ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STUDENTS KNUCK AND BUCK SYSTEMS OF INJUSTICE? A MULTIMETHOD STUDY EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT ACTIVISM AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
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In recent years, college students' declining mental health status has garnered the attention of public health and educational professionals. Mental health is a complex construct influenced by biological, behavioral, social, and environmental factors. One critical dimension of mental health is emotional well-being, representing the positive and negative emotions one experiences. Little research exists regarding the relationship between activism, a possible social influence, and mental health.

This multimethod dissertation study focuses on the relationship between college student participation in activism and contemporary social movements, including the Black Lives Matter movement, and different dimensions of emotional well-being, including depressive and anxiety symptoms, level of optimism, and sense of belonging. Framed by the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, the qualitative portion of the research involved in-depth interviews among 18

students aged 18-25 who participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. The purpose of these interviews was to examine the short-term impact of protest participation on student emotional well-being and how activism was related to coping. Findings revealed that the sociopolitical climate negatively impacted student emotional well-being, and those associated negative emotions acted as a motivator to participate in protests. Conversely, participating in protests garnered sense of belonging and empowerment. Protest participation appeared to serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy among these students.

The quantitative analyses conducted in this dissertation utilized secondary data from the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment to investigate the motivators (Aim 2) and emotional well-being correlates (Aim 3) of activism participation. For both analyses, two forms of activism were studied – disruptive (e.g., protests) and persuasive tactics (e.g., digital activism). Civic morals identity centrality and discrimination were examined as possible motivators.

Multivariate and multinomial logistic regression models developed for Aim 2 held constant other potential confounding variables (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, parental education and race/ethnicity) and revealed positive associations between discrimination experiences and civic moral identity centrality and disruptive activism ($p<.001$) and persuasive tactics ($p<.001$).

Regression models for Aim 3 that examined the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being revealed that disruptive activism tactics were positively associated with depressive symptoms ($p<.001$), anxiety symptoms ($p<.001$), and sense of belonging ($p<.05$). A negative association was observed between disruptive activism and optimism ($p<.05$). All of these associations were robust to the inclusion of demographic covariates. Coping did not appear to moderate any of the relationships observed.

Taken together these finding begin to elucidate the nuanced and complex relationship between activism and emotional well-being. Given that a significant proportion of college students studied participated in some form of activism, our understanding of the impact of activism on student emotional well-being is an important area that warrants additional investigation in future studies. The findings of this study can be used to support ongoing intervention development that addresses the mental health needs of college students, specifically those engaged in activism work. Additionally, these findings can be used to support mitigating health disparities that are the result from sociopolitical factors such as racism and discrimination.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STUDENTS KNUCK AND BUCK SYSTEMS OF INJUSTICE?: A MULTIMETHOD STUDY EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT ACTIVISM AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the ancestors who lived, breathed, and died in the struggle for the

freedom of Black folks. And to all of us who refuse to stop making good trouble until we are all

free.

Acknowledgments

To Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, thank you for giving me the strength, support, and mental fortitude to embark on this journey and complete this dissertation study. I thank you for all that I have and all that is to come as a result of this work.

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To my friends, who are more like my family, thank you for your constant laughs and support. This journey would not have been possible without you all holding me accountable to my dreams and not letting up until you all saw me finish.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

a. Background

During the past ten years, concerns about college students' mental health have grown significantly (Liu et al., 2019). Data from two national collegiate assessments based in the United States (US) demonstrated that college students are reporting higher levels of stress, depression, and anxiety-related symptoms compared to years past, placing them at greater risk of poor academic performance or not graduating (ACHA, 2019; Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). Moreover, these mental health issues are often associated with a decreased sense of belonging, fewer social connections, and lower social support compared to students who are not experiencing these difficulties (Finley, 2016; Nepon, 2010; Garlow et al., 2008).

Mental health is best viewed as a continuum. At one end of the continuum is mental illness or disorder in which the individual is actively in distress and unable to function. At the other end is a positive state of being and where the individual is functioning (Keyes et al., 2005). Nearly one in five Americans live with a mild, moderate, or severe mental illness with higher prevalence in females compared to males and youth and young adults compared to adults older than 26 years of age (NIMH, 2021). Approximately 50% of Americans will meet the DSM criteria for a mental disorder or illness in their lifetime (Kessler et al., 2005). Mental health is influenced by a dynamic interplay of biological, behavioral, social, and environmental factors (Rubio et al., 2013; Mojtabai et al., 2015). The dissertation research focuses on emotional well-being rather than any specific mental disorder, given the recognition that there is a need to improve the population's well-being even in the absence of a diagnosable mental disorder. The concept of well-being most notably appears in the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health, which is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being

(World Health Organization (WHO), 1996). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), well-being is a multi-dimensional construct representing the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative emotions (CDC, 2018).

Where an individual falls on the mental health continuum is related to how they view their own life, which influences their willingness to seek help to be assessed for conditions at the more severe end of the continuum (Keyes et al., 2005). While there has been the intentional and rigorous measurement of negative emotions, the study of positive emotions such as optimism, belonging, life satisfaction, and the impact of experiencing positive emotions on mental health outcomes is newer and is just beginning to be recognized as an important target for college student health initiatives (Hernandez-Torrano et al., 2020).

A social determinants of health framework guides the dissertation research's aims and recognizes that domestic and global social and political environments can significantly impact individual well-being and functioning in addition to the many biological and environmental factors that can affect an individual's health status. The dissertation research investigates the relationship between student participation in social movement activism activities and emotional well-being. As mental health indicators among college students have generated concern in recent years, so have the US's social justice crises, particularly among Black and Brown communities. In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the awareness of longstanding problems such as structural racism, injustices related to police violence among Black communities, immigration, and gender-based violence. Because of its ability to facilitate coordinated responses, share information quickly, and provide real-time coverage of events, social media has been a driving force for raising awareness around social justice issues. The Pew Research Center reported that young adults consistently use social media much more than the rest of the

population (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Due to young adults' high social media use and social media as a platform for social justice, young adults and college students are primed to participate in social movement activism. These growing social justice issues could, directly and indirectly, affect students' emotional well-being, compounding the possible effects of simply adjusting to college and navigating new social and academic pressures.

The choice to participate in activism activities could result from being directly or indirectly affected by the topic of a particular social movement, or participation could result from feeling a humanitarian responsibility. For example, someone could choose to participate in a protest related to police violence against Black communities because they have had a negative interaction with law enforcement officials or know someone who has. According to one study investigating the perceived discrimination experiences of young adults using a nationally representative survey, more than three-fourths of young adults indicated that they had experienced any form of discrimination, with 60% indicating that they had experienced more than one type of discrimination (Grollman, 2012). This concept of humanitarian responsibility as a motivator for activism is closely aligned with the idea of being an ally. An ally is someone in support of a mission that could or could not directly impact them and can include persons from other marginalized or oppressed groups (Washington & Evans, 1991). For example, someone who is not lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual (LGBTQIA+) identified but supports social movements for LGBTQIA+ rights.

On the other hand, someone might participate in the same protest because they do not believe anyone should experience violence at law enforcement officials' hands or have a moral compulsion to see all people treated fairly. This humanitarian viewpoint aligns with the concept of civic morality, which represents honesty and social trust as being important for the public

good (Letki, 2006). Activism participation can generate social trust, consideration toward others in the community, and a sense of community (Letki, 2006). In their study investigating civic moral identity, Letki et al. (2006) found that young adult populations have a less civically moral identity when compared to adults over the age of 30.

b. *Problem Statement*

Social movement activism participation can play different roles in the lives of participants. For some persons, participating in social movement activism is a strategy to cope with negative emotions. For others, it is their strategy to engage in civics in their community or nationally. The relationship between activism and emotions has sparked debate within the social movement literature for many years. In the past, some scholars have used emotional connections to social movements as a way to discredit a movement's legitimacy by depicting it as merely a reaction to "bad feelings" (Jasper, 2011). However, this view of the role emotions play in social movements is antiquated and does not reflect current understandings of the role of emotions within activism (Jasper, 2011, Aminzade & McAdam, 2001). Social movement scholars recognize that emotions play a significant role in developing and maintaining social movements (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001, Jasper, 2011). This research qualitatively examined the role of emotions within young adult social movement activism participants within a contemporary social movement.

Social movement activism participation has been seen as an active coping strategy used among young people, particularly marginalized communities (Ballard et al., 2016, 2019). Active coping strategies seek to find the stressor's source and resolve it or the negative emotions that arise from the stressor. However, research indicates that some young people's active coping strategies, while positive or adaptive, can have well-being costs (Ballard et al., 2016). For

example, participating in protests as an active coping strategy can be time-consuming, requiring that participants expel significant amounts of energy and place the participant at risk for additional stress after protest participation. Additionally, sharing one's views regarding specific topics via social media could increase the risk of negative feedback or threats from persons who do not share their thoughts, leading to anxiety or negative emotions. Another coping style, meaning-focused coping, can elicit positive emotions and provide relief from distress or negative emotions caused by the stressor (Cooper, 2017). Activism, whether through protests or social media, can also be classified as a meaning-focused coping strategy, which uses one's beliefs and values to ascribe positive meaning to stressful experiences.

There certainly have been increased opportunities for students to participate in social movement activities or become social movement activists themselves either on their college campuses, in their local communities, or nationally. From 2009 to 2019, protests have annually increased by 11.5% worldwide (Haig, Schmidt, & Brannen, 2020). Our understanding and analysis of student activism in the US has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), which birthed some of the first national and local student activist organizations, such as the first Black Student Union (Fisher, 2018). Student activism continued to grow during the 1970s and 1980s (Fisher, 2018). However, in 2014 a resurgence of student activism started as students began disclosing many instances of discrimination on their campuses and demanding swift yet meaningful responses to their grievances by their institutions, using protests, demonstrations, and social media as a vehicle for activism (Fisher, 2018). The rise of technology and social media have notably increased everyone's ability to express their views on social issues and share relevant information regarding social movements. In 2018, the Pew Research Center found that 53% of Americans used social media as a way to engage civically (e.g., posting about a cause,

finding information on protests in their area, etc.) (Anderson, Toor, Rainie, & Smith, 2018). As social media and technology continue to advance, it is expected that digital activism will grow.

Additionally, as the world continues to face global crises, there will be increased opportunities for persons to participate in several social movements or activism activities. While some people who participate in social movement activities, such as protests, consider themselves social movement activists, others who participate in social movement activities do not identify themselves as activists. According to Horowitz (2017), the activist identity is a role-based identity that includes: 1) taking on a permanent social role, such as working for a social movement organization; 2) friends and family encourage or discourage the role, and 3) the strength of the identity guides the individual's choices. Many persons who participate in social movement activities, including college students, might not have the level of investment in the social movement to adopt an activist identity and do not consider themselves activists. Instead, these participants identify themselves as persons who care about or are deeply affected by the movement's issue.

While actions such as activism are vital to addressing social justice issues and can lead to internal and social benefits for participants, the effects on one's emotional well-being are largely unknown but could be significant (Ballard et al., 2016). While our empirical understanding of the effects of activism on college students is limited, there are many potential risks to participating in social movements. Within social movement activism, tactics or activities are categorized as disruptive or persuasive. Disruptive tactics, such as protests or demonstrations, bring more risk to the activist or participant than persuasive tactics, such as posting on social media (Briscoe et al., 2016). For example, the risks associated with participating in protests and demonstrations could be arrest or injury due to large crowds. Protests met with aggression from police officers, or anti-

protesters could cause mental distress for protest participants. The risk related to disruptive tactics is often cited as one reason why as activists or social movement participants get older and gain more responsibility, they are less likely to participate in protests or demonstrations. Young people are inherently more risk-taking and are often seen as having fewer responsibilities and more flexibility, which would allow them to participate in disruptive tactics more freely (Morris, 1981; Snow et al., 1980; Biggs et al., 2006).

The risks related to activism are dependent on the context of the social movement's topic and the participant's identity, to an extent (Davenport et al., 2011). For example, the risks related to participating in the Women's March, a commercially supported movement, are distinctly different from participating in a Black Lives Matter movement protest. Additionally, at Black Lives Matter movement protests, police were depicted showing more aggression toward Black-identified protesters than White-identified protesters. On January 6, 2021, violent insurrectionists were met with limited police intervention as they stormed the US Capitol Building. However, during the summer of 2020, Black Lives Matter protesters at the US Capitol building steps were met by police in military-grade riot gear. While tactic categories (disruptive or persuasive) have their baseline of associated risks, it is clearly demonstrated that these risk levels change when social identities are taken into account.

In addition to the physical risks, the risks of participating in social movements could also be more covert and include experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. But at the same time, participation in social movement activities could offer benefits. For example, being involved in a cause gives participants a way to make social connections, giving participants a sense of purpose and a sense of empowerment (Ballard et al., 2016). Additionally, persons who participate in activism have the opportunity to gain a myriad of skills applicable to

several other settings, such as networking to building their professional and social support networks (Ansala et al., 2016). One study showed that participating in activism is associated with increases in purpose and meaning, which can serve as attributes that positively impact emotional well-being (Ballard et al., 2016). The benefits of activism can, directly and indirectly, improve participants' emotional well-being by increasing positive emotions such as optimism or hope. While there is limited research investigating the relationship between emotional well-being and activism, no such studies have investigated this relationship qualitatively to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

c. Conceptual Model

This dissertation study applied Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (TSC) to explain the relationship between activism and emotional well-being and activism as a coping strategy in Aim 1. After that, TSC was used to inform the way in which findings are interpreted in Aims 2 and 3. TSC posits that stress is a transactional process between an individual and their environment, in which the influence of stress is determined by coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984; Freire et al., 2020). Stress is internal or external demands placed on an individual that causes the body to release a stress response (Cooper, 2017). The internal and external stressors that a person might experience and the degree to which they are perceived as stressful could vary by demographic characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. These factors might also be associated with individual coping styles. Traditionally in TSC, a person appraises a stressor to determine if it is a threat. When a person's emotional well-being is threatened, such as when experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, various coping strategies are used to quell these threats, including emotion-focused strategies to manage the accompanying emotions or problem-focused strategies to directly

address the stressor (Freire et al., 2020; Cooper, 2017). Once a person has implemented coping strategies, they will reappraise (secondary appraisal) the stressor to determine if the coping resulted in a favorable or unfavorable outcome (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). If the selected coping strategies are favorable, the person might experience positive emotions because they resolved the stressor. However, if the coping strategies are unfavorable, the person will implement additional coping strategies to resolve the stressor (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). TSC will guide the proposed dissertation research to conceptualize the relationship between activism and emotional well-being.

This dissertation operationalized activism into two categories: disruptive and persuasive activism. Disruptive activism includes participating in a protest or demonstration or attending social movement organization meetings. Persuasive tactics include activism through social media, activism through creating art and media, and activism through wearing clothing, bumper stickers, and buttons. In Aim 2 of this dissertation research, it is expected that there is a positive association between experiencing discrimination and the likelihood of participating in disruptive activism and participating in increased amounts of persuasive activism tactics. Past studies have established that youth in high school and middle school who experienced discrimination used activism as a coping strategy (Ballard et al., 2016). Prior research has also categorized perceived discrimination as a stressor (Kessler et al., 1999). Additionally, within Aim 2, it is expected that there is a positive association between civic morals identity and the likelihood of participating in disruptive activism and participating in increased amounts of persuasive activism tactics. The relationship between activism as a stressor and emotional well-being (i.e., depression symptoms, anxiety symptoms, sense of belonging, and optimism) is assessed quantitatively in Aim 3. Past research has assessed the relationship between depression and anxiety-related symptoms and

activism based on separate categories of activism-related activities among college students (Ballard et al., 2019). The dissertation study assessed activism based on participating in disruptive activism and the number of persuasive activism tactics. Few studies have assessed the relationship between optimism and sense of belonging and activism among college students. However, no studies have assessed optimism and sense of belonging with the number of persuasive tactics college students are participating in during the same time period. It is expected that there is a positive relationship between activism and positive emotions (i.e., optimism and sense of belonging). It is also expected that there is a positive relationship between activism and depression and anxiety symptoms (negative emotions).

Additionally, coping is quantitatively assessed as a moderator in the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. It is expected that the relationship between activism and emotional well-being will differ based on positive coping levels. For example, the relationship between activism and emotional well-being will be stronger in individuals with higher positive coping levels than those with lower levels. In Aims 2 and 3, four antecedent variables (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation, and parents' education) are included to assess covariates in the relationships under investigation. Previous research has demonstrated that social identities, such as race and gender, affect a person's perception of events as being stressful and their available coping strategies. Including the antecedents in this conceptual model allows for investigating subgroup level differences within each relationship. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model for Aims 2 and 3.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model Depicting Aims 2 and 3
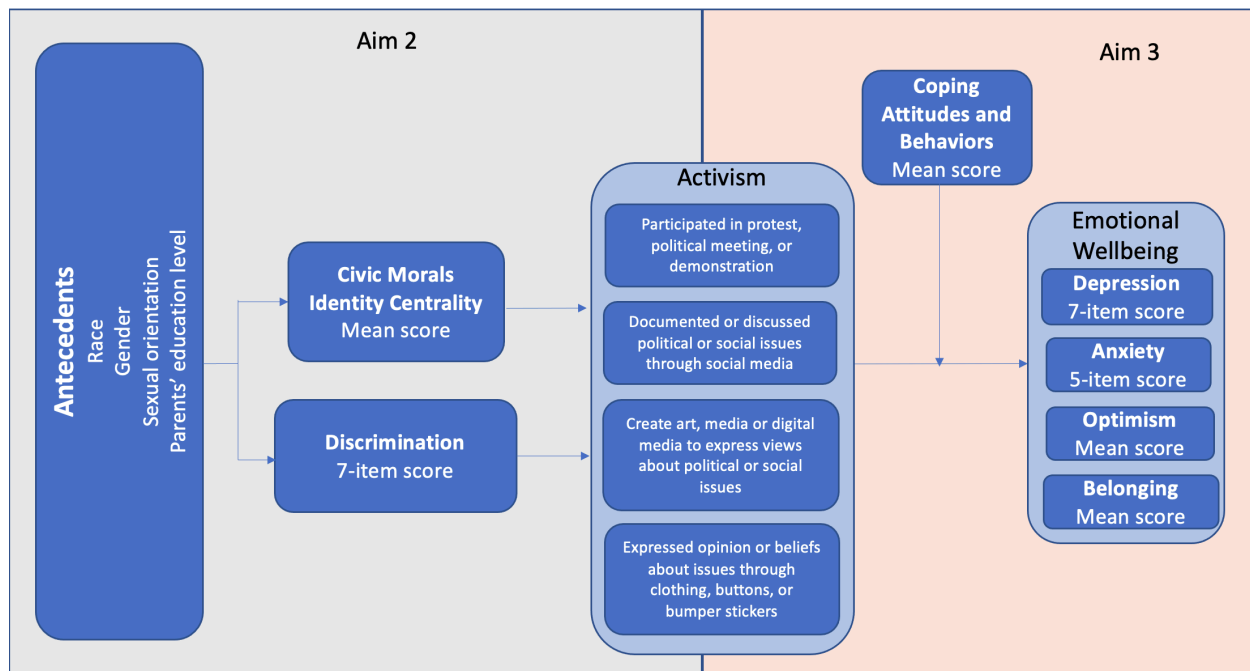
d.<u>Research Questions, Specific Aims, and Hypotheses</u>

The first set of analyses utilized data from in-depth interviews conducted with students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), who participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. These interviews were conducted between February and April of 2021 with 18 students. The purpose of these interviews is to understand how students' protest experience intersects with their emotional well-being.

Research Question 1: What short-term impact does protest participation have on the self-reported emotional well-being of college students who participate in protests from their perspectives?

Aim 1: Explore the impact of protest participation before, during, and after on participants' emotional well-being and the role of coping using 2020 Black Lives Matter protests as a case study.

The second set of analyses used data from the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment (WBA). Wake Forest University (WFU) conducts the WBA annually among undergraduate students at colleges and universities across the US. The purpose of the WBA is to assess 18 dimensions of student well-being, including emotional well-being. The 2019 WBA contains survey responses from 11,921 students from 28 colleges and universities.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between participant motivations and activism participation among college students?

Aim 2: To examine the strength of the relationship between discrimination and civic morals identity centrality and activism.

> **Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive association between the number of discrimination experiences and the likelihood of activism participation.

> **Hypothesis 2:** There is a positive association between civic morality identity centrality and the likelihood of activism participation.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being among college students?

Aim 3: To examine the strength of the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being, as measured by current symptoms of depression and anxiety, level of optimism, and sense of belonging, and the extent to which that relationship is moderated by coping attitudes and behaviors.

> **Hypothesis 1:** There is a positive relationship between activism participation and positive emotional well-being.

> **Hypothesis 2:** There is a positive relationship between activism and negative emotional well-being.

Hypothesis 3: Coping behaviors and attitudes moderates the relationship between activism and positive emotional well-being. Among students who participate in activism, positive emotional well-being will be higher among those with positive coping behaviors and attitudes compared to those who participate and have negative coping behaviors and attitudes.

Hypothesis 4: Coping attitudes and behaviors moderates the relationship between activism and negative emotional well-being. Among students who participate in activism, negative emotional well-being will be higher among those with negative coping behaviors and attitudes compared to those who participate and have positive coping behaviors and attitudes.

e. *Brief Justification and Rationale*

College student mental health has been a national concern for the past ten years (ACHA, 2019; Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019; Liu et al., 2019). Paralleling the decline in college student mental health has been the US's growth of social justice movements. As with past social movements, college students and young adults are likely to continue to participate in social movement activities. Examining the associations between motivations for social movement participation, the experience of movement participation, and emotional well-being is a critical step in understanding the role of social movement participation in the lives of young adults who choose to participate and the connection that movement participation has to their emotional well-being. Past research has shown that social movement activism is a coping strategy for some young adults (Ballard et al., 2019). There has been no previous research that examined if coping moderates the relationship between social movement activism participation and emotional well-being. This dissertation research aims to fill this knowledge gap.

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Using the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment's (WBA) 2019 data, this dissertation examined the relationship between activism participation motivators and the experience of activism participation. Additionally, it examined the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being. Using in-depth interviews with college students who participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, this dissertation examined the short-term changes that protest participation has on students' emotional well-being. Prior research has not qualitatively explored the relationship between social movement participation and emotional well-being. The qualitative section of this dissertation examined the relationship between activism and emotions and provided a rich understanding of the complexity of the relationship. More specifically, this section explored the relationship between emotions as motivations for protest participation and the resulting emotions after participation. The strength of exploring this relationship qualitatively is that it gives deeper context to the potential relationships observed, including how the relationship potentially functions among the participant population. Additionally, the qualitative section will help further understand the role of social movement participation as a coping strategy. Lastly, the qualitative section will illuminate the potential reasons some young adults develop an activist identity and how that identity will influence their future social movement participation.

There is limited prior research investigating the relationship between social movement activism and sense of belonging and optimism. Sense of belonging and optimism are potential protective factors against depression and anxiety (Zhang et al., 2018). Future work can build upon the results of this dissertation by continuing to investigate this important area of research.

f. Public Health Implications

This dissertation study will make at least three contributions to the field of public health. First, new knowledge will be generated about the association between activism and college students' emotional well-being, specifically depression and anxiety-related symptoms, sense of belonging, and optimism. The combination of findings emanating from analyses of quantitative survey data with in-depth qualitative interviews will undoubtedly provide a rich and unprecedented understanding of the meaning of activism participation and the potential consequences to emotional well-being. Moreover, the research will shed light on whether activism is a coping strategy for students who participate in social movements and if individual coping styles moderate the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. Additionally, these qualitative interviews provide a preliminary understanding of how activism can become a part of a young adult's identity.

Second, the research will lay the foundation for an expanded research agenda on these topics. Much of the limited research available pre-dates the expansion in social movement activism tactics, therefore highlighting the need for new research in this area. Additionally, the public health and social movement literature are devoid of qualitative studies that ascertain first-hand accounts of the effect of activism on participants' subjective emotional well-being. The qualitative data gleaned from interviews with students who participated in the BLM during a critical moment in the US's history is extremely valuable to our understanding of their experiences. Studying the effects of activism on student emotional well-being allows for a greater understanding of the multifaceted role that activism plays in student activists' lives. Additional study into this intersection between activism and emotional well-being could highlight the motivating factors for activism participation among college students.

Finally, the findings will inform, albeit in a preliminary way, how colleges and universities could develop initiatives to support students' emotional well-being needs in social movement activities. Wellness and well-being initiatives have become increasingly popular on college and university campuses (McLellan et al., 2012). The shift to implementing well-being or wellness programs in addition to individual counseling treatment services signals a recognition of the value of population-based prevention approaches (Travia et al.,2020). Moreover, it is becoming increasingly apparent that colleges cannot "counsel their way out" of the problems related to college student mental health and that innovative and holistic models are needed to support students. A more precise understanding of the risks and benefits of activism and emotional well-being can improve how higher education supports students who choose to participate in a diverse array of activism-related activities.

g. *Dissertation Organization*

This dissertation includes three chapters: 1) Introduction and 2) Literature Review. This dissertation uses the "manuscript option"; three manuscripts were developed for this dissertation and subsequently presented in chapter 3 (Manuscript 1), chapter 4 (Manuscript 2), and chapter 5 (Manuscript 3). Chapter 6 includes a summary of the findings of the entire dissertation study, strengths and limitations, public health and higher education implications, and future research considerations.

h. *Definition of Terms*

Activism: While social movement and activism are sometimes used interchangeably in literature and media, these two concepts have distinctly different definitions. Unlike social movements broadly, activism is characterized as seeking justice or taking action to create social change (Ballard et al., 2019; Jacoby et al., 2017). Throughout this dissertation, the terms activism and

social movement activism are used interchangeably but are both about the stated definition. In the quantitative analysis, activism is defined based on the following tactics: participation in a protest, creating art, media, or digital media to express political or social views, documented or discussed political or social issues through social media, and expressed opinions or beliefs about issues through bumper stickers, clothing, or buttons.

Black Lives Matter: Black Lives Matter is a social movement and national organization founded in 2013 after Trayvon Martin's death (Tillery, 2019). For this dissertation's purposes, Black Lives Matter references the social movement facilitated by formal and informal groups or organizations or individuals with the expressed mission of ending police violence against Black Americans.

Civic Morals: Civic morals is an identity-based concept that refers to one's civic responsibility for the public's good (Letki, 2006). In this dissertation, civic morals, as a variable, is analyzed in the quantitative sections and understood as an identity that one might hold.

College Student: In this dissertation, college students are persons aged 18-25 years old and enrolled full-time at a four-year college or university. The selection criteria for the Wake Forest Well-being Assessment, which was the quantitative data used in this dissertation, surveyed students aged 18 to 25 years old enrolled full-time at four-year colleges or universities. Participants in the in-depth interviews were selected using the same criteria to create continuity across the qualitative and quantitative data. This selection criteria is keeping in line with the established criteria of a "traditional college student," which is aged 18 – 22 years old, enrolled full-time, and seeking a degree at the undergraduate level (Weber, 2018).

Coping: Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviors mobilized to manage internal and external stressful situations (Algorani & Gupta, 2020). According to Lazarus and Folkman

(1984), who developed the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, coping is understood as a process that uses cognitive and behavioral strategies to alleviate a stress or threat response. They further classify coping as either emotion-focused or problem-focused (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Problem-focused coping uses active strategies to resolve the stressor, while emotion-focused coping involves processing or expressing feelings that arise from the stressor (Lazarus et al., 1996; Riley & Park, 2014). This dissertation used the term coping to broadly classify cognitive or behavioral strategies used to alleviate or adapt to negative emotional states. Where applicable, this dissertation identifies a coping strategy explicitly as emotion-focused or problem-focused. Additional categories for coping are used when the specified coping strategy does not align with the Lazarus and Folkman categorization.

Discrimination: In this dissertation, the definition of discrimination is "being excluded from activities or being the target of disparaging jokes, slurs, or comments." This definition was used in the Wake Forest Well-being Assessment to provide participants with an understanding of discrimination. The categories of discrimination that are used within the larger variable all occur at the individual level. Therefore, when discrimination is referenced within the quantitative data, it does not include discrimination beyond the individual level, such as at the institutional level.

Emotional Well-being: According to well-being researcher Corey Keyes, emotional well-being is determined by the presence of positive emotions, the absence of negative emotions, and perceived satisfaction with life (Keyes et al., 2002). In this dissertation, depression and anxiety are the negative emotions used within the context of emotional well-being. Additionally, optimism and sense of belonging are the positive emotions used within the context of emotional well-being. Throughout the quantitative analysis, emotional well-being might be described in terms of positive or negative or defined within the context of each emotional state listed above.

In the qualitative data, the investigator provided participants with a general definition of emotional well-being. Still, they were allowed to define the concept themselves to determine how they describe their emotional states.

Social Movement: Social movements are a collection of actions that challenge societal powers and are centered around common goals, beliefs, and identities (Watkins Liu, 2018). In this dissertation, the term social movement describes a collection of activities beyond individual forms of activism, such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

Student Activism: Student or college student activism focuses specifically on students' efforts to create social change (Barnhardt, 2014). In this dissertation, student activism is used to describe the activism facilitated by or participated in by students either on their campuses, in their local communities, or nationally.

Wake Forest Well-being Assessment (WBA): The Wake Forest Well-being Assessment is a quantitative survey developed by Wake Forest University in 2016 to understand college students' well-being in the US (Collective, n.d; Jayawickreme et al., 2012). In this dissertation, the WBA was used for the quantitative data analysis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

a. *Young Adult Mental Health as a Public Health Issue*

Young adulthood or emergent adulthood is a unique developmental period where individuals are involved in activities that can prepare them for adult roles and responsibilities, solidify their identity, form meaningful friendships, and learn about the environment in which they live (Arnett, 2010). Scholars have defined young adulthood as encompassing the late adolescent years through the mid-'20s. Young adulthood is the peak developmental period for the onset of mental health and substance use disorders, owing in part to neurodevelopmental changes and the propensity for risk-taking behavior that is emblematic of this age group (Kessler et al., 2005). In 2018, SAMHSA reported that approximately 8.9 million young adults reported having a mental illness (SAMHSA, 2020). Two in every five young adults reported not receiving treatment for their condition SAMHSA, 2020). Considering the risks related to the onset of mental health disorders in young adults, college students are increasingly vulnerable to mental health challenges and disorders, such as depression, due to the nature of the collegiate environment (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013).

About two-thirds of high school seniors in the United States attend college, offering them the opportunity to pursue studies in various topics, interact with faculty and mentors, gain exposure to increasingly diverse student populations, new experiences, and new-found freedoms (NCES, 2019). For the past ten years, the mental health indicators of college students have generated concern among higher education professionals, policymakers, parents, and students. The most prominent mental health conditions within the collegiate population are depression, anxiety, and stress (Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008; Kessler et al., 2005). According to the 2019 National College Health Assessment (NCHA), 45.1% of college students indicated that

they had experienced depressive symptoms that impaired their ability to function within the past 12 months (ACHA, 2019). In the same survey, 65.7% of respondents indicated that they had experienced overwhelming anxiety-related symptoms within the past 12 months (ACHA, 2019). In 2021, the NCHA reported that 74.8% of college students indicated that they had experienced moderate or serious psychological distress using the Kessler 6 (ACHA,2021). In the 2018- 2019 Healthy Minds Study, a cross-sectional survey of 62,171 college students from 79 colleges and universities, approximately 36% of college students who participated in the study indicated that they had experienced moderate or severe depressive symptoms (Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). In the same survey, 31% of respondents indicated that they had experienced moderate or severe anxiety-related symptoms (Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). According to the 2020 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment, before the COVID-19 pandemic, 58% of students reported feeling depressed more than several days over the two weeks (Collective, n.d). In the same survey, 73% of students were concerned that something bad would happen, a measure of anxiety, several days within the past two weeks (Collective, n.d). The proximal effects of depression and anxiety-related symptoms can include shortness of breath, racing heartbeat, low appetite or overeating, and poor sleep quality (Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). In one study on college student mental health, researchers found that students of color experienced modest increases in the prevalence of mental health symptoms but vastly underutilized campus mental health services compared to non-Hispanic White students (Lipson et al., 2019). The underutilization of mental health services indicates that the mental health needs of students of color often go untreated or are treated at advanced and severe stages, often limiting treatment options (Lipson et al., 2019). In college students, prolonged or untreated depression and anxiety-related symptoms correlate with lower academic performance, poorer quality of life, dropping out of college, smoking, lack of physical

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activity, risky sexual behavior, and alcohol and drug use (Ebert et al., 2019). Experiencing

depression as an adolescent or young adult is significantly predictive of experiencing depression

later in adulthood (Colman & Ataullahjan, 2010). In adulthood, mental health disorders have

been associated with lower employment, having one or more chronic conditions, poorer role

performance (e.g., marital or parenting, etc.), and lower household income (Kessler, 2012;

Alonso et al., 2018). Adults with depression will miss an average of 4.8 workdays and 11.5 days

of reduced productivity in a 3-month period (CDC, 2016).

b. *Mental Health Definitions and Trends*

Mental health is a complex construct defined in different ways for different audiences. A

useful way of understanding mental health is to view it as a continuum. Diagnostic conditions

such as mood disorders, anxiety, and schizophrenia are on one end of the continuum. Healthcare

professionals diagnose these disorders using structured psychiatric criteria and examining criteria

for a specified time period. Experiencing some level of functional impairment is a cardinal

feature of these mental disorders. On the other end of the continuum is complete psychological

and emotional well-being and the presence of a high level of functioning (CDC, 2020).

According to Keyes (2002), emotional well-being is the presence of positive emotions and the

absence of negative emotions. Psychological well-being represents one's private and personal

criteria for evaluating one's functioning (Keyes et al., 2002). Scholars have also defined

psychological well-being as the degree to which individuals see themselves as thriving (Ryff,

1989).

Several decades of research have demonstrated that having positive emotions, such as

hope and optimism, confers many physical health benefits (Conversano et al., 2010; Schiavon et

al., 2017). More recently, studies have begun to investigate the construct of "flourishing" among

college students. The 2019 Healthy Minds Study used the eight-item Flourishing Scale to measure positive mental health, or the respondent's self-perceived success in critical areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism (Diener et al., 2009). The score ranges from 8-56 and uses 48 as the threshold for positive mental health (Diener et al., 2009). A little more than one-third of students in the sample (38%) had a Flourishing Scale score of more than 48, which would indicate that they were flourishing or had positive mental health (Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). Research has demonstrated that positive emotions, such as those assessed in The Flourishing Scale, can improve a person's ability to cope with stress and improve their resiliency level (Gloria, 2016). Additionally, persons who report having higher life satisfaction levels, a positive emotion, are more likely to experience less stress than persons reporting low life satisfaction levels (Holinka, 2015). Another positive emotion, hope, has been positively associated with adjusting plans, setting goals, and attaining goals (Ciarrochi et al., 2015). In college students, hope, enjoyment, and pride were positively correlated with student interests, effort when studying, and elaboration of learning material (Boekaerts & Pekrun, 2015).

Several studies with undergraduate college students have shown that students with higher levels of belonging are more likely to engage in their studies than students with lower levels of a sense of belonging (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Having a sense of belonging can mitigate stress in college students, improving student mental health (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). All of these outcomes correlate to academic performance, retention, and graduation.

c. *Evolution of Approaches to Addressing College Student Mental Health*
    i.   Traditional clinical approaches

The conventional treatment model for college student mental health has long been face-to-face individual counseling sessions focused on treating diagnosed symptoms or disorders (Downs et al., 2018). Many outreach efforts focused on getting students to visit counseling

centers at their institutions to receive treatment for their symptoms or conditions. However, the

longstanding stigma related to mental health was often a barrier for many students needing care

(Cohen et al., 2020). With an increased number of students experiencing adverse mental health

outcomes related to college life and many students entering college with prior mental health

conditions, many counseling centers were quickly unable to meet the demand for services among

students who were willing to seek help (Cohen et al., 2020; Downs et al., 2018). Counseling

center directors and students recognized the inability to meet the growing demand for in-office

counseling services. In a review of student-written articles about experiences with counseling

centers on their campuses, many students noted that concerns about long wait times were a

barrier to seeking services at their campus counseling center (Cohen et al., 2020). Over the past

few years, many colleges have adopted technology-based mental health resources as an

additional intervention for students who choose not to seek in-office care (Johnson &

Kalkbrenner, 2017).

     ii. Population-based approaches

     In recent years, colleges and universities have adopted additional and more holistic

strategies for addressing college students' mental health needs, most commonly known as well-

being models. Many colleges and universities have added the term to their websites and

departments' names, often replacing a similar word, "wellness." While the term wellness is often

used interchangeably with the term well-being, the perceptions of each of these terms are

different (McLellan, 2012). Wellness is more often associated with physical health (Kirkland,

2014), whereas well-being focuses on life satisfaction, belonging, optimism, happiness, and

feelings that range from depression to joy (CDC, 2018). Wellness and well-being represent

holistic approaches to health compared to the traditional western model of health, which focuses

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on diagnosing and treating pathologic conditions. Dimensions of well-being previously researched are: physical, economic, social, development and activity, emotional, psychological, life satisfaction, domain-specific satisfaction, and engaging activities and work (CDC, 2018). Well-being dimensions are strikingly similar to their predecessor, wellness, which speaks to the shift in holistic health approaches being more cosmetic than structurally different. Unfortunately, research on what constitutes an effective well-being approach is scarce, as are evaluation studies regarding the effectiveness of addressing mental health on college campuses using a well-being approach.

Holistic health approaches might be valuable ways to educate students about how various dimensions of their health (i.e., sleep, nutrition, physical activity, behaviors) are connected. Moreover, holistic health approaches emphasize the importance of experiences and environments as important influences on a person's health (White, 2010). Healthy eating, physical activity, and individual counseling sessions are all interventions that have been proven effective in decreasing depressive symptoms and improving mood. But combining healthy eating and physical activity with individual counseling sessions can decrease depressive symptoms more than each of these interventions alone.

While many approaches to addressing mental health have focused on reducing negative emotions, such as depression and anxiety, well-being approaches, rooted in positive psychology, specifically focus on taking a positive approach to address health (CDC, 2018; Hernandez et al., 2020). Well-being approaches center on increasing positive aspects of a person's life as tools to reduce negative emotions (Hernandez-Torrano et al., 2020). However, research on positive mental health is understudied and has only gained attention over the past few years (Hernandez-Torrano et al., 2020). Practically, the steps that some colleges have taken to shift to well-being

approaches have been more cosmetic than structural, such as adding the word well-being to the names of departments or university initiatives rather than developing and implementing strategic plans around student well-being. Understanding the contribution of positive emotions to student health is essential in developing new population-based strategies to address student mental health. To meaningfully address college students' mental health profile, it is important to acknowledge that the factors contributing to the decline in mental health among students are specific to the collegiate environment (e.g., academic stress, adjusting to collegiate life, etc.) and occur in the national and global landscape (e.g., the sociopolitical climate, natural disasters, etc.) (Beiter et al., 2015).

d. Influences on College Student Mental Health

Within the collegiate environment, student mental health can be negatively affected by contributing factors such as being away from home, adjusting to the collegiate environment, making new connections, and pressures to perform well academically. Academic performance is a pivotal contributor to stress among college students and can exacerbate depressive and anxiety-related symptoms and substance abuse disorders. Increasingly, students are entering into their first year of college already managing a mental health condition (Kitzrow, 2003). In one study assessing the association between mental health and substance abuse with discontinuous enrollment, Arria and colleagues found that students who enter their first year of college with a previously diagnosed mental health condition do just as well with maintaining enrollment as those who do not have a precollege mental health condition. However, students with poorly controlled symptoms were at increased risk for discontinuous enrollment (Arria et al., 2013). When looking at the college experience through other social determinants of health, students from low socioeconomic status (SES) families are more likely to experience stress than students

of higher SES (Jury et al., 2017). However, other contributing factors to the decline in students' mental health stem from factors that broadly affect many people in the United States (US). Specifically, issues such as sexual violence, which have received increased focus over the last few years through the #MeToo movement, affected many college campuses and began to draw critical national conversations around sexual violence. Environmental disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, and mudslides have contributed to the mental health toll on students directly and indirectly impacted by these disasters. The mental health of many Black students has been affected by the increased levels of police violence against Black communities, which has been shared through the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Many of these contributing factors have been generally categorized under the headline of social justice. Taken together, not just being affected by social issues but also simply being aware of them might negatively impact the emotional well-being of a student.

In addition, the social determinants of health lens requires that we also acknowledge the possible roles of racism and discrimination in the decline of student mental health, especially when contextualized within activism. Discrimination is often seen as the lens through which racism impacts mental health (William & Williams-Morris, 2000). While it might be logical to determine that discrimination negatively impacts mental health, this logical claim has been substantiated by several studies. Broadly, research has demonstrated that discrimination is positively associated with depression, anxiety, and psychological stress (Noh et al., 1999; Rumbaut, 1994; Paradies et al., 2015). Specifically, one study including 413 college students found that perceived discrimination was associated with higher levels of emotional distress (Cokeley et al., 2011). These findings substantiate that the mental health decline of college students cannot be solely attributed to factors unique to the collegiate experience and must

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include the social environment. Beyond racism and discrimination, the impact of sociopolitical climate on student mental health is largely unknown.

e. *Social Movements: A Sociological Perspective*
    i. Theories to explain the development of social movements

Social movements have been a part of the world's history for many years. In the simplest terms, social movements are a collection of actions that challenge societal powers and are centered on common goals, beliefs, and identities (Watkins Lui, 2018). Three dominant models have been used to explain the origins of social movements. First, the classical model posits that social strain causes psychological distress among persons in aggrieved populations, which then causes movements to develop (McAdam & Snow, 1997). One of the classical model's key critiques is that it simplifies movement development to "feeling bad" about the strains placed on aggrieved groups but completely removes many movements' political premise. Additionally, some classical models indicate that movement participants are at the fringes of society and their anxiety about their isolation and alienation spurs extreme behaviors such as social movements (McAdam & Snow, 1997). This school of thought dismisses the collective nature of movements and the years of research that indicates that movement participants are often very integrated within society (Snow et al., 1980). Social integration and social networks are vital mechanisms for persons to become involved in social movements.

Second, a resource mobilization model is used to explain social movement development on the basis of external resources provided to aggrieved groups from politically elite groups (Mcarthy and Zald, 1977). This model acknowledges that movements need resources to get started and sustained but completely discounts the idea that marginalized groups have indigenous resources accessible to them to garner and, to an extent, maintain movements. This model assumes the goodwill nature of political elites to fund movements that would disrupt the *status*

quo and thereby threaten the social order. A strong critique of this work is that when external political elites provide resources, movements are often encouraged to implement less disruptive tactics within established institutions to seek change instead of disruptive tactics outside of societal institutions (McAdam & Snow, 1997).

Finally, political opportunity structure or political process theory, which has been extensively studied through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) by Doug McAdam, posits that a dynamic process between cognitive liberation, structural opportunities, and organizational strength must occur for social movements to take place. First, the political structure must present opportunities for social movements to have a favorable outcome (McAdam & Snow, 1997). These opportunities can include shifts in political power, political instability, or shifts in the economy. These social or political changes create an opportunity for groups with less political power to make a concerted effort to have their movement's goals met. Second, organizational strength, which translates to minority groups obtaining the resources necessary to mobilize into a social movement, is essential to take advantage of political opportunities (McAdam & Snow, 1997). Lastly, cognitive liberation is vital for the aggrieved population to see their current situation as unjust and subject to change (McAdam & Snow, 1997). Cognitive liberation can occur through members recognizing shifts in the political structure and sharing that information with other persons connected to the movement. One critique of political process theory, and McAdam, is that this theory's study within the CRM failed to acknowledge race and identity (Oliver, 2017; Bracey, 2016).

Social movement identity and the movement's purpose are necessary factors to include when studying movements (Davenport et al., 2011). Some movements, such as the women's movement, which has mainly been White-identified for many years, have been a longstanding

movement that garners positive political and commercial support. Even when exercising

disruptive tactics such as protests, law enforcement and commercial entities have largely

supported the women's movement. During 2020, the US and other countries experienced a swell

in protests related in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement following the deaths of

George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police. Conversely, the BLM movement has

drawn strong criticisms from citizens, law enforcement, and the former President of the United

States, Donald Trump, as a pariah in the nation's landscape. BLM protesters have faced violence

not only from oppositional movements but also from law enforcement. In 2020, BLM protests

drew diverse crowds worldwide, with some protests mostly attended by White citizens.

Alongside diverse participation came increased commercial support for the BLM movement.

f. Social Movements and Emotions

Similar to other cultural experiences, such as music and film, movements like BLM can

generate strong negative or positive emotional responses. For example, persons in support of

BLM posting positive messages on social media at the announcement of the conviction of the

officer who killed George Floyd. Conversely, BLM supporters crying at vigils or posting

messages conveying sadness on social media related to the officer-involved killing of Daunte

Wright, just a few miles away from where George Floyd was killed almost a year earlier. For

decades, social movement scholarship sought to suppress these types of emotional displays to

combat stereotypes used to characterize social movements and activists as irrational. For many

years, a growing sociological scholarship has sought to acknowledge the role of emotions in

generating and sustaining social movements.

Previous theoretical explanations of social movement development, such as the classical

model, presented emotions as an irrational part of social movements and used emotions as a tool

to weaken social movement legitimacy (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001). Some scholars have noted that the irrationality associated with emotions is a phenomenon that happens in many Western cultures, is very gendered, and often stereotypical (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001). In response to the irrationality associated with emotions, many movements and movement scholars sought to remove emotions from social movement literature to maintain the legitimacy of the movement, its members, and its cause (Aminzade & McAdam, 2001 Jasper, 2011). However, the human experience does not operate in a vacuum and cannot truly eliminate people's emotional experiences. The recent literature related to movements shows that movements and emotions are deeply intertwined.

Jasper (2011) describes how new cultural models that explain movement development, which complement older theories of movement development, are misspecified if they do not explicitly include emotional causal mechanisms (Jasper, 2011). Jasper posits that emotions are necessary for aiding oppressed groups to take advantage of political opportunities that would make social movement emergence possible. Some emotions such as shame or pride have led some groups of persons to seek revenge for potential humiliation, thereby using these emotions as a motivator for movement development. Additionally, feelings related to belonging support collective identity within movements and motivate persons to continue with movement participation. However, one criticism of the new cultural models is that they tend to concentrate on emotions that "help" protesters and movement participants instead of developing a complete picture of the emotional experiences related to movement participation (Jasper, 2011). This limited view of the emotional experience associated with activism and social movements might hinder newer or younger movement participants from fully understanding the emotional investment related to their choice to participate in social movements.

Other researchers, such as Guobin Yang, support Jasper's argument by demonstrating that emotions ,such as anger, are at times necessary to move persons to action within social movements (Yang, 2007). The sources of anger could be derived from the injustices that one witnesses or at the opponents of social justice who might orchestrate or support systems that support the proliferation of injustices within the sociopolitical climate in the US (Yang, 2007). Anger, and other negative emotions, can provide the motivation for persons to knuck and buck systems of injustice, which is defined as preparing for fight that may not be easily won and is a cultural rallying cry among many Black Americans (Mob & Scrappy, 2004). In the case of social movements, the fight for justice is not easily won and might generate additional feelings of anger and frustration, which might then contribute to further movement participation.

g. *Young Adult Participation in Social Movements: Activism and Civic Engagement*

Much of our modern understanding of social movements and their life cycles are based on the critical analysis of the CRM (Bracey, 2016). While focused on Black Americans' social position and rights, aspects of the CRM, such as tactics, can be found in other social movements, including the current BLM movement. While the terms social movement and activism are sometimes used interchangeably in literature and media, these two concepts have distinctly different definitions. Unlike social movements broadly, activism is characterized as seeking justice or taking action to create social change (Ballard et al., 2019; Jacoby et al.,2017). Activism can be described as tactics used to create social change. The two primary activism tactics used are disruptive and persuasive. Whether disruptive or persuasive, each type of tactic, and the specific activities that fall within them, have varying levels of risk associated with them. Like activism in general, student or college student activism focuses specifically on students' efforts to create social change. Considering their position and awareness of social issues, college students are poised to participate in activism within larger social movements and facilitate movements on

their college campuses. During the CRM, college students created a network among different colleges to plan and execute sit-ins at lunch counters in the towns near their colleges (Morris, 1981). In more modern times, college students have organized sit-ins around divesting in South Africa during the 1980s, Occupy Wallstreet, and used digital activism to highlight experiences with discrimination and racism on their campuses (Fisher, 2018; Gismondi & Osteen, 2017). The rise of activism from students and the external critique that colleges don't adequately prepare students to engage in civic activities after graduation pushed many colleges and universities to incorporate civic engagement in their curriculums and campus activities (New, 2016; Cole, 2012).

Civic engagement is a blanket term used to capture various concepts such as volunteering, activism, voting, and community service on college and university campuses (Jacoby, 2009). Providing a variety of civic engagement activities on campuses provides students from all walks of life the ability to participate in activities that best suit them. During the collegiate time, young adults can gain an increased understanding of political processes and social issues such as human rights or immigration through targeted university initiatives or informal experiences with classmates. These learning and exposure experiences can enrich and impact students from dominant racial/ethnic or gender identity groups in the issues minority populations routinely encounter. Unfortunately, the collegiate experience is not a great social awakening for some students. It might serve as a place where negative behaviors and language that promote various forms of discrimination or divisiveness are introduced, perpetuated, and encouraged. These negative behaviors and language can pose direct and indirect risks to students who participate in activism.

h.Characteristics of Civic Engagement and Activism Participants

While colleges and universities are pushing more students to participate in civic engagement and activism, research has demonstrated that those who are most likely to participate are gender and sexual minorities, persons from families with higher socioeconomic statuses, and those with more central moral identities (Ballard et al., 2020; Swank & Fahs, 2014; Swank et al., 2020). For sexual and gender minorities, activism and civic engagement have been vital components to attaining rights and freedoms that are commonplace for the dominant population. For example, women used social movements to demand the right to vote. Contemporarily, female-identified students have used protests and activism to demand safer campuses and better handling of gender-based violence incidences that occur on and off-campuses. Ballard (2020) found that female-identified students were more likely to participate in expressive politics and activism than male-identified populations (Ballard et al., 2020).

Similarly, students who are gender-minorities, such as non-binary or transgender, have used activism to demand access to restrooms and fitness-changing areas that are free of harassment and potential assaults. The sexuality gap in activism dictates that sexual minorities are more likely to participate in protests compared to heterosexual populations (Swank & Fahs, 2017). The sexuality gap in activism could be attributed to the nature of having a sexual minority identity. Commonly, persons with these identities experience various forms of discrimination, including in their family units (Swank et al., 2020). Additionally, events attributed to sexual minority communities, such as Pride, result from The Black Cat protests and the Stonewall riots (Unipan, 2021). Taken together, other scholars have seen that the more a person engages with their sexual minority community, the more politicized they become, which increases their likelihood to participate in activism (Swank and Fahs, 2017).

For persons with higher levels of educational attainment and higher SES, research has shown that they are more likely to participate in activism and civic engagement (Gallego, 2007; Traber, 2021). In one study, researchers found that persons from families with higher income levels are twice as likely to participate in activism compared to persons with lower SES (Verba, Schlozman & Brady,1995). Even with gender minority communities, persons with higher SES and educational attainment are more likely to participate in civic engagement (Swank & Fahs, 2014). One study demonstrated that persons from families with higher income levels are twice as likely to participate in activism than persons with lower SES (Verba, Schlozman & Brady,1995). Persons of higher SES are more likely to have access to networks that directly engage with persons who understand civic engagement and who have experience with political processes (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). The downside of these findings is that there are often notable differences in the experiences of those with differing SES levels. Those with lower SES are not represented in political actions (Traber et al., 2021).

When examining these findings more closely, it is important to use the lens of access and education. In one study, students of higher SES were more likely to be educated about civic engagement, how to participate, and be encouraged to participate compared to students of lower SES (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). However, it is not just about being educated about civic engagement that made the difference; it was also the quality of the civic education that youth received. Education researchers have cited that civic education's quality and availability has not grown much in the past few years (Winthrop, 2020). Additionally, Willeck & Mendelberg (2022) extend Winthrop's position by concluding that the mechanism used to teach civic engagement matters more than just how much education a student receives, with one promising method being experiential learning. Experiential learning about civics is already embedded in civics education

within K-12 schools with students from higher SES levels and includes things such as voting simulations (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Ballard et al. (2020) also substantiated similar findings among college students. Considering the lack of growth in civic education and the gap in quality civic education with K-12 schools, colleges are the next place for students to engage in education around civics (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Persons of higher SES are more likely to have access to networks that directly engage with persons who understand civic engagement and who have experience with political processes (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). The downside of these findings is that there are often notable differences in the experiences of those with differing SES levels, and the experiences of those with lower SES are not represented in political actions (Traber et al., 2021).

For persons who hold morality central to their identity, they are more likely to participate in civic engagement and pro-social behaviors (Winterich, Aquino, Mittal, & Swartz, 2013; Youniss et al., 1997; Aquino & Reed, 2002; Frimer & Walker, 2009; Hardy, 2005). When someone has a moral identity, their actions, beliefs, values, and goals are guided by morals; and the person will actively participate in activities that motivate the alignment between these factors (Porter, 2013). However, the question arises, did the moral identity precede the moral actions or vice versa? While this question remains up for debate, research has demonstrated that civic moral identities are associated with volunteering and expressive political participation but negatively associated with traditional political activities (Porter, 2013). In a study of 217 adolescent and emergent adults, Sunil & Verma (2018) examined two components of moral identity, internalization and symbolization. Their findings demonstrated that people with high moral identity symbolization, meaning that they wanted their moral choices to be seen externally, were a significant predictor of civic engagement behaviors. These findings give an

understanding of the relationship between civic morals identity and civic engagement by investigating the identity component that aligns explicitly with civic engagement participation. These findings also reinforce that involvement in activism and civic engagement is nuanced and complex.

i. Risk and Benefits to Activism

The risk related to activism can affect participants' physical and mental health. In 2019, Ballard and colleagues conducted one of the first studies to examine the impact of civic engagement on the health of adolescents and young adults (Ballard et al., 2019). Using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (ADD Health), this study assessed the impact of volunteering, voting, and activism on health behaviors in adulthood (e.g., depressive symptoms, metabolic risk, education, household income, personal income, and risky health behaviors). Findings from this study showed that activism was associated with significantly more years of education and higher personal earnings. There was no association between activism and depressive symptoms or metabolic risk. However, there was a significant association between activism and increased risky health behaviors. These risky health behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol use, might serve as tools to cope with the negative feelings associated with activism. Ballard et al. (2019) concluded that activism outcomes are not immediate, unlike voting and volunteering, which can cause feelings of frustration with the pace of social change and result in maladaptive coping mechanisms such as smoking or drinking (Ballard et al., 2019).

Activism can threaten one's overall well-being, including personal safety (Davenport et al., 2011; Ballard et al., 2016). As seen throughout history, some forms of activism, such as protests or sit-ins, have been met with counter-tactics, such as physical violence from private

citizens or government authorities (Davenport et al., 2011). These types of counter-tactics can make activism risky for participants. Also, activists can experience backlash from family, friends, or strangers for expressing their views, especially if they use an internet-based platform. The negative feedback that some movements and activists receive from the media or news coverage, such as those in Ferguson, MO, and Baltimore, MD, can also impact their emotional well-being (Ballard et al., 2016). Additionally, social movement activism participants' emotional well-being could be impacted by their knowledge and awareness of social issues and if they are participating in emotionally taxing movements. Doug McAdam (1988) found that college students who participated in the Mississippi Freedom summer project experienced depression and isolation immediately after participating and into adulthood, into the 1970s (McAdam, 1988).

In another study, Ballard et al. (2020) specifically examined the associations between six forms of political engagement, which included activism, and seven dimensions of well-being, operationalized using depression, anxiety, loneliness, happiness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, among college students (Ballard et al., 2020). This study looked at differences across racial groups and group mean differences in the six forms of political engagement using a variety of demographics. Using the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment, Ballard and colleagues found that activism, operationalized using protest participation, boycotting, and signing a petition, was positively associated with loneliness and negatively associated with self-esteem. The authors strongly cautioned against concluding that activism is bad for student health and well-being because their study did not consider the motivation for engagement in activism or the cause of the political engagement (Ballard et al., 2020).

While there are emotional well-being risks related to participating in activism, there are notable emotional well-being benefits. Activism has been linked to self-esteem, empowerment, and self-confidence (Ginwright & James, 2002; Itzhaky & York, 2003). These previous findings contradict Ballard's conclusions when examining the association between activism and well-being among college students. However, these findings support other research that found a positive association between activism participation and overall well-being (Nelson et al., 2019). Past research has demonstrated that one of the key emotional benefits of activism is sense of belonging (Harre, 2007). While there might be lone demonstrators or protesters, more often than not, a person is among others, either in ideology or physically, when participating in activism. Research has shown that students' connections through activism can improve their social integration into the university, reduce loneliness, and improve social support to cope with collegiate life stressors (Ansala et al., 2016). Supporting Ansala's finding, another study showed that students with a higher sense of belonging to their schools were more likely to participate in activism compared to students with lower levels of school sense of belonging (Encina & Berger, 2021; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Past studies have also shown that persons who participated in activism have higher levels of optimism. Optimism is the tendency of a person to believe that they will experience more good than bad things during the course of their lives (Carver & Scheiner, 2017). In a study among 880 adolescents, scholars found that those involved in activism had higher optimism levels than those who did not participate (Pancer, 2007). However, some researchers have demonstrated that activism is negatively associated with optimism (Cattell, 2021; Pahl et al., 2005). Similar to other impacts of activism on well-being, the relationship between activism and optimism has mixed results and requires further investigation (Sofi, 2021). This relationship has not been adequately investigated in college populations.

Additionally, activism has been demonstrated to be a coping strategy for young people who have experiences with racial and ethnic discrimination and use activism to resolve the feelings associated with the *status quo* of the current society or concerns about a specific issue (Ballard et al., 2016). One study among a diverse group of college students demonstrated that activism was a protective factor for the well-being of Latinx students that participated in activism and were currently experiencing microaggressions on their campus (Hope et al., 2018). However, that same study showed the opposite associations in Black students (Hope et al., 2018). The research on activism as a coping strategy is limited. Participating in activism has been demonstrated as a coping strategy among young people of color, and other marginalized communities, who are more susceptible to discrimination. However, there is no research showing activism as a coping strategy for persons who consider themselves allies to the movement they are supporting or persons supporting from a humanitarian perspective.

j. Theoretical Frameworks to Explain the Connection between Activism and Health

Very few empirical research studies have been conducted on the relationship between activism and health and well-being. Social Capital Theory and the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Ballard et al., 2016) are useful frameworks to guide our understanding of how activism might be related to individual health. Social Capital Theory posits that gaining social connections and relationships can provide human capital benefits (Kreuter & Lezin, 2002). For example, suppose a college student increases their social network during their undergraduate career. In that case, they might have increased social support, which might reduce the risk of mental health problems, including depression and anxiety (Alsubaie et al., 2019).

Second, Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping posits that stress is a transactional process between an individual and their environment, in which the

influence of stress is determined by coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984, Freire et al., 2020). Stress is defined as internal or external demands placed on an individual that causes the body to release a stress response (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Additionally, stress is exposure to a stimulus that is appraised as harmful, threatening, or exceeding one's ability to cope (Cooper, 2017). Coping is the cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage the internal and external demands appraised as taxing or exceeding an individual's resources (Cooper, 2017). TSC has been applied to explain many health behaviors and health statuses. For example, in the study of chronic childhood diseases, TSC has been applied to understand the outcome of adjustment (Hocking and Lochman, 2005). At the onset of diagnosis, many chronic childhood diseases can cause stress for a child. According to this theory, the child or family might use various coping strategies to help the child adjust to their condition, which results in the condition no longer being appraised as a stressor for the child (Hocking and Lochman, 2005).

The original theory centered on two types of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping seeks to directly manage the stressor that the person is experiencing (Riley & Park, 2014). Research has shown that problem-focused coping strategies are positively associated with improved psychological well-being and health-related quality of life (Riley & Park, 2014; Cooper, 2017). Emotion-focused coping seeks to manage the emotions related to the stressor, but not the stressor directly (Vassilliere et al., 2016). Some studies have shown that emotion-focused coping is associated with poorer psychological well-being and decreased health-related quality of life than problem-focused coping strategies (Vassilliere et al., 2016). While emotion-focused coping might not constitute the same benefits as problem-focused coping, some individuals might employ emotion-focused coping strategies temporarily until they

have the resources to employ problem-focused coping strategies (Cooper, 2017). However, the dichotomous taxonomy used to characterize coping has been a critique of TSC.

Folkman revised this theory in 1997 to acknowledge that positive emotions can occur due to successful coping and stressful situations that triggered the need for coping (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2007). Most importantly, and relevant to the proposed research, the revision of the theory suggested a third category of coping—namely, meaning-focused coping, which focuses on using one's beliefs, values, and goals to ascribe positive meaning to the experiences, including the stressors that triggered the need for coping (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2007; Cooper, 2017; Riley et al., 2014). It might be most appropriate to view activism as a meaning-focused coping strategy. Choosing to participate in social movements might occur because one has a fundamental belief that social change can happen. Framing activism as a meaning-focused coping strategy in this context, and exploring how it might have implications for one's health, has not, to date, been investigated.

Chapter 3: Study 1 - "It just felt nice to be able to scream": A Qualitative Examination of the Experiences of College Students Participating in the Black Lives Matter Movement

a. *Abstract*

This study examined the impact of participating in protests on college students' emotional well-being and the associated role of coping. The study sample consisted of 18 undergraduate students aged 18-25 who participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter movement protests. Within the sample, the majority of the participants identified as female (61.11%, n=11) and were Black (38.89%, n=7). In-depth interviews were conducted, and subsequent data were analyzed using grounded theory and thematic analysis. Findings distinguished four themes: 1) emotions and factors contributing to protest participation, 2) elements of protest, and3) identity development and the way ahead. A substantial portion of the participants experienced negative emotions following the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, which motivated them to participate in protests. Unexpectedly, the majority of participants described experiencing positive emotions, including empowerment and hope, while at the protest sites. The protest elements, chanting, listening to protest speakers, and being in community with others were the source of positive emotions. Most participants described protesting as a momentary emotional release. These findings demonstrate that protesting impacts student emotional well-being and is an emotion-focused coping strategy for negative feelings garnered by the sociopolitical climate.

b. *Introduction*

The concerns about college students' mental health have grown considerably during the past ten years (Liu, 2019; Eisenberg & Lipson, 2019). In 2019, 45.1% and 65.7% of students reported depressive and anxiety-related symptoms in the past 12 months, respectively (NCHA, 2019). Many factors can influence mental health status, ranging from individual-level risk factors (e.g., genetics, emotional regulation) to access to care. Other factors are certainly at play when

examining the decline in student mental health, including adjusting to the collegiate environment, pressures to perform well academically, and early diagnosis of adolescent mental health conditions (Kessler et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2019). Additionally, emergent stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated student mental health problems, such as online learning and other health anxieties (Lui et al., 2020). Moreover, these mental health issues are often associated with a decreased sense of belonging, fewer social connections, and lower social support than students who are not experiencing these difficulties (Finley, 2016; Nepon, 2010; Garlow et al., 2008).

If we examine emotional well-being through a social determinants of health lens, factors such as the sociopolitical climate, specifically racism and discrimination, have been contributing to the decline in student mental health observed during the past ten years (Liu, 2019). Past research has adequately demonstrated that institutionalized racism and personal discrimination, directly and indirectly, affect mental health. Racism often affects mental health through the lens of discrimination (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). Research has demonstrated that there have been positive associations between discrimination and depressive symptoms among refugee and immigrant populations in Canada and the US, respectively (Noh et al., 1999; Rumbaut, 1994). In a meta-analysis conducted by Paradies et al. (2015), findings revealed a strong association between racism and negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and psychological stress. This study also showed that ethnicity moderated the relationship between racism and negative mental health with significantly stronger effects for Asian Americans and Latino(a) Americans than African Americans. Within a sample of 413 college students, scholars found that higher levels of perceived discrimination were associated with higher levels of emotional distress (Cokeley et al., 2011). Taken together, these studies

demonstrate the influence of factors related to the sociopolitical climate as negative contributions to student mental health.

As the United States (US) began addressing the burgeoning COVID-19 pandemic, the country's consistent and divisive sociopolitical climate was again at the forefront of news media following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. The COVID-19 regional shutdowns provided an unprecedented captive audience who not only were exposed to the details surrounding the deaths of these law-abiding citizens but also provided the time and opportunity to be affected by them and, for some, to react. Reactions to the unjust killings of these Black citizens sparked hundreds of domestic and global protests in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a social movement and national organization founded in 2013 after George Zimmerman was acquitted of charges in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin (Tillery, 2019; Black Lives Matter, n.d.). Starting as a Twitter hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter), BLM has since evolved into a global organization with the mission of eradicating white supremacy and building local power to intervene against violence toward Black communities at the hands of the state and vigilantes (Black Lives Matter, n.d.). A trademark of BLM within the social justice and political realms is their consistent use of disruptive activism tactics such as protests.

Protests are direct, politically motivated, collective actions against legislative authorities or civic elites (Tarrow, 1989). To participants, protests can represent a physical manifestation of the frustrations of people who have experienced and bared witness to injustice. Martin Bekker (2021) stated that protests represent "an act of love." During protests, people gather in solidarity for a common goal, which might evoke a sense of unity and strength to combat feelings of hopelessness. Past studies have shown that activism, including protests, has benefits, such as

increased self-esteem, empowerment, and self-confidence, particularly among developing emergent adults, including college students (Ginwright & James, 2002; Itzhaky & York, 2003). When specifically studying college students, one study of a diverse group of college students demonstrated that activism was positively associated with well-being among Latinx students who were currently experiencing microaggressions on their campus but not for Black students (Hope et al., 2018).

Fine et al. (2018) found that activism participation was associated with lower levels of psychological distress and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ and gender-expansive youth. Klar and Kasser (2009) found that college students who self-identified as activists were more likely to flourish. In this study, flourishing was based on Keyes' (2002) definition, including psychological, social, and emotional well-being (Keyes, 2002; Conner et al., 2021). Additionally, research has demonstrated that students' connections through activism can improve their social integration into the university, reduce feelings of loneliness, and improve social support to cope with collegiate life stressors (Ansala et al., 2016).

While there are notable benefits to activism participation for students, there are also emotional well-being risks. Doug McAdam (1988), in his study of White college students participating in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, found that many of the students felt feelings of isolation, alienation, and depression immediately after participation and into adulthood (McAdam, 1988). Ballard et al. (2020) examined the associations between six forms of political engagement, including activism, and seven dimensions of well-being among college students. Activism participation was positively associated with loneliness and negatively associated with self-esteem. However, the authors strongly cautioned against concluding that activism *per se* negatively influences student well-being because their study did not consider the

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motivation for engagement in activism or the cause of the political engagement (Ballard et al., 2020). In another study among college students, of those who identified as an activist, 60% of them indicated that activism had a negative impact on their mental health (Conner et al., 2021). However, despite the adverse effects on their mental health, these students still felt compelled to continue their activism participation (Conner et al., 2021). When studying adult activists, some studies have shown that activists are willing to compromise their physical and emotional well-being to advance the movements they are a part of (Barry & Dordevic, 2007; Weber & Messias, 2012).

How activism and protesting impact students' emotional well-being is not well understood. Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping is a potential framework to explain the relationship between activism and emotional well-being (Ballard, 2016). In this theory, stress is a transactional process between an individual and their environment, in which the influence of stress is determined by problem or emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, Freire et al., 2020). While problem-focused coping seeks to manage the stressor directly, emotion-focused coping aims to address the emotions related to the stressor, but not the stressor directly (Riley & Park, 2014, Vassilliere et al., 2016). For example, some individuals might temporarily employ emotion-focused coping strategies, such as protesting, until they have the resources to employ problem-focused coping strategies, such as contributing to policy development (Cooper, 2017). In one study, youth who had experienced discrimination used activism as a coping strategy to handle their discrimination experience (Ballard et al., 2016). However, no studies have investigated protesting as a coping strategy among college populations. Considering the instability of emergent adulthood, developing adaptative coping strategies can be vital to supporting one's well-being (Jenzer et al., 2018). The

findings on the directionality of changes in coping approach have been mixed, with some researchers finding increases in problem-focused coping during emergent adulthood (Wingo, Baldessarini, & Windle (2015) and others finding stable patterns in problem-focused coping Jenzer et al., 2015).

Protests have become almost synonymous with social movements. Social movements are a collection of actions that challenge societal powers and are centered around common goals, beliefs, and identities (Liu, 2018). To an extent, the risks related to protesting are dependent on the context of the social movement's topic and the participant's identities, including their race and ethnicity (Davenport et al., 2011). The race and ethnicity of movement participants also matter regarding how movement activities are portrayed in the media. For instance, during the summer of 2020, BLM protesters were met by police officers in military-grade uniforms as they marched to the US Capitol building in response to recent racially-motivated murders. However, on January 6, 2021, violent insurrectionists were met with limited police intervention at the same location as they unlawfully entered the US Capitol building. Considering that much of our understanding of social movements is based on the critical examinations of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) (Bracey, 2016), for many persons, race and ethnicity have also become synonymous with social movements.

The CRM has also been an anchor to our understanding of student activism in the US (Fisher, 2018). As contemporary social movements, such as BLM, continue to rise, many colleges and universities have increased their efforts to have students become more civically engaged (New, 2016; Cole, 2012), but limited attention has focused on the emotional well-being of students who choose to engage.

Furthermore, emergent adulthood is a pertinent phase of life in which people engage in experiences that further develop their identity, influencing their decision-making (Arnett, 2010). During this time in the life course, emergent adults are engaged in experiences that are helping them to decide who they want to be and what they want out of experiences, such as work and interpersonal relationships (Arnett, 2010). The possible influence of protesting on college students' identities might develop their view of the world from a social justice lens. Considering that racism is a social determinant of health, activism, including protests, is one of many potential direct actions to reduce this social determinant of health, which is at the root of many health disparities. Moreover, since one of the central tenants of public health is social justice, it is vital to investigate the impact of social movements, such as BLM, and the potential impact on the mental health of emergent adults. Additionally, more emergent adults viewing the world through the lens of social justice contributes to achieving equity. The present study utilized qualitative methods to examine the short-term impacts of protest participation on college students' emotional well-being and the potential role of coping in the relationship.

c. *Methods*
    i. Qualitative Approach
      This study utilized a qualitative approach to explore the impact of protest participation on the emotional well-being of college students. Prior research in this subject area has been sparse and primarily used quantitative methods. Qualitative methodologies are appropriate for gaining a deeper understanding of new or scarcely researched areas because they provide context and meaning (Roy at al., 2015). This study employed a purposive sampling method based on gender and racial identity to recruit a diverse sample. The Institutional Review Board at the study site approved this study.

    ii. Site and Sample

The study was conducted at an urban, diverse four-year college on the eastern coast of the United States where the Principal Investigator serves as an administrator. Students were recruited through emails, social media, and referrals. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, electronic communication has been the sole method for communicating with students; thus, no printed flyers were used for recruitment. Participants were primarily recruited through referrals from staff members at UMBC who serve in advisor roles to student organizations. Additionally, participants were recruited through referrals from past interview participants for the study. Lastly, some participants and student organizations shared the study recruitment flyer on their personal and organizations' social media pages. The recruitment goal was to obtain diverse representation in the sample. Thirty-one students completed the study interest form to determine their eligibility. Eligible participants were aged 18-25, participated in support of BLM during 2020, and were enrolled as full-time undergraduate students. Of the 31 students screened for eligibility, 27 students met the study's eligibility criteria. Eighteen participants responded to interview requests and were subsequently interviewed. The mean age of the sample was 21 years (sd = 1.24), 44% were seniors, 61% were female-identified, 55% were heterosexual, 39% were African American/Black, and 94% were born in the US (See Table 1).

iii. Data Collection

Qualitative interviews were conducted between February and April of 2021. Interviews were conducted and recorded via the video conferencing software, Webex®. A semi-structured interview guide, developed in consultation with a social movements scholar and piloted among four 2020 BLM protesters, was used to conduct each interview. Participants were asked a series of nine open-ended and thirteen probing questions about their emotional well-being, participation in the 2020 BLM protests, and experiences following protests. One of the questions regarding well-being from the interview guide was, "How would you describe your emotional well-being

over the past year using three adjectives or descriptors?" An example question related to protest

participation was, "Of the potential causes for the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, which

was the most important to your decision to protest?" One of the probes related to this question

was, "Do you feel like you belong to the Black Lives Matter movement community?" Questions

regarding future activism participation included, "With the recent election of Joe Biden and

Kamala Harris, tell me how your level of activism will change."

Speaking about one's mental health can be a sensitive topic that persons do not wish to

discuss in groups. Participating in a discussion about the sociopolitical climate in the US and

racially-motivated murders of Black citizens can be sensitive and controversial. Interviews were

conducted instead of focus groups to account for the sensitive and controversial nature of the

topics. Each interview ranged from 50- 90 minutes, and participants received an incentive for

their participation. Once data saturation was reached and common themes were heard across all-

new interviews, participant recruitment and interviewing were discontinued (Roy et al., 2015).

`were asked to complete a short questionnaire to provide demographic information and previous

social movement and protest participation experience.

iv. Data Analysis

Grounded theory was the overall approach used to analyze the data (LaRossa, 2005).

Using this approach, the data were first analyzed using two phases: open coding and compare

and contrast. Following transcription, the PI and a graduate-level research assistant cleaned each

transcript, correcting all transcription errors and removing any personal identifying information.

Next, the PI read each transcript several times and reviewed all interview notes to become more

familiar with the data. Then, the PI used open coding, which refers to a detailed breakdown of

the data, to develop initial codes for the data (Daly, 2007). The PI developed a set of sensitizing

concepts for data: emotional well-being, background, concerns about protesting, reasons for

BLM protests, Reactions to protests, personal impact of protesting, and future activism and civic engagement. During the process of open coding, the PI discovered emergent codes such as protests elements that garnered emotional responses. After that, the PI used axial coding to establish the 45 primary and secondary codes that comprised the final coding structure. Looking across the 18 interviews, the PI compared and contrasted to identify the variation within each of the specific codes within the coding structure. An example of one of the primary codes was Reactions to Protest. This code was associated with participants describing their reactions while physically present at protest sites. One of the secondary codes within Reactions to Protest was Chanting. This secondary code was associated with participants describing their general or emotional reactions to chanting at protests or listening to other people chanting. Another primary code was Concerns about Protesting, which was associated with participants' descriptions of their concerns about participating in protests during 2020. One of the secondary codes within Concerns about Protesting was COVID-19. Here, participants described their concerns about contracting COVID-19 while protesting or transmitting COVID-19 to relatives after protest participation. Finally, the PI used Clark and Braun's thematic analysis approach to develop themes within the data (Clark & Braun, 2021). All the codes were examined to find patterns across the codes. After that, themes were developed and defined. One such theme was emotions as motivators for protest participation, which specifically addressed emotional responses to the sociopolitical climate and the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery as motivations for protest participation.

To increase the trustworthiness of the data, this study engaged in peer debriefing, member checks, and exposure in the field (Krefting, 1991). The PI consulted two peers with qualitative analysis experience to review the codebook, developed definitions, and example

codes. The PI and the two peers resolved any discrepancies regarding codes and coding definitions through discussion before finalizing the codebook. Continuing, the study PI and research assistant reviewed three interview transcripts and coded them using the final codebook. The research assistant and PI resolved any discrepancies in coding through discussion. The PI identified themes from the codes by reviewing and interpreting the primary and secondary codes. The PI engaged in peer debriefing with peers following each interview. Additionally, the PI checked the accuracy of the information provided during the interviews by summarizing participant responses, then allowing the participants to confirm accuracy. The PI also discussed the findings of the study with students at the sample site for them to assess the accuracy of the findings. Through their role as an administrator at the study site, the PI was immersed in the same environment as the participants and gained a deeper understanding of their experiences during the study. Descriptive statistics were used to describe participant age, class standing, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, visa status, and lifetime number of protests.

Author 1, the study PI, is a Black cisgender heterosexual female in her early 30s. She has worked in higher education, specifically at the study site, as an administrator for five years and an instructor for three years. The experience of working with emergent adults within a collegiate setting has provided Author 1 with the ability to be in community with students and simultaneously shaped the community around students. Author 1 has specifically focused on the health and well-being of emergent adults within both research and practice for seven years. Using traditional public health and social justice approaches to support well-being, Author 1 developed this specific study based on her years of experience and areas of expertise.

d. Findings

Data analysis revealed three major themes: 1) emotions as motivators for protest participation, 2) emotional residence during protest, and 3) identity development and the way ahead. To protect participant identity, each participant was provided with a pseudonym. Additionally, some quotes presented were edited to improve readability.

ii. Emotions as motivators for protest participation
When asked about their emotional well-being over the past year, most participants described a complicated combination of positive and negative descriptions to categorize their overall emotional well-being. Not surprisingly, many cited factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic as impacts to their emotional well-being. The majority of the participants directly named the sociopolitical climate and the multiple killings of Black citizens as an influence on their overall emotional well-being. Interestingly, for many participants, the manner of death and the contextual details surrounding the murders of these citizens is what caused them to experience negative emotions. One participant, Triston, an African American male whose previous activism experience was not related to the experience of Black folks in the US, stated,

> So that was really nothing new until I saw George Floyd. And I was like, wow, that's crazy… it was completely different. It was like the nature of it was completely different. The level of brutality was completely different.

For others, the fact that Breonna Taylor was sleeping in her home when police killed her was the source of their negative emotions when reflecting on Breonna's story. While the circumstances of these murders follow the pattern of countless other experiences -- a Black person simply living and becoming a victim of police violence -- the attention given to these

murders by the media compounded with COVID-19 region shutdowns providing a captive audience made the awareness of these murders different from the rest.

The effect of the COVID-19 regional shutdowns had more influence on some people's awareness of social justice issues impacting Black America than most people are willing to admit. The lack of awareness of the experiences of Black people was perhaps not intentional but, for some, a byproduct of the fast pace of life or ignorance perhaps afforded to them by their family's socioeconomic status. For some non-Black participants, their new awareness that their Black-identified social connections had been directly affected by discrimination or other effects of the sociopolitical climate added to the negative emotions that they experienced, which is considered cross-cultural solidarity. Participants like Alex, an Asian American female who had never protested before, spoke candidly about how connection to her friends also fueled her 2020 protest experience. Alex stated,

> It made me feel really, really hurt for them. And really angry that people I know have been so personally affected, and it's something that's affecting them years and years down the line … and [it made me] feel extra angry because they're people I care about so strongly and it made me feel a lot more invested because I felt like I need to stand with my friends.

The participants that described a newfound awareness of the experiences of the Black citizens leaned into their awareness and allowed their new knowledge and the negative emotions generated by this awareness to motivate them to act. For non-Black participants, cross-cultural solidarity with Black folx was where they discussed race the most. Brian, an Asian American male, shared his recollection of attitudes shared by Asian Americans,

It's racist that Asians can get into [a competitive university] because they have too many

Asians because we're too smart. And it becomes another thing where they're like, 'so why

do Black people get into [a competitive university] and have lower test scores than

Asians. Aren't we also a minority?' And it becomes infighting between Asian and Black

communities that way.

For many other participants like Brian, their awareness of anti-Black or discriminatory

views held by their racial and ethnic groups are not ideologies that they believe in. They see their

awareness of the experiences of Black people as support for them challenging those ideologies in

their own families.

However, from a broader perspective, some participants like Alex also learned about the

varying forms of racism.

I always thought of racism as a White person attacking a Black person, but it's so much

more widespread and on a spectrum. I think that's something I really learned over this

past year, it [racism] affects everyone and it could affect really day-to-day ways that don't

tend to show up in media or show up in conversations.

While Alex's perspectives represent newfound enlightenment, participants like Misha, a

Black female, were not moved by persons admitting to these types of revelations and saw it as an

annoyance.

Especially with social media, having to witness other non-black people be introduced

something [racialized violence] that we've been going through for such a long time. It

gets kind of tiring watching people be like, did you know, when it's common knowledge

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to everyone else. So, I guess it's just watching people act like it's a new phenomenon or like this is something that just started happening. It gets a little bit tiring.

This reflection demonstrates that many people in the US can turn a blind eye to the discussion of race relations in America. However, the privilege of being blind to race relations is not equitably afforded to all.

For many participants, their motivations to protest were personal and connected to the negative emotions they were experiencing. Some participants indicated that they feared that they could be unlawfully killed because of their race, so they needed to protest. Cameron, a Black male, stated,

> I think the fact that with the two deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd…those two things were really the tipping point for me. For them to happen so close together and following the story behind it, there was no cause for action in terms of why the police did what they did and for them to lose their lives like that. I think that was just something that was so inexcusable that I felt wrong to not do something, to just sit around while people who look like me, people who had nothing, were just doing good in the world, just for them to lose their lives like that. That could potentially be someone I love or even myself. So I think for me, that was the biggest deciding factor in me being a part of the movement.

Bobby, a Black male, extended Cameron's reflection by stating, "Just the fact that Black people don't feel protected in American." This sentiment was repeated by other Black participants who acknowledged the fears and concerns they had for themselves and other Black people. Cameron's reflection that Breonna Taylor or George Floyd's experience could happen to

him was in contrast to other participants like Parker, a Bi-racial female, who stated that her concern was for her brothers and father but not herself. These findings illuminate that, for these participants, their Black identity had a varying influence on their motivations to protest and was compounded by other social identities and social roles that they held.

For some non-Black participants, a sense of community and the importance of the issue at hand motivated them to protest. For example, Lacey, a White female who had participated in numerous protests and is a part of two social movement organizations, talked about the physicality of community within protesting to explain how community supports protests. Lacey stated,

> So it [the motivation for protesting] was the need to be another body to put pressure on the people who are making the laws and to get the attention of the media so that people who don't believe that this [racialized violence] is an issue, have to then grapple logically with why there are so many people out on the streets and in a pandemic to protest this, if it's not an issue.

Lacey's thoughts were shared by other participants as they reconciled with their anxieties about the COVID-19 pandemic and their urge to move beyond sharing about BLM on social media. Alex's previous reflection about her desire to stand in solidarity with her friends, also illuminates that some fears are greater than others. For Alex and others, their fear of racialized violence happening to their Black friends, which they deemed a plausible reality, outweighed the fear of a largely unknown infectious disease that might or might not impact them, which supports a stronger sense of community. Here we see the potential of someone else's emotional experience interacting with the participants' emotions and motivating them to participate in protests, making the role of emotions in protest participation even more nuanced and complex.

ii. Emotional residence during protest

In describing their protest experience, specific elements related to protesting garnered emotional responses from the participants. This phenomenon is defined as emotional residence, which are elements within embodied experiences, such as protesting, that are directly tied to emotional responses. Within the elements of protesting listed by the participants, chanting and listening to speakers and performances generated a strong positive emotional response from the majority of the participants. More specifically, participants indicated that the physical act of chanting phrases such as "Black Lives Matter" gave them feelings of hope, unity, and empowerment. Jamie, who is White and non-binary, stated,

> Those [chants] felt very, in a weird way, empowering, because hearing so many people saying it and yelling it back, it was a little bit awe-inspiring as well as empowering where it's like, oh yeah, we're all, here for the same reason.

When closely examining the physical act of chanting, it becomes clearer how this element of protest can garner positive emotions. For instance, during chants, participants publicly declare their stance regarding race relations in America with their volume is not being stifled. Because they are among others who share the same viewpoint, they do not fear sharing what they believe. Also, the sound of collective voices, which can represent collective actions, demonstrates the power of persons coming together for the same issue.

Many participants indicated that they felt hopeful and inspired when listening to speakers or performers. Brian, an Asian American male, said, "So that same feeling of hope like when you're going to church and the pastor is giving a word, and you're like, it resonates with you, that kind of feeling." While the chanting for many participants symbolized release, for many listening

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to the speakers was synonymous with being emotionally filled. The speakers and performances allowed some participants to feel seen, while others deepened their understanding that racial violence toward the Black community does not always make headlines which is an indicator of the expansiveness or pervasiveness of the issue. The speakers were also educators about other ways to support changing the sociopolitical climate for some participants.

While the crowd diversity was often covered by the media and garnered positive emotions from participants, some participants did not indicate crowd diversity as unique but saw it as something that should always occur. Others just saw it as a reflection of the demographics of their area. However, being in a community with others for the same cause garnered strong positive emotions. Jamie stated, "I would say a little bit of empowerment, a sense of community a little bit where it's we're all in this together. It felt nice. It felt good." These findings demonstrate that for these protesters, community is centered around purpose and not merely representation. While having diverse representation might be helpful, participants might not feel the same positive emotions if persons are not there for the same purpose. For instance, if someone was present at the protest for social media purposes, which some participants stated they noticed, then these participants might not reflect on those persons as being a part of the community within the protest. When some participants mentioned this, they rebuked those persons because it was clear they were not there for the same purpose, reinforcing the idea that shared purpose is a central tenant to how these students define community.

Intriguingly, the participants' positive emotions during the protest remained even if aspects of the protest became dangerous. One participant, Alexis, who had previous protest experience, indicated that they still felt a sense of community from the crowd while tending to

their friend who was struck by a rubber bullet shot by police. Alexis, an Asian American female, stated,

> Even that was overwhelming. Cause it was a lot of people, but again, unfortunately the
> feeling of like, wow, I'm safe here around all these other people, obviously not safe from
> the large barricade of police officers.

Reflections like this extend the concept of community within the grounds of the protest to reflect shared responsibility for each other. Opponents of Black Lives Matter protests, and protests in general, would attempt to paint protests as chaotic and violent places. However, as Jamie and Alexis have stated, these protests grounds are far from that picture. When adding shared responsibility to their understanding of community, the generated positive feelings could be related to being seen as a human worthy of care and protection. Perhaps shared responsibility is also what supported some participants like Jamie feeling comfortable enough to stay at a protest on their own after their friends had left.

While many of the participants spoke candidly about the positive emotions they felt while protesting, many expressed a sense of guilt for feeling positive emotions at the protests. Alexis stated,

> I don't want to say [being at the protest] is a cool feeling because it shouldn't be
> happening. None of this should be happening, but it was just kinda nice to see everybody
> together, everyone literally supporting the same exact chant, the same exact movement,
> but everything was just sad.

Despite most participants openly sharing about their positive emotions, some spoke about experiencing an emotional duality. Alexis's reflection is a reminder that emotions are complex

and nuanced. Additionally, this reflection gives credence to the understanding that even though a situation evokes emotions that would be characterized as being in opposition, the emotions are not competing with one another at all.

A few non-Black participants discussed their awareness that their race provided them with certain privileges and that they used those privileges during protests. Tina, a White, non-binary student who has quite a bit of previous protest participation, arrived at the protest prepared to use their racial privilege to support the protest community. Tina stated,

> When I finally went to a protest, I was the one who would tell other white people, 'Hey, we should be at the front right against the fence.' [I said this] not because we want to stand in front of Black people, but cops are less likely to shoot us than they would the Black girl standing behind me.

Tina's decision to use their privilege as a tool to protect Black protesters from police violence was depicted in the media by other protesters. These revelations remind us that racialized violence is a choice of some law enforcement officials.

iii. Identity development and the way ahead

Despite experiencing strong positive emotions during the process of protesting, many of the participants indicated that the same negative emotions they had experienced remained. Alex stated, "I wouldn't say that my feelings, upset or disgust, disappeared after the protest or any of that. But [they experienced] more feelings, but also the same negative feelings as before." When Alex provided this insight, it helped to understand how protests can act as an emotion-focused coping strategy for these participants. Also, when protests are operating in their intended fashion, they do not change the sociopolitical climate or the root causes of the protests, so it would make sense that the emotions created from the sociopolitical climate would still be present. This

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reflection provokes the thought about whether anyone can indeed cope with the state of the American social and political environments.

Many of the participants indicated that they were aware and resolved that protests alone do not solve the issues at the root causes of the BLM movement. Cecile, a Middle Eastern female, has previous protest experience and is a member of a social movement organization, demonstrated a keen awareness of the limits of protesting. When speaking about their perception of the outcomes of protesting in 2020, Cecile stated,

> They [the root causes of the BLM protests] didn't really change because there were new victims or scenarios. Although the protests were nice and empowering but they didn't have an immediate impact. I guess I continued having the same emotions.

This observation reinforces that participants are keenly aware of protests' limits but participate anyway. Perhaps they are participating because they want to relieve the negative emotions, even momentarily, that are caused by an abstract entity, the sociopolitical climate. Many participants noted that they felt a sense of relief after the protests. Misha stated, "It just felt nice to be able to scream and yell about something that I cared about with other people. Just like that emotional release felt nice." It is unclear whether or not participants went to the protest looking for an emotional release. Unbeknownst to them, while the participants engaged in emotional catharsis, they gained positive emotions resulting from protest elements. In hindsight, they left with the negative emotions they came with and left with a new set of positive emotions.

Following protest participation, many participants indicated that their involvement personally impacted them. Some participants stated that they felt more connected to their Blackness after protest participation. Bobby, a Black male second-time protester, said, "I guess that [participating in protests] made me feel more Black." Bobby's statement supports the notion

that activism, protests in this case, can garner feelings of racial pride. However, these findings underscore that for Black participants, racial pride is garnered through being in a community with persons of the same race. The difference here is that we now see the power of community generated at the protest site, leaving an impact beyond the protest moment.

Brian stated that he had a sense of hope, "I think personally [the protest] made me feel hopeful." Some participants indicated that their participation in protest helped to increase their confidence, while Parker suggested that their participation helped them to determine their purpose,

> So with these protests, finding people throughout these protests and communicating with different people, finding people that were advocating or also have similar experiences and similar interests and being in these protests and such I kind of found my sense of belonging, and purpose in this world, advocating. I'm not sure how to explain it.

Parker's reflection extends the idea that community and solidarity contribute significantly to the protest experience. The shared purpose of protests allows persons from all walks of life, who might not have intersected otherwise, to connect. Lacey noted that she made connections at the protests, and they became her friends after that. Triston stated that after attending the BLM protest he knew more about how he could apply activism tactics to change his own community, including things such as fixing potholes in the street. These details helps us to understand further that while participants are leaving with the negative emotions, they came with, they have gained many protective factors in the process of protesting. Additionally, their application of the protests experience in other areas of their lives, including their familial relationships, underscores the power of activism participation in helping young people to develop their identities.

The majority of the participants indicated that they would continue to participate in activism. Many of them noted that they would continue to share information, engage in conversations with others via social media platforms, and protest again. Some non-Black participants wanted to have more conversations with their social networks about ideologies and rhetoric that were harmful to Black communities. Some of the participants had experienced the negative costs of sharing support for the Black community, such as Jade, who was socially isolated from a long-term friend's parents, or Linda, who a neighbor questioned on Facebook for sharing a list of books about the Black experience. What is encouraging is that these participants encountered these negative reactions before they chose to protest and still committed to participation. A few of the participants resigned themselves to the idea that they would probably have to protest again or that there would be another trending topic with the name of another life lost to racialized violence.

e. *Discussion*

Overall, the findings from this study indicate that participating in protests did impact the emotional well-being of this group of college students. Many participants noted that the sociopolitical climate negatively affected their emotional well-being. While these findings apply to a unique historical moment, these findings support the idea that domestic and international social issues might emotionally impact college students. The majority of the participants saw their protest participation as a type of catharsis, which extends a previous study that found activism as a coping mechanism in adolescents (Ballard et al., 2016). Additionally, none of the participants indicated that their participation in online activism through social media provided them emotional release. This finding supports the purpose of protests, which is to grab the attention of political authority and be a launching pad for other types of activism or traditional political participation. One of the contributions of this study was that it examined the relationship

between activism and emotional well-being using one specific social movement, Black Lives Matter.

Following the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, most of the participants in the study had negative emotional responses to the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Together with centuries-old issues such as racism, discrimination, and racialized violence toward Black people, these unjust deaths acted as the "stressors" that elucidated a negative emotional response that participants felt the need to address. These emotional responses supported their motivations to participate in protests, which follows the model studied by James Jasper related to the relationship between social movements and emotions (Jasper, 2011). Regardless of racial identity, many participants' motivations to protest were related to their moral beliefs and not personal experiences with discrimination. For non-Black participants, the supporting the Black community through protests is a form of cross-cultural solidarity. However, scholars have stated that cross-cultural solidarity with Black folx is difficult to truly achieve when anti-Blackness is still pervasive in other minority communities (Ramos, 2016).

Some participants acknowledged that their sentiments about supporting Black folx is not universally shared among their social networks. When participants are actively declaring a stance on political topics, such as racialized violence, and are in opposition of their social networks, this further contributes to them developing their own identities. For some non-Black participants, they recognized racial privilege was a tool that prevented them or others like them from being exposed to racial tensions in the US. However, it begs the question that if fewer people had consistently turned a blind eye to the stain of racism and the treatment of Black people in the US, would the sociopolitical climate look any different?

Chanting, being with others for a common purpose, and listening to speakers were the protest elements that caused participants to experience positive emotions, supporting the literature's distinction that activism has emotional well-being benefits for participants (Ballard et al., 2016; Ginwright & James, 2002; Itzhaky & York, 2003; Hope et al., 2018; Fine et al., 2018; Klar & Kasser, 2009; Ansala et al., 2016). One of the contributions of this study to the literature was being able to identify the specific elements of protesting that generated the positive emotions and provide context to that identification. Sense of community aligns with the sociological concept of collective identity, which encompasses an individual's emotional and moral connection to a broader community and then acts as a motivator for social movement participation (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). The sense of community and physical presence of being in community with others for the same purpose can also act as a form of community care among participants. When using Deanna Zandt's illustration of the complexity of self-care, one of the ways to engage in care is by participating in activities that help you find meaning and purpose (Birdsong, 2020). Within protesting, participants often join together for a meaningful purpose that allows individuals to care for themselves as the community simultaneously provides an environment that promotes soothing, mourning, grieving, and healing, which is supported by some of the findings in this study.

After protest participation, many participants indicated that they had the same negative emotions as before their participation. Many stated that they felt that they now knew how to contribute to long-term solutions to change the sociopolitical climate in America. These findings support the literature by showing that participating in protest acted as an intermediate step for many participants until they could engage in activities that would solve the stressors they experienced, which would be problem-focused coping (Cooper, 2017). Identifying protesting as

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an emotion-focused coping strategy is one of the main contributions of this study to the literature.

Aside from the main findings of this study, an unexpected result, and one of the contributions of this study to the literature, was that protest participation supported identity development in participants. An unexpected result was that protest participation supported identity development in participants, as well their connection to their own racial and ethnic identity. Perhaps being able to share physical space with other Black citizens increased these participants' racial pride and helped them realize that they were advocating for others and themselves. Additionally, since these participants are in college, their educational status might shield them from some of the impacts that non-collegiate Black citizens face due to their race and ethnicity. Furthermore, protesting and the continual evidence of anti-Blackness in the US might have increased their understanding of their susceptibility to racially biased policing, primarily through the story of Breonna Taylor. Many non-Black participants described becoming aware of the sociopolitical climate and the experiences of Black citizens as an opportunity to break away from conservative rhetoric and ideology that they experienced during their upbringing. Even though some wanted to break away from the ideologies of their childhoods, they also wanted to change the mindsets of others around them. Many of these participants were in process of actively attempting to educate their parents and other relatives about the sociopolitical climate. Equally important, many participants indicated that social media was one of the main tools they used to learn about the sociopolitical climate and the experiences of Black citizens. These findings support the idea that higher education institutions are not the only places to encounter progressive ideas. Additionally, these findings support social media as an integral tool for educating emergent adults about the sociopolitical climate and politics (Intyaswati, 2022;

Park, 2017; Basyouni, 2021). Despite the findings supporting identity development, they did not support the development of an activist identity for these participants. Perhaps there are different experiences that young adults participating in activism engage in that contribute to them developing an activist identity.

Another finding of this study and a unique contribution to the literature on activism and emotional well-being is a possible pathway for the relationship between activism and emotions. The negative emotions that participants experienced preceded their protest participation. Those emotions were then carried over throughout the process of protesting, despite experiencing positive emotions during the protest. The potential directionality for the pathway would be that emotions come before the activism experience. Considering that the study of emotions within social movements and activism participation is cutting edge, future research studies should further investigate the potential directionality of emotions and activism participation for emergent adult populations.

The findings of this study extend our understanding of race and solidarity. Viewing race as a social determinant of health, acknowledging and confronting the varying forms of racism in the US is necessary to support the physical and mental health of the population. For many of these participants, cross-cultural solidarity extended beyond showing up at BLM protests and extended to changing discriminatory ideologies and norms present in their social networks. Some Black participants described how racism affected their emotional well-being by creating feelings of fear and sadness. Fear was related to their realization that they could be victims of racialized violence and an integrated feeling of sadness and shock as they reconciled with their susceptibility to victimization. Unless we dismantle systemic forms of racism within the sociopolitical climate, some authorities will always feel empowered to lean into racist ideologies

when in positions of power, which directs impacts the health and well-being of Black citizens and allies.

While this study offers contributions to this area of research, it is not without limitations. Since this study focused on the experiences of college students, it might not represent the experiences of emergent adults who are not enrolled in colleges and universities. All of the data collected was self-reported. Thus, sensitivity must be given to social desirability. Despite these limitations, the findings represent one of the first and important attempts to examine the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being using qualitative methods and meaningfully contribute to this area's scarce and dated research.

This present study has practical implications for research and practice. It extends previous research by investigating the emotional impact of a specific type of social movement. Future research, however, should explore this proposed relationship between protesting and emotional well-being among other movements. While social movements and activism can act as a direct response to the racism and discrimination, which are social determinants of health, our understanding of social movements is rooted in sociology. Therefore, to holistically understand the implications of social movements on health, public health researchers must collaborate with sociologist in future research of this topic area and vice versa. Additionally, future research should investigate this relationship among non-collegiate emergent adults. More importantly, higher education professionals should consider encouraging students to participate in activism to increase their sense of belonging. Lastly, considering that students in this study indicated that their academic schedules impeded them from further protest participation, higher education professionals can offer cathartic experiences on their campuses that allow students direct ways to channel their emotions into problem-focused coping strategies.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	%(n)
Class Standing	
Freshman	5.56 (1)
Sophomore	16.67 (3)
Junior	33.33(6)
Senior	44.44 (8)
Gender	
Man	27.78 (5)
Woman	61.11 (11)
Non-binary	11.11 (2)
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	55.56 (10)
Bisexual	38.89 (7)
Gay	5.56 (1)
Race/Ethnicity	
Asian/Asian American	27.78 (5)
African American/Black	38.89 (7)
White	16.67 (3)
Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) or Arab Origin	5.56 (1)
Bi-Racial or Multi-racial	11.11 (2)
Hispanic	
Yes	5.56 (]1)
No	94.44 (]17)
Born outside the United States	
Yes	5.56 (]1)
No	94.44 (17)
Lifetime Number of Protest	
1-4	72.20 (13)
5 or more	27.80 (5)

Chapter 4: Study 2 - The Roles of Personal Discrimination and Civic-Moral Identity in Activism Participation among College students

a. _Abstract_

The rise in current social justice issues has provided college students with increased opportunities to participate in activism. While there has been research on the characteristics of students participating in activism, there is much to be understood about the roles of civic morals identity and discrimination experiences with student activism participation. This study assessed participation in activism activities, civic morals identity centrality, and discrimination experiences within 3,321 undergraduate students. Results demonstrated a significant positive association between civic morals identity and discrimination experiences with participating in disruptive activism activities and an increasing number of persuasive activism activities.

b. _Introduction_

While the work of activists and social movement participants has changed the very nature of the world around us, there is still much to be understood about a person's journey to activism. While the terms social movement and activism are often used interchangeably in the scientific literature and the media, these concepts are distinct but related. Social movements can most parsimoniously be defined as a collection of actions that challenge societal powers and are centered around common goals, beliefs, and identities (Watkin Liu, 2018). Activism is typically described as grassroots organizing that seeks to change formal political processes and policies (Hope, 2019). Activism and social movements seek to change the nature of the social and political environment. The collective actions among historically marginalized and oppressed populations, with the support of allies, have materialized revolutionary changes to the sociopolitical climate domestically and globally. However, divisive politics, environmental injustices in communities of color, and continued intense interactions between Black citizens and

law enforcement officials, among other things, have been a source of intensified conflict that has continued the historically contentious nature of the US social and political environments.

The continued upheaval of the US sociopolitical climate has provided pathways for many persons, including college students, to engage in activism through contemporary social movements. Not all persons who participate in social movements or activism will adopt an identity related to their participation. According to Horowitz (2017), the activist identity is a role-based identity that includes: 1) taking on a permanent social role, such as working for a social movement organization; 2) friends and family encourage or discourage the role, and 3) the strength of the identity guides the individual's choices. College students and other individuals who participate in social movement activities, such as attending social movement organization meetings, and activism tactics, such as protest, might not have the level of investment in the social movement to adopt an activist identity and therefore do not consider themselves activists. Instead, these participants might identify themselves as persons who care about or are deeply affected by the movement's issue. Additionally, these participants' identities, values, and core beliefs might broadly align with social justice and activism. Civic engagement is a blanket term used to capture various concepts such as volunteering, activism, voting, and community service (Jacoby, 2009).

The tactics most often associated with activism's effort to facilitate change within the sociopolitical environment are protests and demonstrations (Ekmam & Amnå, 2012). However, the contemporary repertoire of activism tactics extends far beyond those that seek to grasp the media's attention to include traditional political participation (e.g., contacting political representatives and voting) and using social media as a platform for education around social justice topics. Activism can take two forms - disruptive and persuasive, which represent different

risk levels to individuals participating. Disruptive tactics, such as protests or demonstrations, bring more risk to the activist or participant than persuasive tactics, such as posting on social media (Briscoe et al., 2016). The informal yet organized nature of activism tactics invites persons of varying identities and lived experiences, such as college students and young adults, to find and define their place in the pursuit of social justice.

During college, students are provided tools and opportunities to increase their understanding of issues within the global and domestic sociopolitical climate such as human rights or immigration through targeted university initiatives, coursework, or informal experiences with classmates. Considering their position and potential awareness of social issues, many college students are poised to participate in activism within larger social movements and facilitate movements on their college campuses. During the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), college students created a network among different colleges to plan and execute sit-ins at lunch counters in the towns near their colleges (Morris, 1981). Activism tactics such as sit-ins and protests have been used to express demands for voting rights for Black citizens, recognize the needs of persons living with visible and invisible disabilities, and hold public and private companies accountable for their actions toward communities that have been historically oppressed. While many of the activism tactics used today have their roots in history, activism tactics have grown to leverage technology, primarily through the use of social media sites for the widespread dissemination of messages and sharing resources. In addition to their participation in the CRM, college students have organized sit-ins around divesting in South Africa during the 1980s, Occupy Wallstreet, and used digital activism to highlight experiences with discrimination and racism on their campuses (Fisher, 2018; Gismondi & Osteen, 2017). College students' decision to express and demonstrate their concern about social justice issues through activism

tactics indicates their broader awareness and understanding of social justice issues and social movements, including those that extend beyond the collegiate environment.

i. Individual characteristics associated with activism

Although the social movement and activism literature describes characteristics of persons who identify as activists, fewer studies have focused on the characteristics of individuals who sporadically or routinely participate in activism but do not identify as an activist. The literature has shed light on some of the identity-based characteristics of persons who participate in activism, such as gender, sexual, and racial identity. Past research has demonstrated that persons who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) are twice more likely to participate in protest or rallies than heterosexuals (Swank & Fahs, 2017).

Among college students, individuals who identify as sexual minorities are three times more likely to participate in protests (Swank et al., 2020). Ballard (2020) found that female-identified students were more likely to participate in expressive politics and activism than male-identified students. While the burden of oppression among female-identified persons varies due to race, age, and socioeconomic status, female-identified persons have had to use activism tactics, disruptive and persuasive, to attain freedoms and privileges, such as voting and reproductive rights. Contemporarily, many female-identified college students have used activism to demand safer campuses and the prevention of gender-based harms. However, students who are gender-minorities, such as non-binary or transgender, have used activism to demand access to restrooms and fitness-changing areas that are free of harassment and potential assaults. According to Swank and Fahs (2014), feminist activism participation is associated with higher levels of educational attainment among undergraduate social work students. With respect to socioeconomic status (SES), students whose parents completed at least one year of college were more likely to participate in traditional politics and activism than students with parents without a

college degree (Ballard, 2020). Other studies have supported the positive association between activism participation and SES by showing that persons who have a higher income family are twice as likely to participate in protest compared to persons of lower SES (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995).

ii. Motivations for activism participation
Several scholars have discussed the motivations for activism participation. One important motivation examined in relation to activism participation is moral identity, which is described as the extent to which a person upholds morals as a central feature of their identity (Porter, 2013). A moral identity is thought to guide and motivate actions to maintain alignment between their actions and the beliefs, values, and goals that are essential to themselves (Porter, 2013). Research has shown that persons with higher moral identity are more likely to be civically engaged and participate in similar prosocial behaviors (Winterich, Aquino, Mittal, & Swartz, 2013). Among adolescents, civic-moral identity development has been associated with civic engagement (Youniss et al., 1997). For youth, having a strong sense of meaning and value contributes to their belief that they can change the world around them, a premise of civic engagement (Braun-Lewensohn, 2016). These findings comport with other research showing that higher moral identity is associated with having higher levels of meaning (Garcia et al., 2018) Moral identity has also been positively associated with volunteering and expressive politics but negatively associated with traditional political activities (Porter, 2013).

Research indicates that experiencing racial discrimination is another important possible motivation for activism participation among college students (Cronin, 2012). Past experiences with discrimination were correlated with participating in feminist collective action (Liss, 2004). For Black youth who experience racial discrimination, political activism acts as youths' way to cope with and combat the divisive sociopolitical climate fueled by the oppression and

marginalization of communities of color, including Black communities (Ginwright, 2010; Hope & Spencer, 2017). Additional research supports these findings by demonstrating that more stress from experiences of racial discrimination and more incidents of racial microaggressions are associated with increased civic engagement (Szymanski & Lewis, 2015; Hope et al., 2018; White-Johnson, 2012). A recent study found that racial discrimination was an important contributor to African American college students' activism (Ball, 2020). Dunn and Szymanski (2018) demonstrated that activism also a coping response for LGBQ persons who experienced discrimination.

The overall aim of this study was to enhance our current understanding of the possible motivations for activism among college students by describing the characteristics of college students who participated in two types of activism – namely, disruptive activism (protests) and persuasive tactics. The first set of analyses evaluated the associations between two independent variables (civic morals and discrimination experiences) and disruptive activism. It is hypothesized that there is a positive association between civic morals identity and discrimination experiences with disruptive activism. The second set of analyses examined the relationship between the same independent variables with the level of engagement in persuasive tactics. Similarly, a positive association between the independent variables and persuasive tactics is hypothesized, after statistical adjustment for the possible confounding influence of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and parental education.

c. _Methods_

   i. Data Source

Secondary data from the 2019 online administration of the Wake Forest Wellbeing Assessment (WBA) were utilized for the current study. In total, 28 public and private four-year

colleges or universities in the United States voluntarily participated, with student population sizes ranging from less than 1,000 to more than 15,000 undergraduates. At the school's discretion, a random or a census sampling procedure was used. Some schools provided small incentives to all participants, and others offered larger incentives through a raffle procedure. Of the 94,819 students invited to participate in the survey, 13,287 consented, representing a 14.01% response rate. This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Wake Forest University.

ii. Sample

Not all students received versions of the survey that contained all the scales of interest, and thus after removing cases that were missing any of the dependent and independent variables of interest, the final analytic sample consisted of 3,321 participants. When comparing the frequency distribution of the demographic characteristics in overall sample and the final analytic sample for this study, the distributions of both samples were not appreciably different.

iii. Measures

Activism. Students were asked "During the current academic year have you participated in the following activities either on or off-campus?" and provided the following list as responses: 1) Participated in a protest march, political meeting, or demonstration; 2) expressed opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing buttons or bumper stickers; 3) documented or discussed political and social issues through social media; and 4) created art, media, or digital media to express views about political or social issues. All response options were binary (yes/no). Disruptive activism was operationalized as an affirmative answer to the first item. Persuasive activism was operationalized as a count variable of the last three items, which were significantly correlated with one another at the alpha .01 level.

Civic morals. Civic morals identity centrality was assessed as students' civic attitudes and the extent to which these attitudes are central to their identity. The following four responses were provided after the stem question, "Please indicate how central the following things are to your identity" 1) Being willing to stand up for what I believe is right, 2) Caring about people from all types of backgrounds, 3) Providing for future generations, and 4) Being concerned about justice and human rights. The responses were measured using a 5-point scale with "1= Not central to my identity" to "5= Extremely central to my identity." The four civic morals items were significantly correlated with one another at the alpha .01 level (Spearman's rho = 0.41-0.59). A mean score was computed to account for missingness in individual items (3.94% to 41.3%). Higher mean score values indicated a more central civically moral identity.

Discrimination. Seven items assessed if a student had experienced discrimination due to any of their identities, such as race, gender, or disability. An example item is, "During the current academic year, I have experienced discrimination (e.g., being excluded from activities or being the target of disparaging jokes, slurs, or comments) as a result of my: Gender." The responses for this variable were measured using yes and no options. The seven items within this variable were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level (i.e., Spearman's rho = 0.14-0.34). A count variable was computed, with higher values indicating more instances of personal discrimination.

Demographic characteristics. Students were asked to self-report their gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and parent/guardian college attainment using standard items.

iv. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to document the percentage of the sample who participated in disruptive activism (participation in protest marches, demonstrations, or attending

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a political meeting) and who participated in either zero, one, two, or three persuasive activism tactics. Two logistic regression models were developed to evaluate the associations between the two independent variables (civic morals and discrimination experiences) with disruptive activism participation. For each model, the two independent variables were entered into the model first, and then as a second step, covariates (i.e., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and parent's education level) were entered into the model. Lastly, two multinomial logistic regression models were developed to understand how the independent variables were related to the extent of participation in persuasive activism tactics (i.e., participation in zero vs. one, two, or three types of activities). All covariates were entered into the models simultaneously after each independent variable.

d.Results
Description of the sample.
Table 2 shows that most of the sample self-identified as female, had parents that attended at least one year of college, were white-identified, and were heterosexual. Additionally, just over half the sample participated in disruptive tactics or persuasive tactics. Few participants had experiences with discrimination, and civic morals was not highly central to their identities.

 Of the 3,321 participants in the sample, 15.3% (n=509) participated in disruptive activism tactics. Of the persuasive tactics, 26.0% (n=864) participated in one, 19.8% (n=659) participated in two, and 8.9% (n=297) participated in three. Specifically, 39.4% (n=1,369) of the participants used social media to document or discuss their political and social issues, 35.0% (n=1,218) expressed their opinions and beliefs through clothing, buttons, or bumper stickers, and 18.1% (n=630) expressed their views through art or media (data not shown in a table).

Association between civic morals, discrimination experiences and disruptive activism.

The results of the regression models to evaluate the strength of the associations between civic morals and disruptive activism is presented in Table 3. Individuals who participated in disruptive tactics had significantly higher scores on civic morals, even after holding constant gender, sexual orientation, parental education level, and race/ethnicity. Discrimination experiences were also significantly more common among students who participated in disruptive activism, and this association was robust to the inclusion of covariates.

Association between civic morals, discrimination experiences and participation in persuasive tactics.

As seen from the descriptive results in Table 3, there was a positive association between the civic morals score and participation in persuasive tactics. Individuals participating in three persuasive tactics scored the highest on the measure of civic morals, whereas individuals who did not participate in any persuasive tactics scored the lowest (4.29 vs. 3.69). Discrimination experiences were similarly related to persuasive tactic participation, with individuals participating in three persuasive tactics reporting the highest levels of personal discrimination experiences as compared to individuals who did not participate in any persuasive tactics. Table 4 presents the results of the multinomial regression model to test the association between the two main independent variables (civic morals and discrimination experiences) and the number of persuasive tactics, with adjustment for the covariates. As can be seen, the statistical significance of the associations observed were robust to the inclusion of gender, sexual orientation, parent education level and race/ethnicity.

Gender.

Persons who identified their gender identity as something other than male or female were much more likely than male persons to participate in disruptive activism (OR = 5.25) in unadjusted analyses. From the adjusted multinomial regression model results, the association

between gender identity and participation in persuasive tactics was large. For example, the odds of participating in three persuasive tactics rather than none was 23 times greater for participants identifying their gender identity as something other than male or female compared to males, though confidence intervals were large. In the adjusted model, the odds remained statistically significant (OR = 9.09).

Sexual orientation.

Participants identified as LGBA + Other were at significantly higher odds of participating in one, two, and three persuasive tactics rather than zero compared to heterosexuals. Additionally, these participants were roughly twice the odds of participating in disruptive tactics compared to heterosexuals in both the bivariate and multivariate models.

Race and ethnicity.

Some significant differences by race/ethnicity with respect to disruptive activism participation were observed. Participating in one rather than zero persuasive tactics was less likely for Hispanic (non-White) and Asian (non-Hispanic) compared to White-identified students. Asians (non-Hispanic) also had significantly lower odds of participating in three rather than zero tactics compared to White-non-Hispanic-identified students. However, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Biracial participants were at significantly increased odds of participating in one, two, and three tactics rather than none compared to White participants in the bivariate and multivariate models. Some of these differences did not retain statistical significance in the multivariate model.

Parental education

The odds of participating in disruptive activism did not differ significantly by parent education level. Only slight differences existed with respect to the proportion of students

participating in disruptive tactics by parental education level. Similarly, there were only subtle differences in the proportions of students participating in persuasive activism between those whose parents did attend at least one year of college and those whose parents did not. The multinomial logistic regression revealed that the odds of participating in one, two, or three persuasive tactics rather than zero were not significantly different by parent education level.

e. Discussion

In this study of a large diverse sample of college students, civic moral identity centrality and personal discrimination experiences were positively associated with disruptive and persuasive activism tactics. The study findings support previous research that indicated that persons who participate in moral actions, such as volunteering, tend to develop a moral identity. The idea of morality is often associated with justice and fairness, which are both components related to social change. The findings of this study indicate that the more central morality is the identity of college students there is an increased likelihood that they will participate in actions that support social change, such as protest and expressing one's opinions on social media, digital media or art, or wearing clothing to express their opinions.

The findings of this study extend our current understanding of moral identity centrality, which has been assessed for its association with political identity development (Ballard, 2021) but not with activism participation generally or related to specific activism tactics. Helping students to cultivate moral identities might be vital to see the next generation prioritize social actions that benefit all persons and advance the agendas of social movements that seek to improve the sociopolitical climate in the US and abroad. The findings of this study indicate that not all young adults have high levels of morality as central components to their identities. It is

one thing to have morals or practice morality, but it is quite different from saying that morality is central to your sense of self and guides your actions.

This study demonstrated that students who experienced increased personal discrimination are at greater odds of participating in disruptive and persuasive activism tactics. This study further extends this area by demonstrating that students who experience discrimination are more likely to participate in persuasive forms of activism than disruptive yet cathartic experiences such as protests. Uniquely, this study showed that students experiencing increased discrimination are at increased odds of participating in increasing amounts of activism. The nature of discrimination is rooted in ideologies that seek to oppress populations that have been historically marginalized. A direct outcome of discrimination is that the person on the receiving end is made to feel disempowered. Studies have also shown that activism participation can increase feelings of empowerment and social support (Ballard et al., 2016; Ansala et al., 2016). These findings also support previous literature that examined the relationship between activism and coping. Ballard et al. (2016) demonstrated that adolescents who experience discrimination participate in activism to cope with their discrimination experience. As a social determinant of health, the effects of a discrimination experience can reverberate through the life of the person who experienced it and cause direct and indirect consequences. When a person is seeking to cope with their discrimination experience, they attempt to resolve the feelings associated with the experience, either through problem or emotion-focused coping, when using Lazarus and Folkman's understanding of coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Moreover, the case is that persons seek to cope with the experience they had and are also seeking to regain what was lost because of the discrimination experience, empowerment.

This data demonstrated the sexuality and gender gap in activism, established in previous literature related to protest participation, is also relevant for other forms of activism. The sexuality gap in activism dictates that sexual minorities are more likely to participate in protests compared to heterosexual populations (Swank & Fahs, 2019). Explanations for the sexuality gap have indicated that the discrimination that sexual minorities experience from heterosexualism is crucial to their push to participate in activism. One could speculate that the long history between activism and the LGB community catalyzes some of the political nature of the community. However, qualitative research has stated that some of the events associated with the LGBTQIA+ community, such as Pride, are primarily remembered for their protest origins from older community members (Swank and Fahs, 2017).

However, the less central the LGBQ identity is to an individual's sense of self, the less likely they are to participate in activism (Unipan, 2021). These could be related to the nature of holding a gender or sexual minority identity. For instance, in many ways, the US sociopolitical climate has viewed members of the LGBTQIA+ community through stereotypical lenses and attempted to create "social distance" heterosexuals and sexual minorities, especially within familial units (Swank, 2020). As a result, many life freedoms, such as child adoption and marriage, that heterosexuals are privileged to have been a constant political battle for LGBTQIA+ persons. The LGBQ community members' awareness of their oppression and that of others acts as a motivator to activism for some LGBQ activists (Jones, 2002; Swank & Fahs, 2017). Additionally, some of the hallmark celebrations of the LGBTQIA+ community, such as Pride, are the result of disruptive activism tactics, such as The Black Cat protests and the Stonewall riots (Unipan, 2021). As LGBTQIA+ identified persons find more community within

sexuality and gender identities, they are more likely to become politicized and participate in activism (Swank & Fahs, 2017).

Interestingly, there was no significant association between race and activism, given the history of Black, Asian, and Latino populations using disruptive activism as a means of social change, such as through the Civil Rights Movement and the Farmer Workers Movement. One could infer that the experiences of young minority populations are different from previous generations and therefore do not have the same experiences that would provoke activism participation. Perhaps the bubble of higher education and higher SES has shifted these populations of racial minorities away from activism forms and more White-identified populations toward activism, thereby creating little difference across race and ethnicity with contemporary activism participation. Moreover, there might be differences in racial and ethnic activism participation among college students when examining disruptive activism tactic participation within specific social movements and not disruptive activism tactics broadly, as this study did.

This data demonstrated that students whose parents did not finish at least one year of college were less likely to participate in activism. The literature previously shows this finding regarding family SES and adolescent and young adult voting. These findings extend this understanding to include other forms of activism, such as persuasive and disruptive tactics. The inherent issue with this finding is the idea that only some types of young adults, or college students, are at increased likelihood of engaging in activism, which means that there are potentially missing voices and experiences being considered. The needs and experiences of students from high and low SES tend to differ for the most part, despite students from both groups attending the same school. Perhaps students from low SES groups are not only unaware

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of the power of activism, but studies also show that these students are less likely to receive a quality education in civics during K-12 (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). These students might be managing other priorities that preclude them from engaging. With higher SES, there tend to be connections to social networks. Connection to networks has been seen as a possible engine to progress for many social movements, according to social movement theory, and provides adolescents and young adults with the ability to directly interact with persons who have a more profound understanding and experience with civic engagement (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Families with lower SES might also lack the network that would broadly influence their students' understanding and participation in activism or civic engagement.

Taken together, the data from this study indicate that the odds of participating in multiple types of persuasive activism increases as the number of tactics increases. These findings show that persons with central moral identities are not just participating in one kind of activism but are willing to participate in multiple types of activism that can be done without the media attention of protests. Everyday activism or unobtrusive activism is necessary to keep movements alive and progressing toward change. Students' willingness to engage in activism tactics necessary to sustain social change indicates that their moral identity might catalyze activism participation that might go unnoticed. Some persons will only show up to protests because of their disruptive nature but will not share justice-related content or engage in conversation, which are intra- and interpersonal actions that support changing social norms and the social environment.

f. Limitations

While this study had several strengths, there were some weaknesses. The data are cross-sectional, so there is no way to determine if the associations continue beyond the data collection time point. The questions related to discrimination and activism participation are time-bound to the academic year, which could leave out the experiences that students might face outside the

academic calendar. The data were explicitly captured among students who attended four-year universities and colleges; therefore, it does not capture the experiences of young adults who are not enrolled in college. Due to small numbers of students in certain racial and sexual minorities, some of these categories were collapsed to support the analysis. Collapsing these categories could remove some of the specific differences that these groups face relative to students from majority groups. Similar to other studies, this study cannot elucidate whether or not the moral actions of activism participation came before the moral identity development or vice versa. Lastly, disruptive tactics were measured using an item that classified protest, demonstrations, and political meetings together. However, these items connotate different levels of risks. Therefore, future researchers should not include political meetings in a combined disruptive measure.

g. *Implications for practice*

The quality and availability of civic education in K-12 schools has seen minimal growth over the past few years (Winthrop, 2020). As a result, colleges and universities are the next places students can receive this type of education and exposure for adolescents who elect to attend. Considering the findings of this study, colleges can begin to understand more about students who are engaging in activism, including the prevalence of participation on campus, primarily since not every student involved in activism is a part of a school-based activism organization or participates in activism opportunities offered on their campus. Additionally, these findings illuminate potential areas of support that students participating in activism might need presently or in the future.

Higher education, specifically student affairs, gives particular investment toward assisting students in developing their identities. Colleges would benefit from helping students cultivate and nurture moral identities through activism and civic engagement. Colleges can

support removing the exclusivity of activism and civic engagement from only certain types of students at certain times by exposing all students to curricular and co-curricular opportunities to participate in civic engagement. Additionally, colleges and universities can offer a range of opportunities for students to participate in what is characterized as everyday or unobtrusive activism. Unobtrusive activism tactics are necessary components to supporting changes in the social environment by creating micro-changes in social norms. Changing social norms can support meaningful reductions to the injustices, such as gender-based harms, that proliferate many campuses and communities across the country.

Considering these findings, there is an opportunity for colleges to help students develop civic morals as a component of their identities while offering different opportunities to support students with centralizing civic morals within their identities. One method for supporting civic morals identity development could be using intercultural dialogue-based programming and opportunities, which allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of persons from differing identities (Kaplowitz, Lee & Seyka,2018). Intercultural dialogue can lay the foundation for students to understand how they can contribute to changing damaging social norms and develop an understanding of differing communities. By developing a civic moral identity, colleges can support students in being active citizens and having social responsibility, which poises future leaders to see things like activism and civic engagement as complementary tools to changing the sociopolitical climate. Unfortunately, many persons see activism as the antithesis to traditional political engagement instead of as the outcry of citizens that should be heard and meaningfully responded to. Activism forces persons to contend with the fact that despite social and political advances, all men are still not created equal in the US.

For students experiencing discrimination or in response to discrimination incidences on campuses, college officials can continue to provide emotion-focused coping opportunities such as processing groups. Still, they can also provide students with ways to engage in activism-based problem-focused coping. These include speaking to representatives, sharing resources, and empowering students to engage in social change-based conversations either in-person or on their social media platforms. Research has demonstrated that persons have more positive outcomes toward a stressor when engaging in problem-focused coping compared to emotion-focused. While participation in activism can be an outlet for persons who have experienced discrimination, it is crucial for colleges and universities to develop social norms, possibly supported through helping their campus communities develop social responsibility and civic-moral identities, that denounce 'isms such as racism, heterosexism, sexism, and classism. Dismantling these types of divisive social norms must be facilitated through intentional commitments and implementation of meaningful diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

h. *Future research*

Future research should investigate moral identity centrality among non-collegiate young adult populations. Investigating this relationship in non-collegiate students allows for research to differentiate if these phenomena are unique to students or applicable to emergent adults. Additionally, research should also consider the relationship between activism and gender and sexuality with larger populations to understand the potential differences in activism experiences among sexual and gender minorities. Studying this relationship through qualitative Additionally, future research should look at moral identity centrality and activism participation longitudinally to determine if the relationship persists over time and beyond the collegiate environment where persons might have to seek out knowledge and opportunities for activism on their own. Future research should consider using more robust measures of discrimination that are not time-bound

and location-specific. Lastly, future research would benefit from qualitatively investigating the

relationship between experiencing discrimination and activism participation.

Table 2. Sample characteristics (n=3,321)

	% (n)
Gender identity	
Female	72.8 (2418)
Male	25.1 (834)
Other	2.1 (69)
One or more parents/guardians completed at least one year of college	
No/Don't know	20.2 (670)
Yes	79.8 (2651)
Race and Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	12.9 (427)
American Indian or Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander/Two or more races	4.9 (164)
Asian	8.6 (285)
Black or African American	8.5 (282)
White	65.1 (2163)
Sexual Orientation	
LGBA+ or Other	27.1 (900)
Heterosexual	72.9 (2421)
Use of Disruptive Tactic	
No	84.7 (2812)
Yes	15.3 (509)
Number of Persuasive Tactics	
0	45.2 (1501)
1	26.0 (864)
2	19.8 (659)
3	8.9 (297)
	$\bar{x}$ (sd)
Civic Moral Identity Centrality	3.89 (0.98)
Discrimination Count	0.72 (1.22)

Table 3. Unadjusted and adjusted logistic regression models testing the association between civic morals identity and discrimination with disruptive activism participation (n=3,321)

	Disruptive Activism Participation				Unadjusted				Adjusted			
	Yes (n=509)		No (n=2812)									
	x̄	sd	x̄	sd	β	OR	95% CI	p	β	OR	95% CI	p
Civic Morals Identity Centrality Score	4.23	0.83	3.83	0.99	0.51	1.66	[1.48-1.87]	<.001	0.47	1.59	[1.42-1.79]	<.001
Discrimination Experiences	1.25	1.57	0.62	1.12	0.34	1.40	[1.31-1.49]	<.001	0.31	1.37	[1.28-1.46]	<.001
	n	%	n	%								
Covariates												
Gender												
Male	96	11.5	738	88.5	Reference				Reference			
Female	385	15.9	2033	84.1	0.38	1.46	[1.15-1.85]	0.002	0.31	1.36	[1.07-1.73]	0.013
Other	28	40.6	41	59.4	1.66	5.25	[3.10-8.88]	<.001	1.14	3.11	[1.80-5.37]	<.001
Sexual Orientation												
Heterosexual	296	12.2	2125	87.8	Reference				Reference			
LGBA + Other	213	23.7	687	76.3	0.80	2.23	[1.83-2.71]	<.001	0.69	1.99	[1.62-2.44]	<.001
Parental Education Level												
1 + years college	398	15.0	2253	85.0	Reference				Reference			
No College	111	16.6	559	83.4	0.12	1.12	[0.89-1.42]	0.319	0.06	1.06	[0.83-1.35]	0.639
Race and Ethnicity												
White (non-Hispanic)	325	15.0	1838	85.0	Reference				Reference			
Hispanic	75	17.6	352	82.4	0.19	1.21	[0.92-1.59]	0.185	0.15	1.16	[0.87-1.55]	0.315
AI,NH, Biracial*	35	21.3	129	78.7	0.43	1.53	[1.04-2.27]	0.032	0.30	1.35	[0.90-2.02]	0.142
Asian (non-Hispanic)	34	11.9	251	88.1	-0.27	0.77	[0.53-1.12]	0.166	-0.24	0.79	[0.54-1.16]	0.223
Black	40	14.2	242	85.8	-0.07	0.94	[0.66-1.33]	0.709	-0.05	0.95	[0.66-1.36]	0.787

*American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial

Table 4. Persuasive Tactics Descriptive Results

	Persuasive Tactics							
	0 (n=1501)		1 (n=864)		2 (n=659)		3 (n=297)	
	$\bar{x}$	(sd)	$\bar{x}$	(sd)	$\bar{x}$	(sd)	$\bar{x}$	(sd)
Main Independent Variables								
Civic Morals Identity Centrality Score	3.69	1.04	3.90	0.93	4.12	0.90	4.29	0.74
Discrimination Experiences	0.46	0.97	0.74	1.22	1.00	1.32	1.34	1.66
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Covariates								
Gender								
Female	1026	42.4	639	26.4	533	22.0	220	9.1
Male	462	55.4	216	25.9	110	13.2	46	5.5
Other	13	18.8	9	13.0	16	23.3	31	44.9
Sexual Orientation								
LGBA + Other	270	30.0	227	25.2	253	28.1	150	16.7
Heterosexual	1231	50.8	637	26.3	406	16.8	147	6.1
Parental Education Level								
1+ years college	1179	44.5	704	26.6	534	20.1	234	8.8
No college	322	48.1	160	23.9	125	18.7	63	9.4
Race and Ethnicity								
White (non-Hispanic)	964	44.6	579	26.8	419	19.4	201	9.3
Hispanic	204	47.8	91	21.3	88	20.6	44	10.3
AI,NH, Biracial[*]	53	32.3	48	29.3	42	25.6	21	12.8
Asian (non-Hispanic)	156	54.7	68	23.9	49	17.2	12	4.2
Black	124	44.0	78	27.7	61	21.6	19	6.7

*American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial

Table 5. Unadjusted and adjusted multinomial logistic regression to test the association between the civic morals identity centrality and discrimination count and persuasive activism tactic participation (n=3,321)

	1 vs. 0						2 vs. 0						3 vs. 0					
	OR	CI	P	AOR	CI	p	OR	CI	P	AOR	CI	p	OR	CI	P	AOR	CI	p
	Unadjusted Models			Adjusted Model			Unadjusted Models			Adjusted Model			Unadjusted Models			Adjusted Model		
Civic Morals Identity Centrality Score	1.24	[1.13-1.35]	<.001	1.23	[1.13-1.35]	<.001	1.61	[1.45-1.78]	<.001	1.56	[1.39-1.73]	<.001	2.08	[1.78-2.45]	<.001	1.98	[1.85-2.35]	<.001
Discrimination Experiences	1.30	[1.20-1.41]	<.001	1.28	[1.18-1.39]	<.001	1.51	[1.39-1.64]	<.001	1.48	[1.36-1.61]	<.001	1.74	[1.58-1.91]	<.001	1.67	[1.51-1.83]	<.001
Covariates																		
Gender																		
Male	Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference		
Female	1.33	[1.10-1.61]	0.003	1.31	[1.08-1.58]	0.006	2.18	[1.73-2.75]	<.001	2.06	[1.63-2.61]	<.001	2.15	[1.54-3.01]	<.001	1.97	[1.39-2.77]	<.001
Other	1.48	[0.62-3.52]	0.374	1.02	[0.42-2.45]	0.974	5.17	[2.42-11.06]	<.001	2.47	[1.13-5.38]	0.023	23.95	[11.72-48.96]	<.001	9.09	[4.33-19.09]	<.001
Sexual Orientation																		
Heterosexual	Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference		
LGBA + Other	1.63	[1.33-1.99]	<.001	1.61	[1.31-1.98]	<.001	2.84	[2.32-3.49]	<.001	2.67	[2.17-3.30]	<.001	4.65	[3.58-6.00]	<.001	3.71	[2.81-4.89]	<.001
Parental Education Level																		
1 + years college	Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference		
No college	0.83	[0.67-1.03]	0.088	0.84	[0.67-1.04]	0.106	0.86	[0.68-1.08]	0.190	0.79	[0.62-1.00]	0.059	0.99	[0.73-1.34]	0.927	0.91	[0.66-1.26]	0.912
Race and Ethnicity																		
White (non-Hispanic)	Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference			Reference		
Hispanic	0.74	[0.57-0.97]	0.029	0.76	[0.58-1.00]	0.051	0.99	[0.75-1.31]	0.957	1.00	[0.75-1.34]	0.975	1.03	[0.72-1.48]	0.854	1.01	[0.69-1.48]	0.969
AI,NH, Biracial[*]	1.51	[1.01-2.26]	0.046	1.45	[0.97-2.19]	0.072	1.82	[1.19-2.78]	0.005	1.62	[1.05-2.49]	0.030	1.90	[1.12-3.22]	0.017	1.58	[0.91-2.74]	0.105
Asian (non-Hispanic)	0.73	[0.54-0.98]	0.038	0.74	[0.54-0.99]	0.047	0.72	[0.51-1.02]	0.062	0.74	[0.52-1.05]	0.091	0.37	[0.20-0.68]	0.001	0.38	[0.20-0.71]	0.002
Black	1.05	[0.78-1.42]	0.764	1.07	[0.79-1.45]	0.678	1.13	[0.8-1.57]	0.458	1.16	[0.83-1.62]	0.389	0.74	[0.44-1.22]	0.233	0.78	[0.47-1.31]	0.352

[*]American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial

Chapter 5: Study 3 – Understanding the Emotional Well-being of College Students Participating in Activism

a. <u>Abstract</u>

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to: 1) examine associations between two types of activism (i.e., disruptive and persuasive) and four dimensions of emotional well-being (i.e., depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, optimism and sense of belonging); and, 2) evaluate the extent to which coping moderates the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. **Participants:** The study sample included 10,165 undergraduate students. **Methods:** A secondary data analysis of the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment was conducted. Regression modeling was used to examine relationships between activism activities and emotional well-being, with statistical adjustment for demographic characteristics. A moderation analysis was conducted to investigate the role of coping. **Results:** About two in five students participated in some form of activism. Activism participation was significantly associated with increased symptom scores on depression, anxiety, and was positively associated with sense of belonging, and negatively associated with optimism. No evidence of moderation by coping was observed. **Conclusions:** Participating in activism is associated with student emotional well-being in both positive and negative ways, suggesting the need for more research and dialogues about student activism on college campus.

Introduction

Concerns about college students' mental health have grown over the past ten years and have become a significant public health problem (Liu et al., 2019). In 2019, 45.1% and 65.7% of college students experienced depressive symptoms that impaired their ability to function and overwhelming anxiety-related symptoms, respectively, during the past 12 months (ACHA, 2019). Mental health issues have only been exacerbated as the United States (US) reckons with

the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Acute negative mental health symptoms can have a deleterious effect on a student's general health and well-being. If prolonged or left untreated, depression and anxiety-related symptoms can lead to lower academic performance, poorer quality of life, increased risk of dropping out of college, lack of physical activity, risky sexual behavior, and alcohol and drug use (Ebert et al., 2019).

Many factors influence college students' mental health and well-being, including homesickness, adjusting to the collegiate environment, and making new friends. These factors, however, have always been emblematic of college student life. While the reasons for the decline in mental health indicators have been debated, scholars have yet to adequately consider external influences such as the sociopolitical climate contributing to student mental health decline. If one applies a social determinants of health perspective, the potential impact of the social and political environment could affect students' mental health. In recent years, the US has had to confront social justice issues such as excessive force used by law enforcement officials toward Black citizens, the proliferation of gender-based harms, and immigration policies used as weapons against immigrant populations. Many of the social justice issues that grab media attention are associated with larger social movements, such as the movement for Reproductive rights, #MeToo, The #DREAMers movement, and Black Lives Matter. The context behind each of these movements affects millions of college students in the US, potentially compounding the effects of simply adjusting to college and navigating new social and academic pressures. Furthermore, many college students across the country have organized campus-based social movements to demand changes on their campuses related to many social justice issues, including those previously mentioned. College campuses have had a long history of being an active setting

for social movement participation and activism, with college students using their social position to demand justice.

Activism encompasses two primary tactics—disruptive and persuasive. Disruptive activism tactics draw attention to the participant, might force the authority to address the issue at hand, and might be associated with increased physical risks (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). Persuasive or influence tactics convince persons of the merit of a movement's claims, which can include the use of social media or art and performance (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). Our understanding and analysis of student activism in the US has roots in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), which birthed some of the first national and local student activist organizations, such as the first Black Student Union (Fisher, 2018). Beyond the CRM, student activism continued to grow during the 1970s and 1980s (Fisher, 2018). In 2014 a resurgence of student activism started as students began disclosing instances of discrimination on their campuses and demanded swift and meaningful responses to their grievances by their institutions, using protests, demonstrations, and social media as a vehicle for activism (Fisher, 2018). A Pew Research Center study reported that the majority of participants who protested during the 2020 protests in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery were between the ages of 18 and 29, which aligns with the age of emergent adults (Barroso & Minkin, 2020; Arnett, 2010).

While activism can be a tool to impact the sociopolitical climate positively, it is not without risks. Research has demonstrated that the relationship between activism and well-being is nuanced and complex. Using the 2019 Wake Forest Well-being Assessment, Ballard and colleagues (2020) found that activism, operationalized using protest participation, boycotting, and signing a petition, was positively associated with loneliness and negatively associated with self-esteem among college students. They concluded that activism outcomes are not immediate,

unlike voting and volunteering, and might cause feelings of frustration with the pace of social change (Ballard et al., 2020). Importantly, most of our current understanding of the mental health correlates of activism has been derived from studies of persons who identify as an activist (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011; Gorski & Chen, 2015; Linder et al., 2019). In a qualitative study among 42 college students who self-identified as activists, 60% indicated that activism had negatively impacted their mental health (Conner, 2021). These students also indicated that social capital, a sense of purpose, effecting change, self-care, and community care were protective factors that helped them sustain their mental and emotional health while participating in activism. In 1988, McAdam (1988) found that White college students who participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project to register voters in 1964 experienced depression and isolation immediately after their participation and moving into their adulthood in the 1970s. This study demonstrates that the negative effects of activism have the potential to be sustained beyond the point of participation. Other scholars have noted that many activists are willing to compromise their physical and emotional well-being for the movements they are supporting (Barry & Dordević, 2007; Weber & Messias, 2012). This type of emotional martyrdom might have a greater negative emotional effect on college student activists than students who are not activists. Taken together, there are many unanswered questions related to the complex relationship between activism and emotional well-being, especially among individuals who do not identify themselves specifically as an activist.

Despite the potential for risks, research has identified several intangible and emotional benefits associated with activism, including increases in self-esteem, empowerment, and self-confidence (Ginwright & James, 2002; Itzhaky & York, 2003). It has been suggested that being involved in a cause gives participants a sense of purpose and a sense of empowerment through

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the development of social connections (Ballard et al., 2016). Activism was associated with increased well-being among Latinx college students who were currently experiencing microaggressions on their campus but decreased well-being among Black students (Hope et al., 2018). Other research has found activism to be associated with lower levels of psychological distress and suicidal ideation among racially diverse LGBTQ/gender expansive youth (Fine et al., 2018). Altogether, these findings support the extensive work of social movement scholars such as Jasper (2011), who studied the relationship of emotions and social movements through a sociological lens. Jasper's work delineates that emotions are necessary for oppressed groups to take advantage of political opportunities that allow a social movement to emerge (Jasper, 2011). Emotions such as a sense of belonging are tied to collective identity, a contributing factor to social movements, which can motivate persons to continue their participation in a movement. Research shows a sense of belonging is one of the key benefits of participating in activism (Harre, 2007). Through activism, students' connections can improve their social integration into the university, reduce loneliness, and improve social support to cope with collegiate life stressors (Ansala et al., 2016). Students who have a higher sense of belonging to their schools are more likely to participate in civic engagement (Flanagan et al., 2007). While there are lone demonstrators or individuals going on hunger strikes in the name of justice, activism often takes place with others. Most persons who participate in activism and social movement organizations have established networks, which act as a way for other persons to get involved or be recruited to social movement organizations.

Social movement activism participation could serve as a coping strategy for young people who have experiences with racial and ethnic discrimination by resolving feelings associated with the *status quo* of the current society or concerns about a specific issue (Ballard et al., 2016). No

research has been conducted to examine activism as a coping strategy among college students. Finally, the relationship between optimism and activism has yielded mixed findings (Sofi, 2021). Using the Life Orientation Test and in-depth interviews, previous studies have found that college students who participate in activism have higher levels of optimism than those who are not involved (Pancer et al., 2007; Cattell et al., 2021). In the study by Pancer et al. (2007) among university students over two years, optimism levels remained higher among students participating in activism, operationalized as participating in political activities, across both time points (Pancer et al., 2007). Pahl et al. (2005), measuring comparative optimism among 90 British university students, found comparative optimism was not associated with environmental pro-social behaviors (Pahl et al., 2005).

The overall purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between two forms of activism participation (i.e., disruptive and persuasive) and four separate dimensions of emotional well-being (anxiety, depression, optimism, and belonging) among a large sample of college students. The strength of the association between activism participation and well-being will be evaluated after holding constant gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and parental education. The analyses will also examine whether or not coping moderates the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. Based on the current literature, it is hypothesized that there will be a positive association between activism participation and each element of well-being. Additionally, it is hypothesized that coping will moderate the relationship between activism and emotional well-being.

b. _Materials and Methods_

   i.   Data Source
       This study was a secondary data analysis of the 2019 Wake Forest Wellbeing Assessment (WBA). Investigators at Wake Forest University administer the WBA, an annual online survey

that measured 18 dimensions of well-being (Wake Forest Wellbeing Collective, nd), including civic engagement and mental health. During the Spring 2019 administration of the WBA, 28 public and private four-year colleges or universities in the US voluntarily participated. The size of the undergraduate student populations at these institutions ranged from less than 1,000 to more than 15,000. Each school chose to administer the WBA to either a random sample or a census of their undergraduate students. Offering incentives for participation was optional, and some schools provided small incentives to everyone who participated, and others offered larger incentives through a raffle. This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Wake Forest University.

ii. Sample

The initial sample of the 2019 WBA included 11,923 students. After eliminating cases with missing data on any of the dependent variables, the final analytic sample was comprised of 10,165 students.

ii. Measures

Activism. Students were asked, "During the current academic year have you participated in the following activities either on or off-campus?" and were provided the following list as responses: 1) participated in a protest march, political meeting, or demonstration; 2) expressed opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing buttons or bumper stickers; 3) documented or discussed political and social issues through social media; and 4) created art, media, or digital media to express views about political or social issues. All response options were binary (yes/no). Disruptive activism was operationalized as an affirmative answer to the first item. Persuasive activism was operationalized as a count variable of the last three items. The items were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level.

Negative emotional well-being. Students were asked: "Over the past two weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following?" and provided a list of responses that corresponded to the following two dimensions of emotional well-being.

a) Anxiety symptoms. Anxiety was assessed using five items from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) (Spitzer et al., 2006), including "Not able to stop or control worrying." Responses were provided on a 5-point scale, ranging from "1=Not at all" to "5 = Nearly every day." The responses were summed into a score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety-related symptoms—the scores for this variable range from 5 to 25.

b) Depressive Symptoms. Depression was assessed using seven items, including "Feeling little interest in your usual activities." The responses were provided using a 5-point scale, ranging from "1=Not at all" to "5 = Nearly every day." Four items were from the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) (Kroenke et al., 2001) and three additional items were added to assess the current level of depression symptoms. Responses were summed to create a score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of depressive symptoms—the scores for this variable range from 7 to 35.

Positive emotional well-being. Students were asked: "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements" and gave responses that corresponded with the following two dimensions of emotional well-being.

a) Optimism. Optimism was assessed using a five-item measure. Respondents were instructed to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented. An example item was: "When things are uncertain in life, I expect the best." The responses were measured using a 6-point scale, ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." A

mean score was developed for these items to account for missing data—the scores for this variable range from 1 to 6.

b) **Sense of belonging**. Students' current sense of belonging to the campus they attend was measured using ten items. An example item is: "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I feel accepted at my school." Responses were measured using a 6-point scale ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." A mean score was developed for these items to account for missing data. The scores for this measure range from 1 to 6.

Coping. Students were asked to rate their level of agreement on a six-point scale for each of ten statements, including "I have a hard time making it through stressful events." Response options for these items were measured using a 6-point scale ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." After conducting correlational analyses and a factor analysis, one item – namely "Drink alcohol to help myself feel better" was not correlated with the other items and therefore was removed. A mean score was computed for this measure, and scoresranged from 1 to 6. For the moderation analysis, a dichotomous variable was constructed for the coping measure using a median split procedure. A dichotomous variable was developed for ease of interpretation. Positive coping was indicated by scores greater than or equal to 4.00 and negative coping was defined as mean scores less than 4.00.

Demographic characteristics. Students were asked to self-report their gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and parent/guardian college attainment using standard items.

iii. Statistical Analysis

Missing Data. Across the independent variables and the covariates, the amount of missing data ranged from <1% to 33.9%. Persuasive activism, parental education level, race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation had <1% missing data. However, disruptive tactics had

33.9% missing data in part due to planned missing. Multiple imputation (Sterne et al., 2009) was used to account for missing data within the covariates and the independent variables because the missing data were determined to be missing at random (MAR). Five datasets were imputed, which aligns to standard convention (Little & Rubin, 2019).

Descriptive Analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to document the percentage of the sample who participated in disruptive activism (participation in protest marches, demonstrations, or attending a political meeting) and who participated in either zero, one, two, or three persuasive activism tactics. Additionally, descriptive statistics were used to determine the sample's mean score on each of the four separate dimensions of emotional well-being (i.e., depression, anxiety, belonging, optimism) and the coping measure.

Regression Analyses. Linear regression models were developed to evaluate the associations between the two independent variables (disruptive and persuasive activism) and depression, anxiety, optimism, and sense of belonging. Each bivariate model contained only the activism variable and the dependent variable. Next, multivariable models were developed that entered all of the covariates (i.e., race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and parent's education level) simultaneously into the models containing each activism variable to adjust for the potentially confounding influences of demographic and individual characteristics on emotional wellbeing.

Moderation Analysis. A moderation analysis was conducted by regressing each emotional well-being measure on each of the two types of activism, binary coping measure, and the interaction between both each type of activism and coping. This resulted in eight models with three variables each. The interaction term between coping and each type of activism is a signifier that the relationship between the predictor and outcome variable is dependent upon the level of

coping (Aiken & West, 1991). The analysis tested for moderation by observing any statistical

significance in the interaction terms.

SPSS v27.0.1.0 (SPSS Inc, Chicago, Illinois) was used for all analyses.

c. Results
i. Sample characteristics
The majority of the sample identified as female (72.8%), had parents or guardians who

had attended at least one year of college (80.1%), were White-identified (63.3%) and were

heterosexual (73.4%).

ii. Participation in Disruptive and Persuasive Tactics
Of the 10,165 students included in the sample, 10.2% (n=1,034) participated in disruptive

tactics, which included participating in a protest, demonstration, or political meeting. For

persuasive tactic participation, 23.8% (n=2,418) of the sample participated in one tactic, 15.0%

(n=1,529) participated in two tactics, and 2.9% (n=296) participated in three tactics. Regarding

involvement in specific types of persuasive tactics, 23.6% (n=2,396) of students used social

media to document or discuss their political and social issues, 26.8% (n=2,721) expressed their

opinions and beliefs through clothing, buttons, or bumper stickers, and 12.3% (n=1,247)

expressed their views through art or media.

iii. Associations between activism and emotional well-being
The results of the regression models to understand the relationship between activism and

negative (depression and anxiety) and positive (belonging and optimism) dimensions of

emotional wellbeing are shown in Table 2a and 2b, respectively. Both disruptive activism and

persuasive activism were significantly associated with higher depression and with higher anxiety

symptom scores, even after adjustment for the influence of gender, sexual orientation, race and

ethnicity, and parental education level. Notably, the number of persuasive activism tactics

showed a positive significant step-wise relationship with both depression and anxiety symptoms.

There was an inverse relationship between disruptive activism and optimism scores, with individuals participating in disruptive activism having a significantly lower mean optimism score than individuals who did not report participating in disruptive activism. Similarly, the lowest optimism scores were observed for the group that participated in two persuasive tactics. The significance of the relationship between persuasive tactics and optimism was attenuated with the inclusion of the covariates, with only the group participating in three persuasive tactics having significantly lower scores than the group who did not participate in any persuasive tactics.

The only notable significant findings observed in the bivariate models evaluating the association between activism and the measure of belonging involved the two persuasive activism tactics. In the multivariable model, a significant association between participating in one or two activism tactics and belonging, indicating evidence of subgroup variation.

Although the analyses were primarily focused on the relationship between activism and different dimensions of well-being, many of the covariates had significant associations with the dependent variables.

iv. **Gender**

Participants who identified as other for gender reported the highest depression and anxiety symptoms scores among all gender identities represented. As a result, when examining the association between gender and depression and anxiety symptom scores, participants who identified as others had significantly higher depression and anxiety-related symptoms levels in the bivariate and multivariate models. Additionally, these participants had significantly lower optimism levels than males in both models. However, they only had significantly lower levels of belonging in the bivariate model. Female-identified participants had the highest mean sense of belonging score across all gender identities, substantiating the significant, positive associations seen in both models. They also had significantly higher anxiety-related symptoms than males in

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both models. Additionally, female participants had significantly higher optimism levels than male participants in the multivariate model.

v. **Sexual orientation**

Compared to heterosexual students, participants identified as LGBA + Other had the highest depression and anxiety symptom scores. These participants had significantly higher depression and anxiety symptoms in the bivariate and multivariate models. Conversely, LGBA +Other students had significantly lower optimism and sense of belonging compared to heterosexuals in the bivariate and multivariate models.

vi. **Race and ethnicity**

Students who identified as White had the lowest depression and anxiety symptoms scores among all the racial and ethnic identities. In the bivariate and multivariate models, students in all other racial and ethnic identities, except for Black students, had significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to White identified participants. The mean depressive symptom scores between Black and White students have a slight difference which would help to explain the insignificant associations when comparing the groups in both models. Hispanic and American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial students had significantly higher anxiety-related symptoms than White students in the bivariate model. However, in the multivariate model, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial, and Black students had significantly higher anxiety-related symptoms than White students. Across all racial and ethnic identities, participants had significantly lower sense of belonging than White students in both models. Hispanic, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial, and Asian (non-Hispanic) participants had significantly lower optimism levels than White participants in both models. However, Black students had significantly higher optimism levels than White students in both models.

vii. **Parental education**

For students whose parents or guardians attended at least one year of college, these participants had significantly lower levels of depression and anxiety-related symptoms in both models compared to students whose parents did not attend college. However, there was no significant difference in optimism scores between the two groups. Additionally, students whose parents attended at least one year of college had significantly higher sense of belonging in both models than students whose parents did not attend college.

    viii. **Moderation**

  The moderation analysis revealed that the associations between disruptive activism and the dependent variables were not moderated by coping. Similarly, coping did not moderate any of the associations between the persuasive activism tactics and dependent emotional well-being variables.

d. Discussion

This study found that both forms of activism participation were associated with higher symptom scores on depression and anxiety. Moreover, a significant positive association was observed between disruptive activism and sense of belonging. However, the association between disruptive activism and optimism was negative. The association between persuasive tactics and optimism was negative, with sense of belonging being positively related to one and two persuasive tactics, but not related to three persuasive tactics.

The positive associations between activism and depression and anxiety symptoms found in this study are consistent with previous literature suggesting that activism participation could have a negative impact on emotional well-being (Ballard et al., 2020; McAdam, 1988). This study makes a novel contribution in that it examined the association between persuasive tactic involvement and well-being. In this sample, 41.7% of individuals engaged in one, two, or three types of persuasive tactics. Anxiety and depression symptoms were higher among students who

participated in more persuasive activism tactics than students who did not or who had lower levels of participation. The cross-sectional nature of the study precludes our ability to discern the temporal nature of the association. It is possible that participating in activism tactics could generate the negative emotions that participants experience. Most historical and contemporary social movements are connected to social justice issues that can provoke negative emotions. The deaths of unarmed Black citizens at the hands of law enforcement officials, the separation of families at the US borders, or hearing persons recount experiences of sexual assaults are topics that alone can draw an emotional toll. Additionally, inherent in participating in persuasive or disruptive tactics is a public declaration about one's stance on an issue, regardless of whether or not that stance might be in direct contrast to others. In this way, negative emotions might result from the discomfort of going against a cultural norm or, more overtly, experiencing retaliation because of demonstrating or expressing a stance related to a movement. For example, a person from a conservative region choosing to express support for Black Lives Matter might be met with backlash, especially when expressing their views on the internet or social-media-based platforms.

Alternatively, increased levels of depression and anxiety could precede activism expression. Before participating in activism or social movements, individuals might make themselves aware of or investigate the social justice issue they choose to communicate their stance by searching the internet, reading news articles, or following social media accounts to find information on the issue before acting. One could speculate that students participating in activism are more aware of the roots causes of social justice issues, such as systemic racism, and realize that there has yet to be meaningful, sustained change despite hundreds of years of

effort. It would be important for future studies to measure emotions before and after activism participation.

The study revealed a positive association between sense of belonging and persuasive tactic participation. This finding supports literature demonstrating that persons participating in civic engagement have a higher sense of belonging (Encina & Berger, 2021). Additionally, previous research established that youth with a greater sense of belonging to their schools report an increased likelihood of civic commitment participation (Flanagan et al., 2007). This study extends these findings by establishing the same association within a collegiate population and demonstrating that this association might be true for any amount of activism participation.

This study found a negative relationship between activism and optimism. Some studies have shown that activism positively correlates with optimism (Pancer et al., 2007; Cattell, 2021), while others demonstrate a negative relationship (Pahl et al., 2005). Some previous research by denoting a negative association with optimism and varying amounts of persuasive activism participation. The potential awareness of the sociopolitical climate could support the lower levels of optimism observed in activism participants across activism types. When considering the definition of optimism, it can be hard to expect something good related to the sociopolitical climate when there is continued evidence of its destructive nature. Perhaps when the issues at the root of the destructive nature of the domestic and global social and political climates are meaningfully addressed and experience sustained change, there will be a stable positive association between activism and optimism. In the meantime, the lack of optimism might act as a driving force for activism participation.

This study did not find evidence that coping moderated the relationship between activism and depression. When examined contextually, these findings reveal that the impact of activism

on mental health is external to the participants as individuals and is not related to the actual participation in the activism tactic. It is possible that a different measure of coping could result in a different outcome. Future research in this area should consider using a measure that separates coping attitudes from coping behaviors.

Among the study covariates, this study found a positive relationship between negative emotional well-being and being a gender minority, specifically among participants identifying their gender as other and those who are LGBA + Other sexual orientation. This finding is consistent with other literature to examine the relationship between mental health and gender minority identity (Mutanski et al., 2010; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Lipson et al., 2019). Additionally, these participants had lower levels of optimism and overall lower sense of belonging compared to male students and heterosexuals. The findings in this study related to sexual and gender minorities and optimism are in line with the mixed results demonstrated in previous literature (Kwon, 2013; Harkness et al., 2020; Luk et al., 2019; Wilson & Liss, 2020; Vaccaro & Newman, 2017). Female-identified students had higher sense of belonging, optimism, and anxiety-related symptoms than male students. The findings in this study related to female identity and anxiety and sense of belonging are consistent with previous literature (McLean & Anderson, 2009; Zalta & Chambless, 2012; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Furrer & Skinner, 2003). However, the findings on female identity and optimism add to the mixed association found in previous research (Pushkar et al., 2010; Bjuggren & Elert, 2019; Yue et al., 2017).

The association between race and ethnicity with negative emotional well-being and belonging is consistent with prior research. Previous literature has demonstrated that historically marginalized and oppressed populations have higher levels of depression and lower levels of sense of belonging compared to White-identified populations (Whisman & Richardson, 2015;

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Fan et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018). Additionally, the findings on optimism in this study are consistent with prior research, which showed higher levels of optimism in Black compared to White populations (Oreskovic & Goodman, 2013; Coll & Draves, 2008). Other studies have found mixed results on the association between race and optimism (Colby & Shifren, 2013; Lee et al., 2015).

Students whose parents went to at least one year of college had lower negative emotional well-being outcomes and a higher sense of belonging. These findings are consistent with previous literature that demonstrated that students with lower socioeconomic status, which parental education level is often a proxy for, had lower levels of belonging and higher levels of depression (Jury et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2013; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). While this study demonstrated no difference in optimism levels, previous research has shown that persons of lower socioeconomic status had lower levels of optimism (Heinonen et al., 2006).

e. Limitations
While this study has many strengths, there are some limitations. As mentioned earlier, the primary limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study. Second, the measure of sense of belonging measure is specifically tailored to the student's school. Students might have different levels of sense of belonging if the question was broad or specific to another location. The levels of anxiety and depression observed in the sample are fairly low, and should not be construed to be clinically significant. Finally, the sample of schools that participated in the WBA was not nationally representative and thus, the findings of the study are not generalizable to schools with other characteristics (e.g., community colleges).

f. Implication for practice
While many colleges and universities encourage students to participate in activism and civic engagement, they should also make students aware of the ebbs and flows of activism

participation and the range of emotions they might feel while participating, particularly highlighting potential negative emotions such as depression and anxiety. Communicating with students engaged in activism that any amount and any type of activism could cause them to experience negative emotions will provide engaged students to better prepare for emotional fluctuations. Simultaneously, making students aware of the benefits, emotional and social, of activism could support their decision to engage despite the potential negative emotional effects.

Considering that schools might not be able to accurately identify all students participating in activism, especially if they are only participating off-campus, it might be most beneficial to develop interventions to reduce negative mental health outcomes at the population level, to increase the ability to provide support for students participating in activism. Higher education institutions can also provide students participating in activism with ongoing curated emotional support, such as emotional dialogue groups to discuss their emotions with students involved in the same activities. Considering that students participating in activism have a higher sense of belonging than those who do not participate, dialogue groups could support student belonging, which has been identified as a protective factor to psychological distress among student activists (Conner et al., 2021). Additionally, colleges and universities should provide faculty and staff working directly with students engaged in activism training to identify signs of mental health distress to connect students with appropriate resources when needed.

g. *Future research*

While the findings of this study reveal that students participating in activism have increased levels of depression and anxiety, they also show increased levels of sense of belonging. Paired with the findings showing decreased levels of optimism, the conclusion can be drawn that the impact of activism on student mental health continues to be complex and nuanced. Future

research should investigate this relationship using qualitative studies to begin untangling the nuanced complexities of activism, generally, and then its relationship to mental health. Studies should consider using a measure of belonging that is not specific to a particular location. Additionally, future research should directly assess the impact of the sociopolitical climate on student mental health to determine if the negative emotions associated with students who participate in activism come before, during, or after they chose to participate. Additionally, this study should be replicated longitudinally. Lastly, this study should be replicated among non-collegiate populations and institutions not currently participating in the WBA.

Table 6. Sample characteristics (n=10,165)

Sample Descriptive Statistics	% (n)
Gender Identity	
Female	72.8 (7402)
Male	25.3 (2567)
Other	1.9 (193)
One or more parents/guardians completed at least one year of college	
Yes	80.1 (8143)
No or Don't know	19.8 (2017)
Race and Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latino	13.4 (1360)
American Indian (AI) or Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian (NH) or Other Pacific Islander/Two or more races	5.2 (525)
Asian	8.9 (904)
Black or African American	8.8 (897)
White	63.3 (6438)
Sexual Orientation	
LGBA+ or Other	26.3 (2674)
Heterosexual	73.4 (7466)
Disruptive Activism Tactic Participation	
No	55.9 (5687)
Yes	10.2 (1034)
Persuasive Activism Tactic Participation	
0	57.3 (5828)
1	23.8 (2418)
2	15.0 (1529)
3	2.9 (296)
	$\bar{x}$ (sd)
Depression Symptoms Score (range 7-35)	13.74 (6.95)
Anxiety Symptoms Score (range, 5-25)	14.24 (5.43)
Belonging (range 1-6)	4.35 (1.05)
Optimism (range 1-6)	4.13 (1.15)
Coping (range 1-6)	3.84 (0.92)

Table 7. Unadjusted and adjusted linear regression predicting depression symptom score and anxiety symptom score (n=10,165)

				Depression Symptom Score								Anxiety Symptom Score					
				Unadjusted			Adjusted					Unadjusted			Adjusted		
	n	x̄	(sd)	β	95%CI	p	β	95%CI	p	x̄	(sd)	β	95%CI	p	β	95%CI	p
Disruptive Activism																	
No	5687	13.52	6.87	Reference			Reference			14.00	5.40	Reference			Reference		
Yes	1034	14.81	7.25	1.39	[0.99-1.79]	<.001	0.72	[0.32-1.12]	<.001	15.17	5.43	1.13	[0.79-1.48]	<.001	0.68	[0.32-1.04]	<.001
Persuasive Activism																	
0	5828	13.15	6.69	Reference			Reference			13.78	5.37	Reference			Reference		
1	2418	14.25	7.07	0.68	[0.32-1.05]	<.001	0.51	[0.16-0.86]	0.004	14.53	5.46	0.39	[0.09-0.69]	0.011	0.24	[-0.05-0.53]	0.104
2	1529	14.71	7.29	1.40	[0.99-1.82]	<.001	0.93	[0.51-1.36]	<.001	15.15	5.44	1.19	[0.85-1.54]	<.001	0.79	[0.44-1.14]	<.001
3	296	16.16	7.51	3.36	[2.81-3.91]	<.001	2.35	[1.81-2.89]	<.001	15.97	5.28	2.24	[1.81-2.68]	<.001	1.53	[1.09-1.96]	<.001
Covariates																	
Gender																	
Male	2567	13.47	6.81	Reference			Reference			13.16	5.19	Reference			Reference		
Female	7402	13.69	6.91	0.22	[-0.09-0.53]	0.159	-0.07	[-0.38-0.23]	0.641	14.52	5.45	1.36	[1.12-1.60]	<.001	1.19	[0.96-1.44]	<.001
Other	193	19.26	8.06	5.79	[4.79-6.81]	<.001	3.51	[2.49-4.53]	<.001	17.68	5.20	4.52	[3.74-5.31]	<.001	3.21	[2.40-4.01]	<.001
Sexual Orientation																	
Heterosexual	7466	12.90	6.51	Reference			Reference			13.73	5.35	Reference			Reference		
LGBA + Other	2674	16.12	7.59	3.20	[2.91-3.51]	<.001	2.91	[2.60-3.22]	<.001	15.69	5.40	1.96	[1.73-2.19]	<.001	1.66	[1.42-1.90]	<.001
Race and Ethnicity																	
White (Non-Hispanic)	6438	13.43	6.79	Reference			Reference			14.15	5.42	Reference			Reference		
Hispanic	1360	14.29	7.25	0.86	[0.45-1.27]	<.001	0.55	[0.14-0.95]	0.009	14.61	5.47	0.47	[0.15-0.78]	0.004	0.19	[-0.14-0.51]	0.259
AI, NH, Biracial*	525	15.07	7.61	1.73	[1.12-2.34]	<.001	1.41	[0.81-2.01]	<.001	14.85	5.43	0.76	[0.28-1.25]	0.002	0.51	[0.03-0.98]	0.037
Asian (Non-Hispanic)	904	14.37	6.98	0.93	[-.45-1.42]	<.001	0.89	[0.42-1.36]	<.001	14.35	5.25	0.21	[-0.17-0.58]	0.289	0.20	[-0.17-0.57]	0.284
Black	897	13.66	6.91	0.21	[-0.27-0.69]	0.388	0.25	[-0.22-0.73]	0.296	13.88	5.58	-0.28	[-0.66-0.10]	0.149	-0.38	[-0.76- -.01]	0.047

Parental Education Level																	
No College	2017	14.52	7.33	Reference			Reference			14.93	5.55	Reference			Reference		
1+ years college	8143	13.55	6.84	-0.97	[-1.31- -0.63]	<.001	-0.79	[-1.13- -0.45]	<.001	14.07	5.39	-0.87	[-1.13- -0.60]	<.001	-0.75	[-1.02- -0.48]	<.001

*American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial

Table 8. Unadjusted and adjusted linear regression predicting optimism score and belonging score (n=10,165)

				Optimism Score							Belonging Score					
				Unadjusted			Adjusted				Unadjusted			Adjusted		
	n	x̄	(sd)	β	95%CI	p	β	95%CI	p	x̄	(sd)	β	95%CI	p	β	95%CI	p
Disruptive Activism																	
No	5687	4.31	1.09	Reference			Reference			4.39	1.05	Reference			Reference		
Yes	1034	4.14	1.11	-0.19	[-0.29- -0.10]	<.001	-0.11	[-0.20- -0.02]	0.023	4.46	1.02	0.06	[-0.10- 0.12]	0.096	0.09	[0.03- 0.16]	0.004
Persuasive Activism																	
0	5828	4.16	1.14	Reference			Reference			4.35	1.06	Reference			Reference		
1	2418	4.11	1.15	-0.04	[-0.10- 0.02]	0.158	-0.02	[-0.07- 0.04]	0.618	4.36	1.05	0.07	[-0.003- 0.15]	0.058	0.08	[0.001- 0.15]	0.048
2	1529	4.03	1.20	-0.11	[-0.19- -0.03]	0.008	-0.04	[-0.12- 0.04]	0.323	4.36	1.03	0.08	[0.14- 0.15]	0.019	0.10	[0.03- 0.17]	0.005
3	296	4.28	1.11	-0.26	[-0.35- -0.17]	<.001	-0.10	[-0.19- -0.01]	0.028	4.27	0.99	-0.02	[-0.11- 0.07]	0.694	0.04	[-0.05- 0.13]	0.367
Covariates																	
Gender																	
Male	2567	4.12	1.19	Reference			Reference			4.27	1.08	Reference			Reference		
Female	7402	4.16	1.13	0.04	[-0.01- 0.09]	0.153	0.07	[0.02- 0.12]	0.009	4.38	1.04	0.11	[0.07- 0.16]	<.001	0.15	[0.09- 0.19]	<.001
Other	193	3.40	1.18	-0.71	[-0.88- -0.55]	<.001	-0.39	[-0.56- -0.22]	<.001	4.08	1.17	-0.19	[-0.35- -0.04]	0.014	-0.04	[-0.19- 0.12]	0.634
Sexual Orientation																	
Heterosexual	7466	4.25	1.11	Reference			Reference			4.41	1.04	Reference			Reference		
LGBA + Other	2674	3.80	1.20	-0.44	[-0.49- -0.39]	<.001	-0.41	0.03	<.001	4.19	1.07	-0.21	[-0.25- -0.16]	<.001	-0.20	[-0.25- -0.15]	<.001
Race and Ethnicity																	
White (Non-Hispanic)	6438	4.13	1.14	Reference			Reference			4.43	1.04	Reference			Reference		
Hispanic	1360	4.14	1.64	0.01	[-0.06 – 0.08]	0.718	0.03	[-0.04- 0.09]	0.427	4.24	1.08	-0.19	[-0.25- -0.13]	<.001	-0.14	[-0.19- -0.07]	<.001
AI, NH, Biracial*	525	3.93	1.55	-0.22	[-032- -0.11]	<.001	-0.18	[-0.28- -0.08]	<.001	4.13	1.08	-0.30	[-0.39 - -0.21]	<.001	-0.28	[-0.37- -0.19]	<.001
Asian (Non-Hispanic)	904	4.03	1.16	-0.09	[-0.18- -0.02]	0.016	-0.09	[-0.17- -0.02]	0.020	4.28	0.97	-0.15	[-0.22- -0.07]	<.001	-0.13	[-0.21- -0.06]	<.001
Black	897	4.37	1.16	0.25	[0.16- 0.33]	<.001	0.22	[0.14- 0.30]	<.001	4.18	1.06	-0.25	[-0.33- -0.18]	<.001	-0.25	[-0.32- -0.17]	<.001
Parental Education Level																	
No College	2017	4.13	1.18	Reference			Reference			4.39	1.06	Reference			Reference		

1+ years college	8143	4.13	1.15	0.003	0.03		0.01	[-0.05-0.07]	0.667	4.28	1.11	0.22	[0.17-0.27]	<.001	0.18	[-0.13-0.23]	<.001

*American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Biracial

Chapter 6

a. Overview and Summary

The concerns about college students' mental health have grown considerably during the past ten years (Liu, 2019). In 2019, national data indicated that college students were experiencing high levels of depressive and anxiety-related symptoms, and psychological distress (ACHA, 2019a; NCHA, 2020) that interfered with their ability to function. Many factors can influence mental health status, ranging from individual-level risk factors (e.g., genetics, emotional regulation), family-level influences, social support and access to care. Traditionally, factors related to the collegiate environment have been studied as contributors to the decline of student mental health (e.g., homesickness, having to adjust to new friends and navigate an unfamiliar environment). Through the lens of a social determinants of health perspective, it is possible that the current sociopolitical climate and responses to it could also adversely impact student mental health. Paralleling the troubling trends in student mental health has been a reawakening of the need to address structural racism, and a number of other social injustices. These social movements have created opportunities for students to participate in activism in unprecedented ways. While almost all the contemporary social justice issues that the US has faced recently have historical roots, many movements are drawing increasingly diverse supporters who are leveraging technology and social media to engage in activism. Through social media, activism participants are able to connect to one another to share resources and information and draw lawmakers' attention. In particular, the connections that are made through activism are generally peer-to-peer for youth and young adults (Ballard et al.,2016). Historically and contemporarily, college students have participated in social movements.

While we have substantial research on college students' activism efforts (Barnhardt, 2014; Broadhurst, 2014, Rhoads, 2016) few studies have explored the connection between activism participation and college student health and well-being. Importantly, it is possible that activism participation could be related to emotional well-being in both positive and negative ways. This dissertation used a multimethod approach to fill this critical research gap and explored the relationship between activism and the well-being of college students. Three related studies were conducted that: 1) qualitatively examined the motivators and short-term impact of protest participation on the emotional well-being of college students who participated in the 2020 Black Lives Matter demonstrations; 2) quantitatively examined two possible motivators of activism participation – namely discrimination experiences and civic morals identity centrality; and, 3) quantitatively evaluated the strength of the associations between activism participation and four dimensions of emotional well-being (i.e., depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, optimism, and sense of belonging), and the extent to which coping moderated the relationships. It was hypothesized that in students who had high coping levels there would be a stronger relationship between activism and emotional well-being (depressive and anxiety-related symptoms) and a stronger relationship with positive emotional well-being (sense of belonging and optimism). Conversely, students who had lower coping levels there would be a weaker higher negative emotional well-being and weaker positive emotional well-being.

Findings from the three studies, separately and together, contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between participation in different forms of activism and several dimensions of student well-being. Moreover, the findings provide insights into the lived experiences of college students who participated in a major and ongoing contemporary social movement to address structural racism in the United States.

The first study conducted as part of this dissertation gathered data from in-depth interviews among a sample of 18 college students who participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. This study used a purposive sampling method based on gender and racial identity to recruit a diverse sample. Questions were asked to understand participants' emotional well-being, their emotional experience participating in the 2020 BLM protests, and their experiences following protests. An example question related to protest participation was, "Of the potential causes for the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, which was the most important to your decision to protest?" One of the probes related to this question was, "Do you feel like you belong to the Black Lives Matter movement community?" This study was guided by Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Clark and Braun's thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data (Clarke & Braun, 2021). Three primary themes emanated from the study. First, emotions as motivators for protest participation. The findings attributed to this theme were focused on the role of emotions as motivating factors for students to engage in Black Lives Matter protests. For the majority of the students, negative emotions, such as anger and sadness generated from the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, served as motivators. In addition to the killings of these Black citizen, participants also named factors resulting the sociopolitical climate as sources of negative emotions, such as racism and discrimination. Second, emotional residence during protest. In this theme, the relationship between some of the factors that support the relationship protest and emotions are identified by participants. These factors that they identified garnered positive emotions and the positive emotions persisted even when the protest grounds became tense. Any negative emotions that were expressed during the protests from the presence of police and the presence of persons not at the protest for the same purpose. Third, identity development and the

way ahead. In this theme, participants revealed how, for some, the protests changed the way they looked at themselves and inspired them to consider future pathways that align with activism. A novel insight gained from this study is that protesting potentially contributed to the identity development of these young adults. Understanding one's identity and purpose in the world is a major developmental milestone of young adulthood. Some Black-identified participants indicated that protest participation helped them connect more to their Black identity.

Taken together, it is clear that the sociopolitical climate of 2020 negatively impacted the emotional well-being of participants. On the other hand, all participants reported largely positive emotional experiences while engaging in protests. Most participants attributed the elements of chanting and being in a community with others for a shared purpose as the protest elements that generated the most positive emotions. While many participants indicated that participating in protest was an emotional catharsis, they acknowledged that their negative emotions caused by the sociopolitical climate were essentially unchanged after their protest participation. These results demonstrate that protest participation can serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy among college student protest participants. The majority of participants were keenly aware of different forms of racism, a portion of participants indicated that gaining information about the causes of the Black Lives Matter movement before protesting and attending protests helped them to become more aware of different forms of racism. This finding demonstrates that protests can also act as a teaching tool for those who choose to knowledgably participate. Additionally, many participants acknowledged that they were aware that their protest participation did not directly impact the root causes of the Black Live Matter movement. Still, they were willing to participate in protests in the future and other means of activism.

The two quantitative studies utilized secondary data from the 2019 Wake Forest Wellbeing Assessment (WBA) (Wellbeing Collective, n.d.) that included 11,923 college students from 28 institutions who were administered an online survey. Two forms of activism were measured - disruptive tactics (i.e., participation in protests or demonstrations, or attending political meetings) and persuasive tactics (i.e., expressing one's opinion on social media or through art, or through wearable items or bumper stickers)

The first set of quantitative analyses examined the roles of civic moral identity centrality and discrimination experiences in relation to activism participation. After removing participants that were missing data on any of the study variables, the final analytic sample consisted of 3,321 students. Of the final sample, 15.3% (n=509) participated in disruptive activism tactics. Of the persuasive tactics (i.e. expressed opinions through clothing buttons or bumper stickers or documented or discussed views through social media or created art or digital media to express views) 26.0% (n=864) participated in one, 19.8% (n=659) participated in two, and 8.9% (n=297) participated in three. Across persuasive tactics, most participants indicated participating in expressing their opinions through clothing buttons or bumper stickers (n=1,218, 35%) or documenting or discussing their views through social media (n=1,369, 39.4%). Multivariate logistic regression modeling revealed significant positive associations between both hypothesized motivations (personal discrimination experiences and civic moral identity centrality) and disruptive tactics, even after statistically holding constant the influences of race, parental education, gender and sexual orientation. Multinomial logistic regression models were used to compare the discrimination experiences of students who participated in zero, one, two or three persuasive activism tactics. Having experienced more discrimination was associated with an increase in the odds of participating in any amount of persuasive activism tactics compared to

not participating. The odds of students participating in persuasive activism tactics were higher as their civic morals identity centrality increased. Participants who were sexual and gender minorities were at increased odds of participating in activism tactics compared to heterosexuals and males, respectively.

Lastly, the strength of the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being was examined quantitatively in Chapter 5. Positive and negative emotions were hypothesized to be higher among students who participated in activism compared to those who did not. Coping was hypothesized to moderate the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. The analytic sample consisted of 10,165 students, after removing participants with missing data. Multivariate linear regression models revealed a positive relationship between disruptive and persuasive activism tactics and depression, anxiety, and sense of belonging. A negative association was observed between activism participation and optimism. Coping did not significantly moderate the relationship between activism and emotional well-being.

d. *Synthesis of Findings from Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses*

This dissertation research focused on the experiences of college students during a time in which the US was grappling with not only a global pandemic, but political and social divisiveness related to social injustice and structural racism. As such, the research provided a unique glimpse into the lived experiences of college students during a unique time in our history. This section describes contributions related to five major topic areas.

First, the research advances our understanding of activism by investigating the degree of participation in tactics regardless of a person's self-identification with activism. Previous studies have most often compared activism participation to non-participation. By examining varying amounts of activism tactics that students are participating in, we being to understand a different

perspective in the correlated between activism and emotional well-being. This nuance is particularly important because the qualitative interviews revealed that students are often engaging in more than one form of persuasive activism, particularly before they transition to disruptive activism. The quantitative analyses supported the notion of participation in more than one form of activism simultaneously.

Second, this dissertation research illuminated the meaning of activism for participants. For some, activism, protests specifically, acted as an emotional release for negative feelings that they experienced. For others, protests served as a catalyst for them to begin to identify what they wanted to do professionally and personally in the future and who they were, which is a function of identity development in emergent adulthood (Arnett, 2010). For some participants, protesting was associated with advocacy or standing up on behalf of others, which they saw as a career path. On the other hand, engaging in activism allowed them to connect to who they were and evoked feelings of racial pride. Feelings of racial pride can act as a guard against discrimination, particularly among historically marginalized and oppressed populations, and support further identity development (Ramaswamy & Daniels, 2015; Huguley et al., 2019). These findings help us to broaden our understanding of the impact of activism by illuminating that even sporadic participation positively contribute to the participants' lives beyond the point of engagement.

Third, the research contributed to our understanding of the motivations for activism among college students. The findings from the quantitative analyses demonstrated the importance of both civic moral identity centrality and discrimination experiences as potential motivations. While it might seem intuitive that increased discrimination experiences would be associated with activism participation, the in-depth interviews revealed a different story. Personal discrimination experiences were not a strong motivator for participating in protests,

even among students from historically marginalized and oppressed populations. All interview participants indicate that learning about the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd, garnered negative emotions because they did feel people should be treated that way. Taken together, the findings highlight that moral identity might be more of a motivator for activism than previously considered.

Fourth, the studies shed light on the association between activism participation and emotional well-being. The qualitative interviews afforded the opportunity to examine the effect, albeit the short-term effect, of participation on different dimensions of well-being. The negative emotions caused by the sociopolitical climate spurred students to participate in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, which supports Jasper's explanation of the role of emotions in social movements (Jasper, 2011). As mentioned before, protest participation was cathartic, but positive emotions were not enduring. While the direction of the relationship could not be ascertained because of the cross-sectional nature of the quantitative survey, significant relationships were observed between activism participation and negative dimensions of emotional well-being. The findings all support, albeit preliminarily, a possible directional pathway for the relationship between activism and emotional well-being among emergent adults. Specifically, emotions precede engagement in activism tactics. Additionally, the negative emotions that precede activism participation also carry over after protest participation, which supports the notion that those initial negative emotions might also be the motivation for repeat activism engagement.

This study also began to disentangle the relationship between positive emotions and activism. Previous literature has demonstrated that activism has been associated with positive emotions such as empowerment. By examining the 2020 BLM protests, this study advances previous research and identifies possible sources attributed to positive emotions. For example,

the act of chanting during protests caused many participants to feel a sense of empowerment as they were able to express their stance related to BLM in a community of others who felt the same way. Additionally, participants noted that listening to speakers and personal stories from the families of victims of racialized violence educated them about the extensive issues of racialized violence and helped them think of future pathways for them to participate in activism. These findings allow practitioners and researchers to expand their understanding of the value of activism in the lives of those who engage.

Following the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, this study showed that participants were engaged in activism because of the negative emotion they experienced from the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Participants indicated that they felt an emotional release from engaging in protests in the interviews. However, after their participation, many of them noted that they had the same negative emotions they felt before protest participation, which supports protest as a form of emotion-focused coping. Surprisingly, coping did not moderate the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. Additionally, BLM protesters did not mention their coping strategies in terms of handling stressors from the sociopolitical climate. Instead, they mentioned coping in terms of their maintaining their general mental health. Perhaps coping strategies will not suffice if the stressor or negative emotions result from an external, abstract source, such as the sociopolitical climate.

On the other hand, participation was related to an enhanced sense of belonging. The qualitative interviews also underscored how a sense of belonging was closely tied to activism participation. Study results revealed that students who participated in disruptive activism had a higher sense of belonging than non-participants. Like civic morals identity centrality, community

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is a potential motivation for activism. The BLM protesters indicated that issues of racism and discrimination potentially impacting their Black friends contributed to their motivation to protest. Additionally, they described being around other people for a shared purpose garnered positive emotions and gave them a sense of unity. These findings help us understand the nuanced role of activism and belonging by revealing that participants potentially have a higher level of sense of belonging before their activism participation and that the level increases when participating in activism.

This study showed a negative association between activism and optimism, which was found in previous studies. However, this dissertation helps us understand the possible influence of the sociopolitical climate on a participant's optimism. Optimism is related to expecting more good than bad things to happen in the future. When contextualizing this definition with activism participation, low levels of optimism make sense. Many of the BLM protesters openly acknowledged that their protest participation did not solve the root causes for the BLM movement. As a result, many of the participants were resolved with the awareness that there would be another Black victim of racialized violence. This awareness that the climate in the US continues to support the proliferation of racialized violence could cause participants not to expect more good than bad things from the sociopolitical climate. An overall conclusion from the research is that the sociopolitical climate does influence student emotional well-being in complex ways, and that the connection warrants further investigation. The research also shed light on how individual characteristics were related to activism participation and emotional well-being.

This study did not demonstrate racial differences in the relationships examined, especially when investigating BLM protests. The lack of racial differences supports the previously stated notion that the characteristics of students who participate in activism might be

different from those of previous generations. While the sociopolitical climate has been consistently volatile toward historically marginalized and oppressed populations, there have been many advances in opportunities afforded to minority groups. Perhaps those advances, combined with higher levels of parental education and socioeconomic status, have shifted the awareness and experiences of minority students to a place where they are not directly impacted by the destructive nature of the sociopolitical climate. Some of the racial and ethnic minority BLM protesters stated that they grew up in very diverse neighborhoods and could not recall people not being treated equitably, and some went on to say that they were not aware of concepts such as microaggressions until they got to college. In addition, White protesters reported their awareness of the racial climate that fueled BLM protests. The lack of differences in race seen in the activism and emotional well-being relationship, seen in activism and civic morals and discrimination relationship, and protest experience leads us to believe that there is another phenomenon at play. Perhaps the intersection of White students' awareness and racial minorities having less awareness than previous protesters contributes to the lack of racial differences. This relationship needs to be explored further in future studies.

Fifth, the findings of this dissertation support the individual level theories but make the case of other theories to explain the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. The qualitative findings in Chapter 3 illuminated that the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping could be applicable to explaining activism participation at the individual level. However, Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that when examining the relationship between activism and motivators and emotional well-being there were distinct findings regarding sexual and gender minorities, which suggests that group level theories such as Minority Stress Theory are applicable when explaining the activism and emotional well-being relationship (Meyers, 2003).

While this theory might be applicable to students from historically marginalized and oppressed communities experiencing social stress and engaged in group coping, future research should investigate group level theories that explain the participation of allies from groups with higher levels of power and position in relation to the topic of the social movement.

The study findings reveal differences by sexual orientation and gender identity. Previous research has demonstrated that sexual and gender minorities are more likely to participate in activism (Swank & Fahs, 2017). These findings have been explained by underscoring that when a person embeds themselves in a gender and sexuality minority identity, they often become politicized because these identities have long been intertwined with activism.

e. *Limitations*

While this dissertation research resulted in novel and substantial contributions, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. First, this study only examined the experiences of college students, which means that the findings cannot be applied to emergent adults not affiliated with higher education institutions, or students at two-year colleges or community colleges. Similarly, the results are not generalizable to older or younger individuals. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study design precluded the ability to understand the temporality of the observed associations. Additionally, Wake Forest's decision to use a planned missing approach in the WBA resulted in more missing data than what was expected, but sufficient sample sizes were available to conduct the statistical analyses required to investigate relationships. Some of the quantitative self-report measures used in the study were time-bound, and asked students to reflect on experiences, feelings or behaviors during either in the last two weeks or during the academic year. Therefore, the findings cannot fully inform our understanding of the associations studied. For example, the depressive and anxiety symptom measures assessed students within the last two weeks. Lastly, although it is a strength that this

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research, particularly the qualitative research, was conducted at a unique time in history when the Black Lives Matter protests were occurring and when the world was grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is also a limitation because the findings might not be generalizable to other historical periods.

f. Future Research

While this study has advanced our understanding of the potential motivators and correlates of activism participation, there are several opportunities for future research to extend these findings. First, future research of these topics should investigate these relationships in other types of samples to understand whether or not the observed relationships are unique to collegiate populations. For example, investigations of other types of college students, non-collegiate emergent adult samples would be of interest. Additionally, this study was conducted in the US. Considering that activism is prevalent worldwide, future studies should be focused on investigating the meaning of activism and its connection to young adult health and well-being in other countries. Future research should be conducted to understand if the study findings are applicable to individuals who participate in other types of social movements.

Second, future mixed methods research studies could utilize more comprehensive assessments. Including other measures such as perception of risk of activism participation, family and peer influences on participation could advance our understanding of motivations for activism participation. Other measures of emotional well-being could be included to more fully understand the relationship between activism participation and health. It would also be of interest to understand how activism participation might influence academic engagement of college students, or shape their interests in particular professional career paths (e.g., law, policy, sociology, public health, etc.). In terms of theory, future studies should specifically examine the appraisal processes within the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping to understand better

how this theory potentially explains the relationship between activism and emotional well-being. Future research should directly measure motivations for activism participation broadly and specifically for different social justice issues.

Finally, longitudinal research designs are needed to fully understand the direction of the observed relationships, especially with respect to how activism participation might impact the emotional well-being of persons across time. Such studies could include physical health, sleep quality, and relationship quality as potential outcomes of interest. Prospective designs could also shed light on the transition from one form of activism participation (e.g., such as wearing a button) to more intensive involvement (e.g., organizing a demonstration) and the factors related to such transitions.

g. *Implications for Practice*

The implications of this research for practice within institutions of higher education include providing population-based mental health interventions, providing interpersonal and community-level interventions for students engaged in activism, training staff, faculty, and students to be mental health support referrers, and meaningfully addressing campus climate.

While this study provides a snapshot of the prevalence of activism participation on campuses, it would be quite challenging to identify all students engaged in activism to provide them with mental health support. Bearing this in mind, it would be an effective strategy to target their mental health support and strategy at the population level to maximize the potential for all the students engaged in activism to be reached. Additionally, colleges and universities should support students specifically involved in activism, considering that they are actively contending with the sociopolitical climate. Cohort-style processing groups could build upon the sense of belonging generated through activism and channel it to coping. Colleges and universities could use higher education tools such as intercultural dialogue and restorative practices to help students

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better understand the lived experiences of their peers and support reducing instances of discrimination experiences on campuses, which positively supports student mental health.

Of most importance is dismantling systems of oppression that continue to impact historically marginalized populations profoundly. It might seem like a tall task, but when individuals, communities, and organizations, such as higher education institutions, take steps to change the social environment around them, those changes contribute to changing our social and political environments. Considering that higher education is historically and contemporarily connected to racism, white supremacy, classism, and sexism, colleges and universities are thoughtful places to target dismantling oppression and make meaningful contributions to change the sociopolitical climate in the US.

Appendices
Appendix A: Methods

      This dissertation used a multimethod approach to explore the relationship between

activism participation and emotional well-being among college students. Multimethod

approaches involve conducting more than one independent research study to address different

but related research questions to investigate the same general topic. This approach is distinct

from mixed methods, where two or more data analytic strategies are used to answer research

questions within the same study (Driessnack et al., 2007). The methods used in this dissertation

research are qualitative and quantitative. One of the strengths of quantitative research is that it

allows researchers to determine whether or not relationships exist between variables of interest,

the strength of those relationships, and the direction. However, quantitative data cannot provide a

more detailed context of how and why those relationships exist at the individual level. This

weakness of quantitative research is a notable strength of qualitative research. Not only does

qualitative research allow for greater context into observed relationships, but it can also

illuminate complexities within relationships that have been found using quantitative research.

Additionally, qualitative research allows for discovering new insights regarding a topic area that

night have never been considered.

Qualitative Phase
Aim 1: Explore the impact of protest participation before, during, and after on participants'
emotional well-being and the role of coping using 2020 Black Lives Matter protests as a case
study.

Measures
      In-depth interviews were conducted that focused on understanding student protest

participation given the sociopolitical climate in the United States (US). During the time of

dissertation development, the US was experiencing an influx of protests in support of the Black

Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Many of the protests occurred after Black citizens, such as

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, were killed by police officers. BLM was chosen because it is an emotionally charged contemporary social movement that is not universally accepted. The interview guide included nine open-ended and thirteen probing questions (Appendix H).

Study Population. The sample was comprised of students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). UMBC was selected to conduct interviews because they participated in the 2019 WBA. However, since the WBA is an anonymous survey, which included a random sample of 3,000 UMBC students, there is no definitive way to determine if the interview participants participated in the 2019 WBA. The qualitative interview participants were undergraduate students aged 18-25 and enrolled full-time at UMBC. The inclusion criteria for the interviews were replicated from the criteria used for participation in the WBA. For these interviews, participants had to have participated in a protest or demonstration in support of or related to the mission of Black Lives Matter, which was assessed through a self-reported question included on the study interest form (See Appendix E). Between February and April of 2021, 31 students completed all the questions on the study interest form to determine eligibility. Of the 31 students who completed the interest form, 27 students met the inclusion criteria and were considered eligible to participate in the study. Of the 27 students who were eligible to participate, 18 participants were interviewed.

Sampling Procedure. The UMBC IRB approved the in-depth interviews application in January of 2021, and recruitment for the interviews began in February of 2021. Students were recruited through emails, social media, and referrals. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, electronic communication has been the sole method for communicating with students; thus, no printed flyers were used for recruitment. Participants were primarily recruited through referrals

from staff members at UMBC who serve in advisor roles to student organizations. Additionally, participants were recruited through referrals from past interview participants for the study. Lastly, some participants and student organizations shared the study recruitment flyer on their personal and organizations' social media pages.

If students were interested in participating in the study, the study flyer instructed them to complete a study interest form or screener. Once a potential participant completed the screener, the screener immediately notified them if they were eligible for study participation. The Principal Investigator (PI) contacted eligible persons after completing the study interest form via email to schedule their interview. Eligible persons were instructed to provide at least three dates and times for their interview. Interviews were planned to last 60-90 minutes, so participants were asked to send their date and time preferences budgeting for a maximum of 90 minutes. Once the interview date and time was confirmed, participants were sent a Google calendar request that included a video conferencing link, and they were sent the study consent form via DocuSign. Participants had to indicate whether or not they consented to have their interview recorded within the consent form. If participants did not agree to have their interview recorded, they were informed that they could not continue participating in the study. The day before the participants' scheduled interview, they were asked to complete a demographic survey. Each interview was recorded via the secured video conferencing software, Webex, and will be transcribed verbatim. Participants received a $25 Amazon gift card as an incentive for their participation in the study. The Amazon gift card was sent to them via the email address on the study interest form.

Data Analysis

All the interviews were recorded and will be transcribed verbatim using the third-party transcription service Temi ®. Once transcripts were returned, the PI and graduate research

assistant checked them for accuracy and cleaned them. During data cleaning, transcripts were checked against the interview audio files for inaccuracies and all identifying information was removed. All audio and video files were stored in a cloud-based Box folder that is accessible to the PI. After that, transcripts were uploaded into NVivo® 12 and analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a long-standing approach to analyzing qualitative data and provides a significant amount of versatility in analysis (Clark and Braun, 2021).

This dissertation followed Clark and Braun's steps for thematic analysis (Clark and Braun, 2021). First, all transcripts were read and reviewed several times, noting any initial patterns within the data. Then, using open coding, an initial codebook was developed. Next, axial coding was used to further develop the codebook. After that, the codebook and accompanying definitions were reviewed by the PI and two qualitative peers. Any discrepancies within the codes or definitions were resolved through discussion. Once the codebook was finalized, the PI and research assistant reviewed three of the interview transcripts and coded them using developed codebook. The research assistant and PI discussed discrepancies between the sets of codes until consensus (Krefting, 1991). Lastly, NVivo was used to code each interview transcript and examine the interview passages that fell under each code to assess patterns and themes across the data.

Quantitative Phase

Aims 2 and 3 of this dissertation used the 2019 Wake Forest Wellbeing Assessment. Developed in 2016, the WBA seeks to measure 18 dimensions of well-being (Collective, n.d). This assessment aims to assess undergraduate students' perceptions of their well-being and if students have the resources and skills to be well moving forward (Collective, n.d; Jayawickreme et al., 2012). Wake Forest divided this assessment into two parts: outcomes and pathways. Outcomes are the health indicators that assess whether or not students perceive themselves as

well, which include behaviors, attitudes, and emotional states (Jayawickreme et al., 2012). At the same time, pathways assess whether or not undergraduate students have the resources or skills to become well, including values, beliefs, knowledge, money, and social support (Jayawickreme et al., 2012).

Missing Data. The WBA has approximately 250 items. As a result, Wake Forest investigators administered the assessment using a planned missing data approach to reduce participant survey fatigue and attrition. In the planned missing design, participants were intentionally not presented with all the items used in the study. The WBA used a within-block version of the multiform missing data design. In this design, participants received some of the items being measured in a specific dimension of well-being or domain but did not receive all the items. The within-block planned missing design is best suited for research questions that seek to assess the relationship between sets of items, which is the case in the WBA. Within-block planned missing designs can reduce the survey's power without introducing bias. With the within-block planned missing data design, the WBA was expected to have 33% missing data. Excess missing, missing data beyond the 33% planned missing data ranged from 0%-8%. Since the WBA data were deemed missing at random (MAR) through a series of statistical analyses conducted by WFU, multiple imputation was used to account for missing data.

Before analysis, an intense review of the dataset provided by WFU was conducted. The examination revealed that the planned missing approach used by WFU resulted in some measures (optimism, belonging, coping, civic morals identity centrality) having items within the variables with missing data ranging from 11.8%-41.7%. As a result, mean scores of available items were developed for each of these variables and were used in subsequent analyses instead of sums.

Aim 2 Methods

Aim 2: To examine the strength of the relationship between the stimuli, discrimination and civic

morals, and activism.

      Sample. To develop the Aim 2 analytic sample (Table 9), participants in the original

dataset (n=11,923) were removed if they had missing data for any of the Aim 2 variables (civic

morals identity centrality mean score, disruptive activism, persuasive activism, discrimination, or

any covariates). After excluding participants with missing data on any of the Aim 2 variables, the

final analytic sample contained 3,321 participants.

Table 9. Aim 2 Analytic Sample Development

Overall sample	**11,923**
Exclusion criteria	**Sample size**
Dependent Variables	
Missing Disruptive Activism Tactic	7,044
Missing Persuasive Activism Tactics	3,476
Covariates	
Missing Gender	3,475
Missing Sexual Orientation	3,466
Missing Race and Ethnicity	3,456
Missing Parental Education Level	3,455
Independent Variables	
Missing Civic Morals Identity Centrality Mean Score	3,431
Missing Discrimination	3,321
Final Aim 2 Sample	3,321

Measures: Independent variables

      Civic Morals Identity Centrality. The measure, Civic morals identity centrality, was

measured using four items. This variable assesses students' civic attitudes and the extent to which

they are central to their identity. WFU adapted these items from the Stanford Civic Purpose

Project: Longitudinal Study of Youth Civic Engagement in California, 2011-2013 (Damon,

2016). An example item is, "Please indicate how central the following things are to your identity.

Even if something seems good but isn't an important part of who you are, you should answer 'not central to my identity.' Being willing to stand up for what I believe is right." The responses were measured using a 5-point scale with "1= Not central to my identity" to "5= Extremely central to my identity." The four civic morals items were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level. Spearman correlation coefficients for these items ranged between 0.412 and 0.592. These items were combined into a mean score to account for missing data that ranged from 3.94% to 41.3%.

Discrimination. Discrimination was measured using seven items. These items assess whether or not a student had experienced discrimination due to any of their identities, such as race, gender, or disability. An example item is, "During the current academic year, I have experienced discrimination (e.g., being excluded from activities or being the target of disparaging jokes, slurs, or comments) as a result of my: Gender." The responses for this variable were measured using yes/no options "1= no" and "2=yes." I will recode these values to reflect "no=0" and "yes=1." The seven items within this variable were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level. The Spearman correlation coefficients for these items range been 0.140 and 0.344. These items were combined into a count variable with higher values indicating more instances of personal discrimination.

Measures: Dependent Variable

Disruptive activism: Participation in disruptive activism was assessed through a single item. The stem question to this item was, "During the current academic year have you participated in the following activities either on or off-campus?" The disruptive item stated, "Participated in a protest march, political meeting, or demonstration." The response option for this question was binary (yes/no).

Persuasive activism: Participation in three types of activism activities was assessed using the stem question: "During the current academic year, have you participated in the following activities either on or off-campus?". The individual persuasive tactics were assessed through these items: 1) expressed opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing buttons or bumper stickers, 2) documented or discussed political and social issues through social media, and 3) created art, media or digital media to express views about political or social issues. Possible responses were yes/no for each item. These three items were combined into a count variable. The items were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level. The Spearman correlation coefficients for these items ranged between 0.273 and 0.420. Higher values indicated more participation in persuasive activism tactics.

Measures: Antecedents (Demographics)

Race and Ethnicity. This measure instructed participants to indicate their race/ethnic identity using the statement," Select one or more of the following races." There were seven response options that participants could select from "Hispanic/Latino of any race," "American Indian or Alaskan Native (not Hispanic)," "Asian (not Hispanic)," "Native Hawaiian," "Black or African American (not Hispanic)," "White (not Hispanic)," or "Two or more races (not Hispanic)." Due to small sample sizes among "American Indian or Alaskan Native (not Hispanic)" (n=4), "Two or more races (not Hispanic)" (n=152), and "Native Hawaiian" (n=8), these categories were combined, resulting in 5 race and ethnicity categories.

Gender. Participants were asked to indicate their gender identity through the question, "Which best describes you?" The response options for this question were "female," "male," or "other."

Sexual Orientation. Participant sexual orientation was measured using the question, "How do you describe your sexual orientation?" Participants were allowed to select from six response options: "asexual," "bisexual," "gay," 'heterosexual," "lesbian," and "other." Due to low sample sizes, "asexual" (n=171)," bisexual" (n=457), "gay" (n=68), "lesbian"(n=67), and "other"(n=137) were combined into a single category, LBGA+ Other.

Parents' Education. Participants were asked to indicate their parents' education level with the question, "Has one or more of your parents or guardians completed at least one year of college?" The response options for this question were "yes," "no," or "don't know." Due to the small sample size, "don't know" (n=60) was combined with "no."

Aim 3
Aim 3: To examine the strength of the relationship between activism participation and emotional well-being, as measured by depression, anxiety, optimism, belonging, and the extent to which that relationship is moderated by coping.

Sample. To develop the Aim 3 analytic sample (Table 10), participants in the original dataset (n=11,923) were excluded if they were missing any dependent variables (depression, anxiety, optimism mean score, belonging mean score). After removing participants missing data on any dependent variables, the Aim 3 analytic sample was 10,165. Multiple imputation was used to account for missing data within the covariates (parental education level, gender, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity) and the independent variables (disruptive and persuasive activism participation) because the missing data were determined to be missing at random (MAR).

Table 10. Aim 3 Analytic Sample Development

Overall sample	**11,923**
Exclusion criteria	**Sample size**
Dependent Variables	
Depression Symptom Score	11,536
Anxiety Symptom Score	11,466
Optimism Mean Score	10,376
Sense of Belonging Mean Score	10,165
Final Aim 3 Sample	10,165
If Independent Variables were Removed	
Missing Disruptive Activism Tactic	6,721
Missing Persuasive Activism Tactics	3,322
If Covariates were Removed	3,233

Measures: Independent Variable
The independent variable for Aim 3 is activism, which was the dependent variable in Aim 2.

Measures: Antecedents (Demographics)
The antecedents for Aim 3 are the same as the antecedents used in Aim 2.

Measures: Dependent Variable

WFU used five of the seven items from the GAD-7 to measure the current level of anxiety symptoms. The GAD-7 is a validated measure of anxiety-related symptoms with a Cronbach's alpha between 0.79 and 0.91 (Dear et al., 2011). An example item was: "Over the past two weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following: Not able to stop or control worrying." Participants responded on a 5-point scale, ranging from "1=Not at all" to "5 = Nearly every day." The responses were summed into a score consistent with the scoring instructions for the GAD-7, with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety-related symptoms (Spitzer et al., 2006) -- the scores for this variable range from 5 to 25. The Pearson

correlation coefficients ranged from 0.445 to 0.797. The items in this score were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level.

Depression Symptoms. WFU used four items from the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9) and three additional items to assess the current level of depression symptoms. The PHQ-9 is a validated measure of depressive symptoms with Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (Maroufizadeh et al., 2019; Kroenke et al., 2009). An example item is, "Over the past two weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following: Feeling little interest in your usual activities." Other items used to measure depressive symptoms were variations of the items found in the PHQ-9. For example, "Over the past two weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following: Feeling hopeless." The responses were provided using a 5-point scale, ranging from "1=Not at all" to "5 = Nearly every day." Responses were summed to create a score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of depressive symptoms—the scores for this variable range from 7 to 35. The Pearson coefficient for the items was 0.481 to 0.819. The items in the score were significantly correlated at the alpha .01 level.

Optimism. Optimism was measured using two items from the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), one item from the Optimism Scale, and two additional items. The LOT-R measures one's dispositional optimism and has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76 (Scheier et al., 1994). An example item is: "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. When things are uncertain in life, I expect the best." The Cronbach's alpha for the Optimism Scale is 0.84 (Pan et al., 2017). The item used from that scale is "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. When I think about the future, I feel positive about it." One of the additional items was, "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I believe things usually work out eventually." The

responses were measured using a 6-point scale, ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." A mean score was developed for these items to account for missing data—the scores for this variable range from 1 to 6. The items in the mean score were correlated at the alpha .01 level, and the Pearson correlation coefficients ranged from 0.548 to 0.726.

Sense of belonging. Students' current sense of belonging to the campus they attend was measured using ten items. An example item is: "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I feel accepted at my school." Responses were measured using a 6-point scale ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." A mean score was developed for these items to account for missing data. The scores for this measure range from 1 to 6. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these items ranged from 0.224 to 0.845.

Measure: Moderator

Coping. Coping was measured using ten items. Three items used were from the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The Cronbach's alpha for the BRS is 0.71 (Fung et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2008). An example item used was, "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. I have a hard time making it through stressful events." The Wake Forest University investigators included seven additional items. An example item is "Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. Take action to resolve the problem." Response options for these items were measured using a 6-point scale ranging from "1 = Strongly disagree" to "6= Strongly agree." One of the original ten items was removed because it did not correlate with the other nine items. After conducting a factor analysis, the Cronbach's alpha for the scale increased when the item "Drink alcohol to help myself feel better" was removed. The Pearson correlation coefficients for these items ranged from 0.111 to 0.678. A mean score was developed for this item. The scores for this measure range from 1 to 6. After

that, a frequency distribution and a median split was conducted to convert coping into a

dichotomous variable for the moderation analysis. Positive coping representing scores greater

than or equal to 4.00 and negative coping represented mean scores less than 4.00.

Table 11. Frequency distribution of sense of belonging, optimism, & coping in overall sample (n=11,923).

	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Slightly disagree n (%)	Slightly agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)	Missing n (%)
Sense of Belonging							
I feel a sense of belonging to my school	667 (5.6)	957 (8.0)	1100 (9.2)	2577 (21.6)	3474 (29.1)	1742 (14.6)	1406 (11.8)
I feel accepted at my school	353 (3.0)	523 (4.4)	787 (6.6)	2374 (19.9)	4405 (36.9)	2069 (17.4)	1412 (11.8)
I feel included at my school	466 (3.9)	719 (6.0)	1239 (10.4)	2609 (21.9)	3711 (31.1)	1760 (14.8)	1419 (11.9)
There are faculty or staff who help me feel like I belong at my school	300 (2.5)	446 (3.7)	618 (5.2)	1691 (14.2)	2474 (20.7)	1487 (12.5)	4907 (41.2)
I would have to change myself in order to feel like I fit in at my school.	438 (3.7)	754 (6.3)	1041 (8.7)	1007 (8.4)	2108 (17.7)	1619 (13.6)	4956 (41.6)
People at my school are friendly toward me	68 (0.6)	101 (0.8)	289 (2.4)	1461 (12.3)	3470 (29.1)	1642 (13.8)	4892 (41.0)
I belong to a group of friends at my school who are important to me.	410 (3.4)	524 (4.4)	505 (4.2)	1188 (10.0)	2128 (17.8)	2273 (19.1)	4895 (41.1)
I regularly participate in at least one activity that helps me feel like I belong.	630 (5.3)	860 (7.2)	614 (5.1)	1316 (11.0)	2053 (17.2)	1538 (12.9)	4912 (41.2)
The academic experiences I have had at my school help me feel like I belong.	346 (2.9)	542 (4.5)	801 (6.7)	1841 (15.4)	2279 (19.1)	1147 (9.6)	4967 (41.7)
There are campus programs and events that help me feel like I belong at my school.	490 (4.1)	697 (5.8)	843 (7.1)	1702 (14.3)	2002 (16.8)	1282 (10.8)	4907 (41.2)
Optimism							
I believe things usually work out eventually.	105 (0.9)	282 (2.4)	438 (3.7)	1548 (13.0)	2754 (23.1)	1900 (15.9)	4896 (41.1)
When things are uncertain in life, I expect the best	648 (5.4)	1233 (10.3)	1512 (12.7)	1841 (15.4)	1214 (10.2)	558 (4.7)	4917 (41.2)
Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad	370 (3.1)	727 (6.1)	1053 (8.8)	1689 (14.2)	2090 (17.5)	1049 (8.8)	4945 (41.5)
When I think about the future, I feel positive about it.	235 (2.0)	598 (5.0)	1022 (8.6)	2054 (17.2)	1932 (16.2)	1178 (9.9)	4904 (41.1)
When I think about the future, I feel positive about it.	267 (2.2)	460 (3.9)	764 (6.4)	1957 (16.4)	2245 (18.8)	1281 (10.7)	4949 (41.5)
Coping							
I tend to take a long time to get over stressful events in my life	1587 (13.3)	2359 (19.8)	2699 (22.6)	1596 (13.4)	1666 (14.0)	591 (5.0)	1425 (12.0)
I have a hard time making it through stressful events.	1129 (9.5)	2044 (17.1)	2509 (21.0)	1962 (16.5)	2083 (17.5)	771 (6.5)	1425 (12.0)
It is hard for me to tolerate it when something bad happens.	981 (8.2)	1842 (15.4)	2471 (20.7)	1994 (16.7)	2290 (19.2)	906 (7.6)	1439 (12.1)
Make sure to be kind to myself.	436 (3.7)	1043 (8.7)	1372 (11.5)	1906 (16.0)	1562 (13.1)	671 (5.6)	4933 (41.4)
Know at least one faculty/staff person at my school I can talk to	970 (8.1)	1273 (10.7)	794 (6.7)	1292 (10.8)	1708 (14.3)	936 (7.9)	4950 (41.5)
Have at least one friend at my school I can talk to	378 (3.2)	443 (3.7)	351 (2.9)	979 (8.2)	2341 (19.6)	2529 (21.2)	4902 (41.1)
Take action to resolve the problem	98 (0.8)	268 (2.2)	615 (5.2)	2076 (17.4)	2661 (22.3)	1272 (10.7)	4933 (41.4)
Try to see the stressful event in a more positive light	262 (2.2)	640 (5.4)	1027 (8.6)	2147 (18.0)	1935 (16.2)	967 (8.1)	4945 (41.5)
Try to learn something from the stressful event	113 (0.9)	299 (2.5)	535 (4.5)	1962 (16.5)	2581 (21.6)	1533 (12.9)	4900 (41.1)
Drink alcohol to help myself feel better	3397 (28.5)	1364 (11.4)	658 (5.5)	913 (7.7)	439 (3.7)	218 (1.8)	4934 (41.4)

Table 12. Frequency distribution for items in Civic Morals Identity Centrality, Depression, & Anxiety for the overall sample (n=11,923)

	Not central to my identity n (%)	Slightly central to my identity n (%)	Moderately central to my identity n (%)	Central to my identity n (%)	Extremely central to my identity n (%)	Missing n (%)
Civic Morals Identity Centrality						
Being willing to stand up for what I believe is right	180 (1.5)	523 (4.4)	1522 (12.8)	2710 (22.7)	2072 (17.4)	4916 (41.2)
Caring about people from all types of backgrounds	276 (2.3)	444 (3.7)	1412 (11.8)	3467 (29.1)	4884 (41.0)	1440 (12.1)
Providing for future generations	403 (3.4)	534 (4.5)	1449 (12.2)	2375 (19.9)	2240 (18.8)	4922 (41.3)
Being concerned about justice and human rights	240 (2.0)	502 (4.2)	1281 (10.7)	2385 (20.0)	2593 (21.7)	4922 (41.3)

	Not at all n (%)	Several days n (%)	Half the days n (%)	Over half the days n (%)	Nearly every day n (%)	Missing n (%)
Depression						
Feeling depressed	4930 (41.3)	2959 (24.8)	1546 (13.0)	1218 (10.2)	1205 (10.1)	65 (0.5)
Feeling sad	3253 (27.3)	4615 (38.7)	1741 (14.6)	1254 (10.5)	1004 (8.4)	56 (0.5)
Feeling like nothing can make you happy	7058 (59.2)	2274 (19.1)	1166 (9.8)	795 (6.7)	566 (4.7)	64 (0.5)
Feeling hopeless	6827 (57.3)	2560 (21.5)	1100 (9.2)	773 (6.5)	604 (5.1)	59 (0.5)
Feeling little interest in your usual activities	5188 (43.5)	3393 (28.5)	1422 (11.9)	1063 (8.9)	792 (6.6)	65 (0.5)
Thinking that others would be better off without you	7913 (66.4)	1952 (16.4)	822 (6.9)	519 (4.4)	414 (3.5)	303 (2.5)
Feeling like you have let yourself, friends, or family down	5556 (46.6)	3087 (25.9)	1196 (10.0)	951 (8.0)	828 (6.9)	305 (2.6)

	Not at all n (%)	Several days n (%)	Half the days n (%)	Over half the days n (%)	Nearly every day n (%)	Missing n (%)
Anxiety						
Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	859 (7.2)	3244 (27.2)	2292 (19.2)	2896 (24.3)	2583 (21.7)	49 (0.4)
Not being able to stop or control worrying	2670 (22.4)	3227 (27.1)	1915 (16.1)	2162 (18.1)	1890 (15.9)	59 (0.5)
Worrying too much about different things	1476 (12.4)	3447 (28.9)	1983 (16.6)	2428 (20.4)	2529 (21.2)	60 (0.5)
Being easily annoyed or irritable	2222 (18.6)	4351 (36.5)	2244 (18.8)	1814 (15.2)	1222 (10.2)	70 (0.6)
Being concerned that something bad might happen	3536 (29.7)	3321 (27.9)	1844 (15.5)	1630 (13.7)	1514 (12.7)	78 (0.7)

Table 13. Frequency distribution for Race & Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Gender, and Parental Education level in the overall sample (n=11,923)

Race and ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino n (%)	American Indian or Alaska Native, not Hispanic n (%)	Asian, not Hispanic n (%)	Black or African American, not Hispanic n (%)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, not Hispanic n (%)	White, not Hispanic n (%)	Two or more races, not Hispanic n (%)	Missing n (%)
	1567 (13.1)	29 (0.2)	1032 (8.7)	1111 (9.3)	29 (0.2)	7216 (60.5)	548 (4.6)	391 (3.3)
Sexual Orientation	Asexual n (%)	Bisexual n (%)	Gay n (%)	Heterosexual n (%)	Lesbian n (%)	Other n (%)	Missing n (%)	
	574 (4.8)	1511 (12.7)	236 (2.0)	8530 (71.5)	239 (2.0)	459 (3.8)	374 (3.1)	
Gender	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	Other n (%)	Missing n (%)				
	8393 (70.4)	2974 (24.9)	211 (1.8)	345 (2.9)				
Parent education level	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	Don't know n (%)	Missing n (%)				
	2145 (18.0)	9227 (77.4)	202 (1.7)	349 (2.9)				

Table 14. Frequency distribution for Disruptive Activism, Persuasive Activism, and Discrimination Types for the overall sample (n=11,923)

	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	Missing n (%)
Disruptive Activism			
Participated in a protest march, political meeting, or demonstration	5965 (50)	1079 (9.0)	4879 (40.9)
Persuasive Activism			
Expressed my own opinions or beliefs about issues through clothing, buttons or bumper stickers	4134 (34.7)	2857 (24.0)	4932 (41.4)
Documented or discussed political and social issues through social media	4473 (37.5)	2517 (21.1)	4933 (41.4)
Created art, media or digital media to express my views about political or social issues	5733 (48.1)	1316 (11.0)	4874 (40.9)
Discrimination Types			
Racial/ethnic background	9126 (76.5)	1273 (10.7)	1524 (12.8)
Gender	8580 (72.0)	1815 (15.2)	1528 (12.8)
Religious affiliation	9496 (79.6)	902 (7.6)	1525 (12.8)
Socioeconomic status	9454 (79.3)	927 (7.8)	1542 (12.9)
Political beliefs	8992 (75.4)	1390 (11.7)	1541 (12.9)
Sexual orientation	9721 (81.5)	652 (5.5)	1550 (13.0)
Disability	9897 (83.0)	472 (4.0)	1554 (13.0)

Appendix B: University of Maryland, College Park IRB

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

DATE:	July 21, 2020
TO:	SAMANTHA SMITH, MPH
FROM:	University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[1634142-1] Understanding the mental health impact of activism on college student activists
REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	July 21, 2020
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category # 4

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Appendix C: UMBC IRB Application

PROTOCOLS   **kuali**

#461 - Qualitative Analysis of the Experiences and Emotional Wellbeing of Student Who Participated in Black Lives Matter Protests - UMD Dissertation Fulfillment

Protocol Information

Review Type	Status	Approval Date	Continuing Review Date
Expedited	**Approved**	**Apr 16, 2021**	**Apr 23, 2021**

Expiration Date	Initial Approval Date	Initial Review Type	
May 14, 2021	**Jan 22, 2021**	**Expedited**	

Feedback

Approval Comment

Your request for approval of changes has been reviewed by the Office for Research Protections and Compliance (ORPC). The ORPC has determined your request to be administrative in nature therefore not requiring additional Institutional Review Board review (Guidance on IRB Approval of Research with Conditions http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/conditionalapproval2010.html#section-i). You may proceed with the modifications noted in the amendment. All other conditions and investigator responsibilities outlined in the original approval letter are still in force.

Protocol Amendment Form

Amendment

Has there any changes to any previous conflict of interest disclosure, as described by UMBC's

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Conflict of Interest policies?
N/A

Is this a change to the approved protocol title?
No change

Is this a change to previously approved procedures?
No Change

Is this a change in the principal investigator or research team members?
No change

Is this a change to previously approved measures, questionnaires, etc.? Upload your updates in the Attachment Section.
No change

Is this a change to sponsored funding? List any applicable KUALI UMBC Award Number, Institutional Proposal Number or Proposal Development Number. These numbers can be found in KUALI or in your OSP Notifications.
No change

Is this a change to previously approved recruitment or advertisement? Upload your updates in the Attachment Section
No change

Is this a change in the consent process and/or consent documents? Upload your updates in the Attachment Section
No change

Is this a change to data collection, storage and/or confidentiality?
No change

Is this a change in the research location?
No change

Was there a Change in Number of Participants and/or Participant Selection
Increase

How many participants did the study increase by?
9

Resulting Total to be Enrolled:

24

Reason for Change:

The original study was approved to interview 10-15 participants. The majority of the original sample was very similar in race and ethnicity. In order to diversify the sample, additional participants were recruited. As a result of the recruitment efforts, more participants were recruited than expected. However, the additional participants recruited will allow for greater diversification of the study sample.

Reanalysis of Risk

This modification DOES NOT increase the risks to participants in the approved protocol

Provide a narrative summary of all proposed modifications with a description of how the modifications affect research risks and benefits. Also describe any event or new data that precipitated the change.

With the recruitment of additional participants to diversify the study sample, there is no additional risk or benefits to the participants. The modification to the study will only include increasing the number of participants allowed to participate in the study from 10-15 to 10-24. The increase in the study sample was caused by increased recruitment efforts that were implemented in order to diversify the study sample. The original study sample was very similar in race/ethnic identity. This change in sample size is the result of a protocol deviation that has been submitted to the IRB for review.

General Information

Principal Investigator

Smith, Samantha Alyce

Permissions

Full Access

IRB CITI Training

  ⓘ Samantha Smith has no training courses on file.

People Attachments

Attachment

CITICOMPLETIONREPORT3749416 (1).PDF

Name

CITI Training Certificate

Attachment Type

Comments

Attachment

SMITH.SAMANTHA - 2020 COMPLETE RESUME.DOCX

Name

Resume

Attachment Type

Resumes

Comments

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General Questionnaire

For Legacy Protocol (data conversion record) only, select "Yes"
No

Indicate which type of review you believe this protocol will require.
Final review type designation will be assigned by the IRB office.

Expedited Category Research

Is this a collaborative project being conducted at multiple institutions? NOTE: This would require the use of an Institutional IRB Agreement (IAA). Later sections will ask whether or not UMBC will be the "IRB of Record"
Yes, UMBC is the reviewing IRB

Is this application associated with a Planning and Development activity?
No

Is this protocol supported by external funding
No

Does the Principal Investigator(s) or any of the project personnel have a financial interest related to the research or sponsor (e.g. payment for services, equity interests, etc.) that must be disclosed according to any of UMBC's Conflict of Interest policies?
No

Is the lead PI on this project a student? If yes, select the UMBC faculty advisor from the person list. Then, as an attachment to the protocol, upload the "Faculty Advisor IRB Protocol Certification" the Attachments Section.
No

Will you using the IRBs standard informed consent for your participants?
Yes

Expedited Categories

Expedited Review Categories (choose the category applicable to research)
6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for

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research purposes.

Protocol Information

Anticipated Project Start Date

December 14, 2020

Anticipated Project End Date

May 14, 2021

NOTE: The anticipated start date should be the date you plan to begin official IRB approved activities. The project may not start until final IRB approval is issued.

Provide a lay summary of the study, including the purpose and the research questions and hypothesis to be evaluated.

Throughout the world's history, people have engaged in civil disobedience or social movement activism to challenge and change the world around them. Social movements are the collective actions of persons most often from vulnerable populations that challenge societal powers with the desire of creating social change. For example, in the past 7 months, protests have taken place worldwide to oppose the killing of unarmed Black men and women at the hands of police officers in the United States (US). The work of social movements and activists has resulted in many global changes, especially in the US. Due to the amount of time and the risks involved in participating in protests, protesters are often young adults or college students. Many persons who fall in these classifications have more time and less responsibility that would be impacted by the risks associated with participating in protests. However, there is no established data on the impact that participating in protests has on the emotional wellbeing of students who choose to protest. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and emotional wellbeing of students who participated in protests that were related to or in support of the mission of the Black Lives Matter movement during 2020. This study will recruit and interview undergraduate students who participated in protests in 2020. Using a semi-structured interview guide, participants will be asked about how events leading up to the protest, the actual protest event, and the protest outcomes impacted their emotional

wellbeing. The research question for this study is: How did participation in the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement protests impact student activists' emotional wellbeing?

Who are the proposed participants?

The target population for this study is full-time undergraduate students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County aged 18-25 years old who participated in protests or demonstrations related to the mission or in support of the Black Lives Matter movement during 2020.

Procedure Narrative

List each procedure individually and provide brief details about the measures or questionnaires planned for use. When using multiple questionnaires, surveys or other measures, describe which questionnaires, surveys or other measures will be used for specific procedures. If research is conducted in an education setting, describe any alternative activities for students who do not wish to participate.

Participant recruitment – Digital recruitment materials will be circulated to recruit students from the target population. Recruitment materials will be shared through relevant academic department email lists and social media pages, through the email lists and social media pages of relevant Student Affairs departments, and through relevant student organization email lists and social media pages with the permission of each department and student organization representatives. Recruitment materials (attached) contain a brief description of the study's purpose, PI contact information, and a link to the study interest form. Interested participants will use the link to complete the study interest form.

Participant Eligibility – Interested participants will complete the Participant interest form, which will be administered via Qualtrics. Qualtrics is a secured survey platform that uses TLS encryption for all data. This form will ask for the participant's name, phone number, and email address. The form will also ask participants to answer questions to assess eligibility to participate in the study. An interested person will complete the interest form. Thereafter, they will be contacted by the study PI to review eligibility. At that time, the PI will explain the procedures of the study and allow the potential participant to ask any questions they may have. If a person is eligible and would like to

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participate in the study, the PI will move ahead with scheduling their interview time and date. At the conclusion of the call, the PI will send the participant the study consent form to sign and one consent form to keep. The participant will electronically sign and email back or print, sign, and scan a copy of the consent form to the PI. The participant screening data will only be accessible by the PI. Once participants have received their incentives for participation in the study, their participant interest form information will be deleted. Participant information (name, email, and phone number) collected during screening will be stored separately from the data that is collected for research.

Prior to the interview – Participants will receive an email or text reminder at least two days before their scheduled interview. Additionally, participants will receive an email or text reminder at least 1 hour before the start of their interview. In the reminder to be sent 1 hour before the start of the interview, participants will receive a unique Webex meeting link and a copy of the participant demographics form. Participants will be instructed to complete the demographics form before the start of the interview.

Participant interview – At the start of the participant interview, participants will be reminded that the interview is recorded and they will be allowed to ask any questions they may have about the study or study procedures. Additionally, participants that have been recruited through an academic department, will be reminded that participation in the study will not support any of their academic course grades. A semi-structured interview guide will be used to conduct the interview. Each interview will last 60 - 90 minutes.

After the interview – After the interview is concluded, participants will receive the code for their $25 electronic Amazon gift card.

After interviews have been conducted – After all the interviews within the study have been conducted, the audio and video files will be provided to Temi, a third-party transcription service, that will transcribe the files. Once

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the transcription is complete, the study PI will review each of the transcripts to correct any errors and to remove any identifiable names, information, or phrases. Temi is a commercial transcription service that uses software to transcribe audio and video files, meaning there is no human interaction with the data during transcription. All data files provided to Temi are stored and transmitted using TLS 1.2 encryption for the highest level of security.

Analysis – Transcripts will be analyzed using thematic analysis and grounded theory approach. Each transcript will be analyzed and the results of the analysis will be written in a manuscript. During analysis, data will be stored in the cloud based server, Box.

Conclusion of study- Audio data and transcripts will be stored in a cloud-based Box folder.

Will participants be compensated for their participation?
Yes

What steps will be taken to avoid coercion or undue influence?
Participation in the study is completely voluntary. At any point, participants are allowed to terminate their participation in the study. Study participants will be compensated at a reasonable amount in relation to the study activities that they are asked to complete. The minimum wage in the state of Maryland is $11 per hour. Since the study components that participants are being asked to complete will take just over 2 hours in time, participants will be compensated for two hours of work at the minimum wage pay rate.

What compensation is offered (e.g., money, gift cards, extra credit)?

Please note that UMBC Working Fund requires an IRB determination / approval letter from the

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investigator in order to obtain a working fund advance for participant payment.

Refer to the IRB's guidance at https://research.umbc.edu/participant-compensation/
Amazon gift card

What is the compensation amount?
$25

How will payments be tracked?
Payments to participants will be tracked using a Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet will contain participant identification numbers, which will be assigned to participants prior to the start of data collection, participant

preferred email addresses, the tracking number for the virtual gift card, and the date the gift card is emailed to participants.

Using UMBC Working Funds?

Please indicate if UMBC Working Funds will be used for participant compensation. Do not select Yes if personal funds are planned.
No

List an estimate of the time commitment from each participant for each phase of the study.
Completing interest form, eligibility screening, and interview scheduling: approximately 30 minutes Completing demographics form: approximately 5 minutes Interview: approximately 60 - 90 minutes

Select ALL the methods of data collection that will be employed in this study (select all that apply)
In person interviews
Internet surveys (including online and email based data collection)
Audio/Video recording

What devices will be use to collect / record data?
Computer
Laptop

Describe how long data will be stored/retained. Refer to the IRB's guidance on protocol files - https://research.umbc.edu/protocol-files-2/
Data for this study will be stored and retained for 5 years after the completion of the study

How will data or human biological specimens be collected and/or obtained?
For the purposes of this study, data will be collected through in-depth interviews conducted with participants. Interviews will be conducted using the secured video-conferencing software, Webex. Participants will provide demographic data through a short demographic survey that they will complete prior to the start of their interview. The survey will be administered online using the survey platform Qualtrics. In the event that participants do not consent to video recording through Webex, they will be provided with the study phone number and the interview will take place via phone and the

conversation will be recorded. If participants do not consent to audio recording, they will be not be allowed to continue participation in the study. The focus of the proposed study is the emotional experiences of students who exercised the legal right to protest. Potential participation in illegal activities during protests is beyond the scope of this study and is not relevant to the research questions that have been posed. According to the UMBC Guidelines for Reporting Sensitive information website, the only illegal information that a PI is obligated to report is past or current child abuse (https://research.umbc.edu/guidelines-for-reporting-sensitive-information/). In summation, neither the PI nor the University is obligated to report information to law enforcement about any potential illegal activity that a participant may disclose.

Who will have access to the data, biological specimens and/or to the codes?

Smith, Samantha Alyce

If a participant decides to withdraw from this study, what procedures will you use to protect the confidentiality of the data or biological specimens during your analysis?
If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, any data that has been collected from the participant including demographic information or interview data (recordings and/or transcripts) will not be used in data analysis. Their demographic data will only be used to explore potential commonalities among all participants who choose to withdraw from the study. Along with other participants, any identifying information will be removed from all study materials. The participant identification number, which will be assigned prior to the start of data collection will be maintained in order to appropriately

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identify participants who have voluntarily stayed in the study or withdrawn.

Where will data records, information or biological specimens will be stored during the course of the study?

During the course of the study, data collected from participants, including demographics survey, audio files and transcripts, will be stored on a password protected laptop and cloud-based Box folder that is only accessible to the PI. The laptop computer will be stored in a locked facility that is only accessible by the PI.

Where will data, biological specimens and associated protocol files reside upon completion of the study?

Upon completion of the study, the protocol files that need to be retained for up to 5 years after the completion of the study will be stored in a cloud-based Box folder that is only accessible by the PI.

Describe how data, biological specimens or study records will be kept confidential or explain how anonymity, privacy and/or confidentiality will be maintained?

The study procedures will take place via the secured video conferencing platform, Webex. A unique meeting identification number and link will be created for each participant. Only the PI and the participant will be allowed to participate in the video conferencing session. The video conferencing session will be locked at the start of the participant interview to ensure that no other parties are able to join the session. Participants will be provided with a participant identification number before data collection. Each participant interview will be recorded. All audio files and transcripts will be stored on a password-protected laptop computer that is stored in a locked facility and in a cloud-based Box folder. All files will only be accessible by the study PI. All audio files and transcripts will be analyzed in a secure location. Prior to the interview participation, potential participants will be asked to complete a study interest form, which will be made available through Qualtrics. The form will ask participants to provide their name, phone number, email address, and eligibility questions. Participants will be asked to complete a demographics survey at the start of their interview, which will be made available through Qualtrics.

At a minimum, the IRB requires investigators to maintain an accessible protocol file (in an office or secure device) for five (5) years past completion of the research activity

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What safeguards will be implemented to protect participant information and minimize risks?

password protections

coding systems

Will any data or biological specimens contain personal identifiable information (PII) or HIPAA protected health information (PHI) (e.g., names, addresses, student/employee IDs, IP addresses, photos, or audio/video recordings)?

Yes

Please Describe

As a part of this study, in-depth interviews will be conducted with participants. The interviews will be recorded. Due to COVID-19, interviews with participants will be conducted via the secured video conferencing software Webex. When recording, Webex will capture both audio and video recordings of the interview. However, only the audio transcript will be used during data analysis. Prior to the interview participation, potential participants will be asked to complete a study interest form, which will be made available through Qualtrics. The form will ask participants to provide their name, phone number, email address, and eligibility questions. The data from the interest form will only be used to determine participant eligibility and to set up interviews. Once interviews have been completed, the interest forms will be destroyed.

Will the collection / storage of data or biological specimens lead to a deductive disclosure of personal identifiable information (PII) (e.g., names, addresses, student/employee IDs, IP addresses, photos, or audio/video recordings)?

No

How will data be shared with research team members and/or collaborators?

While there are no formal collaborators on this dissertation project, the advising faculty at UMD may need to review the interview data that is collected. In the event that the advising faculty needs to review the collected data, the data will be shared using a secure cloud-based folder in Box. The advising faculty will be given permissions to view the established Box folder for the study that contains study protocols and data.

Location of Study
Select **ALL** the specific locations where data will be collected (select all that apply). Include specifics about the location

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UMBC campus

Note: Letters of cooperation from sites that generally consist of a broad statement indicating that the researcher will be allowed to recruiting participants, conduct his or her study procedures and collecting data at a specific facility are not considered human subjects use approval but may be submitted as part of the application. If local or institutional IRB approval from the research site required, upload a copy with the application.

Recruitment Process

Select **ALL** of the tools that you plan to use to recruit your participants

Flyers
Email
Use of Internet social media or online networking sites

Will participants experience direct benefits from participation in the study?
No

Will participants experience potential risks/discomforts from participation in the study? (including physical, psychological, social economic, monetary, reputational, legal or other potential risks)
Yes

Please describe the potential risks.
The proposed study, which includes in-depth interviews and a demographic survey, has two most closely related risks: breach of confidentiality and emotional discomfort. During the interviews, participants will recount their experiences and emotional states leading up to and during their participation in the 2020 Black Live Matter social movement activities. For some participants, this discussion may arouse emotional discomfort. During the interviews, participants will be recounting personal experiences related to their participation in the 2020 Black Live Matter protests. During the interviews, participants may inadvertently disclose identifying information about themselves or others who participated with them.

What procedure(s) will be utilized to prevent/minimize any potential risks or discomforts?
For the purposes of this study, data will be collected through in-depth interviews conducted with participants. Interviews will be conducted using the

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secured video-conferencing software, Webex. Participants will provide demographic data through a short demographic survey that they will complete prior to the start of their interview. The survey will be administered online using the survey platform Qualtrics. In the event that participants do not consent to video recording through Webex, they will be provided with the study phone number and the interview will take place via phone and the conversation will be recorded. If participants do not consent to audio recording, they will be not be allowed to continue participation in the study. The focus of the proposed study is the emotional experiences of students who exercised the legal right to protest. Potential participation in illegal activities during protests is beyond the scope of this study and is not relevant

to the research questions that have been posed. According to the UMBC Guidelines for Reporting Sensitive information website, the only illegal information that a PI is obligated to report is past or current child abuse (https://research.umbc.edu/guidelines-for-reporting-sensitive-information/). In summation, neither the PI nor the University is obligated to report information to law enforcement about any potential illegal activity that a participant may disclose. Participants will be made aware of the possibility of emotional discomfort during the consenting process. Participants will be able to terminate their participation in the study at any time without penalty. Additionally, all participants will be provided with a list of on-campus mental health resources that they may speak with further. To minimize the risk of a confidentiality breach, participants will be asked to minimize the disclosure of identifying information as much as possible during the interviews. Additionally, after the audio files of the interviews have been transcribed, they will be reviewed by the PI to remove any identifying information. All study data, which includes interview transcripts, demographic surveys, and participant interest forms, will be stored on password-protected computers located in locked facilities that are only accessible to the PI.

Participant Selection

Participant Selection

Select **ALL** the categories of participants that will be included in your study.
UMBC students

Describe the inclusion or exclusion criteria?

To be included in the study, potential participants must meet the following criteria: a currently enrolled full-time undergraduate student at UMBC, aged 18-25 years old, must have participated in 2020 Black Lives Matter protests or demonstrations. Due to the nature of how protests are organized, there is no way to formally verify past BLM protest participation beyond self-report. On the participant interest form, participants will be asked to denote whether or not they have participated in BLM protests during the specified time period. As the PI, I acknowledge the potential bias and error in this self-report method.

How will eligibility be determined and by whom?
Eligibility will be determined by having participants complete an interest form, which will be made available through Qualtrics. Each interest form will be reviewed by the PI to determine if participants meet the inclusion criteria for the study.

Will participants be selected for any specific characteristics, e.g., age, sex, race, ethnic origin, religion, social or economic qualifications, unable to read, speak or understand English, or those with limited literacy, etc. If yes, describe below.
Yes

Indicate the specific characteristics and the estimated number of participants you plan to recruit.
Participants will be selected based on their reported participation in 2020 Black Lives Matter social movement activities. 10 - 15 students will be recruited for the study.

Process of Consent

Indicate the informed consent process(es) and/or document(s) to be used in the study.
Adult Informed Consent
Email consent
Web-Based Survey Consent

How and where will the consent process take place?
The consent process will take place after participants are deemed eligible, which includes completing the participant interest form and speaking with the PI. After the participants are deemed eligible, they will be sent the consent

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form, which will be in the form of Docusign. Participants will receive a Docusign link via email to review and sign the consent form. The signed consent form will be securely stored in Docusign and will be available for participants to review after they have signed. Participants will also be able to download a signed copy of the consent form to retain for themselves, should they choose. In the event that a participant would like to provide a physical signature, they will be allowed to print, sign, and scan back a copy of the consent form. The scanned consent forms will be stored in the secured cloud based server, Box.

Who, among the research team members, will obtain consent?

Personnel
Smith, Samantha Alyce

What information will be provided to participants if a research study deals with anonymous research, recording instruments or reportable activities (e.g. illegal drug use, child abuse, etc.)?
This study involves recording instruments. Participants will be informed that the interviews will be recorded after they complete the interest form, during the consenting process, and reminded at the start of the interview. Participants will be provided with information on the purpose of recording the interviews, that only the audio portion of the recordings will be used for transcription, who will have access to the recording files, and storage of the recording files.

Attachments

Attachments
Please upload all relevant project documents to this section. Such documents include surveys, measures, questionnaires, etc. In addition, the IRB requires that consent and assent documents, recruitment flyers, and other documents prepared for research participant use be submitted in Kuali in Microsoft Word format. This will allow reviewers to add comments and suggestions.

Following final review, convert these documents to Adobe PDF and upload these versions in the Attachments Section.

Attachment

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SMITH_IRB CONSENT FORM.DOCX

Name

Consent Form

Attachment Type

Consent Documents

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_PARTICIPANT RESOURCE SHEET.DOCX

Name

Participant Resource Sheet

Attachment Type

Other

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_RECRUITMENT_FLYER.DOCX

Name

Recruitment Flyer

Attachment Type

Recruitment Materials

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_PROTOCOL AND INTERVIEW GUIDE_FINAL DRAFT.DOCX

Name

Interview Protocol

Attachment Type

Questionnaires

Comments

Attachment

DEMOGRAPHIC_SURVEY (2).DOCX

Name

Demographic Survey

Attachment Type

Questionnaires

Comments

Attachment

BLACK_LIVES_MATTER_PROTEST_PARTICIPANT_AND_WELLBEING_STUDY_INTEREST_FORM
(2).DOCX

Name

Study Interest Form

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Attachment Type

Questionnaires

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_EMAIL INVITATION.DOCX

Name

Email Inviation

Attachment Type

Other

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_RECRUITMENT_FLYER.PDF

Name

Attachment Type

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_PARTICIPANT RESOURCE SHEET.PDF

Name

Attachment Type

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Comments

Attachment

SMITH_EMAIL INVITATION.PDF

Name

Attachment Type

Comments

Attachment

SMITH_IRB CONSENT FORM_V2.PDF

Name

Consent Form Update

Attachment Type

Comments

Investigator Assurance

By checking the box, the investigator(s) certify that they will abide by all UMBC IRB policies and procedures and understand that no research activities will be conducted with human participants prior to obtaining the required approvals. The investigator(s) certify all personnel working on this protocol have the appropriate expertise to conduct research with human participants and have completed the applicable CITI training to conduct approved research procedures. The investigator(s) will inform the IRB at the earliest possible date of (1) any significant changes in the project with respect to human subject participation, (2) any adverse reactions or unexpected responses observed involving human participants, and (3) any need for continuation of the project activities beyond the approval date. Failure to submit a request for approval of such

changes will require a submission of a report of noncompliance to the IRB that must be approved before moving forward with the research.

I certify I have read and agree to the text above

Did you participate in a

BLACK LIVES MATTER

protest during 2020?

If so, this new research study may be for you!

This new study seeks to understand the experiences and wellbeing of students who participated in Black Lives Matter protests during 2020.

You may be eligible to participate if you:
- Are a full-time undergraduate student at UMBC
- Are between the ages of 18 & 25 years old
- Participated in Black Lives Matter protests during 2020

Participants will be asked to:
- Complete a 60-90 minute interview

Participants will receive a $25 gift card

Interested in participating?

Let us know here:
https://tinyurl.com/y3brvte5

SAMSMITH@UMBC.EDU

SCAN ME

I CAN'T BREATHE

BLACK LIVES MATTER

BLACK LIVES MATTER

B LACK LIVES MATTER

Appendix E: Interview Participant Interest Form

Q19 Thank you for your interest in is new study that seeks to understand the experiences and well-being of students who participated in protests that were related to or in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Please complete this short form and someone from the study will follow-up with you.

For questions regarding this form or the study, please contact:
Samantha Smith
samsmith@umbc.edu

Page Break ⸺

First Name

_____

Last Name

_____

Preferred Name

_____

Preferred Pronouns

_____

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

_____

Phone Number

_____

Email Address

_____

What is your preferred method of contact?

    ○ Phone (1)

    ○ Email (2)

    ○ Both (3)

What is the preferred time of day for communication?

    ○ Morning (1)

    ○ Afternoon (2)

    ○ Evening (3)

Page Break ——————————————————————————————

Are you currently an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)?

    ○ Yes (1)

    ○ No (2)

Are you currently enrolled as a full-time student at UMBC?
Full-time status is designated as being registered for 12 or more academic credits.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

During 2020, did you participate in a protest or a demonstration in support of the mission of Black Lives Matter movement?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

During 2020, which of the following social movement activities related to Black Lives Matter did you participate in? [Check all that apply.]

☐ Boycotted a business (1)

☐ Signed a petition (2)

☐ Participated in a protest or demonstration (3)

☐ Wore a piece of clothing [including cloth masks or face covering] that expressed your opinion of Black Lives Matter (4)

☐ Posted or discussed your opinions of Black Lives Matter on social media (5)

☐ Created art, media, or digital media to express your opinions on the Black Lives Matter movement (6)

☐ Wrote an article or letter about Black Lives Matter for school or community publication (7)

☐ Contacted political representative to tell them how you felt about the Black Lives Matter movement (8)

☐ Other (9) _____

☐   N/A (10)

Are you willing to participate in a 60 - 90-minute interview about your experiences and emotional well-being in relation to your participation protests in support of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Thank you for your interest in this research study. Unfortunately, **you are not eligible** to participate in this study at this time. If you know someone who may be interested in the study, please encourage them to complete this interest form.

Thanks again!

Thank you for your interest in this study. At this time, **you are eligible** to participate in this study. A member of the research study team will contact your via your preferred method of contact to confirm eligibility and provide you with additional information.

We look forward to speaking with you soon!

Appendix F: Interview Demographic Survey

Thank for agreeing to participate in this study. As stated previously, this study is being conducted to explore the experiences and well-being of students who participated in protests or demonstrations that are related to or in support of the Black Lives Matter movement during 2020.

As stated in the consent form that you signed, you are being asked to complete this demographic survey and a 60-90 minute interview as a participant in this study.

If you have questions about the study or this form, please feel free to contact:
Samantha Smith
samsmith@umbc.edu

What is your class standing?

○ First year or Freshman (1)

○ Sophomore (2)

○ Junior (3)

○ Senior (4)

Which gender identity do you most closely identify?

○ Man or Male (1)

○ Woman or Female (2)

○ Trans woman (3)

○ Trans man (4)

○ Gender queer (5)

○ Agender (6)

○ Genderfluid (7)

○ Non-binary (8)

○ Intersex (9)

○ My identity is not listed (10)

Which sexual orientation do you most closely identify with?

○ Asexual (1)

○ Bisexual (2)

○ Gay (3)

○ Lesbian (4)

○ Pansexual (5)

○ Queer (6)

○ Questioning (7)

○ Straight/Heterosexual (8)

○ My identity is not listed (9)

Which racial identity do you most closely identify with?

○ Asian/Asian American (1)

○ African American/Black (2)

○ Native American (3)

○ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (4)

○ White (5)

○ Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) or Arab Origin (6)

○ Bi-racial or Multi-racial (7)

Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino/a/x?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

What undergraduate degree are you pursuing? (Major)

_____

Are you studying at UMBC on an F1 Visa?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Page Break

Besides Black Lives Matter, what other types of protests have you participated in? (eg. Women's March, March for Science, etc.)

_____

How many protests have you participated in during your lifetime?

▼ 1 (1) ... 8 or more (8)

Are you a formal or informal member of a university, local, or national social movement organization?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

What is the name of the organization(s) you belong to?

_____

Over the past two weeks, how often have you experienced any of the following?

	Not at all (1)	Several days (2)	Half the days (3)	Over half the days (4)	Nearly every day (5)
Feeling depressed, down, or hopeless (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Little interest or pleasure in doing things (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Not being able to stop or control worrying (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Please rate how strongly you typically agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
In uncertain times, I usually expect the best. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I'm always optimistic about my future. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad. (3)	○	○	○	○	○

For the following statements, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in typically describing you.

	Not a very happy person (1) (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	A very happy person (7) (7)
In general, I consider myself (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

For the following statements, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in typically describing you.

	Less happy (1) (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	More happy (7) (7)
Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization typically describe you?

	Not at all (1) (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	A great deal (7) (7)
. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization typcially describe you?

	Not at all (1) (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	A great deal (7) (7)
. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix G: Email Invitation

Dear UMBC Student,

Did you participate in a Black Lives Matter protest during 2020? If so, this new research study may be for you.

The purpose of this new study is to explore the experiences and emotional well-being of students who participated in protests or demonstrations that were related to or in support of the mission of the Black Lives Matter movement during 2020. You are eligible to participate in this study if you: participated in a Black Lives Matter protest during 2020, are a full-time undergraduate student at UMBC, and are between the ages of 18 and 25 years old.

Participants will be asked to complete a 60-90 minute interview. All participant responses will be anonymous and confidential. Upon completion of study activities, participants will receive a $25 Amazon gift card.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participation in this study has no academic or coursework related benefit. If you are interested in participating, please let us know at:

https://umbc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a5ZoPQQd6HVNlwV

For more information about this study, please contact Samantha Smith (samsmith@umbc.edu).

Best
Samantha Smith

Appendix H: Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol

Welcome
Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study.

My name is Samantha Smith and I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, College Park. My work is focused on the health and well-being of college students, which is a focus of this study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who participated in protests or demonstrations during 2020 that were related to the mission or in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. I am specifically interested in how your participation in protests or demonstrations intersects with your well-being.

For the next 60-90 minutes, I will ask you a series of questions about your experiences during 2020. Please feel free to share as much as you would like. If there is a question that you do not prefer to answer, please just say "I'd prefer not to answer that question." If you need me to repeat a question, please feel free to let me know.

As a reminder, this interview will be recorded. During the interview, you may see me taking notes on our discussion. In the event that I am writing, please feel free to answer the question as fully and completely as you would like to. During the interview, you may hear me uses phrases such as, "Tell me how you feel." For the purposes of this interview, "feelings" refers to your emotional response.

This interview is completely voluntary. If at any point you would like to excuse yourself from the interview, you are welcome to do so. For the purposes of this study, you will be provided a participant identification number in order to protect your name and identification. During data analysis any personally identifiable names or phrases will be removed from the data. While every appropriate measure will be used to maintain confidentiality, I cannot guarantee total confidentiality, which was stated in the participant consent form.

What questions do you have before we start?

Turn on recorder.

Emotional Well-being
1. What does emotional well-being mean to you?
2. If you could describe your emotional well-being over that past year using 3 adjectives, what would they be? And why?

Background to participation
3. From your vantage point, why is there a Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020?
4. Of all the potential causes that you mentioned, which one was the most important to your decision to participate in protest during 2020?
5. What were your concerns about protesting in 2020?

During Participation in 2020
6. Describe the scene at the protests you attended.

Outcome of participation
7. In thinking about your 2020 protest participation, to what extent did the protest help to solve the problems your identified early?

8. In reflecting on your participation in protests during 2020, how has participating in protests personally impacted you?
9. With the recent election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, tell me how your level of activism will change.

Appendix I: Qualitative Codebook

Name	Description
Activist Identity	Any mention of the participant identifying themselves as an activist.
Background	When the participant describes previous or current experiences that provide greater context to the participant's life.
Activism or Civic Engagement Background	Any mention of previous or current experiences with civic engagement or activism tactics, such as protest participation, wearing clothes, posting on social media, signing petitions, or buycotting companies.
Childhood	When the participant describes the way they grew up or their upbringing, or the social or geographic environment they grew up in.
Emotional Background	Any mention of previous or current experiences that are related to the participant's emotional wellbeing, emotional language development, emotional states or emotional development.
Experiences with discrimination	When the participant describes current or previous personal experiences with discrimination or microaggressions that are based on the participant's social identities.
Parental background	when a participant mentions their parent's upbringing, political views, language choices, racial views, behaviors, or stance in relation to activism or social justice.
Physical Health background	Any mention of previous or current experiences that provide background or context to the participant's physical health or medical conditions.
School	Any mention of schools, K-12 or post-secondary, as the setting for learning or experiences that participants report changed their thinking or behavior.
Social Connections	When a participant mentions their social connections, friends, or social relationships.
Spirituality	Any mention of spirituality or religion related to emotional wellbeing or activism.
BLM Movement	Any mention of the Black Lives Matter movement including historical background of the movement from the participant's perspective or generally mentioning the BLM movement.
Belonging	Any mention from the Participant about them belonging t0o or finding community within the Black Lives Matter movement or associated movements.
Reactions to BLM	Any mention of reactions, including emotional reactions, to the BLM movement in general, supporters of the movement, or movement tactics, such as protests.

Name	Description
Concerns about Protesting	Participants describe the concerns that they had about protesting during 2020.
Arrest	Participants indicating that they were concerned about themselves or others at the protest being arrested during the protest or after the protest.
COVID-19 Concerns	Participants indicating that they were concerned about contracting COVID-19 while attending protests or transmitting the COVID-19 to family members after protest participation.
Police Concerns	Participants indicating that the presence or practices of police or law enforcement officials were a concern they had when they were making the decision to protest.
Violence	Any mention of violence among protesters or violence between protesters and police as a concern for protesting during 2020.
Coping	Any mention of how participants cope with or do not cope with their negative emotions.
Emotional Wellbeing	The descriptors, phrases, and words that participants use to describe their own emotional wellbeing over the past year (2020-2021).
Integrated Descriptors	Any use of words or phrases used to describe the emotional wellbeing of participants that would not be considered traditional feelings words or would be more applicable to describing an experience.
Negative Descriptors	When describing their emotional wellbeing, participants use words or descriptors that describe their emotional wellbeing in a negative way.
Neutral Descriptions	When describing their emotional wellbeing, participants use words or descriptors that describe their emotional wellbeing in a neutral way.
Positive Descriptions	When describing their emotional wellbeing, participants use words or descriptors that describe their emotional wellbeing in a positive way.
Traditional Descriptors	Any use of traditional feelings words or phrases (e.g. happy, sad, etc.) to describe the emotional wellbeing.
Future Activism or Civic Engagement	Any mention of participants' desires or plans to participate in protests or activism tactics in the future.
Meaning of Emotional Wellbeing	Emotional wellbeing refers to the definition or meaning that participants assign to describing emotional wellbeing from their own conceptual standpoint, experience, or general understanding of the phrase.
Motivations for Protesting	Participants described their own motivations for protesting in BLM protests during 2020.

Name	Description
Allyship	Participants indicating their participation in 2020 BLM protests was motivated by their role as an ally or for their desire to stand up for the Black community.
Availability	Any mention of increased amounts of time or the availability of protests as the reason for participating in BLM protests during 2020.
Breonna Taylor	Any mention of the death of Breonna Taylor, the details of her death, or the manner of her death as a motivator for participating in 2020 BLM protests.
George Floyd	Any mention of George Floyd's death or the manner of his death as a motivator for participating in 2020 BLM protests.
Personal Impact of Protest Participation	Participant reactions or emotional reactions following participating in protests.
Emotional Impact	Participants state the impact that participating in protest had on their emotions.
Reactions Post Protest Participation	Participant reactions or emotional reactions following participating in protests.
Reactions to deaths of black citizens	Any mention of the participant's reaction or emotional reaction to the deaths of black citizens by law enforcement or non-black citizens, videos of deaths of black citizens, or the news coverage of deaths.
Reactions to Protest	Any mention of the reactions or emotional reactions that participants had to protest participation.
Chanting	Any reactions or emotional reactions that participants had to chanting during protests or listening to chanting during protests.
Crowd Diversity	Any reactions or emotional reactions that participants had to the racial diversity of the crowd at the protests.
Police	Any reactions or emotional reactions that participants had to the presence of police or law enforcement officials at the protest.
Speakers and performances	Any reactions or emotional reactions that participants had to speakers or performances that were present during protests or the message delivered by speakers or performers.
Reasons for BLM Protest in 2020	Participants provide their understanding for the possible reasons that there were BLM protests happening during 2020.
COVID-19 Pandemic	Any mention of COVID-19 or related factors such as, increased time, as a reason for BLM protests during 2020.

Name	Description
Deaths	Any mention of the deaths of Black citizens, such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or Ahmaud Arbery, as possible reasons for BLM protests in 2020. This includes the manner of death as a possible reason.
Media Coverage	Any mention of news media or social media coverage of the socio-political climate or officer and citizen involved deaths of Black citizens.
Trump	Any mention of former President Trump's behavior, ideas, or rhetoric as a possible cause for protests during 2020.
Socio-political Climate Background	When participants reference the socio-political climate in the United States as it relates to politics, race relations, or divisiveness.
Reactions to the Socio-political climate	Any reactions or emotional reactions to the general sociopolitical climate in the United States.
White Privilege	Any mention of language or behaviors related to demonstrating the use of white privilege.

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