

ABSTRACT
EXPLORING THE DENIAL OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM:
IMPACTS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY, PERCEPTIONS
OF PRIVILEGE, AND THREAT

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This dissertation consists of one correlational and one experimental study grounded in Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive a significant portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The importance of one's social identity plays a crucial role in how they interpret intergroup relations. I explored factors that may explain the denial of institutional racism among White individuals, focusing on the importance of their racial identity and attitudes towards White privilege.

In Study 1, which included 193 White participants, a weak positive correlation was found between racial identity centrality and denial of institutional racism; however, this relationship was not mediated by attitudes toward White privilege. In Study 2, which involved 203 White participants, individuals were exposed to a collective group threat through an article about changing racial demographics in the United States, while the control group read a similar article about the changing demographics of dating app users. Results showed that collective group threat did not significantly affect racial identity, belief in White privilege, or denial of institutional racism.

These findings suggest that while racial identity centrality may influence beliefs about institutional racism, other social identities and factors, such as political ideology, also play critical roles in shaping White individuals' beliefs. Additionally, social identity threats related to resources or national culture may not impact the denial of institutional racism, yet other social identity threats may be more relevant and impactful in this context. This research underscores the complexity of attitudes toward institutional racism and indicates directions for future studies to better understand and address its denial.