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White Students' Perceptions of the Costs and Consequences of Being Black

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Abstract
Many whites explicitly believe that their race has had no impact on their accomplishments in life. The current study used the contingent valuation method to implicitly measure the value of being white—or alternatively, the cost of being black—among a sample of white college students. Participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario in which their racial appearance was altered due to a medical mishap, and then asked to identify the negative consequences they would experience as a result of this change. Participants also assigned a dollar value to their race by reporting the smallest financial settlement they would accept as compensation for the mishap. Results revealed that white students who imagined being black anticipated financial consequences significantly more often than black students who imaged being white, but they anticipated psychosocial consequences significantly less often. The median financial settlement for whiteness was relatively low, while the mean value was quite large and highlighted the importance of whiteness among certain respondents. These findings are discussed, with suggestions for future research.

Keywords White privilege · Financial costs · Psychosocial costs · Contingent valuation method

America's "Great Awokening" to racial inequality and social injustice underwent a period of unprecedented growth following the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020. Protesters rallied in more than 140 cities across the USA (Taylor, 2020), and unlike many such protests in years past, these rallies included hundreds of thousands of white participants (Harmon & Tavernise, 2020). Public support of Black Lives Matter (BLM) increased exponentially (albeit temporarily) during this time, growing nearly as much in the *2 weeks* following Floyd's death as it had during the previous *two years* (Cohn & Quealy, 2020). Confederate statues throughout the South, which had survived calls for their removal amidst the Civil Rights Movement, the Charleston church shooting, and the Charlottesville white nationalist rally (among other events) finally began to come down (Aguilera, 2020). The city of Asheville, NC approved reparations for slavery, sparking other cities around the country to consider similar legislation (Dwyer, 2020). Public outcry to "defund the police," and for police reform more generally, gained sufficient traction to emerge as talking points in the 2020 Presidential race (Pierce, 2020). According to Google's (n.d.) report of its most commonly searched terms and phrases in 2020, the question "How to help Black Lives Matter?" was asked more often in the USA than the question "How to help during coronavirus?".

Collectively, these events suggest that the USA is becoming more self-aware of systemic racism and social injustices that disadvantage black communities. America—and in particular, white America—is beginning to see glimpses of the very same racial problems that it has turned a blind eye to in the past. At the same time, there remains a sizable portion of the country (particularly, whites) that refutes the notion that racism remains embedded within the country's socio-politico-economic institutions and affords whites special privileges. According to the Pew Research Center (Horwitz et al., 2019), while 60% of whites believe that blacks are treated less fairly by the criminal justice system, far fewer believe they are treated unfairly during hiring/promotion decisions (44%), while shopping in stores/restaurants (37%), and when seeking medical treatment (26%). When it comes to affording blacks the same rights as whites, the majority of whites (62%) believe that the USA has done *enough* or *more than*

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enough in this endeavor. Although 45% of whites say that being white has helped them to get ahead, 50% report that their race has had *no impact* on their achievements in life. Among those whites who feel that being black hurts one's chances to advance, 50–60% attribute this condition to institutional factors such as racial discrimination and the lack of access to good jobs and schools. However, approximately 45–50% place the blame squarely within black communities, citing a lack of family stability and good role models. In short, rather than seeing race as a construct that impacts upward mobility in America, a large proportion of whites adopt a position of colorblindness whereby one's lot in life is believed to be unaffected by race (Gallagher, 2003; Neville, 2009). This colorblindness results in the inability to see white privilege.

White privilege refers to the collection of opportunities and benefits—be them social, political, economic, educational, etc.,—that are afforded to whites simply because they are white. This privilege has been described as an "invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10) that white people can rely on for help each and every day. Colorblindness is what keeps this knapsack invisible (Gallagher, 2003), and it protects whites from two inter-related psychological threats associated with white privilege (Knowles et al., 2014). First, the acknowledgement of white privilege presents a *meritocratic threat* in that it suggests one's successes in life are not due to internal characteristics such as motivation and work-ethic, but are instead due to an external characteristic (namely, skin color) over which we have no control. Thus, white privilege is threatening to whites because it implies that one's successes in life are at least partially unearned, and that the person is instead just lucky to have been born white. Second, white privilege presents a *group-image threat* in that it cements the white race to historical and immoral racist practices such as slavery. Given that self-concept and self-esteem are derived in part from the larger groups to which we identify, any threats to the sanctity of the white race will also threaten the self-value of the white individual (Knowles et al., 2014).

For the sake of psychological self-preservation, many whites come to protect themselves from meritocratic and group-image threats by denying the existence of white privilege (e.g., "It's not the color of your skin but the content of your character that matters"), by distancing their self-identify from their group-identity (e.g., "White privilege may exist but I certainly did not benefit from it"), or by dismantling racial barriers by supporting the cause for equality (e.g., "I support BLM—I'm one of the good whites"; Knowles et al., 2014; see also DiAngelo, 2018). In a culture that values individuality (as does America's), white privilege is thought to present a greater meritocratic threat than group-image threat, and the technique that is best suited to manage this threat is denial. The end result is that many whites in America—such as the 50% noted earlier (Horwitz et al., 2019)—will come to believe that their race has had no impact on their accomplishments in life.

Empirically documenting the privileges that whiteness affords can help to make the invisible knapsack more apparent; however, measuring a phenomenon that many refuse to see—and doing so in a manner that is easily understandable and also undeniable—presents a difficult methodological challenge. For example, some scholars have repeatedly documented that people of color (and particularly, blacks) experience worse outcomes in such areas as criminal justice sanctioning, economic achievement, educational attainment, general health/life expectancy, health care use/access, and quality of life/general happiness (Assari, 2018; Boshara et al., 2015; Brame et al., 2014; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Coverdill et al., 2011; Do et al., 2012; Farrell et al., 2020; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009; Heckman & LaFontaine, 2010; Hirschl & Rank, 2010; Kovera, 2019; Manduca, 2018; Manuel, 2017; Olshansky et al., 2012; Sampson & Lauristen, 1997; Weissman et al., 2018; Yearby, 2018; Zang et al., 2017). However, in the midst of their white fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), whites can psychologically dismiss these divergent racial outcomes as the result of different internal traits (e.g., criminality, work-ethic, etc.,) rather than the result of biased institutional practices.

Other scholars have used standardized questionnaires to measure white privilege (Swim & Miller, 1999) or its related constructs such as white privilege awareness (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001), white privilege attitudes (Pinterits et al., 2009), white guilt (Swim & Miller, 1999), colorblind ideology (Ryan et al., 2007), colorblind racial attitudes (Neville et al., 2000), and the psychological costs that whites' experience as a result of racism (Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Such scales have been shown to have strong psychometric properties and are not heavily influenced by social desirability. While these measures lend themselves to statistical analyses that help to advance the research on white privilege and its correlates, to the general public such discussions of standardized scale scores, factor loadings and Cronbach's alphas may have little intuitive value—and are therefore not easily understood or particularly meaningful to them.

Still other scholars have sought to quantify the totality of white privilege and the history of black subjectification in America by estimating the cost of reparations for slavery, which commonly tally into the trillions of dollars (Craemer, 2015, 2018; Craemer et al., 2020; Darity & Frank, 2003; Darity & Mullen, 2020; Osabu-Kle, 2000). Measuring privilege in terms of US dollars provides the general public with a metric that is easily understood; however, using these estimates to shine a light on the value of white privilege remains difficult for many reasons. First, most Americans—including approximately 80% to 90% of whites (Younis, 2020;

Johnson, 2020)—fundamentally oppose the idea of cash reparations to descendants of slaves. As a result, any discussion of reparations and what it represents will commonly fall on deaf ears. Similarly, the very idea of reparations has become consumed by identity politics (Balfour, 2005), which breeds reluctance and resentment rather than consideration and comprehension of opposing points of view. Finally, in the face of the group-image threat that reparation poses, whites can all too easily distance themselves from their moral responsibility with such self-preserving claims as "I never owned slaves, so I don't owe anything!" (Balfour, 2005; Knowles et al., 2014). In short, estimates of reparations arguably do little to enlighten whites to the value of their whiteness. Fortunately, other techniques such as the contingent valuation method can be used to measure white privilege in a less threatening manner.

The Contingent Valuation of Whiteness

The contingent valuation method (CVM) is a survey technique used for assigning value to items that are not available for sale in the regular market and therefore do not have observable monetary worth (Venkatachalam, 2004). Developed for and used largely in the field of environmental economics, the CVM asks participants to determine how much they would be willing to pay (WTP) for a particular benefit such as having more greenspaces in urban areas, or conversely, how much they would be willing to accept (WTA) in compensation for a particular loss such as the removal of greenspaces to make room for urban development. These WTP and WTA values reflect the totality of the intrinsic and extrinsic value of non-market items, and express it in easily understood dollar units. Such estimations can then be used by researchers, city planners, and policy-makers when conducting environmental impact assessments and cost–benefit analyses (Bruce, 2006; Venkatachalam, 2004).

Although the CVM was created to provide a hypothetical marketplace in which to find the worth of environmental goods, variations of the approach have been used by researchers in other fields to provide estimates for such non-market intangibles as: the value of human life (Balmford et al., 2019), reductions in mortality risk (Alberini et al., 2006), human organs (Altinanahtar et al., 2008), mobility, cognition, vision, upper limb function (Lin et al., 2016), workplace safety (Gerking et al., 1988), life satisfaction/happiness (Seals, 2020), a non-restrictive diet (Soler & Borzykowski, 2020), and even a country's success in Olympic competition (Funahashi et al., 2020; Wicker et al., 2012). More importantly for the current study, the method has also been used in at least two instances to assess the value of being white (Hacker, 1995; Mazzocco et al., 2006).

Hacker (1995) appears to be the first to have used the CVM to measure the perceived value of whiteness. He describes this exercise in his book *Two Nations: black and white, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, but with few details. White students were asked to imagine a scenario in which they were visited by a representative of an organization that assigns people their race at birth. The representative informs the students that his company has made a mistake, that they were to have been born black, and that this mistake now needs to be corrected:

> So at midnight tonight, you will become black. And this will mean not simply a darker skin, but the bodily and facial features associated with African ancestry. However, inside, you will be the person you always were. Your knowledge and ideas will remain intact. But outwardly you will not be recognizable to anyone you now know (p. 36).

The representative also explains that the company will provide reasonable compensation for its mistake, and so students were asked to report how much compensation they would request assuming that they were to live another 50 years, now as a black person.

Hacker (1995) never fully tabulated the students' responses to this question (see Mazzocco et al., 2006, footnote 7), but he does report that it was "…not out of place [for students] to ask for $50 million, or $1 million for each coming black year" (p. 36). Given that students' internal qualities and abilities remained the same (i.e., "inside, you will be the person you always were…"), Hacker concluded that this WTA value of $50 million was necessary to compensate for the "discriminations and dangers" students knew they would now face as a black person (p. 36). In other words, Hacker concluded that this renumeration was the value of the privilege afforded to students simply for being white.

However, this $50 million estimate may be confounded with the compensation for another non-market good. Recall that in Hacker's (1995) scenario, the change in the students' race also rendered them unrecognizable to all they know. Thus, students may have factored the cost of being unrecognizable into their $50 million valuation. Mindful this possibility, Mazzocco et al. (2006) developed a different race-change scenario and presented it to multiple groups of white participants, most of whom were college students. In their scenario, participants were asked to imagine that they have been black all their lives but have always been "passing" as white in society. Participants were also asked to imagine that there was "…a new government program [that] offers a one-time, tax-free cash gift to persons who can prove they have a black ancestor" (p. 268). They were informed that they had the necessary proof of their ancestry to claim this cash gift, and were then asked "What amount of cash would you require to continue your life, publicly (and correctly)

identified as black?" (p. 268). Because participants in this study are not asked to consider an actual change in their physical appearance, Mazzocco et al. avoided confounding the cost of becoming black with the cost of becoming unrecognizable. For purposes of comparison, the researchers also presented participants with two other CVM scenarios: one in which participants were asked to report their WTA estimate for giving up citizenship in their home state to instead claim residency in Pennsylvania, and one in which they were asked their WTA estimate for foregoing television for the rest of their lives.

Results across multiple samples of white participants revealed that median WTA estimates for a change in race status ranged from just $75 to $1500 (Mazzocco et al., 2006). Median estimates for a change in statehood were comparable, ranging from $100 to $1000, while the estimates for giving up television were the largest and ranged from $100,000 to $1 million (see Mazzocco et al., 2006, Table 1). On the surface, these findings suggest that whites in the study would rather be black for the rest of their lives than to give up television forever. Based on a series of follow-up studies, Mazzocco et al. concluded that the relatively low WTA values for whiteness is, in part, a function of the participants' lack of understanding of the real world disparities between whites and blacks in society. In other words, because participants could not see their invisible knapsack, they did not know just how valuable it actually was.

There are other possible explanations for the low valuation of whiteness in Mazzocco et al.'s (2006) study. For example, their scenario describes a change in participants' racial *status* rather than their actual racial *appearance*—i.e., participants were *labeled black* but still *appeared white*. This disjuncture between status and appearance is not the typical phenomenological experience of being black in America, and therefore white participants in the study may not have viewed the change as particularly impactful given that they could easily continue to "pass" as white. Mazzocco and colleagues attempted to correct for this issue by modifying the scenario to state that participants would now be "identified as black *in any encounters*" if they accepted the money being offered (p. 271, emphasis added). Results revealed that this stipulation had virtually no impact on participants' WTA values; they still remained low. Given that research on colorism reveals that light-skinned blacks are viewed more favorably by others and are afforded more privileges in society than those with darker skin tones (Hannon, 2015; Hunter, 2007, 2008; Monk, 2015; Norwood, 2014), it is possible that the whites in Mazzocco et al.'s study continued to feel that their light-skinned appearance would trump any racial label assigned to them. This colorism effect would then, in turn, dilute the hypothetical change in race that the scenario was designed to create, potentially leading to lower WTA scores.

A second possible explanation for the low WTA values may stem from a common statistical decision that Mazzocco et al. (2006) employed. The researchers reported median and log-transformed mean WTA values to minimize the influence of outliers and skewness in participants' responses. This practice is especially important when conducting inferential analyses, as failing to adjust for heavy skewness/outliers reduces statistical power and leads to more Type II errors. At the same time, normalizing the scores intentionally underweights the WTA estimates of those participants who have strong emotional/visceral attachments to the goods being traded, and who therefore place a very high price on the items. Given that white privilege is often an impassioned topic among whites, normalizing the skewed WTA scores runs the risk of insufficiently capturing the true collective value of this commodity. Therefore, if the focus on WTA estimates happens to be descriptive in nature such that there is little concern over Type II errors, then reporting the raw means along-side the medians can reveal a fuller, more nuanced understanding of how white participants value their race.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants ($n = 481$)

	n	Percent	Mean (SD)
Age	481	–	23.90 (8.13)
Sex			
Male	163	34.2	–
Female	314	65.8	–
Race			
White	380	79.0	–
Black	101	21.0	–
Class standing			
Freshman	34	7.5	–
Sophomore	94	20.6	–
Junior	132	28.9	–
Senior	110	24.1	–
Graduate student	81	17.8	–
Other	5	1.1	–
In-state residency	446	98.8	

*n*s within each variable may not total 481 because of missing data

The Current Study

Following the lead of Hacker (1995) and Mazzocco et al. (2006), the currently study used the CVM to measure the perceived value of being white (relative to being black) among a group of college students. Participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario describing a medical mishap that alters their race, making them appear as a different person. For purposes of comparison, a separate group of participants was given a scenario describing a change in

their face (but not race), also making them appear as a different person. Participants were asked to identify the negative consequences they might experience as a result of their new appearance, and to identify the smallest amount of money they would accept as a settlement for the medical mistake. Participants repeated this exercise while considering several other medical conditions (e.g., blindness, paralysis, lower intelligence, etc.) to determine the *relative value* of their race.

Using these qualitative and quantitative measures, the current study explored the costs and consequences of being black, as perceived by a group of whites students. For purposes of comparison—and unlike the work of Hacker (1995) or Mazzocco et al. (2006)—the study also examined the costs and consequences of being white, as perceived by a group of black students. Although both groups of students may find any change in their racial identity to be undesirable, several a priori predictions based on the concept of white privilege can be offered:

Hypothesis 1 White students will report greater negative consequences when they imagine being black, compared to when they imagine having a new facial appearance.

Hypothesis 2 White students who image being black will report greater negative consequences, compared to black students who imagine being white.

Hypothesis 3 Relative to the other medical conditions they are asked to consider, white students will rank being black among the least desirable conditions, compared to black students' ranking of being white.

Hypothesis 4 White students who imagine being black will report a higher WTA value, compared to black students who imagine being White.

Methods

Participants

A total of 616 students at a large urban university in the Southeastern United States completed an online survey developed for this study. The university is located in a state that is approximately 70% white and 22% black (US Census, n.d.). Although 87% of students are in-state students, the student body composition is approximately 51% white and 16% black.

The initial sample of 616 students consisted largely of white participants ($n = 382$), followed by black participants ($n = 101$), Hispanic participants ($n = 62$) and Asian participants ($n = 19$). The remaining students ($n = 52$) were a member of some other racial/ethnic group or provided no information about their race. For ease of presentation, and in light of the relatively small sample sizes for certain groups, the current study focuses on the responses from white and black students only. After an initial inspection of these cases, two participants were omitted because of invalid/questionable responses to various survey questions (e.g., one student did not enter an actual WTA dollar value but instead entered the text "the cost of the surgery" as the amount they would be willing to accept). The final sample ($n = 481$) therefore consists of 380 white students and 101 black students. Table 1 summarizes basic demographic characteristics of this sample.

Materials

An online "Medical Malpractice Lawsuit Survey" was created for this study. The study's recruitment materials indicated that the purpose of the survey was to understand how much money people feel is fair compensation in response to acts of medical malpractice. Participants were informed that they would read various hypothetical scenarios describing a medical mistake that left them with a permanent side effect resulting in a change in their physical ability, cognitive ability, or general appearance. Participants were told they would then answer questions about how these side effects would impact them, and about any financial compensation they would seek in response.

The survey began with several questions asking participants about their general health. Then, all participants were presented with the following hypothetical scenario.

> You were admitted to the hospital yesterday for a planned, routine surgery. The surgery itself was a success; however, due to a hospital error, you were mistakenly given a bag of IV fluids with medicine that was meant for a different patient. When you awoke from your surgery, you learned that the medication in the IV bag interacted with other medication that you had been given in preparation for your surgery. The two drugs interacted to produce a single unexpected side effect:
> *You are now completely blind.*
> This side effect cannot be treated or reversed. You will live this way for the rest of your life.

Participants were shown a list of 12 adverse consequences that were physical, cognitive, psychosocial or financial in nature. By responding to 12 dichotomous Yes/No questions, participants denoted which of these outcomes they would experience as a result of the side effect. The consequences were: *Physical pain, Physical disability, Cognitive disability, Mental anguish (worry, anxiety, depression,* etc.*), Shame/embarrassment, Loss of friendships/relationships, Loss of respect/social status, Loss of wages/income,*

Increases in minor inconveniences, Inability to achieve my future potentials/dreams, and *Loss of joy/happiness in my life*. An open-ended *Other* option was also available for participants to use if desired. Note that this collection of outcomes was designed to be purposefully broad and not tied to any specific side effect (such as blindness) because this same set of outcomes was used throughout the survey as participants read other malpractice scenarios.

Participants were also asked to assign a dollar value to the attribute that was permanently altered due to the medial mishap. They were told:

> The hospital has malpractice insurance to cover the cost of medical mistakes such as this. It also has a team of highly experienced lawyers who can fight the case in the court system if need be.
> To avoid costly legal fees, you ask for an out-of-court settlement. The hospital lawyers will agree to your settlement only if you request a payment that is justified, fair and reasonable. If the lawyers think you are being greedy, then they will fight your case in court. Therefore, your best strategy for receiving an out-of-court settlement is to request the smallest amount of money that you would be willing to accept (and still feel is fair), given this side effect.

Participants were instructed to report the smallest amount of money they were willing to accept in a settlement.

After completing all questions associated with the blindness scenario, participants were informed that they would now be asked to consider the same hypothetical scenario several more times, but each time with a different side effect. Participants were informed that while some of the side effects were purely science-fiction, they should imagine that each situation is real and has actually occurred.

In addition to the blindness scenario (which all participants completed), the survey contained six sets of additional hypothetical scenarios describing other side effects. Participants were randomly assigned to one side effect within each of these six sets, resulting in a total of seven scenarios that were presented to each participant (i.e., the blindness scenario plus one from each of the six sets). By randomly assigning participants to one side effect within each set, the survey was able to present a wide range of medical outcomes while minimizing respondent fatigue. The side effects included in the study were intentionally designed to vary in terms of how much they might impact participants' lives—from very minimally to quite extensively. The six sets of side effects included in the study are described below.

Set 1: New Race vs. New Face. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) they now appear to be a member of a different racial group, or (b) their facial features are sufficiently altered to make them appear to be a different person. Appendix 1 includes a description of the New Race and New Face conditions, as well as descriptions for all of the remaining side effects used in the study.

There were multiple versions of the New Race scenario, all of which were modeled after the one used by Hacker (1995). Assignment to a New Race scenario was conditioned upon the participants' responses to a screening question about their own race. Some white participants randomized to the New Race condition were randomly assigned to a scenario indicating that they had become African American. To explore the impact of colorism, this condition was randomized further to assign white participants to different skin tones. That is, some whites assigned to the African American race were told their skin appears "light brown," while others were told their skin appears "medium brown" or "dark black." Other whites were simply told they now appeared African American, with no information about skin tonality provided (see Appendix 1).

Some black participants randomized to the New Race condition were randomly assigned to a scenario in which they had become white. Because colorism is not typically associated with white people of different skin tones, the white scenario was not subdivided further.

Other white and black participants randomized to the New Race condition were assigned scenarios in which they appeared either Hispanic or Asian. However, to avoid an excessive number of comparisons both within and across participants' racial groups, the current student excludes the Hispanic and Asian conditions and instead focuses only on black students who contemplated becoming white, and on white students who contemplated becoming African American. Furthermore, the results for the four African American conditions—i.e., light brown, medium brown, dark black or "no skin tone provided"—were collapsed into a singular African American group ($n = 234$), unless otherwise noted.

As seen in Appendix 1, participants assigned to the New Race scenario were told that not only did they have a different skin color, but that they also now had facial features associated with their new race, leaving them immediately unrecognizable to friends/family. As a result, the New Race scenario (much like Hacker's, 1995 scenario) alters *two* aspects of the participants: their race and their recognizability. To uncouple the value of participants' race with that of their recognizability, some white and black students were randomly assigned to a New Face scenario. In this scenario, participants were told the IV medication altered their facial appearance, leaving them unrecognizable to friends/family (see Appendix 1). By comparing the New Face responses to the New Race responses, the study is able to examine the value of participants' racial appearance without the confound of being unrecognizable.

Set 2: Paralysis-Dominant Hand vs. Paralysis-Waist Down. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) they are paralyzed in their dominant hand, or (b) their

legs are paralyzed from the waist down. Prior to random assignment, screening questions were used to determine participants' dominant hand, and if they are currently able to walk. Participants who were unable to walk were automatically assigned to a Dominant Hand condition. If participants were ambidextrous and assigned to the Dominant Hand condition, then they read a scenario in which their right hand was paralyzed.

Set 3: Water Only vs. Coke/Pepsi Tastes Switched. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) they can only drink unflavored water without getting sick, or (b) Coke tastes like Pepsi and Pepsi tastes like Coke.

Set 4: Cold Extended vs. Persistent Body Odor. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) it now takes them 2 days longer to recover from the common cold, or (b) they have persistent body odor that cannot be masked.

Set 5: Less Intelligent vs. Less Attractive. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) they are slightly less intelligent, or (b) they are slightly less attractive. Prior to randomization, participants rated their intelligence level on a 0 (Extremely Unintelligent) to 10 (Extremely Intelligent) scale. They also rated their attractiveness on a similar 0 to 10 scale. In the scenarios, participants were asked to consider having their intelligence/attractiveness levels lowered by two points on this scale.

Set 6: Live 5 Years Less vs. Die in 1 Week. All participants were assigned to a scenario in which (a) their life expectancy will be shortened by five years, or (b) they will die in exactly 1 week.

After the blindness scenario, the New Race scenario and the New Face scenario, participants were asked to use the 12 dichotomous questions to indicate which of the 12 adverse outcomes they might experience as a result of the side effect. After each of the remaining scenarios, however, participants were simply asked to specify which *one* of the adverse outcomes they would be *most likely* to experience (rather than complete the 12 dichotomous questions for every scenario). This modification was included to shorten the overall length of the survey, and to minimize participant fatigue. After every hypothetical scenario, participants were asked to report the smallest amount of money they would be willing to accept in an out-of-court settlement. The survey then concluded with a set of demographic questions.

Procedures

Data were collected during the late Fall of 2019 and early Spring of 2020. Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in several social science courses received an email inviting them to take part in the study. Students were offered a nominal amount of extra credit in their course for participating. This targeted sampling procedure yielded responses from 139 white students and 73 black students. Subsequently, recruitment was opened up to all University students, and a mass recruitment email was sent to the entire student body (with no extra credit offered to these students). Before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the normal teaching and research activities on campus, an additional 241 white students and 28 black students completed the survey.

Results

Table 2 summarizes the assignment of participants to the different hypothetical side effects. Of primary interest is the assignment to the New Race scenarios. As seen in the table, of the 332 white students in the New Race condition, 234 were assigned to a scenario in which they became African American (be it to the light brown, medium brown, dark black or "no skin tone provided" condition). In contrast, 27 black students were assigned to a scenario in which they became white. Given the low sample cell sizes in certain conditions, effect size estimates (ψ and Cohen's *d*)

Table 2 Number of cases assigned to each side effect scenario, by race of the participant

	Total sample ($n=481$)	White participants ($n=380$)	Black participants ($n=101$)
Blind	478	379	99
New face	70	48	22
New race	411	332	79
Af. Am. (no skin tone provided)		*56*	–
Af. Am. (light skin tone)		*65*	–
Af. Am. (medium skin tone)		*57*	–
Af. Am. (dark skin tone)		*56*	–
White		–	*27*
*Hispanic**		*47*	*22*
*Asian**		*51*	*30*
Paralyzed dominant hand	245	196	49
Paralyzed waist down	230	179	51
Water only	217	169	48
Coke/pepsi switched	251	203	48
Cold extended	240	179	61
Persistent body odor	225	192	33
Less intelligent	233	183	50
Less attractive	226	182	44
Live 5 years less	215	169	46
Die in 1 week	241	195	46

*n*s within each set of side effects may not total 481 because of missing data

*Results for these New Race conditions are beyond the scope of the current study and are therefore excluded from the analyses. They are shown here to clarify the random assignment process

were calculated in addition to traditional tests of statistical significance.

The Perceived Consequences of a Being Black

Recall that participants indicated how having a new race would impact their lives by reviewing a set of 12 adverse consequences and denoting which ones they expected to experience. Table 3 summarizes the endorsement rates for these consequences as reported by participants in the New Race condition and—for purposes of comparison—those in the New Face condition. The first column of numbers lists the endorsement rates for white students assigned to the New Race scenario, the second column lists the rates for whites assigned to the New Face scenario, the third summarizes the χ^2 values for the endorsement rates across the two conditions, and the fourth reports the corresponding effect size estimate, ψ. The fifth through eighth columns summarize the New Race and New Face endorsement rates and corresponding χ^2 and ψ values (respectively) for black students. The final two columns list the χ^2 and ψ values comparing the New Race endorsement rates across white and black students.

As seen in the table—and contrary to Hypothesis 1—white students typically endorsed negative consequences *less often* in the New Race condition than in the New Face condition, although not always significantly lower. For example, a smaller percentage of the white students who read the New Race scenario anticipated experiencing mental anguish compared to those who read the New Face scenario (77.4% vs. 93.8%, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, those in the New Race condition were less likely to anticipate experiencing minor inconveniences, loss of friendships, loss of respect, shame/embarrassment, loss of joy, and some type of cognitive disability than those in the New Face condition (all $ps < 0.05$). The estimates of these effects are generally small except for shame/embarrassment and loss of joy, which represent a small-to-medium effect (e.g., $0.20 \leq \psi \geq 0.50$).

While not statistically significant, the only two consequences that had higher endorsement rates for whites in the New Race condition are: loss of wages, and "Other." Of the 38 white students who listed an Other consequence, the most common theme reported was experiencing racism/discrimination ($n = 15$), followed by psychological trauma/confusion associated with a loss of identity ($n = 13$) and various other miscellaneous consequences ($n = 10$).

As seen in Table 3, black students also typically expected more problems from having a new face rather than a new race, though none of the differences are statistically significant. The smaller sample size of black students likely plays a role in this (note that several ψ estimates are .20 or greater). There were two adverse outcomes that black students felt they were more likely to experience as a result of a becoming white: loss of respect, and loss of joy. These differences were not statistically significant, the absolute difference in endorsement rates was negligible, and the effect size estimates are practically zero.

The results thus far suggest that white students believe becoming a different white person (i.e., having a new face) is more debilitating than becoming a black person. Black students, on the other hand, found the likelihood of problems across the two conditions to be statistically equivalent, though sample size issues may help to explain these null results. In a final examination of these anticipated problems,

Table 3 Endorsement rates (percentages) for potential negative consequences, by participant's race and assigned scenario

Negative consequence	White participants				Black participants				White vs. black participants	
	New race	New face	χ^2	φ	New race	New face	χ^2	φ	New race	
									χ^2	φ
Mental Anguish	77.4	93.8	6.73**	0.15	92.6	100.0	1.70	0.19	3.38	0.11
Minor inconveniences	69.2	87.5	6.64*	0.15	74.1	90.9	2.29	0.22	0.27	0.03
Loss of friends/relationships	56.0	81.3	10.62**	0.19	70.4	81.8	0.86	0.13	2.05	0.09
Loss of respect/status	53.4	72.9	6.17*	0.15	66.7	63.6	0.05	0.03	1.72	0.08
Shame/embarrassment	38.5	93.8	48.79***	0.42	88.9	100.0	2.60	0.23	25.02***	0.31
Loss of wages/income	33.8	22.9	2.16	0.09	7.4	27.3	3.50	0.27	7.86**	0.17
Loss of joy/happiness	29.5	72.9	32.27***	0.34	74.1	72.7	0.01	0.02	21.42***	0.29
Unable to achieve dreams	17.9	20.8	0.22	0.03	11.1	27.3	2.11	0.21	0.79	0.06
Cognitive disability	9.0	18.8	4.00*	0.11	25.9	45.5	2.04	0.20	7.26**	0.17
Physical pain	6.8	10.4	0.74	0.05	14.8	31.8	2.01	0.20	2.18	0.09
Physical disability	6.0	8.3	0.37	0.04	11.1	27.3	2.11	0.21	1.05	0.06
Other	16.2	8.3	1.96	0.08	7.4	13.6	0.51	0.10	1.45	0.08

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

the difference in the endorsement rates for the New Race condition was examined across white and black participants. Whereas Hypothesis 2 predicted white students to endorse more negative consequences than black students, the results shown in the final columns of Table 3 indicate that three of the four consequences that differ across race had higher endorsement rates for black participants.

A closer inspection in these results reveals a more nuanced impact of losing one's racial identity than originally predicted in Hypothesis 2. Black students who contemplated becoming white were significantly more likely to expect psychosocial problems of shame/embarrassment ($\psi = 0.31$), loss of joy ($\psi = 0.29$), and cognitive disability ($\psi = 0.17$) than white students who contemplated becoming black. However, white students were significantly more likely to expect financial problems in the form of lost wages/income as a result of being black ($\psi = 0.17$). Thus, it appears that racial identity affords greater intrinsic/social rewards to black students, but greater extrinsic/financial rewards to white students.

Note that the findings in Table 3 simply reveal whether students expected to *experience* these negative consequences; they do not indicate how *impactful* these consequences might be if they were to occur. To better understand the total magnitude of harm resulting from a change in one's race, an examination of the dollar amount participants assigned to their race was conducted.

The Perceived Cost of Being Black

Recall that participants reported the minimum compensation they would seek in a lawsuit against the hospital for the medical mishap resulting in their assigned side effect. Across all side effects, WTA values were heavily and positively skewed, with skewness scores ranging between 10 and 16 for each side effect except the New Face condition and Less Attractive condition (skewness = 7.4 and 6.9, respectively). To account for this skewness, median scores were computed across white and black participants; however, for descriptive purposes, mean scores were also determined. Table 4 summarizes these median and mean WTA values for each side effect presented in the study. Side effects are listed in descending rank order of WTA values, within the race of the participant.

Looking at the median values in Table 4, there are several findings worth noting. First, the side effect that one might expect a priori to negatively impact participants' lives the most (i.e., death within the week) received the highest valuations across race, while the one that should arguably have the least impact (i.e., having Coke taste like Pepsi and vice versa) received the lowest. This finding offers validity to the CVM and suggests that participants responded to the exercise thoughtfully despite having to imagine various hypothetical medical conditions. Second, the rank-ordering of the 13 WTA medians was nearly identical across race, and where there are discrepancies, those discrepancies are minor. For example, whereas being blind and having persistent body odor received the third and fourth highest compensation values (respectively) among white students, the rank-ordering of these two side effects was reversed for black students. Similar subtle discrepancies in rankings can be found elsewhere in the table.

Finally, and in contrast to Hypotheses 3 and 4, not only are the rank orderings across white and black students similar, but so are the median dollar amounts assigned to each side effect. Nonparametric tests of these WTA values revealed no statistically significantly differences across race for any side effect except for the Coke/Pepsi condition, in which black students sought higher compensation than whites (Ms = \$15 K vs. \$3 K, $p < 0.05$).

Of particular interest are participants' WTA scores for the New Race condition. Interestingly, black students placed a higher valuation on their race than whites (Ms = \$800 K vs. \$500 K), though this difference was not significant. Given that the New Race condition described a change in participants' race *and* recognizability, these estimates should be viewed in tandem with those of the New Face condition. In doing so we see that white participants valued their race and their recognizability equally, with a median value of \$500 K for each. This suggests that all of the value that white's placed on their racial identity can be explained by the price they put on recognizability. Thus, whiteness is perceived to have a net value of \$0. By comparison, the net value that black students put on their race is \$50 K (i.e., New Race score–New Face score = \$800 K–\$750 K).

For descriptive purposes—and to further explore the possibility that skin color is valued at \$0 among whites—the mean WTA scores were computed for each side effect. Unlike the median, mean scores are better able to capture the full range of value assigned to race, since it does not underweight the WTA estimates of those respondents who have strong emotional/visceral attachments to the attributes lost in the hypothetical scenarios (such as their racial identity). These mean scores are reported in the right-half of Table 4, with the side effects listed in descending value within participants' race. Despite the impact of skewness, we see that the side effect "death within the week" continued to receive the highest compensation request, while far less intrusive side effects (i.e., having the taste of Coke/Pepsi switched; having a cold for slightly longer) resulted in the lowest requests for compensation. This again suggests that respondents took the hypothetical exercises seriously, and offers validity to the CVM technique.

Unlike the rank-ordering of the medians—and consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4—the rank-ordering of mean WTA values varied considerably across white and black participants, with the biggest rank difference found for the New

Table 4 Median WTA values (with sample sizes) and mean WTA values (with standard deviations) for hypothetical lawsuit settlements, rank ordered within race of participants

Median WTA values (*n*)				Mean WTA values (SD), Cohen's $d^{a,b}$			
White participants		Black participants		White participants		Black participants	
Die in 1 week	$5,000,000 (193)	Die in 1 week	$5,000,000 (46)	Die in 1 week $D = 0.01$	$2,651,121,490 (35,990.00)	Die in 1 week	$2,317,927,174 (14,730.00)
Legs paralyzed	$2,000,000 (176)	Legs paralyzed	$3,750,000 (50)	New race-black $d = 0.12$	$32,298,328 (351.41)	Body odor	$58,014,333 (200.29)
Blind	$1,800,000 (379)	Body odor	$2,000,000 (30)	Legs paralyzed $d = 0.04$	$30,537,813 (238.07)	Legs paralyzed	$24,047,500 (76.58)
Body odor	$1,000,000 (190)	Blind	$1,500,000 (99)	Drink only H_2O $d = 0.16$	$9,869,525 (70.41)	Blind	$19,052,530 (111.88)
Hand paralyzed	$950,000 (194)	Hand paralyzed	$1,000,000 (47)	Less intelligent $d = 0.01$	$6,604,039 (38.53)	Live 5 years less	$8,248,717 (30.04)
Less intelligent	$750,000 (181)	New race-white	$800,000 (27)	Live 5 years less $d = 0.06$	$6,060,995 (39.55)	New face	$6,544,773 (21.08)
New race-black	$500,000 (234)	New face	$750,000 (22)	Blind $d = 0.17$	$5,533,909 (17.53)	Less intelligent	$6,277,640 (29.14)
New face	$500,000 (48)	Less intelligent	$750,000 (49)	Hand paralyzed $d = 0.03$	$5,122,263 (363.99)	Less attractive	$6,240,477 (21.14)
Live 5 years less	$500,000 (169)	Live 5 years less	$725,000 (46)	Body odor* $d = 0.39$	$3,217,797 (7.39)	Hand paralyzed	$5,993,574 (20.15)
Drink only H_2O	$500,000 (167)	Less attractive	$600,000 (43)	Less attractive $d = 0.24$	$2,284,126 (9.52)	Drink only H_2O	$1,652,553 (3.62)
Less attractive	$400,000 (181)	Drink only H_2O	$300,000 (47)	New face $d = 0.33$	$1,556,292 (3.84)	New race-white	$1,544,444 (2.55)
Cold extended	$30,000 (177)	Cold extended	$25,000 (61)	Cold extended $d = 0.03$	$421,441 (2.31)	Coke/pepsi	$646,661 (2.90)
Coke/pepsi*	$3,000 (201)	Coke/pepsi	$15,000 (48)	Coke/pepsi* $d = 0.25$	$120,935 (0.43)	Cold extended	$368,137 (1.34)

*Differences across racial groups significant at $p < .05$

**Differences across racial groups significant at $p < .01$

[a]Standard deviations are reported as e^{-6} (e.g., 35,990.00 = 35,990,000,000) to present large values more easily

[b]While raw mean values are shown in the table, all comparison of means tests were performed using log-transformed means to better approximate the assumption of normality. Means tests and Cohen's *d* are based on comparison of WTA values for the same scenario across race of participants

Race condition. Among white students, the average compensation for becoming African American ($32 M) was ranked the second highest, whereas among black students the compensation for becoming white ($1.5 M) was eleventh. As with all other differences in WTA means across race, this difference in New Race means failed to reach statistical significance ($p = .18$), a finding that is largely attributed to the inflated standard deviations resulting from heavy skewness. Although the effect size for this difference is considered to be small ($d = .12$; Cohen, 1992), the practical significance of the difference between these two price tags on race is striking.

Equally striking is the relative value of race. For white students, *all side effects except immediate death* were more desirable than becoming African American. Illustratively, white students in this study would rather spend the rest of their lives being paralyzed from the waist down ($30.5 M), being blind ($5.5 M) or having persistent body odor ($3.2 M) than to be African American ($32 M). By way of comparison, black students in this study would rather be white ($1.5 M) than to be paralyzed ($24 M), blind ($19 M) or have a persistent odor ($58 M). In fact, among black students in this sample, the cost associated with becoming white fell somewhere between being able to drink only water for the rest of their life ($1.7 M), and having Coke taste like Pepsi, and vice-versa ($646 K).

To better assess the value of race independent of recognizability, the differences in the mean New Race and New Face WTA values was computed for each racial group. When white students considered the New Face scenario, their average minimum compensation was approximately $1.6 M, which is far less than the $32 M they were seeking for having a different race. This suggests that most of the cost associated with becoming black ($32 M–$1.6 M = $30.4 M) is

actually due to losing one's whiteness rather than becoming unrecognizable. Interestingly, when black students contemplated having a new face, their average minimum compensation was $6.5 M—which easily *exceeded* the $1.5 M they wanted for becoming white. In other words, black students found the idea of taking on a new face to be undesirable, but being white helped to mitigate the cost.

To better understand the variability of WTA values, a series of analyses were performed using demographic variables as predictors. Analyses were conducted for white and black participants, separately. In both sets of analyses, no significant differences (either of raw WTA values or logged scores) were found across age, sex, household income level, individual income level or class rank (e.g., Freshman, Sophomore, etc.). Given that the sample was largely homogenous in terms of age, a comparison of ages at the extremes was conducted. Participants were dichotomized into groups consisting of those less than 20 years of age, and of those 30 and older. Because of an insufficient number of cases, this young/old comparison of WTA values could not be conducted among black participants. Among white participants, the difference in raw WTA scores between students under 20 years of age ($n=56$) and those who are 30 or older ($n=29$) failed to reach significance ($p=0.50$). An analyses of logged WTA scores was significant at $p=0.052$, with younger participants reporting a lower WTA.

In a final additional examination of the variability in WTA values, a breakdown of scores across skin tone conditions was computed. Table 5 summarizes the results. While the median scores show no apparent trend toward colorism, the mean scores reveal that a dark skin tone is viewed as less desirable ($92.6 M) than light or medium tones, which had WTA values that were quite similar (approximately $1.5 M). When participants receive no information regarding skin tone, the WTA mean for becoming black that fell between that of the medium and dark tone conditions ($38.9 M).

Table 5 Median WTA values (with sample sizes) and mean WTA values (with standard deviations) for white participants who imagined becoming African American, by assigned skin tone condition

	Median (*n*)	Mean (SD)[a]
Becoming African American (collapsed)	$500,000 (234)	$32,298,328 (351.41)
No skin tone description	$750,000 (56)	$38,925,107 (267.00)
Light skin tone	$500,000 (65)	$1,4332,696 (3.46)
Medium skin tone	$700,000 (57)	$1,740,807 (3.16)
Dark skin tone	$500,000 (56)	$92,600,921 (667.84)

[a]Standard deviations are reported in reported as e^{-6} (e.g., 351.44 = 351,440,000) to present large values more easily

Discussion

Many whites contend that a person's race has no meaningful impact on life outcomes, and that good fortune stems from internal characteristics such as motivation, intellect, work-ethic, etc., (Gallagher, 2003; Horwitz et al., 2019; Neville, 2009). In other words, they believe there is no inherent advantage in life to being white. When presented with arguments to the contrary, many whites are able to dismiss these claims through a collection of psychological self-preservation techniques including denial (Knowles et al., 2014; c.f. DiAngelo, 2018). The denial of white privilege stalls the growth of America's Great Awokening, and it further delays reconciling the injustices that continue to befall many in black communities.

The current study sought to test the belief that "race doesn't matter" by measuring how much whites perceived cost of being black (or conversely, the value of whiteness). Racial value was measured using a common metric (US dollars) and was obtained from a sample of college students. Participants also reported the negative consequences they would expect to experience if they were to live their lives having the outward appearance of a black person but maintaining their own internal characteristics/abilities. In this way, the current study sought to measure white privilege in terms that are easy for the public to understand (i.e., dollars), and are difficult for whites to deny (because the self-reported estimates come from whites, themselves).

More than half of the whites in this study indicated that a change in their race would result in negative outcomes as mental anguish, loss of friends, and loss of respect from others, and more than one third felt they would be ashamed/embarrassed. However, contrary to Hypothesis 1, an even *greater* percentage felt they would experience these same negative outcomes if they experienced a change in their appearance that left them unrecognizable to others (but still white). Thus, the negative consequences associated with a change in race appear to be due to a general change in appearance, and not specifically to being black.

Interestingly, black participants who imagined being white also reported many of these same negative consequences in high number. Much like their white counterparts, these students were more likely to endorse the consequences associated with a change in their appearance (i.e., a new face) rather than a change in their race, though these differences were not statistically significant. Contrary to Hypothesis 2, black students were significantly more likely than white students to anticipate experiencing shame/embarrassment, loss of happiness and a cognitive disability if their race was altered. Given that African Americans view their race as a more important part of

their identity than do whites (Horowitz et al., 2019; Jaret & Reitzes, 1999), and find pleasure in being black (Lacy, 2004), it is perhaps not surprising that the thought of becoming white led to higher endorsement rates of these psychosocial outcomes.

The only consequence that white students expected to experience more often was financial in nature. Despite having the same work-ethic, motivation, etc., whites who imaged being black were more likely to anticipate future losses of wages/income than blacks who imaged being white. Thus, participants seemingly recognized that skin color has financial dividends that are above and beyond the content of one's character. These dividends help to constitute the "blank checks" that whites carry inside their invisible knapsack (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10).

How much do whites say this knapsack is worth to them? Contrary to Hypothesis 3, the median value that whites assigned to their race was relatively low $500,000, and after taking into account the value assigned to their recognizability (also $500 K), the perceived net value of whiteness is $0. This suggest that (1) skin color truly does not matter to the whites in this study, or (2) the whites in this study are truly blind to their privilege. While the current study is not able to determine which of these explanations is correct, research by Mazzocco et al. (2006)—which also uncovered relatively low WTA estimates for whiteness—suggests that whites place a small price-tag on their race because they remain largely unaware of the real-world benefits they receive as a function of their race. This lack of awareness may also help to explain why there was no significant difference in racial WTA values across white and black students, in contrast to Hypothesis 4.

Although whites may be largely colorblind, there is some evidence to suggest that—*implicitly*—they know that race matters in America. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, the mean WTA estimates, which incorporate the more impassioned feelings that participants have about their race and its worth, reveal that whites value their whiteness at approximately $32 M. At this price, becoming black was valued as one of the most undesirable outcomes examined in this study. Furthermore, when factoring in the cost of being unrecognizable ($1.6 M), the net value of whiteness *as reported by whites* is $30.4 M, and is approximately equal to the value of being able to walk (cf: Table 4). The trend toward colorism found in the mean WTA values in Table 5 further suggests that white participants are not truly colorblind to the impact of being black, especially being black with dark skin tones.

Of course, race may have value in other, more deeply personal ways that have nothing to do with privilege. Race can have historical significance and/or embody a set of collective cultural experiences that help to define who we are. This can be seen in the way black participants who imaged becoming white endorsed psychosocial consequences to a significantly higher degree than white students who imagined becoming black. For example, 88.9% of black participants reported that they would feel shame/embarrassment if their race was changed, compared to 38.5% of whites, with similar percentages found for experiencing a loss of joy/happiness. Such findings support the notion that racial/cultural identities are more common among groups that society has historically recognized as being different from the norm.

In contrast, whites—who have historically have been viewed as the norm in US culture—do not experience these feelings of difference and are therefore less likely to develop a strong racial identity. This notion that race plays a lesser role in a white person's sense of self is especially true of whites under the age of 30 (Horowitz et al., 2019). Given that 87% of the current sample is under 30, whiteness should not carry great cultural or historical value in this study. Accordingly, cultural and historical relevance are not the likely reasons for seeking $30.4 M in recompense for becoming black. Instead, the more parsimonious explanation for this large price tag on whiteness appears to be the loss of privilege in society and the need to offset the future "dangers and discriminations" that whites expect to experience while living as a black person in America (Hacker, 1995, p. 36).

Strengths and Limitations

The current study extends the work of Hacker (1995) using the CVM to examine whites' WTA estimates of whiteness. Unlike Mazzocco et al.'s (2006) own extension of this work, the current study presents CVM scenarios that describe an actual change in racial appearance and not just a change in racial status. The current study also includes a separate scenario to help account for the value of recognizability, as well as additional scenarios describing other medical side effects ranging from the trivial to the extreme. In this way, the study is able to examine not only the absolute value of whiteness (in dollars), but also the relative value (compared to blindness, paralysis, etc.). The finding that participants' median and mean WTA estimates for immediate loss of life are the highest, and that benign outcomes such as having the taste of Coke and Pepsi switched are among the lowest, suggests that participants completed the CVM exercises thoughtfully, adding validity to the study's methodology.

However, given that the current study is limited to a few hundred (typically young) college students in the Southeast, the findings uncovered here may not be generalizable to whites more broadly. Today's college students have more opportunities to be exposed to the ideas of critical race theory, white privilege, white fragility, etc. (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015), and as such, they may have responded in ways that are different from other less-educated groups in society. Similarly, compared to older adults, those under the age of 30 are more likely to acknowledge slavery's legacy in

the US, and more likely support the movement for reparations (AP-NORC, 2019). Thus, the current study's younger sample may be more likely to see the value of their whiteness and place a higher price-tag on it. At the same time, these young adults have likely had more limited experiences with hiring agencies, financial institutions, healthcare organizations, the criminal justice system, etc., where outcomes can vary by race. This suggests the current sample has not yet experienced the full spectrum of divergent outcomes that people of different races experience in these arenas, and as a result, whites in the sample may undervalue the cost of being black. Future research on the perceived value of whiteness should examine the perceptions of a more heterogeneous and representative group of white individuals. Future research should also consider adding follow-up surveys or focus group sessions to gather qualitative data that might allow for a deeper understanding of participants' justifications for their WTA values, as well as their familiarity with the notion of white privilege and their exposure to diversity.

The current study collected data through an online survey, which does not ensure responses are independent. If students who completed the online survey talked about their responses to those who had not yet done so, then the subsequent groups' valuations of whiteness may have been impacted by how the former group answered. Any such lack of independent responding can undermine traditional Fisherian statistical testing. However, this potential limitation is present in most every online survey—and while it should not be ignored—there is no reason to believe that the current study experienced this potential threat to any greater or lesser degree than other study online surveys.

The valuations of whiteness uncovered in the current study may also be influenced by participants' general aversion to loss (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1991). Rooted in Prospect Theory, loss aversion is the phenomenon of placing greater value on items we once had but now lost, compared to items of objectively equal value that we may have recently acquired. In other words, the sting of losing $20 is generally thought to be greater than the joy of finding $20 (see also the Endowment Effect; Thaler, 1980). In the CVM scenarios used in the current study, participants are informed that their original race is lost due to a medical mishap. By framing the scenarios in this way, participants' WTA estimates of whiteness may be inflated beyond its true objective value. Future research should develop scenarios that require WTP estimates of whiteness—i.e., asking whites how much they would be Willing To Pay to *remain* white—and see how these estimates compare to the WTA estimates uncovered here.

The current study's valuations of whiteness could have been influenced by social desirability. While the study did not include a measure of social desirability, other scales designed to measure constructs related to white privilege have not been influenced by socially desirable responses (Neville et al., 2000; Pinterits et al., 2009; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004). Compared to these other scales, the current study examines white privilege in a more indirect manner, which should trigger socially desirable responding to an even lesser degree. However, if whites in this study did elect to respond in a more socially desirable way, it means that the WTA estimates for becoming black are artificially deflated. Thus, the $32 M price tag on whiteness reported in the current study could be considered a conservative estimate.

Given that the distribution of WTA estimates is highly skewed, future research should gather additional information on participants to help understand why some whites feel more passionately about their whiteness than do others. It may be the case, for example, that individuals with more white privilege awareness (Ancis & Szymanski, 2001) or more white guilt (Swim & Miller, 1999) see greater value in their race. Conversely, those who staunchly deny the existence of white privilege may nevertheless be the same individuals who value their whiteness the most. The identification of such correlates of perceived whiteness can help to develop strategies to combat misplaced colorblindness in the US.

Finally, given that racial strife in America is not simply a white/black problem, future research should explore the value individuals assign to their race across a more diverse set of racial/ethnic groups. Such an undertaking may help not only to broaden our understanding of dominant-minority racism, but it may also shed light on inter-minority racism and other cultural conflicts between African American and Asian American/Latinx communities (Robinson & Chang, 2017; Thornton, 2011).

Conclusion

In his 1996 HBO comedy special, comedian Chris Rock opined "There ain't a white man in this room that would change places with me…And I'm rich!" The findings from the current study partially bear this out.

White students in this study were more likely to anticipate financial repercussions if they were to live out the rest of their lives as a black person. Additionally, while the median estimates of the value of whiteness suggest that these financial harms are not terribly large, the mean values exceed $30 million, making "becoming black" second only to immediate death in terms of its undesirability. Thus, while many whites may continue to deny that their race affords them privilege, the findings from this study suggest that many whites could not easily afford to live *without* their privilege.

Appendix 1

New Race: African American (no skin tone provided)

> You now appear to be African American. You have skin coloring and facial features/hair associated with African ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be African American, and you will not be recognizable to anyone you now know. You will have to explain to everyone (including friends and family) that it's you.

New Race: African American (light skin tone provided)

> You now appear to be African American. You have skin coloring (light brown) and facial features/hair associated with African ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be African American, and you will not…

New Race: African American (medium skin tone provided)

> You now appear to be African American. You have skin coloring (medium brown) and facial features/hair associated with African ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be African American, and you will not…

New R.ace: African American (dark skin tone provided)

> You now appear to be African American. You have skin coloring (dark black) and facial features/hair associated with African ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be African American, and you will not…

New Race: White

> You now appear to be white. You have skin coloring and facial features/hair associated with European ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be white, and you will not…

New Race: Hispanic

> You now appear to be Hispanic. You have skin coloring and facial features/hair associated with Hispanic ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be Hispanic, and you will not…

New Race: Asian

> You now appear to be Asian. You have skin coloring and facial features/hair associated with Asian ancestry. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now appear to be Asian, and you will not…

Different Face

> Your facial features/hair have changed just enough to make you look like a different person. Inside, you are still the person you always were. You just now have a different face, and you will not be recognizable to anyone you now know. You will have to explain to everyone (including friends and family) that it's you.

Paralysis-Dominant Hand

> You are now paralyzed in your right hand (from your wrist to your fingers). You have full use of your arm; just not your hand.

Paralysis-Waist Down

> You are now paralyzed from the waist, down. You cannot walk, not even with a cane, crutches, prosthetic or some other type of assistance.

Water Only

> Your taste buds have changed such that you can now only drink water (unflavored) without getting sick. All other beverages—including soft drinks, coffee, tea, milk, juice, frozen drinks, alcoholic drinks, etc.—will taste horribly foul and if you drink these beverages you will immediately cough up all that you consumed. Unflavored water is the only beverage you can drink without the foul taste or without getting sick.

Coke/Pepsi Switched

> Your taste buds have changed such that Coke (and Diet Coke) now taste like Pepsi (and Diet Pepsi), and Pepsi (and Diet Pepsi) now taste like Coke (and Diet Coke). These are the only changes to your sense of taste. It is as if your Coke and Pepsi taste buds have been switched.

Cold Extended

> Your body will now need more time to recover from the common cold. You will not get the cold more often, but when you do get a cold you will experience the symptoms for about 2 days longer than normal. Therefore, if it normally took you 10 days to get over a cold, it will now take you 12 days. Your symptoms will not be any more or less severe; they will simply last longer than before.

Persistent Body Odor

> You now have persistent, unpleasant body odor that is quite noticeable. Soaps, deodorants and perfumes/colognes do little to mask the odor.

Less Intelligent

> You are now less intelligent than before. The change in your intelligence is equal to a 2-point reduction on the 0-10 scale you saw earlier. This means that if you originally were a "10" on that scale, then you would now be 8. If you originally were a "9," you would now be a 7. If you originally were an "8," you would now be a 6. And so on.

Less Attractive

> You are now less attractive than before. The change in your attractiveness is equal to a 2-point reduction on the 0-10 scale you saw earlier. This means that if you originally were a "10" on that scale, then you would now be 8. If you originally were a "9," you would now be a 7. If you originally were an "8," you would now be a 6. And so on.

Live 5 Years Less

> Your life expectancy has been shorted, and you will die five years sooner than expected. For example, if you would have normally lived to be 100, you will now live to be 95. If you would have normally lived to be 93, you will now live to be 88. If you would have normally lived to be 81, you will now live to be 76. And so on. This side effect does not change the cause of your death, only the timing in which it occurs.

Die in 1 Week

> You will die in exactly one week. Your body will simply become tired and shut down. Your death will be peaceful. You will feel no pain; you will not suffer. You will not live long enough to spend any of the settlement money that you may be awarded; however, you can request that the money be given to whomever you wish (friends, family, an organization, a charity, etc.).

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Consent to Participant Participants provided their informed consent.

Consent for Publication I consent to the publication of this manuscript.

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