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Project Topic: White Privilege in American Society

Brief Introduction

This project will elaborate on the idea of white privilege as it is still relevant in today's current society as well as on UNCG's campus. Considering the historical background of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, it is evident that the university is heavily influenced by white individuals. Over the years, it is interesting to view how much the campus, students, and faculty has grown. Knowing that UNCG was once a strictly white womens college, it is interesting to view how much the campus, students, and faculty has grown. The overall growth and expansion of UNCG has allowed for massive diversity. Each year, the university's minority rate continues to increase as UNCG is a supporting diversity. With this being said, UNCG offers many opportunities to everyone regardless of their race or gender, but many opportunities are also favored towards certain ethnic groups. While connecting UNCG's campus to today's society, I plan to incorporate more of a theoretical analysis on how everyone is considered human but minority individuals continue to be degraded within society. Also I would like to mention how systematic racism still exists within the government. An example of this could be COVID and how it impacted many American citizens. For instance, white individuals were granted access to healthcare whereas black individuals and other minorities did not have the

same opportunities. Elaborating on this idea, it was interesting to view how many minorities heavily suffered and in some cases died due to the unavailability of proper healthcare.

Theoretical Review

White privilege is a racial and social issue that has continued to spread throughout American society through generations for many centuries. When discussing white privilege, it can be defined as “the unearned benefits white people receive in Western countries simply by being a part of the dominant group” (Bell, n.d.). These racial inequalities have been going on and continued to go on after the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments have been added to the Constitution of the United States. The thirteenth amendment was ratified in 1865 which stated the abolition of slavery, the fourteenth amendment was ratified in 1868 which declared that individuals who are born or naturalized in the United States are granted equal rights no matter their race, and the fifteenth amendment was ratified in 1870 and stated that United States citizens had the right to vote regardless of their race or color of their skin. Before the abolition of slavery by the passing of the thirteenth amendment, slavery consisted of white supremacists/capitalists and black and white workers. Although black and white workers had the same responsibility, which was to follow the orders and commands from the white supremacist, the white workers felt and believed that they had more authority over the black workers. When discussing the white workers, they felt like they had higher authority because they were able to attend events with the capitalists favored by the white population while dehumanizing the black population. Since white privilege has dominated American society, it is evident that being born as a white individual automatically gives an individual the advantage to be successful within society, due to the color of their skin.

African Americans have always struggled to achieve their desired freedoms due to all of the negativity and racial hatred that whites have against blacks. In the article, *The Fallacy of White Privilege - And How It Is Corroding Society*, Arora Rav mentions "... it's true that the institution of slavery and the following decades of anti-black dehumanization has a continuing impact today" (Rav, 2020). After the passing of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments, racial discrimination and racial hatred from the white population to the black population still greatly occurred because the white individuals are viewed to have higher power and they wanted white domination throughout American society. The story *The Lynching of Jube Benson* that was written by Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1904 greatly relates to the racial inequalities and discrimination that occurred years after the passing of three amendments. Within the story, Jube, a black servant, was responsible for taking care of the girlfriend of a white capitalist. Although, Jube and the capitalist were good friends and had a good bond, this all changed when the white capitalist believed that Jube was responsible for the rape and murder of his girlfriend. Due to the murder, the white capitalist took action and lynched Jube without any hesitation or investigation because he was the only black individual that has been around the young white girl. By the audience viewing the traumatic incident that happened to Jube, Dunbar clearly expresses the way that white individuals view black people and the evil and negativity that are associated within black community. With this being said, another racial and inequality issue that occurred after the passing of the three mentioned amendments was the Rosa Parks' bus incident that occurred in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. During this time, racial segregation was still a huge deal and African Americans were to respect the white individuals and treat them as if they were higher authority, although according to the fifteenth amendment, citizens were granted the same equal rights despite their race or the color of their skin. In this event, Rosa

Parks was a black woman who took a seat on the bus and refused to give up her seat for a white individual. At the time, blacks were to sit in the back rows of the bus and white individuals were given the first few rows in the front of the bus. Rosa Parks believed that it was necessary to stand up for her rights as a black individual because she was sitting in the assigned rows for the African Americans on the segregated bus, but she was still told to move to the back of the bus by a white individual. The disrespect and the dehumanization of African Americans significantly conveys the inequalities within races. African Americans are treated as if they are worth nothing and are perceived as if they are a negative contribution to American society. The historic background that the black community derives from creates a feeling of not belonging which makes it harder for them to feel comfortable within American society, considering that white individuals have humiliated and dehumanized African Americans for such a long time. Relating to social theorist, W.E.B DuBois, he argued “that the poverty shared by poor whites and blacks should have united them” (Hall, 2020). Viewing the argument that DuBois made, it makes logical sense as to why black and white individuals should have wanted to come together to build a stronger and also more powerful America, but instead it only segregated them more.

Regarding the idea of white privilege as it pertains to the way that individuals are viewed in society, the way of life that is deemed upon an individual is normalized to believe that white individuals are higher class and African Americans are a part of the lower class. This idea is not necessarily accurate considering that nowadays, when riding through urban areas and popular traffic areas, many of the homeless people that continue to stand on the corners of streets are not only African Americans but also white individuals. When homeless white individuals are seen holding signs stating that they are homeless, it is perceived to be abnormal because they have a wide variety of opportunities to better themselves. Essentially in the workplace, there are many

workplace inequalities that still exist in today's society. Many of the inequalities that occur are both gender and racial inequalities. For example, the white individuals within the workplace have many more opportunities, such as promotions or moving up within the field, that many African Americans do not obtain due to their historic background regarding education. Education during the time of slavery was given to black and white individuals separately. The article, *The unequal race for good jobs: How whites made outsized gains in education and good jobs compared to blacks and Latinos*, greatly discusses the significant imbalance of income and wealth between the white community and other minority communities. The article states, "white workers are more likely than Black or Latino workers to have a good job at every level of education attainment" (Carnevale, A. P., Strohl, J., Gulish, A., Werf, M. V. D., & Campbell, K. P., 2020). This is considerably interesting considering that during the times of slavery, white children were able to go to school to receive their education while black children were to acquire their information from churches. The education that was taught within the schools for whites and the churches for blacks were completely different. With this being said, this allowed white individuals to believe that they were more superior because they were receiving their education from a school. Also, white individuals felt superior and dominant over the black community because white supremacists gave orders to the black slaves and heavily degraded them during the time of slavery. Due to the segregation that occurred during the time of slavery and even after slavery between black and white individuals, it has greatly created a fundamental divide which causes white individuals to continue to dehumanize the black community. When discussing the divide between white individuals and minority individuals, it is clear that this distinction is unequal and continuous throughout generations. By being the race white, these individuals automatically receive unearned set privileges solely due to the color of one's skin. Lemaire

expands on this idea by stating, “there is nothing a student of color could do by way of upbringing or economic benefits to earn the set of privileges white students enjoy automatically, just as there is nothing a white person can do to get rid of their unearned privilege” (Lemaire). The amount of power that the white race holds over others in society is immoral considering that everyone is supposed to be granted the same rights and opportunities as humans in society. Due to the negative image that African Americans convey to white individuals, this reduces the chances for racial equality for all in American society.

Another racial and social inequality that American individuals encounter within society that is relevant to today’s society is the idea of police brutality along with white privilege. “The use of excessive force by police in recent incidents against people of color has brought the term to the forefront as a protest chant” (Hall, 2020). A current example that occurred a few months ago that greatly impacted black community in American society were the deaths of George Floyd and also Breonna Taylor. Both individuals are “examples of blacks being treated more aggressively in confrontations with police” (Hall, 2020). Upon understanding the death of George Floyd, he died in police custody after being accused of using a counterfeit twenty dollar bill at a convenience store when purchasing cigarettes. The way that the white police attacked Floyd when being notified about the incident was so brutal that less than twenty minutes after the first officer arrived, Floyd was pinned to the ground by three police officers at which Floyd was then found unconscious with no signs of life. Examining the traumatic event concerning Breonna Taylor, “ Taylor was asleep in bed when she was shot by officers who forced their way inside her home. Everything except for Taylor's encounter with police were recorded on phone video and went viral on social media” (Hall, 2020). Not only does this issue emit negative hatred and extreme brutality against the black community, but it also strongly degrades African Americans

especially considering the invasion of Taylor's home based off of the assumption that her ex-boyfriend was sending illegal drugs to her home through the mail. Knowing that Breonna was innocent and there was nothing found in her home, the issue greatly conveys the negative perception that African Americans give off to white individuals. After these events occurred, many people within the black community joined together and started to protest. The African American community protested for their rights as well as equality throughout American society. White privilege as it relates to police brutality shows that African Americans do not have a voice in society. Whether they are innocent or not, they will still receive the worst possible consequences for the simplest wrongdoings and sometimes even death.

White privilege has dominated American society for many years. It is evident that being born as a white individual automatically gives an individual the advantage to be successful within society, due to the color of their skin. Blackness within an individual has always been viewed as a sin in society that holds an ample amount of evil that contributes to the cruel treatments that they receive as well as the obstacles that they encounter living in a "white world." Relating to the article provided by Lemaire, he affirms "whiteness is seen as the archetype, or the best way to look, behave, talk, dress, etc." (Lemaire). With this being said, anyone who is a race other than white is prone to get degraded and stereotyped in society. Many of these stereotypes allow white individuals to feel as if they are superior and have an upper-hand over minority communities. Lemaire greatly elaborates on this idea by also stating, "Whites possess more power than other racial groups simply due to the privilege associated with having white skin. Given the fact that white skin is perceived as "normal," this acquisition and use of power is also viewed as "normal." White power continues because whites control the governmental, economic and corporate systems from which the power comes" (Lemaire). Referring to the idea of power

throughout society, it is apparent that being the race white offers an individual many advantages considering that they have more authority over minority communities. For instance, the government, out of the forty-six presidents that have served, there are only about five presidents that have been black or have black ancestors. With this being said, it is not common to have a minority individual as a leader of the country. Having a black president creates fear for individuals who are associated in the white community because minorities as a whole have continuously been diminished. Knowing that the race white is seen as “normal” in society, it is seen as abnormal having a minority individual serving as the face of the country.

White privilege in the workplace is also very common throughout society. The income that white individuals earn at the workplace is significantly higher than minority individuals. As mentioned, the education levels that an individual has greatly differs between white community and the minority community. Minority communities often are not able to obtain the same education as white individuals due to a number of reasons. Indicated in the article, *The unequal race for good jobs: How whites made outsized gains in education and good jobs compared to blacks and Latinos*, it describes the wealth imbalance by noting, “on the bachelor’s degree pathway, median earnings in 2016 for good jobs were \$75,000 for White workers, compared to \$65,000 for both Black and Latino workers” (Carnevale, A. P., Strohl, J., Gulish, A., Werf, M. V. D., & Campbell, K. P, 2020). It is discriminatory to allow individuals who are categorized as the dominant race to be able to obtain more money than minority individuals although everyone has the same qualifications. The racial inequalities that are created within the workplace tends to separate individuals into different social classes in society. As expressed in the article provided by P. Constant, it states “a typical white American family has ten times the wealth of a typical black family, and that yawning gap creates a tremendous number of differences. Your wealth —

or lack thereof — affects where you live, what you eat, where you work, and basically every other environmental factor.” Based on what Constant has mentioned throughout this quote, it is clear that the lack of pay that minority individuals receive delays the success that they wish to have and achieve. Everyone in American society’s goal is to achieve the American Dream, but society limits the success that an individual has based on one’s race. In American society, everyone is to be treated equal and be able to obtain the same opportunities, but this is not possible considering that white privilege automatically grants white individuals more advantages and opportunities.

Racial stereotypes and racial hatred against the African American community has been going on for many years during slavery and even after slavery. African Americans were to obtain their freedoms in American society in stages through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments. Considering the ratification of each of these amendments, black individuals still tend to be treated as if they do not belong in society and as if they are all affiliated with negative intentions/actions. With white privilege continuing to dominate American society, it only makes it harder for African Americans to be accepted or feel like they belong.

A relatively current event that greatly relates to the idea of white privilege is the outbreak of COVID-19. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that is very contagious and spreads quickly. During the time that COVID-19 was first introduced, many jobs, stores, restaurants, etc. were being shut down and everyone in American society was put on lockdown. During the time of lockdown, many of the hospitals were becoming overcrowded and many individuals were losing their lives. After mentioning that minority individuals are less likely to receive the same pay wages as white individuals, many of these minority individuals are not able to afford health insurance. Constant exaggerates this idea when he specifies, “Black Americans are almost twice

as likely to be uninsured than white Americans, and that they're in occupations that place them at higher risk of infection” (Constant). By placing minority individuals in occupations that place them at a higher risk of infectious diseases, it almost seems as if they are automatically set up for failure rather than success. Even if minority individuals have health care, it still does not offer the same benefits as white individuals. As stated in the article, *Implicit Bias and Racial Disparities in Health Care*, Bridges states, “Black people simply are not receiving the same quality of health care that their white counterparts receive, and this second-rate health care is shortening their lives” (Bridges). With this being said, it is presumed that due to the quality of health care that minorities receive, this causes them to suffer heavier and in some cases lose their life due to the unavailability of proper care. Throughout the article, Bridges elaborates on the idea of improper treatment by health care providers by stating, “racial and ethnic minorities receive lower-quality health care than white people—even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable” (Bridges). Throughout this quote, Bridges discusses the dominance that the white community holds in society. Minority communities continue to live in American society where they are devalued in society for no other reason other than because of the color of their skin. The environment that the white community lives in is substantially different from the environment that the minority community lives in. With this being said, minority individuals are more commonly known for living in areas that are dirtier and deteriorated, whereas white individuals are known for living in areas that are clean and upgraded. Regarding the environment, Constant believes that the environment that an individual is surrounded by is very important as it gives a better understanding of one’s health conditions. Throughout his work he states, “your environment is one of the biggest factors in your health, which is why diabetes and asthma rates are so much higher in Black people than in white

people” (Constant). With this being mentioned, it makes sense as to why minority individuals are associated with many more health problems than white individuals. It is also interesting how minority individuals are known for living in environments where they are at a higher rate for serious health problems and still do not receive the proper healthcare that they need. Considering that minority individuals live in higher health risk communities, they are known to be “sicker and have shorter life spans than their white complements” (Bridges). Minority communities deserve to have access to the proper health care considering that they are all human and deserve the same rights and opportunities as others, especially when discussing one’s health.

In conclusion, in order for American society to develop, build, and progress, both the white community and the minority community must unite together as a whole. Considering that everyone is human and American citizens, minority individuals should be able to receive and have the same opportunities as the white community. As a minority community, these individuals have gone through many disparities to obtain the rights that they have now, but the rights that are given to this community are still not equivalent to the rights and privileges that the white community hold.

Why test my approach at UNC Greensboro campus?

UNC Greensboro is a supporting diversity which includes a high rate of minority students projected each year. With this being mentioned, I would like to test this theory in my current community. By completing this experiment, I will learn whether or not by being in the category of white plays a role for obtaining different positions and/or opportunities within UNCG’s community.

What steps will I take to test my theory?

Some ways that I could test my theory on UNCG's campus will simply be an empirical test which can include an observational survey or also conducting interviews. For example, a way that I could conduct my survey would be by attending one of the career fairs that the Bryan School of Business holds within the spring semester. By attending this career fair, I would be able to see the type of work and positions that interest certain ethnic groups. Knowing that the university is responsible for deciding who their recruiters are in preparation for the career fair event, it would be interesting to see which careers interest certain ethnic groups the most. Considering the opportunities that are structured for an individual, it will be interesting to view how each of the minority interests in jobs are compared to the interests of the dominant race, white. After collecting an observational study, I will also take into account a short interview for individuals. I will simply ask questions such as "Which career did you find to be the most interesting?" or "What does your future career consist of?" By asking these questions, I will be able to compare my observational results to my interview results. This will be interesting because my results may align with one another but then again they may not.

Findings & Conclusion

After attending the UNCG 2023 Spring Career Fair, there were many students that showed up to this event and were eager to obtain a job. All of the students that participated in the career fair were very diverse and there were ample jobs that were recruiting students, especially students that are close to graduating. Many of the jobs were not looking for a specific race or gender, just someone who was determined and ready to work.

Initially, my intended goal when entering the career fair was to just observe which jobs appealed to the students based on their race, gender, and ethnicity. After conducting my observations, I was then to conduct a short interview with students who attended the career fair and asked them very simple questions regarding the UNCG Spring Career Fair. There were many students that were interested in many jobs. There was not a recruiting table that was specifically targeting a specific race, gender, or ethnicity, but there were a few jobs that were gender specific. While conducting my observations, some of the companies that I observed were Target, Charles Aris, Wake County Public School System, Spectrum, Arch Mortgage Insurance, and Durham Police Department. For each of these recruiting tables, the students that were interested in each company were very diverse. As I observed each table, I conducted a tally chart based on race to determine the interests of UNCG students. For each company that I observed at the career fair, Target was one of the most popular companies that many students approached. According to my data regarding how many students approached the table based on their race, I calculated twelve black students, eight white students, two asian students, and five hispanic students. With this being said, it is evident that the company is very diverse as many students were interested in the company. The second company I observed was Charles Aris. Charles Aris is a professional research/marketing team that heavily recruits students each year. According to my data, I tallied eight black students, seven white students, and three asian students. The third company that I observed was Wake County Public School System. As stated in my data, I tallied, four black students and four white students. I found this to be interesting because I feel that many individuals do not really consider becoming a teacher due to fear. Considering that there are many school shootings that have occurred and continue to occur each day, it can be a safety issue becoming a teacher because you are not only responsible for yourself but you are also

responsible for many students. The fourth company that I observed was Spectrum. According to my data, I tallied five black students, three white students, four asian students, and five indian students. The fifth company that I observed was Durham Police Department. According to my data, I tallied two black students and five white students. When conducting my observation I also found it fascinating how there was such a small number of students that visited the table.

Throughout this observation, I believe that this position did not appeal to many minority individuals possibly due to the racial discrimination and police brutality that is commonly seen through the news and media. Lastly, I observed Arch Mortgage Insurance. Throughout my observation, I tallied two black students, four white students, and four asian students. After conducting my observations, I have concluded that many students have a variety of different interests no matter their race. I also observed that many of the recruiting tables were very diverse and looking to hire many students. When approaching the recruiting tables, there were specific questions that were asked. The questions included, “What is this company?”, “What are the expectations for fulfilling a role within this company?”, “Is there a specific race or gender that you are looking for when recruiting students?”, “Is this the first time your company has attended the UNCG career fair?”, and lastly “What could the school do or change differently in the future?” Many of the recruiters were elated that I had asked those questions because they were not expecting me to ask them about their experience while visiting UNCG. After asking many of these questions to the recruiters, many of their answers were very similar for each company. For instance, many of the companies that I observed have attended the UNCG career fair many times if not yearly. The only company that was new this year was the Durham County Police Department. After being told that this was the company’s first time attending the career fair, I asked what they thought about UNCG and its students. The recruiter mentioned how they were

really enjoying their time because it was interesting to see how many students came out to the event and were ready to obtain a job. Something interesting that I learned from this table is that within this field, it is interesting working with female officers. They discussed how females have a different demeanor than males which greatly affects the outcomes of the situation.

After conducting my observations, I then stepped outside of the career fair and randomly asked students of different races and genders a series of short questions. The questions that I asked included, “What is your name?”, “What race are you associated with?”, “What is your major?”, “What type of job are you looking for?”, “What are your interests?”, and “What could UNCG do differently in future career fairs?” The first person that I asked was an Italian male named Andrea. His major was International Business and his top recruiting tables at the fair were Sherwin-Williams and Arch Real Estate. Andrea’s interests included diversity and happiness. He really enjoyed the career fair and didn’t think that UNCG needed to change anything! The second student that I interviewed was a black male named Amauri. Amauri’s major was Information Systems and Supply Chain Management. Amauri’s ideal job is within any field as long as it is not a typical 9-5 and also a position in which he could utilize all of his skills. He mentioned how he would not change much about the career fair, but he did mention how UNCG could add more jobs to the fair. The third student that I interviewed was a second-year Hispanic female named Miroslava. Miroslava’s major was Public Health and her ideal job is to do something within the field of policy-making and government. Some of her interests included having a sense of community while also expressing culture. Miroslava believes that in the future, UNCG could participate in a survey after the career fair and get back with students to see if they were able to obtain a job/internship that they were interested in. The fourth student that I interviewed was a first-year male student named Gonzalo. Gonzalo is a senior from Spain and

his major is Business administration. While at the career fair, he was looking to obtain a full-time job or internship and many of his interests within a career included having a fun environment as well as employees. Gonzalo was very positive with the outcome of the career fair. He did not believe that anything about the fair needed to be changed because there were plenty of opportunities for everyone. Lastly, the fifth student that I interviewed as a black female named Samiah. Samiah's major is Biology and she hopes to pursue a career in the healthcare field and then soon become a doctor. Many of Samiah's interests included having a nice atmosphere, having an ideal location, and having specific requirements and expectations. Something that Samiah mentioned that UNCG should include in future career fairs would be providing a wide variety of internships, instead of mostly being job oriented.

After completing my research and testing my experiment, I am now able to evaluate if white privilege is relevant throughout UNCG's community. After conducting my analysis, it is evident that white privilege is inapplicable. With this being mentioned, UNCG has been ranked #1 in North Carolina and #13 nationally for social mobility. This is exceptional considering that UNCG was originally a women's college and also a predominantly white institution. It is interesting to note how UNCG's minority population continues to grow rapidly. Due to the extreme increase in students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, it is evident that there is an absence of white privilege at the university. At UNCG, many different programs and clubs have been created that promote minority culture which allows students to spread their culture with others. By allowing individuals to express themselves and also their culture, this greatly motivates the university as a whole to prioritize and promote diversity within its community. At UNCG, many of the students and faculty are very diverse and offer equal opportunities to

everyone no matter their race, gender, or ethnicity. At UNCG, each student is able to attain the same achievements as well as achieve one's personal goals.

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