

Civic Engagement Among College-Aged Youth in Middle Tennessee

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines social activism among young blacks in Middle Tennessee in the age of Black Lives Matter (BLM). Special attention is given to the participation of college-age young people, and their participation in high-risk activities such as protests and demonstrations. Drawing from the political context theory on youth civic engagement, I hypothesize that black college-aged students participate in high-risk civic engagement, and that this participation is influenced by the current Black Lives Matter movement. This study's data includes a total of 210 surveys distributed on the campuses of Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), Tennessee State University (TSU), and Fisk University. Data are also drawn from secondary sources including local media stories of social activism among young blacks in Middle Tennessee. The results show that 45% of black students have participated in high-risk civic engagement, and over 75.6% report a likeliness to participate within the next year. The study focuses on the period from 2014-2017, which experienced an outburst of protests across the country, including Middle Tennessee, particularly focused on police accountability, criminal justice reform, and racial equity on college campuses.

INTRODUCTION

This research study seeks to address whether young people and especially college-age¹ African Americans² in Middle Tennessee are attracted to protests, civil disobedience, and other forms of high-risk social activism. Given the current Black Lives Matter (BLM) social movement and prominence of black youth's participation in demonstrations and protests, there has been renewed interest in civic engagement among black youth. Across the country, college students are participating in different acts of civil disobedience, as well as advocating for equity on and off their campuses, despite risking ostracism and repression. My central thesis is that black college-aged students in Middle Tennessee are attracted to high-risk forms of civic engagement. Drawing from political context theory, I hypothesize that the context of the Black Lives Matter movement presents a platform for black youth civic engagement to flourish through various acts of high-risk civil disobedience. I also hypothesize that the political context of the period spanning 2014-2017—a period referred to as the age of Black Lives Matter—shaped the political attitudes of black youth in Middle Tennessee, and therefore influenced the rate at which black youth participated in civic engagement and high-risk forms of civil disobedience. Hence, this study assesses black youth involvement in high-

¹ For the purpose of this study, “college-age” and “college-aged” are used interchangeably.

² In this study, “black” and “African American” are used interchangeably.

risk initiatives in the Middle Tennessee area, while drawing from past research on black youth and young adult participation in social movements.

Youth activism is shaped by the political context of its respective time period. For the purposes of this study, I use “activism” and “civic engagement” interchangeably. Civic engagement among youth, specifically black youth, occurs and has occurred within the context of intergenerational or multi-generational social movements. Civic engagement can be defined as the initiatives of an active citizenry designed to improve the quality of life in their community. These initiatives can take the form of electoral and interest group politics, or may entail grassroots mobilization, community organizing, and even protests. In a social movement, an organized group of people work together toward a common goal directly related to advancing social change in their society (Smelser, Killian, and Turner 2009). During the movement of the 1930s, the post-World War II Civil Rights movement, and the Black Power movement, black youth activism grew and developed through the aid of different social movement infrastructures and networks. These mobilizing structures foster civic engagement among black youth by placing them at the forefront of social movements (Franklin 2014). This study focuses on the current context of the Black Lives Matter movement and its role in fostering civic engagement among black youth, specifically in the Middle Tennessee region.

Civic engagement research indicates that the status and competing representations of black youth inform policymaking and legislative decision-making. Historically, black youth have been at the center of “neoliberal debates about the role of government,” normally being portrayed in the media and in popular culture as socially deviant,

irresponsible, and immoral (Ibid., 4). While black youth activists typically advocate for more government intervention and social welfare programs, some political observers and politicians emphasize the disinvestment of federal resources that could assist disadvantaged communities where many black youth reside. Through the media and institutionalized practices and policies, the public discourse of disinvestment criminalizes and dehumanizes African American youth (Lang 1998). Of course, not all black youth are in disadvantaged neighborhoods, but still, even five decades after the demobilization of the civil rights movement, at least one-third of young blacks live in economically-distressed neighborhoods (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2017). Hence, such institutional support is necessary to ensure the overall political agenda of equity is being pursued. This centering of black youth as poor, problematic deviants in our society demeans the value of black youth (Cohen 2010), and overshadows their capacity to advocate for their communities while still facing systematic and institutionalized racism in their communities.

Additional research on civic engagement underscored the decline of protests among youth since the end of the civil rights movement (Celestine 2005). Social capital theorist Robert Putnam attributes the decline in civic engagement to diminished activism amongst youth since the 1960s, a period of increased youth civic and political participation as exhibited with the civil rights, free speech, anti-war, and feminist movements. During the 1990s, this notion was commonly accepted in the civic engagement field – that the desire by young people to get involved in the civic and political process had disappeared. However, this perception undervalued the “broader

conceptualization of political activism” of young people, which includes non-traditional forms of civic engagement, such as “participating in youth-led social justice movements” (Hope, Keels, and Durkee 2016, 203). African American youth have also participated in nonconventional forms of civic engagement such as providing financial assistance to a family member, cultural expression, and participating in public demonstrations (Hope and Jagers 2014).

It is important to note that social and political contexts shape the definitions of traditional forms of political participation versus high-risk activism for some activists. Living in poverty already produces a particular isolation from the broader community. Imagine a poor youth attending a town hall meeting for the first time. The act of advocating for quality housing in their neighborhood can be quite a fearful experience and considered just as much of a high-risk act as protesting at a town hall (Franklin 2014, 134). The research suggests that civic engagement, as well as high-risk activism, is contextual.

This study examines social activism among college-age young people in Middle Tennessee. Given the history of black youth activism occurring outside of the realm of institutionalized and electoral politics, this study also explores participation in high-risk and non-traditional civic engagement among black college-aged youth in the area. Emphasis is given to black college students considering that colleges and universities are “central institution[s] for civic incorporation” of youth (Flanagan and Levine 2010, 159).

Cathy Cohen’s *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* highlights the significance of black youth’s social, political, and economic

experiences and how these factors shape their political attitudes and behaviors. Cohen's work has notably contributed to the recent literature on black youth activism during the Obama era, emphasizing the importance of black youth's diverse personal accounts and their understanding of the government's role in the success and/or hardships in their lives. The current political context of this study comes at the end of the Obama era, in which President Obama's rhetoric surrounding the state of black youth often created a moral panic, blaming personal responsibility as opposed to the forces of institutional racism (Cohen 2010, 42). During the Obama era (2008-2016), the general public assumed that America had now become a post-racial society, meaning that the election of an African American as the President equated to equal opportunity for all races in the United States.

Furthermore, the Obama administration created the My Brother's Keeper initiative, which focused on promoting school readiness, college preparation, equal opportunity for jobs, and giving youth second chances (Obama White House Archives 2016). Unfortunately, the continuation of the neo-liberal political agenda, which shapes social service programs and influences support for community development in underprivileged neighborhoods, during the Obama administration indicated that the country still has tremendous work to do in regard to advancing racial equity (Nkansah-Amankra, Agbanu, and Miller 2013). Obama has been criticized, specifically by black scholars, of leading a particular narrative of black youth that contradicts the proposed outcomes of his past policies. Consider the perspective of Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative as a federal program "premised on the view that young black men constitute a social problem," a popular stance in the advancement of neoliberal policies. This

standpoint highlights how Obama framed black youth as the sole perpetrators of their own social and economic futures, and failed to address the issue that drives the racial wealth gap in the U.S.

Although the black high school graduation rate increased by approximately 8% under the Obama administration, one cannot ignore the fact that even blacks with “some college education” still have “higher unemployment rates than whites who never finished high school” (Darity 2016). The neoliberal agenda works at odds with positive, sustainable outcomes for the black community as a disproportionate number of blacks live in poverty and are directly affected by harmful neoliberal policies. Although the symbolic value of President Obama remains, a substantial change in the overall economic position of blacks did not occur. Poor black youth remain “secondary citizens,” and maintain a general distrust in the government and its ability to enact positive change on the lives and conditions of black people (Cohen 2010, 113).

In reality, there is still much to learn about why black youth engage in high-risk activism considering Black Lives Matter is a recent social movement. This study will provide insight into the current state of activism among black youth and youth in the Middle Tennessee area. At the end of the Obama era and at the beginning of the Trump administration, black youth activism is deserving of further research.

Finally, before moving forward, it is important to explain what is described as the age of Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter activists emphasize the inclusion of all black people including youth, the elderly, poor people, the disabled, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer/Questioning) people, and black women. The Black

Lives Matter movement stresses the importance of centering the most marginalized people in the black community, who often go ignored and mistreated. BLM's agenda focuses on halting the policing killings of unarmed blacks, advancing restorative justice initiatives, and supporting policies that uplift black women, children, the poor, and members of the LGBTQ community (Garza 2017). This all-inclusive philosophy encourages young black activists to become involved in high-risk acts, such as protests and demonstrations.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BLACK YOUTH ACTIVISM

During the Great Depression era, youth-based activism focused on racial and economic justice. In a time of "widespread poverty," "racial bigotry," and "increasing militarism abroad," young activists positioned social class at the forefront of their initiatives, and "value[d] racial and ethnic diversity instead of exclusivity" (Bynum 2013, 1). Youth, and specifically black youth, felt empowered to enact positive social change. Black youth organizations like the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SYNC) and the college chapters and youth councils of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) advocated for civil rights and racial desegregation (Franklin 2014). African American youth have historically participated in the political realm, and have maneuvered through various institutional obstacles and resistance. As foot soldiers on the frontlines of social movements, black youth have played a significant role in advocacy and civic engagement.

Research on black youth activism emphasizes the significance of mobilizing structures as mediums for engaging young people in high-risk activism. Social movement organizations, advocacy organizations, and community-based organizations serve as channels for activism by providing critical social capital and empowering black youth to enact social change (Ginwright 2007). Civic engagement among black youth has usually been propelled by three different types of groups: “youth-led organizations, multigenerational (or intergenerational) organizations, and network-affiliated groups or advocacy coalitions that support youth activities” (Franklin 2014, 5).

Social capital is defined as “both the informal and formal networks and associations” of citizens that provide the capacity for promoting community life (Sullivan 1997, 235). At the local level, community-based organizations offer opportunities for African American youth to engage in intergenerational learning as adult members of the community “help youth frame personal struggles as political issues” and form a political consciousness (Ginwright 2007, 403). Within these organizations, black youth are encouraged to participate in “community change activities” that address social issues in their environment; they become inspired to advocate against the various problems they see in their schools and communities (Ibid.). Hence, youth’s participation in activism operate as a context for their learning and development.

For urban black youth specifically, social capital and “informal networks [are] most vibrant.” Despite black political and civic life being reduced to mainstream political strategies such as “annual conventions” and “symbolic rallies” as a result of the post-civil rights era, urban black youth maintain networks and rich social capital (Kirshner 2007,

2). The social capital that stems from involvement in advocacy organizations builds trust and ties among community members, counteracting the general distrust that black youth have in the government. Through involvement in civic organizations, which often arise during a social movement, African American youth have the opportunity to participate in various forms of civic engagement.

The various forms of civic engagement are displayed throughout the history of social activism among black youth. Black youth participated in boycotts, sit-ins, protests, established freedom schools, and other initiatives during a period of *de jure* terrorization of black communities. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a prominent social movement organization during the Civil Rights movement, utilized distinctive strategies that contributed much to building the capacity of black youth as active community advocates.

SNCC was well-known for its creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools. The schools operated as “autonomous institutions,” implementing programs that provided young black Mississippians various opportunities to participate in civic life “activities led by civil rights workers” (Sturkey 2010, 349). The Mississippi Freedom Schools exemplify how young activists incorporate unique strategies to “motivate and activate” disadvantaged black youth by providing literacy training and introducing the idea of “intellectual freedom” to them (Ibid.). With the help of SNCC’s efforts with the Mississippi Freedom Schools, black students “became politically conscious and committed to the larger Civil Rights movement” (Hale 2011, 325). The famous “jail, no bail” strategy, also used by SNCC during the Civil Rights movement, approached the

consequences of arrest for civil disobedience by refusing to post bail and requesting jail time instead of paying fines. This method emphasized young activists' opposition to immoral, discriminatory laws, and also served as a practical means for black youth, considering limited financial resources. (Zinn Education Project 2017).

Civic engagement within a social movement is often influenced by the political context of the respective time period. Black youth activism has traditionally existed outside of electoral and institutionalized politics; however, as the political context changes, the forms of black youth civic engagement varies and adapts. Black youth activism ranges from the radical Southern Negro Youth Congress of the 1930s to the institutional leveraging occurring after the legislative acts passed during the Civil Rights movement.

Student and Youth-Based Activism in the 1930s and 1940s

As stated earlier, Great Depression era politicized black youth. The political environment was shaped by the extreme poverty and racism instilled in public policy. Despite heightened “alienation of young blacks” during this period, African American youth activism was radical and militant (Franklin 2014, 7). In this era, there was a surge in black and white youth activism. Organizations like the American Student Union (ASU) and the American Youth Congress (AYC) “sought to address the dismal state of black-white relations at home” during a period of youth movements in America occurring throughout the 1930s (Bynum 2013, 1). While black students challenged the conservative

leadership of historically black colleges and universities in the 1920s (Wolters 1975), militant black youth addressed economic justice issues affecting the black working class and civil rights infractions, such as voter disenfranchisement through the poll tax.

Much of this activism stemmed from black youth's membership in two different, but important organizations: the NAACP Youth Council and the Southern Negro Youth Congress (SNYC). Led by its first national youth director Juanita Jackson, the NAACP Youth Council hosted an "anti-poll tax campaign" and a number of marches, boycotts, and sit-ins to bring attention to the significance of voting rights and its role in advancing racial equality in America (Franklin 2016). Since the 1930s, African American youth have participated in high-risk forms of civic engagement. Sit-ins, a well-known act of civil disobedience displayed by African Americans in the general discourse on black activism, were utilized to highlight the legal discrimination against black people in public places. At a time of political repression, young people still managed to partake in civic engagement through measures outside of the political norm (Bynum 2013). SNYC was "the most radical youth organization of the 1930s and 1940s." It fought for voting rights and racial desegregation, but also for the just treatment of black workers. SNYC helped 5,000 black tobacco workers go on strike and create the Tobacco Stemmers and Laborers Industrial Union in 1937. In addition, SNYC "organized labor youth clubs and labor and citizenship schools", and created youth legislatures which focused on foreign policy, voting rights, and labor policy (Franklin 2014, 7). It is clear that during the emergence of youth movements in America, African American youth actively participated and creatively organized themselves at the frontline of high-risk forms of civic engagement.

As measures of the more traditional acts of civic engagement such as voting and participating in electoral politics were not available to black youth, black youth still found a way to be involved in movement activism. Assessing the political context of the time period of activism is essential to understanding how political and civil rights issues shape black youth's political attitudes. In turn, black youth's political attitudes are directly tied to their approach to civic engagement and specific issues of advocacy. During the 1930s, African American youth were radicalized by the detrimental social and political implications of the Great Depression, and as a result, were "receptive to left-oriented and progressive economic justice measures." While SYNC remained active well into the 1940s, black youth activism overall declined. In the 1950s, African American youth civic engagement "experienced a rebirth" (Franklin 2016, 7).

Post-World-War II Era/Civil Rights Movement

Black youth activism during the post-World War II era was "shaped by the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, Emmitt Till's murder by Mississippi segregationists in 1955, the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955/1956, the Little Rock desegregation campaign in 1957, and the Youth Marches for Integrated Schools in 1958/1959." These events influenced local, state, and national politics in the post-World War II era (Franklin 2016, 8). This generation of young activists faced different conditions than the young activists of the 1930s. In addition, the politics of the Cold War centered the concern of how America appeared to other nations across the world in regard to racial inequality and

true democracy. From the late 1950s into the 1960s, black youth participated in mass-organized rallies and protests, which focused on desegregation in business, schools, and other public places (Lang 2015).

The Student Sit-In movement of 1960 brought together approximately 50,000 students protesting against the segregation of public places in the South. The most influential student-based organization of the Civil Rights movement was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which formed after the large wave of sit-ins in the 1960s (Davies and Morgan 2012). SNCC was well-known for its unique community-based approach to organizing. Members of SNCC immersed themselves in the communities for which they were advocating, and empowered those communities to organize themselves. Freedom schools were set up across the rural South in the midst of racialized terror aimed specifically at African American communities. By becoming a part of the community, empowering community members and teaching them community-organizing strategies and tactics, SNCC provided a channel for rural black people to become their own advocates. This form of civic engagement is fundamental to the community-based approach of black youth activism that builds critical social capital in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods (Hale 2014).

SNCC also collaborated with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), another significant advocacy organization of the Civil Rights movement. CORE sponsored the Freedom Rides of 1961 to protest racial segregation in interstate travel and commerce (Conner and Rosen 2016). In addition, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the NAACP played a major role in helping place black youth at the forefront

of civic engagement activities. Multi-organizational activist efforts such as these were pivotal in enlarging the effect of participating in high-risk forms of civic engagement. Indeed, militant activism drew attention to the cruel mistreatment of blacks.

Post-Civil Rights Era/Black Power Movement

After the Civil Rights movement of the late 1950s and the 1960s, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 heavily contributed to the shift in the political context of Black youth activism at that time. Again, African Americans experienced different circumstances than the generation of black activists during most of the Civil Rights movement. Black people were then able to participate in electoral politics, and there was a surge in the number of black elected public officials. As more institutionalized means of civic engagement became available to black people and black youth, black youth militancy declined (Hamilton 1978). However, the Black Power movement of the late 1960s and the 1970s highlight the militant advocacy of black youth that still existed until its influence declined in the late 1970s.

A major organization during the Black Power movement was the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU), which was involved in a myriad of different large-scale civic engagement activities. SOBU, like SNCC with the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, participated in a method of civic engagement called parallel institutionalization (Greenburg 1998, 9). This meant that black youth would create their own institution similar to the one that actively excluded and

discriminated against African Americans. For example, it worked with the Black People's Union Party of North Carolina and the North Carolina Black Political Assembly (Franklin 2016, 6). SOBU also aligned their activist work with that of the well-known Black Panther Party as they promoted community survival programs. Towards the late 1970s, the influence of Black Power advocacy organizations like SOBU waned due partially to FBI surveillance, and the institutionalization of black politics (Fainstein and Fainstein 1996). It was at this point that the common mobilization strategies used to empower black youth activism shifted to institutional methods of attempting to get black youth involved in politics.

In the post-civil rights era, the Black Power ideology acknowledged the persistence of racialized segregation in community neighborhoods. Youth-based movements and organizations operated during a time when African Americans were plagued by low employment rates and low quality schools (van Horne 2007). The conditions of black people and black youth ranged from a well-off black middle class to a marginalized, alienated lower class living in ghettos. Despite the advancement of civil rights and racial equality through the legislative acts passed during the Civil Rights movement, black youth of the post-civil rights era would also engage in militant forms of activism.

The 1980s and 1990s

Despite the decline in popular mobilization, black youth activism did not cease. There were several youth-based movements and organizations that were prominent after this time period. The Free South Africa/Student divestment movement of the mid-1980s included campus-based protests and demonstrations which displayed black South Africans' poor, segregated living conditions. Shantytown protests, a high-risk civic engagement tactic in which student activists built makeshift construction representing the oppressive racism that permeated throughout South Africa, were appearing on college campuses across the United States (Soule 1997). These college protests included black students, other students of color, and progressive white students, culminating in a multiracial coalition dedicated to pressuring colleges and universities to divest in their business relationships with corporations that were financially invested in South Africa.

During the 1980s, "student protest rallies" increased among black youth on college campuses (Tripp 1992, 47). In addition, community-based black youth activism thrived, involving coalitions made up of different youth activist organizations such as the African American Youth Congress and the NAACP Youth Council in New Haven (Franklin 2014, 95-112). In 1990, the Black Student Leadership Network (BLSN), a significant post-civil rights youth organization, was formed in efforts to develop a mass of black student leaders who dedicated themselves to "improving the socio-economic situation of black children and their families" (Collison 1992, 1). BLSN led efforts in

placing black youth and students at the forefront of advocacy by utilizing community-based strategies (Franklin 2014, 203).

Beginning in the late 1990s until the early 2000s, the Juvenile Justice Reform movement (JJRM) drew attention to the disproportionate incarceration of black and Latino youth, human rights abuses in youth prisons, and zero-tolerance policies. The specific issues of this movement focused on the juvenile justice system, indicating a shift away from the agenda of youth-oriented movements during the mid-1980s (Ehrhard-Dietzel, Barton, and Hickey 2016). In addition, adult-led advocacy groups organized the different initiatives of the JJRM, but the utilization of community-based strategies to address their issues was similar to BLSN's tactics. An important community-based strategy that helped in "building the capacity of young people" was the radical healing approach, noted by educator Sean Ginwright; this notion of "revolutionary hope" assisted black youth, who sometimes faced constraints on opportunities for civic engagement in their communities (Ginwright 2010, 77).

Larger adult-led advocacy organizations operated as movement infrastructures that aided black youth activism. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was another organization that was highly active during this period, and put an emphasis on organizing black youth from 1989 to 2005. AFL-CIO modeled its Union Summer program after SNCC's Freedom Summer program of 1964, targeting admission to black youth (Haut, Kelly, and Mishler 2009; Franklin 2014, 75). During this period, adult-led advocacy organizations positioned black youth so

black youth had the resources to advocate for themselves, calling attention to issues surrounding youth violence, crime, and an unjust juvenile prison system.

CONTEMPORARY BLACK YOUTH ACTIVISM

In the 21st century, black youth activism has emphasized criminal and juvenile justice system reform. In 2007, the protests surrounding the Jena 6, six black boys who were charged with attempted murder and 100 years in prison for beating up a fellow white student at their high school in Louisiana, gained much media attention and centered the issue of juvenile justice reform. The background story noted that days before, white students allegedly hung nooses from the “white tree” after a black student sat underneath it at school (Newman 2007). High-risk activism on behalf of black people and black youth in support of the Jena 6 highlighted the collective power of black youth civic engagement.

In addition to criminal justice reform, police brutality is an issue for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which began in 2013. The BLM movement spawned from the prominence of the “trending topic” #BlackLivesMatter on Twitter, a popular social media outlet among youth across the globe. The hashtag was started by three black women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, in response to the killing of Trayvon Martin, a black youth, and the non-conviction of his killer, George Zimmerman, in Florida (Garza 2017). The BLM movement sparked after the killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York, involving a

host of “die-ins,” public demonstrations in which protestors re-enact the killings of African Americans by laying down on the street or ground, and other forms of protests (Mirzoeff 2015).

The organizing theory of the Black Lives Matter movement aligns with black feminist theory, which distinguishes it from the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. BLM emphasizes the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in the structural racism of America (Larson 2016). BLM intentionally situates black women, poor youth, queer and transgendered black women at the forefront of protests (Obasogie and Newman 2016). BLM’s philosophy insists that women, LGBTQ people, and disabled black people play a central role in the organizing and advocacy activities of the movement, as opposed to the mostly male leadership that garnered media attention during the civil rights movement. Its purpose is to center “those that have been marginalized within black liberation movements” (Garza 2017).

A significant difference between the Black Lives Matter movement from past black social movements is a strong stance against using respectability politics to advance social and political change. During the civil rights movement, respectability politics was utilized as a means to appeal to the white public, and was based on the notion that black people must “show themselves [as] dignified” in order for the humanity of black people to be acknowledged (Cohen 2010, 40). The aesthetic of black middle class activists wearing suits to protests permeated throughout the media coverage of the movement. Today, respectability politics includes discourse highlighting the notion of personal responsibility over “discussing the lived conditions and politics of Black communities”

(Ibid., 42). It places blame for one's life trajectory solely on the individual, ignoring the impact and experiences of institutionalized racism that affects every day black life. This rejection of respectability politics has already caused a generational divide as older black civil rights activists find it difficult to adhere to the strategies of BLM. Protest frontlines display a variety of black people, from queer and transwomen to young black boys wearing saggy pants, distinguishing the Black Lives Matter movement as a social movement that embraces all black people, regardless of socioeconomic status or gender identity.

A number of organizations exist within the larger BLM movement, including the actual organization titled Black Lives Matter, which has chapters in different cities across the country. Other youth advocacy groups support the movement such as Black Youth Project 100 in Chicago, Million Hoodies Movement for Justice in New York, Dream Defenders of Florida, Justice League NYC, and Organization for Black Struggles in St. Louis. Currently, black youth activists have used institutional politics (e.g. voting, lobbying, etc.) and non-institutional activism. For example, in 2015, a multiracial coalition of activists and researchers affiliated with the BLM movement compiled a national platform called Campaign Zero, which gave policy recommendations for police reform. Furthermore, they were able to secure commitments from three presidential candidates in the Democratic Party to “develop comprehensive restorative justice measures” if they won the U.S. Presidency (Franklin 2016, 11).

Through high-risk forms of civic engagement, black youth activists have already participated in high-profile demonstrations and protests on college campuses and at their

schools around the world. In 2015, black students at the University of Missouri (Mizzou) belonging to Concerned Student 1950 built a “tent city” on their campus in protest against various racial injustices occurring at the school. The football team boycotted games until the university’s president resigned, and a graduate student began a hunger strike. Students engaged in campus activism and drew attention to the injustices they felt were largely ignored by university administration (Wong and Green 2016). The protests at Mizzou sparked a number of widespread protests on college campuses across the country. All in efforts to draw attention to different instances of racial bias within their respective school systems, student activists participated in acts of high-risk civic engagement ranging from die-ins to campus walk-outs, where students walk out of classrooms in protest.

Middle Tennessee Student Activism

In Middle Tennessee, black college-aged students are no stranger to public demonstrations, protests, and other high-risk forms of civic engagement. Tennessee State University, Fisk University, and Middle Tennessee State University, the three universities studied in this particular research, have a history of student civic engagement among its minority students. In addition, American Baptist College, a historically black college located in Nashville, TN, recently hosted a retreat for youth activists in 2014. The retreat brought activists from Ferguson, Missouri, Chicago, and Atlanta, and placed an emphasis on centering the voices of the young activists (Hale 2014).

The Nashville Student Organizing Committee (NSOC), founded in 2014, is a community-based organization dedicated to advancing social justice in the Middle Tennessee area. NSOC is made up of a majority of students attending Tennessee State University and Fisk University, and includes African American students and Latino/a students. In 2014, members of NSOC held a protest in the Legislative Plaza at the state's capitol advocating for the repeal of Tennessee voter identification (ID) laws (Cisk 2014). Tennessee's voter ID laws currently deny college students the ability to use their university ID to vote. NSOC and others argued that this provision targets college students, the poor, and people of color, who have higher chances of not having a government-issued ID.

In addition to this high-risk form of civic engagement, members of NSOC filed a federal lawsuit against the state of Tennessee in 2015 (Barchenger 2015). Although the court dismissed the case, these student activists utilized a combination of high-risk forms of civic engagement through the federal judicial system to advocate for an issue directly affecting them.

The rich history of high-risk forms of civic engagement at Fisk University includes civil rights leaders John Lewis and Diane Nash, along with other black student activists at the university, leading protests that spread throughout the region as part of the larger civil rights movement. Their sit-ins incited citywide boycotts, ultimately resulting in Nashville becoming the first Southern city to desegregate lunch counters. The same student activists participated in the infamous freedom rides as well.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Fisk students held a number of protests against the university's administration, "demanding an African-American studies course, better quality of life on campus and improved financial aid" (Tamburin 2016). In addition to Fisk University students' involvement with the Nashville Student Organizing Committee, they "held a walkout and march the day after Election Day" in 2016 in response to the election of the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, who made promises during his campaign that would ban Muslims from the U.S. Some political observers believed Trump's Muslim ban and other law enforcement measures would reinforce "law and order" tactics in black, Brown, and poor communities (Sawyer and Tamburin 2016). Students also joined others in a protest passing by the state capitol and blocking the entrance to Interstate 40, yet another example of high-risk activism.

Students at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) have been protesting and participating in high-risk forms of civil disobedience on campus since the 1960s. Advocating for the removal of Confederate figures on the campus, students, and African American students in particular, have voiced their dissent against them. In 1989, the campus finally removed a bronze medallion of Nathan Bedford Forrest that stood outside of the university center.

Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate officer during the Civil War, is principally responsible for the Fort Pillow massacre of hundreds of surrendering black soldiers. He was also the first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, a terrorist organization whose activities were admonished by the Enforcement Acts during Reconstruction (History.com Staff 2009). Currently, MTSU's ROTC building is named after Nathan Bedford Forrest,

which has historically incited protests on behalf of students. In 2006 and 2007, students protested the name of the building, but there was no action on behalf of MTSU (Taylor 2016).

In 2015, in response to racial tension and protests on university campuses across the country, Middle Tennessee State University's President, Dr. Sydney McPhee, announced that the university would form a committee to determine whether or not the name of Forrest Hall should be changed. In the same year, students, along with faculty members and some MTSU alumni, protested the name on the campus. The process for a decision on the name change of Forrest Hall consisted of a series of public forums inviting students and community members of Murfreesboro to voice their stances on a name change to the appointed committee.

A group of students at MTSU, a majority of whom were African Americans, formed the Talented Tenth organization. The group, along with other student activists, expressed their discontent with the name of Forrest Hall at public engagement forums held by the university. In a room filled with "Keep the Name" stickers worn by community members, and racially charged comments by some attendees, the protesting students drew attention from Middle Tennessee area news media. University departments supported the name change, uplifting the position of students advocating for the name change. Here, institutional means of support aided the student's advocacy as they participated in public demonstrations and protests that disrupted the status quo of the community meetings (Taylor 2016). In January 2017, students held a "Not My President" rally outside of MTSU's Student Union building, in protest against the newly elected

President Donald Trump. In the Middle Tennessee region, college students are not afraid to take risks and advocate for issues important to them, whether it be through nonconventional or conventional methods of participation.

The advocacy methods of black youth activists during this post-civil rights era is significant in understanding why and how black youth use particular forms of civic engagement to advocate for specific social issues. Black activism lies on a spectrum, ranging from institutionalized means of civic engagement to high-risk, unconventional means of civic engagement; however, the tradition of black youth activism is often comprised of advocating outside the normal political channels. Analyzing black youth civic engagement in the 21st century requires the acknowledgement that the insertion of electoral and institutionalized politics as a means of achieving advocacy goals after the wins of the civil rights movement affected the available and/or utilized routes for activism.

Further, the socioeconomic and political context of a specific time period of civic engagement molds how black youth are politicized and influences the methods and issues of advocacy during that time. From the militant, radical approach to activism that emerged in response to the economic deprivation of the Great Depression to the rise of racial consciousness of black youth during the Black Power movement in response to a conservative political regime, black youth activism is influenced by the current political events of its time.

The post-civil rights era of black youth civic engagement marked the implementation of the institutionalization of black politics (Franklin 2014). In the

twenty-first century, Black Lives Matter is a movement bridge-builder. It serves as a framing narrative positioning black youth at the center of political significance, and emphasizes the racialized killings they face at the hands of police officers (Franklin 2016). Institutional civic engagement measures such as Campaign Zero garnered the attention of Democratic Party presidential candidates.

METHOD AND DATA

In order to investigate the experiences of African American youth and their political and civic involvement throughout the Middle Tennessee area, I was part of a research team that administered a 23-question survey on the campuses of Middle Tennessee State University and two historically black universities in Nashville, Tennessee State University and Fisk University. The targeted age range was 18 to 24 years old.

We utilized a convenience sampling method to survey college students. We followed a methodologically sound measure to retrieve an approximate representation of students due to the difficulty of collecting a random sample of the population. On the campus of MTSU, we collected an even number of surveys at high-student traffic areas on campus: Student Union building, James E. Walker Library, and Keathley University Center. We administered surveys to every fifth person who came into our survey area, and surveys were only given to one person if they were sitting with other people in a group. Although this study focuses on black youth civic engagement, surveys were

administered to students across racial/ethnic backgrounds at MTSU in order to note similarities and/or differences across race and ethnicity in the data analysis. The surveyors alternated between men and women. We also collected organizational data from the following student organizations at MTSU: Black Student Union, Collegiate 100 Black Men, and Alpha Kappa Psi Professional Business Fraternity. At Tennessee State University (TSU) and Fisk University, we followed the same procedure, but targeted black students. At TSU, surveys were collected inside of the student center; at Fisk, surveys were administered inside of the cafeteria during a high traffic time of day. A total of 210 surveys were collected, and approximately half of the surveys were conducted at TSU and Fisk.

In addition to the survey, I conducted a secondary analysis of acts of civic engagement among college-aged students in Middle Tennessee by reviewing newspaper articles which reported on college youth activism in the area. I reviewed the content of four articles from *The Tennessean* and a special college activism issue of *MTSU Sidelines*. The articles recorded college-aged activism on the campuses of Middle Tennessee State University, Fisk University, and Tennessee State University, as well as at the state capitol in Nashville, Tennessee.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Before moving forward, it is important to provide a general overview of the survey participants. A majority (90%) of the survey participants in Table 1 identified as black or a person of African descent, and majority (60.5%) were employed. Only 14% of students surveyed indicated a permanent residence outside the state of Tennessee. An overwhelming 97% stated support for the past Obama administration, 85% identified as Democrat or a lean Democrat, and over half (57.5%) voted for Hillary Clinton in the past presidential election in November 2016. Over a quarter (25.7%) did not vote at all in the past election.

Table 1. Demographic Data

	Race
Black/African descent	90%
Other	10%
	Gender
Male	56.2%
Female	43.8%
	Employment Status
Working	60.5%
Don't work	39.5%
	Permanent Residence
West TN Resident	32%
Middle TN Resident	31%
East TN Resident	6%
Not TN Resident	14%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, *N*=210.

Regarding their social and political attitudes, almost three-quarters (74.3%) of college students surveyed in Middle Tennessee stated that they believe race relations between blacks and whites in America will always be a problem. Approximately 61% of the students have little or no confidence that police officers treat blacks and whites equally in their cities. As indicated in Table 2, a majority of students also believe that relations between local law enforcement and minorities in communities will either get worse (34.8%) or stay the same (42.9%). The findings show that students in Middle Tennessee share the general consensus that racial inequality still exists, both in American society and within their own communities. In the age of the Black Lives Matter, about 88% of students surveyed support this social movement. It is important to note that the political attitudes of Middle Tennessee students align with those of the Black Lives Matter movement—most are aware of police brutality and racial bias in the criminal justice system.

Table 2. Political Attitudes and Views

	Obama Administration
Support	97%
Oppose	3%
	Political Party Leaning
Democrat or lean Democrat	85%
Republican or lean Republican	7%
Independent or Other Party	8%
	Presidential Election Vote
Hillary Clinton	57.5%
Donald Trump	4.7%
Third Party/Other	2.84%
Did not vote for President	25.7%
Do not know	1.6%
	Race Relations Between Blacks and Whites in America
Always will be a problem	74.3%
Solutions will eventually be worked out/don't know	25.7%
	Police Equal Treatment of Blacks and Whites in Your City
Confidence	32.9%
Little or no confidence	67.1%
	Relations Between Local Police Forces and Minorities in Communities
Will get worse	34.8%
Will get better	22.4%
Will stay the same	42.9%
	Support for #BlackLivesMatter
Support	87.4%
Oppose	6.3%
Have not heard enough/Do not know	6.3%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, *N*=210.

Regarding civic engagement participation in Middle Tennessee, 41% of students have participated in high-risk initiatives such as a protest, demonstration, or sit-in in the past two years. A clear majority (71.4%) of students reported a likelihood that they would

participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year for a just cause, despite the possibility of it leading to some type of punishment. Over one-third of students participated in a voter registration/education campaign, the most widely used form of civic engagement reported in the survey. About a quarter of students attended a city council or school board meeting, and about a quarter participated in an activity sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization.

Table 3. Participation in Civic Engagement

	Participated in protest, demonstration, sit-in or related activities in the past 2 years?	
Yes		41%
No		59%
	Likelihood to participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year for a just cause, even if it may lead to some type of punishment?	
Likely		71.4%
Not likely		28.6%
	Participated in an activity sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization	
Yes		25.2%
No		74.8%
	Attended a city council or school board meeting	
Yes		25.2%
No		74.8%
	Participated in voter reg./education campaign	
Yes		40%
No		60%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, N=210.

The survey results show a fairly high rate of civic engagement participation among black college-aged youth in Middle Tennessee. Students indicated that they were

likely to participate in high-risk actions in the future. The findings suggest that as the Black Lives Matter movement continues even more students may participate in acts of high-risk civic engagement.

According to secondary analysis of local newspaper articles reporting on black student civic engagement in Middle Tennessee, there is a record of high-risk civil disobedience among blacks and other minority college-aged students. Middle Tennessee's college students seem to be attracted to militant forms of civic engagement when they are involved in a community-based and/or student-based advocacy organization, such as the Nashville Student Organizing Committee or the Talented Tenth organization.

Within these advocacy groups, black college students hold a sense of solidarity. This community-based approach cultivates capacity-building among the students. Sharing political knowledge and working together to solve problems in their campus-community, advocacy groups help to promote participation in civic engagement among black students (Checkoway 2013). Black college-aged youth involved in organizing activities on their campuses and in their communities utilize their "collective social power" to enact social change. They are able to choose the "issues that are most important to them" as they operate by a collective decision-making process (Christens and Dolan 2011, 529). Organizational involvement places student activists in Middle Tennessee at the forefront of high-profiled acts of high-risk civic engagement.

To garner a deeper understanding of social activism among young people, bivariate cross tabulations using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

software were conducted. I found statistically significant relationships between race and participation in high-risk civic engagement, race and political attitudes, and political attitudes and participation in civic engagement.

The results of the findings are in Table 4. Almost half (45%) of students of African descent have participated in a protest, demonstration, sit-in, or other form of high-risk civic engagement in the past two years. However, only about 5% of students identifying as another race have participated in an act of high-risk civic engagement in the past two years. In the age of Black Lives Matter, this survey findings show that over half of the black students are attracted to militant forms of political participation.

Table 4. Race and Participation in High-risk Civic Engagement

Race	Have you ever participated in a protest, demonstration, sit-in or related activities in the last two years?	How likely are you to participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year for a just cause, even if it may lead to some type of punishment?
Black/African descent	45%	75.6%
Other	4.8%	33.3%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, N=210. Only statistically significant chi-squares less than .05 are reported.

Over three-quarters (75.6%) of black students stated that they were likely to participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year for a just cause regardless of facing a punishment. Only about one-third (33.3%) of students of a different race stated that they were likely to participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year. While

most black students are drawn to protests, non-blacks were lukewarm to this form of political expression. The results show a large record of black students' past participation in acts of high-risk civil disobedience, and they show that black students foresee a future of participating in high-risk civil disobedience for a just cause.

In the political context of Black Lives Matter, black students in Middle Tennessee acknowledge that there are social issues worth risking punishment, and have a likelihood of participating in acts of high-risk civic engagement within the next year. The larger political context of Black Lives Matter consists of the high-profile killings of unarmed black people at the hands of law enforcement officers and vigilantes, police brutality, the harmful effects of the neoliberal agenda on black communities and poor communities, and the criminalization of black youth. These issues reflect the sentiments of black youth and student activists, as exhibited with the high-risk civic engagement of the BLM movement. The political context of Middle Tennessee includes a constituency of college-aged youth aligning with a liberal political agenda in opposition to the broader conservative political agenda in Tennessee. Issues affecting college students directly include voter identification policy, Confederate figures and symbolism on campuses, and zero tolerance policies embraced by the Trump administration. These contexts shape the political attitudes of black youth in Middle Tennessee.

Regarding race and political views in Middle Tennessee, almost all blacks who participated in the survey supported the Obama administration. Yet, as indicated in Table 5, 19% of students identifying as another race opposed the Obama administration. Only

about 1% of blacks opposed President Obama. The study shows high support of President Obama across races.

Table 5. Race and Political Attitudes

Race	Obama administration		Police Equal Treatment of Blacks and Whites in Your City	
	Support	Oppose	Confidence	Little or no confidence
Black/African descent	98.9%	1.1%	29.6%	70.4%
Other	81%	19%	61.9%	38.1%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, N=210. Only statistically significant chi-squares less than .05 are reported.

In addition, the majority (61.9%) of students of another race reported confidence that police officers treat blacks and whites equally, while only slightly over a quarter (29.6%) of black students reported such confidence. Based on the survey results, there is a statistically significant relationship between being black and having little or no confidence in police officers treating blacks and whites equally. It is possible that black youth are unfairly treated by law enforcement, as research indicates (Brunson 2007), and this experience influences their view of police officers and equal treatment.

Table 6 provides more insight into political participation and race relations. Over a quarter of college students who believe that police relations with minority communities will get worse have volunteered and/or served in a political campaign, followed by about 21% of college students who believe that police relations with minority communities will get better. Only about 9% of college students who believe that police relations will

remain the same volunteered and/or served in a political campaign. Of the 17.6% of college students who volunteered and/or served in a political campaign, the majority of them believe that police relations with minority communities will get worse. Here, it seems that holding either positive or negative stances on police relations with minorities in communities has a meaningful relationship with participation in a political campaign.

Table 6. Political Attitudes and Participation in Civic Engagement

Political Attitudes	Volunteered and/or served in a political campaign		Participated in social justice or civil rights organization activity	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Police relations w/minorities in communities will get worse	26%	74%	-	-
Police relations w/minorities in communities will get better	21.3%	78.7%	-	-
Police relations w/minorities in communities will stay the same	8.9%	91.1%	-	-
Race relations between blacks/whites will always be a problem	-	-	28.8%	71.2%
Race relations between blacks/whites will have solutions eventually worked out or do not know	-	-	14.8%	85.2%

Source: Survey of Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee, N=210. Only statistically significant chi-squares less than .05 are reported.

Almost 30% of college students who believe that race relations in America will always remain a problem participated in a civic engagement activity sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization. Less than 15% of college students who believe that race relations will eventually be resolved in America or do not know participated in a

civic engagement activities sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization.

Based on the survey results, viewing race relations as a continuous problem in America has a positive relationship with civic engagement activities sponsored by social justice or civil rights organizations. Most students who participated in activities sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization also believe that race relations in America will always be a problem.

In Middle Tennessee, black college-aged youth use various methods of civic action and engagement. Activism that incorporates “institutional and extra institutional activities” exhibit how black youth advocate using mainstream political approaches, while still militantly challenging the established political process (Rogers et al. 2012, 45). Further, there appears to be a relationship between college students’ general view on race relations in society and within their communities and participation or the likelihood of participation in some form of high-risk civic engagement. The various acts of high-risk civil disobedience that are prevalent within the current Black Lives Matter movement are fueled by the consensus among young activists that racial tensions are still a problem, and there exists a poor relationship between law enforcement and minority communities. Based on the findings, the general views on race relations align with the views of the BLM movement. The political context of national protests in response to police brutality influenced how Middle Tennessee students and young people viewed race relations, and shaped their participation in high-risk activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the survey results, almost half of black college-aged youth participated in an act of high-risk civic engagement in the past two years. This finding confirms the underlying hypotheses guiding the study: black college-age young people are more likely to participate in risky political activities, and their social and political outlooks were influenced by the political context of the Black Lives Matter movement. The political context entailed nationwide protests and demonstrations advocating against racial injustices such as police brutality and the institutional racism that is embedded in the American criminal justice system. The secondary analyses of activism in Middle Tennessee further indicate black student involvement in high-risk initiatives from 2014-2017.

Moreover, in the post-civil rights era and in the age of Black Lives Matter, black college-aged youth in Middle Tennessee participate in forms of high-risk civil disobedience, which occurs outside the arenas of institutionalized politics and electoral politics. The local and national political contexts of Black Lives Matter influence policies embraced by black students. Participation in community-based organizations such as the Nashville Student Organizing Committee and organizations “with an African American-focused agenda” such as the Talented Tenth Student Activist Coalition help to promote non-electoral activism among black college-aged youth in Middle Tennessee (Swain 2010, 566). As viable political and civic actors in their communities, many black students have become activists challenging injustices. Social injustices such as voter ID laws,

Confederate figures on a college campus, and opposition to President Donald Trump are among the issues deemed worthy to become involved in various acts of public disruption and high-risk civic engagement.

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APPENDIX A - SURVEY

Principal Investigators: Jessica Shotwell and Dr. Sekou M. Franklin
Study Title: Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee

The following information is provided to inform you about your participation in the project titled: *Civic Engagement Among College-Age Young People in Middle Tennessee*. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about the study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. Also, there is no compensation for participating in this research.

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research. In fact, your input is greatly needed in assessing different viewpoints about civic engagement in Tennessee. And, an anticipated benefit of your participation in this research is that you will help researchers understand the social activism, advocacy, and grassroots lobbying of young people in Tennessee.

If you should have any questions about this survey please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor at: Jessica Shotwell, jms2df@mtmail.mtsu.edu, 901-653-8556 or Dr. Sekou Franklin, 1301 East Main Street, P.O. Box 29, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Sekou.Franklin@mtsu.edu, 615-904-8232. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this survey, please contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS INTERVIEW

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this interview.

Date: Signature of Survey Respondent _____

Consent obtained by:

Date: Signature of Researcher(s) _____

Printed Name and Title _____

1. Please circle your racial/ethnic background.

1. Black/African American
2. Afro-Caribbean
3. African
4. Latino/a
5. Asian
6. Native American
7. White
8. Other

2. What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Transgender
4. Prefer not to answer

3. Were you born in the United States?

1. Yes
2. No

4. If you answered no to Question #3, please name your country of birth.

5. How many hours per week do you work?

1. Don't work
2. Part-time
3. Half-time
4. Full-time

Now, I want to ask you a few questions about political and civic participation.

6. Please mark all that you have participated in the past two years as part of a larger effort to lobby a public official or to make a specific political demand. (Please check the appropriate response.)

- a. Have volunteered and/or served in a political campaign.
- b. Have participated in an activity sponsored by a social justice or civil rights organization.
- c. Have attended a city council or school board meeting.
- d. Have visited congress or a state legislature.
- e. Have participated in voter registration/education campaign.
- f. Have participated in a petition drive in support of a public policy.

[] g. Have attended a town hall meeting

7. Do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent or other party?

1. Democratic
2. Independent, But Lean Democrat
3. Independent
4. Independent, But Lean Republican
5. Republican
6. Other Party (Specify) _____

8. Have you ever participated in a protest, demonstration, sit-in or related activities in the past two years?

1. Yes
2. No

9. How likely are you to participate in a protest or demonstration in the next year for a just cause, even if it may lead to some type of punishment (e.g. a citation, arrest, reprimand by your parents, or reprimand by your school)? (Please circle one.)

1. Very likely
2. Somewhat likely
3. Somewhat unlikely
4. Very unlikely
5. Don't Know

10. Did you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama handled his job as president?

1. Strongly Approve
2. Somewhat Approve
3. Somewhat Disapprove
4. Strongly Disapprove
5. Don't Know

11. Do you think race relations between blacks and whites will always be a problem for the United States, or that a solution will be eventually worked out?

1. Always a problem
2. Solution eventually worked out
3. Don't know

The next set of questions asks about issues related to policing in the United States.

12. How much confidence do you have in police officers in your city to treat blacks and whites equally?

1. A great deal
2. A fair amount
3. Just some
4. Very little

13. Over the course of the next year, do you think relations between local police forces and minorities in communities around the country will get better, get worse, or stay about the same?

1. Get better
2. Get worse
3. Stay the same

The next set of questions pertain to the current political climate

14. Who did you vote for in the November election for president?

1. Hillary Clinton
2. Donald Trump
3. Gary Johnson
4. Jill Stein
5. Evan McMullin
6. Other
7. Did not vote for president
8. Don't know

15. When did you decide you were going to vote?

1. In the last few days before the election
2. In the week before the election
3. In October 2016
4. In September 2016
5. Before then
6. Don't know

16. From what you have heard or read about the movement called #BlackLivesMatter, do you...

1. Strongly support the movement
2. Somewhat support the movement
3. Somewhat oppose the movement
4. Strongly oppose the movement
5. Haven't heard enough about the movement
6. Don't know

Finally, I have just a few more questions about your background.

17. Do you belong to a fraternity/sorority?

1. Yes
2. No

18. How often do you attend religious services?

1. More than once a week
2. Once week
3. A few times a month
4. A few times a year
5. Never

19. In terms of religion and its role in social and political life, do you believe it is:

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Not too important
4. Not at all important
5. Don't know

20. Based on what you know, have black church leaders supported or opposed the Black Lives Matter movement?

1. Strongly supported
2. Somewhat supported
3. Somewhat opposed
4. Strongly opposed
5. Don't know

21. Finally, in terms of black church and Black Lives Matter, do you know of any churches that have hosted a meeting or conversation about policing and criminal justice issues?

1. Yes
2. No

Just a few more questions

22. When do you expect to graduate?

1. This academic year (2016-2017)
2. 2017-2018
3. 2018-2019
4. 2019-2020
5. After 2020
6. Already graduated

23. What city/county do you consider your permanent home? _____