research, I have attempted to anchor perception of racism to an element of reality—knowledge of history.

The history measure used in the present study appropriately served its intended function, which was to impose "truth" criteria into the study of perception of racism. The "true" items in the history measure are historically documented instances in American past. Establishing this truth element was an attempt to pin claims or denials about racism to a more objective standard of comparison. However, a potential limitation of the history measure is the restrictive nature of

the knowledge of history measure. The current measure limited participants to choose "true" or "false" with and indication of their certainty for each item. The current measure does not allow for analysis of the content of participants' knowledge or depth of understanding of these events, which could also vary widely among participants. Open-ended questions such as, "What was Jim Crow?" would allow for elaborative answers, which one could code for accuracy and amount of detail. Another useful alternative for measuring historical knowledge would be to give participants an open recall task in which participants would list a certain number of Black History facts. One could code responses for accuracy, level of detail, and valence.

One could code the content of the history responses and group racism type -- such as "institutional racism", which would include responses such as Tuskegee and Jim Crow, "Isolated racism", which would include incidents such as the Emmet Till murder. Based on my research and others (O'Brien,*et al* 2009) one could expect to find a negative relationship between national identity and recall of institutional racism for African American and European American participants. It would also be interesting to include "meritocracy" as a category created to represent history responses describing inventors and individuals such as Frederick Douglass, a former slave who became a writer and statesman. Based on research by O'Brien and colleagues (2009) one would expect to find that meritocracy would be more strongly related to perception of institutional racism than of isolated racism.

Alternatively, one can use the open recall history task as an outcome measure (Sahdra & Ross, 2007) to answer a different research question – e.g. whether making identity salient would affect the valence of items recalled. Based on the results of the current study (negative relationship between identity and knowledge of racist history for whites), for European Americans, making national identity salient would lead to less recall for negative items than

people who had no identity manipulation. For African Americans, the current research does not reveal a significant relationship, positive or negative, between identity and knowledge of history (positive or racist), and therefore does not inform any predictions about the outcome.

Future Directions and Implications

Exploring motivated differences in knowledge. One useful extension of the previous research involves exploring the source of the differential historical knowledge in depth. African Americans and European Americans have come to acquire different historical knowledge as a product of differential exposure. The current discussion has not, however, examined any possible *motivational explanation of the differential knowledge*.

Individual may have motivations of two sorts—motivation to seek accuracy and motivation to protect the self—which each yield different outcomes. Depending on the motivation, individuals can employ strategies to arrive at accurate outcomes or desired outcomes (Kunda, 1990). If an individual is motivated to protect the self and the ingroup, then he or she should actively avoid historical information with negative implications for the self or the ingroup (e.g., stimuli which induce collective guilt or information that could tarnish the individual's conception of the self as unprejudiced (Branscombe,1998; Crandall, *et al*., 2002). Conversely, if the individual is motivated toward obtaining accuracy, then she or he would not avoid the historical information despite its implications for the group. There is support in the literature for both possibilities.

Selective consumption of history. For reasons that I noted in the motivation section of this paper, failing to acknowledge racism in the present can yield self-protective benefits, particularly for European Americans. Moreover, the present research has demonstrated that awareness of racist U.S. history has negative implications for racial identity in European Americans as well as

negative implications for national identity in both African American and European Americans. Given the negative psychological consequences for acknowledging racism, past and present, it seems that individuals might have motivation to avoid learning about racist aspects of U.S. history.

In two studies, one could explore whether the ego defensive motivations play a role in African American and White American's willingness to expose themselves to negative information about racism in American history. One study could utilize identity related threats and the second study could utilize a self affirmation paradigm to buffer threats. The main hypothesis of first study would be that participants will avoid identity-threatening historical information when a relevant identity is salient. The primary hypothesis of the second study would be that the participants will be more likely to approach identity-threatening historical information after being affirmed.

Implications for Selective reproduction of racist US history. In addition to exploring whether individuals engage in selective consumption of racist history, it would be relevant to explore selective reproduction of racist history and the role that racial and national identity play in an individual's willingness to share racist information with others. Kurtiş and colleagues (2010) found that representation of identity relevant history – in the form of Thanksgiving commemorations that either mentioned genocide, did not mention genocide, or did not mention indigenous peoples at all—have implication for levels of national glorification. In this study, the bi- directionality of identity was also observed, which demonstrated a relationship in the opposite direction— identification has implications for history reproduction. Participants who were exposed to an identity salience manipulation were more likely to support omitting the mention of genocide in Thanksgiving commemorations than participants who were not exposed. This effect

demonstrates that levels of national identification affect decisions about dissemination of identity relevant information.

Using similar methods one could observe the effects of national and racial identity on dissemination of racist history. The experimenter could ask European American participants to arrange a layout for the February university bulletin. The experimenter could give participants folder containing a variety of clippings from which to choose. Among the clippings would be representations of black history (racist and positive). One could expect to find that for European Americans, manipulating racial and national identification would result in fewer representations of racist history than those who had not received the manipulation. Participants in the national identity condition may include more positive black history representations than those in the ethnic or control condition. Positive representations of black history usually exemplify American values like invention, pioneering and overcoming adversity and therefore I would expect to find more schema consistent materials in that condition.

Conclusion

A real-world example of the selective reproduction of racist U.S. history comes in recent attempts of the Texas State Board of Education to adjust history textbook language to change references to the "Atlantic Slave Trade" to the "Atlantic Triangular Trade" (among other changes). The news of the proposed changes sparked considerable discussion expressing concern that history books would depart from portraying the truth. However, news of an attempt to use history textbooks to manipulate public opinion should come as no surprise those who study history or its dissemination. James Loewen (1996), in his analysis of American history textbooks argues that textbook production is so focused on promoting patriotism that there is an intentional exclusion of historians and original sources from the production process. He notes the

politicized nature of history education such that officials are not interested in accuracy if inconvenient truths result in less flattering portrayals of American history that discourage positive national identity.

The present study helps to reveal why history education is a matter of political concern. In short, knowledge of history affects social climate in the present. Knowledge of racist history (or lack thereof) has implications for the support of policies and institutional practices (such as public school bussing programs) that rest on an understanding of historical context. As American history textbooks are the primary means my which Americans are exposed to history, control of that information source provides some control over public opinion and attitude. The continued erosion of collective knowledge about America's racist past will lessen the likelihood policies and practices in the present will address ongoing problems or reflect lessons leaned from the past.

One beneficial result of Texas' attempt to change American History books is that it brought attention to an issue that has concerned American historians and educators for decades. Changes toward neutralizing negative incidents in U.S. history rob students of the opportunity to learn about previous wrongdoing or injustice on the part of our nation's leaders. Today's students grow to become tomorrow's leaders, and learning about past injustice not only improves racial attitudes and challenges stereotypes (Hughes, Bigler, & Levy, 2007) but also teaches them how to think critically about events, in the past and the present (Loewen, 1996). Teaching youth to perceive nuance of events, allows for more challenging and informed approaches the problems of today. Our history—good, bad and controversial as it may be—is an essential element in providing the context by which we come to conceptualize ourselves and the world.

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Appendix A

Instructions: Please indicate whether each item below is True or False by writing the words "**True**" or "**False**" before each item. Then, indicate your level of confidence in your answer by placing an "**X**" on the number that represents your certainty from "1" if you are guessing, to "5" if you are certain of your answer.

1. _____ An African American doctor invented the process of extracting plasma from whole blood or the purpose of storage and transfusion. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

2. _____ African American, Booker T. Washington helped to initiate the civil rights movement in 1955. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

3. _____ Fourteen year old African American Emmett Till was kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped a for allegedly whistling at a white woman. The two white acquitted for his murder by an all-white jury later boast about committing the murder in a *Look* magazine interview. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

4. _____ Among many pursuits, African American Benjamin Banneker contributed to the historic survey that laid out the District of Columbia. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

5. _____ In Tuskegee, Alabama the U.S. Government deceived over 600 African American men by hiding their diagnosis of syphilis, and for the next forty years denied them medical treatment for this potentially fatal disease. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

6. _____ African American George Washington Carver invented hundreds of uses for the peanut and other plants. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

7. _____ Medgar Evers struggled for the civil rights of Black Americans and was assassinated for his writings. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

8. _____ In the 1980's congress passed the Purity Act which prevents Black immigrants from entering the U.S. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

9. _____ The Emancipation Proclamation did not abolish slavery throughout the United States. (Full citizenship was not established for Black Americans until the 14th Amendment was adopted.) <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

10. _____ An African American man invented the fluorescent light bulb. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

11. _____ African American Paul Ferguson was shot outside of his Alabama home for trying to integrate professional football. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

12. _____ Ralph Bunche was the first African American to receive Noble prize for Peace. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

13. _____ An African American operated in the first successful open heart surgery.<u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

14. _____ After slavery ended Jim Crow laws enforced segregation, limited black job opportunities and kept Black Americans from voting were in effect until the 1960s. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

15._____ In the 1970's, the F.B. I. developed a program to insure high unemployment rates of African American people to maintain an inexpensive pool of workers. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

16._____ An African American man invented the cotton gin. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

17._____ The U.S. Government promised payment of 40 acres of land and a mule for their "services" as slaves but never delivered such payment. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

18._____ Garrett Morgan invented and patented the rotary blade lawnmower. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

19._____ Supreme Court ruling in 1896 in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* that separate facilities for whites and blacks were constitutional encouraged the passage of discriminatory laws. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

20._____ Fredrick Douglas, born a slave, escaped and became one of America's most dominant black abolitionist and agitator during the 19th century. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

21._____ Bernice Bethune was a leader in the black women's club movement and served as president of the National Association of Colored Women. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

22._____ The F.B.I. has employed illegal techniques (e.g., hidden microphones in motels) in an attempt to discredit African American political leaders during the civil rights movement. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

23._____ The Unites States criminal justice system has historically delivered longer sentences to Black Americans than White Americans for the same crimes. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

24._____ The African American slave Dred Scott sued for his freedom. The Supreme Court ruled that he was property, not a citizen of the United States and therefore could not sue in federal court. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

25._____ Less than 200 Black people were lynched in the U.S. during the one hundred year span between 1870 and 1970. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

26._____ Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman elected to Congress <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

27._____ Elijah McCoy was the first person to patent a traffic signal. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

28._____ The U.S. government deliberately created and administered the HIV virus to over 900 African Americans in a secret project during the 1980s. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

29._____ Mae Jemison was the first Black Female astronaut. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

30._____ Historically, African American defendants convicted of killing white victims were much more likely to be sentenced to death than were African-American defendants convicted of killing African-American victims. <u>Certainty:</u> (Guessing) 1 2 3 4 5 (Certain)

Appendix B

PART A: The following items describe a policy, decision, or existing state of affairs. Please select a number from the scale below to indicate how much YOU, personally, think racism plays a role in each.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Certainly

___1. The decision of universities like California and Texas to end affirmative action programs.

___2. The decision of the US Government to invade Iraq.

___3. High rates of poverty among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans.

___4. The practice of racial profiling—using only information about race in the decision to make traffic stops, police searches, etc.

___5. The relatively small number of African Americans in professional sports coaching positions (NBA, NFL) relative to the number of African American athletes.

___6. The decision of the USA to withdraw from the United Nations conference on racism.

___7. The policy of denying Mexican trucks access to US highways, even though (a) Canadian trucks have unimpeded access and (b) access for Mexican trucks is mandated by the NAFTA accord.

___8. The portrayal of African Americans in US entertainment media.

___9.Sentencing practices whereby possession of any quantity of cocaine is punishable by a maximum sentence of one year, whereas possession of 5 grams of crack (made from cocaine and baking soda) carries a mandatory 5 year minimum sentence.

PART B: The following items describe an event or situation. Please select a number from the scale below to indicate how much YOU, personally, think racism or discrimination plays a role in each.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Certainly

____10. Several people walk into a restaurant at the same time. The server attends to all the White customers first. The last customer served happens to be the only person of color.

___11. An African American man goes to a real estate company to look for a house. The agent takes him to look only at homes in low income neighborhoods.

___12. An African American man was pulled over for speeding by a White highway patrol officer. Unknown to the man, his registration had expired earlier that month. Rather than give him a ticket and let him continue, the officer impounded the vehicle at the man's expense.

___13. An African American woman made reservations for a rental car over the phone, but when she arrived in person to collect the car, the agent informed her that no cars were available.

___14.Lashandra Jenkins and Amy Conner applied for the same job. The have nearly identical qualifications. Amy gets called for an interview and Lashandra does not.

Appendix C

Instructions: Using the following scale, please indicate your opinion on the following items.

Strongly
Disagree   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**   **7**   **Strongly**
                                                                                    Agree

_____ I often regret that I belong to my racial group.

_____ In general, I'm glad to be a member of my racial group.

_____ Overall, I often feel that my racial group is not worthwhile.

_____ I feel good about other members of my racial group.

Appendix D

Instructions: Using the following scale, please indicate your opinion on the following items.

Strongly   **Strongly**
Disagree   **1**   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**   **6**   **7**   **Agree**

9 ._____ I often regret that I belong to my nation.

10._____ In general, I'm glad to be a member of my nation.

11. _____ Overall, I often feel that my nation is not worthwhile.

12. _____ I feel good about other members of my nation.