

---

Racial Capitalism, Interest Convergence and the Perpetrator Perspective:  
An Understanding of Corporate Responses to #BlackLivesMatter in 2020

---

Erasmus School of  
Social and  
Behavioural Sciences



Thesis

20th of June 2021

Georgie L. Bews - 515529

Master's Thesis Project

Understanding #BlackLivesMatter

Supervisor: dr. Bonnie French

Co-reader: prof.dr. Willem Schinkel

Engaging Public Issues

Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Science

Erasmus University Rotterdam

## Abstract

The year 2020 may be seen by some as an anomaly of the modern era. At the same time as a global pandemic brought the capitalist West into a new health crisis, the unjust murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd by U.S. law enforcement brought on another social crisis. Thus, while modern American life came to a standstill around the pandemic, Black Lives Matter (BLM) regained momentum, with one notable call being directed at corporations to recognise these racial injustices and support racial equity. Of importance to this matter is the way capitalism is understood as *racial capitalism*, a system that, for the past 400 years, has expropriated and devalued Black labour and life. This research attempts to add to the body of research in the field of racial capitalism by expanding on how racial capitalism and its system of expropriation remain visible within corporate responses. This study performs a *qualitative thematic analysis* of the reaction to BLM 2020 by the 25 top-earning American corporations of 2020. The study introduces two thematic frameworks; 1) *the external corporate action frame* and 2) *the internal corporate action frame*. These frameworks measure the responses of corporations to BLM 2020 on social media and through their websites. The results of this research show that corporate responses fall within a two-step process towards equity, in which either a focus on diversity remains or, in some cases, a new focus on racial equity develops. By building on the theories of *interest convergence* and *the perpetrator perspective* from Critical Race Theory (CRT), the results nevertheless unearth how racial capitalism's system of expropriation remains visible within their responses.

**Keywords:** BLM, corporate responsibility, CRT, interest convergence, perpetrator perspective, racial capitalism

## **Preface**

### *Acknowledgements*

First, I would like to thank those who have helped, supported and directed me during my research. I would like to thank dr. Bonnie French for her guidance throughout this research, as her care for her thesis group and enthusiasm during each meeting has been greatly rewarding. She encouraged me to look at my research in a different light, enabling me to leave the sessions feeling optimistic and energised. As an aspiring future academic, I am grateful for her support of the process, listening ear and thoughtful feedback. I would also like to thank Jelle Walsteijn, Emma van der Hooft, and Paul Bews for their support while writing this research in partial lockdown at home. I similarly thank my thesis group members for sharing difficulties, ideas and inspiration, even as all meetings took place online.

### *Positionality*

I understand my position as a young, White woman of partially European descent in the matter. While I may not understand how racism feels personally, I can only imagine its massive impact on the Black community and other people of colour. Researching how racism lives on in modern-day society left me shocked yet motivated to bring these instances to light. I stand as an ally to Black and POC and hope to contribute to a just future by researching the chosen topic.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Regarding the ethical considerations of the research, careful consideration has been put into the decisions made in the thesis. The topic of racism is a challenging yet essential issue that must be discussed. The current thesis is able to critically and openly analyse the responses of the object of study, that of large corporations, with proper considerations. For further information, please refer to the ethics and privacy checklist in the appendix.

## Table of Contents

---

Introduction	4
Literature and Theory	7
Literature	7
Understanding Racial Capitalism	7
Racial Capitalism: Primitive Accumulation, Kapitalverhältnis and Expropriation	8
Racial capitalism in 2020, the Crisis of Modern-day Slavery, and Forms of Debt	9
Corporate Responsibility and the Standardisation of White Labour	11
The Morbid Symptoms of Racial Capitalism	12
Theoretical Framework	12
Methodology	14
The Method	14
Framing the data	14
The Sample	15
The Analysis	15
Results & Analysis	17
The Two-Step Process Towards Equity	17
Focus on Diversity	18
Focus on Racial Equity	20
The Path of Least Resistance: Interest Convergence in Corporate Responses	22
The Focus on Individualisation: The Perpetrator Perspective	24
Focus on Education	24
Focus on Entrepreneurship	26
Focus on Individual Perspectives	27
Conclusion	29
Limitations and Further Research	30
Bibliography	32
Appendix	39

---

## Introduction

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”

- Fraser, 2016, p.177

The year 2020 may be seen by some as an anomaly of the modern era. At the same time as a global pandemic brought the capitalist West into a new health crisis, the unjust murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd by U.S. law enforcement brought on another social crisis. These three police killings, which happened in quick succession, sparked a significant peak in Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests, with activity around the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter hitting a record level of 47,8 million interactions on Twitter in May and June 2020 amid protests that were spreading not only nationally, but globally as well (Anderson, Barthel, Perrin, & Vogels, 2020). However, these events formed only the tip of the iceberg, as, over the past years, the Black community found significant dissatisfaction with the Trump administration, remaining mass incarceration and high unemployment rates. Their frustrations were enlarged in 2020 as anger grew over the disproportionate deaths of Black people due to the COVID-19 pandemic, duly unearthing the extensive health and wealth gap along the colour line (Anderson, Barthel, Perrin, & Vogels, 2020). These conditions, which are part of a larger issue of systemic racism, repeatedly harm, attack, and devalue Black bodies. No longer anomalies, these injustices should instead be understood as a continuum of the long crisis of capitalism that has been ongoing for the past 400 years.

Thus, while modern American life came to a standstill around the pandemic, BLM regained momentum, with one notable call being directed at corporations to recognise these racial injustices and contribute to racial equity. Online, BLM protestors introduced hashtags to further awareness and allyship for the Black community, such as #SilenceIsViolence, #BlackOutTuesday, and #SupportBlackBusinesses. Due to the increased visibility of corporations online and changing social standards in consumers, corporations thus felt compelled to react to the call to respond and, in some cases, take responsibility (Koeze & Popper, 2020; Nguyen, 2020). By the 10th of June 2020, corporations had already pledged a total amount of \$1.7 billion to address racial injustices, with pledges ranging from \$1.5 million by Microsoft to \$1 billion by Bank of America (Bal, Venugopal, Thevenot 2020).

However, by May 2021, a year after the start of the BLM protests, it was found that most of the pledged money had not yet materialised (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2021).

Of importance to this matter is the deeper connection between capitalism and racism, coined as *racial capitalism* by Robinson in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of Black Radical Tradition* (1983). For the past 400 years, racial capitalism has allowed the White elite to accumulate profit by devaluing Black labour and life, a structure that still plays a central role in capitalism and racism to this day. Indeed, racial capitalism has manifested in multiple systems and incidents, of which the recent police killings are the latest instalment. They follow the historical continuum of the 400-year-old structure of racial capitalism, which includes the expropriation of Black bodies in the U.S. slavery system of the 18th century (Robinson, 1983), the murdering of Black-business owners in the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 (Messer, 2021), the racial segregation system of the Jim Crow laws in the 19th and 20th century (Edwards & Thomson, 2010), and the recent lead poisoning of Flint's Black population in 2014 (Pulido, 2016). Racial capitalism thus forms the context of modern-day race issues and the engagement of corporations with BLM.

The current research thus attempts to analyse corporate responses to BLM 2020 from the frame of racial capitalism. Previous research has looked towards corporate responsibility in racial issues (De Oca, Mason & Ahn 2020; Kyoung, Overton, Bhalla, & Li, 2021; Ciszek & Logan, 2018; Schulz, 2017; Herbert, 2020; Sobande, 2019; Francis & Robertson, 2021; Wilson, 2020; Grier & Poole, 2020; Ozbilgin & Erbil; 2021; Mogaji, 2020) by arguing from specific case studies such as Nike's Kaepernick campaign (Kyoung, Overton, Bhalla, & Li, 2021), specific industries such as the sports and real estate industries (Sobande, 2019; Francis & Robertson, 2021), or specific terms such as *socially conscious marketing* (De Oca, Mason & Ahn 2020) and *corporate political advocacy* (Ciszek & Logan, 2018). However, this literature does not situate corporate responses within the larger context of racial capitalism. Scientifically, the current research attempts to add to the body of research in the field of racial capitalism by expanding on how racial capitalism and its system of expropriation remain visible within corporate responses. Socially, it hopes to make visible how racial capitalism continues its "morbid symptoms", namely the death of three innocent Black citizens, and continue the discussion on the impact of racism in America's capitalist society. The research thus aims to answer the following research question:

*How have top-earning corporations in the United States reacted to #BlackLivesMatter in 2020, and how is racial capitalism's system of expropriation still visible in their responses?*

The research thus attempts to address the question from a sociological perspective, as it aims to form an understanding of the current relationship between corporations and racial capitalism in modern-day American society. First, the research introduces previous literature from racial capitalism to enable a deeper understanding of its history and legacy. Then, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is introduced, from which two theories, *interest convergence* (Bell, 1980) and *the perpetrator perspective* (Freeman, 1978), are used as analysis tools. Next, the study performs a *qualitative thematic analysis* of the responses to BLM 2020 by the 25 top-earning American corporations of 2020. Two thematic frameworks are established, *the external corporate action frame* and *the internal corporate action frame*, to measure corporations' responses to BLM 2020 on social media and through their websites. Finally, the results section analyses the positionality and responses of the corporations and presents three crucial findings from the corporate action frames. First, results show a two-step process in which corporations respond by focussing on diversity efforts or racial equity efforts. Second, the CRT theories of interest convergence and the perpetrator perspective are applied to critically analyse the corporations' responses as part of racial capitalism. Concluding the current research, the literature is revisited to show how the system of expropriation by racial capitalism remains visible within the corporate responses to BLM in 2020.

## **Literature and Theory**

In this section, existing and relevant literature will be visited to deepen an understanding of the dualism between capitalism and racism. Introducing C.J. Robinson's (1983) concept of racial capitalism, an analysis of more recent literature follows. After a clear image is given of the history of racial capitalism, two important theories from Critical Race Theory (CRT) will also be introduced as tools for the analysis, namely, interest convergence (Bell, 1980) and the perpetrator perspective (Freeman, 1978). Thus, the following literature and theory paint a background against which the corporate responses to BLM 2020 may be critically analysed.

## **Literature**

### *Understanding Racial Capitalism*

Over the past decades, a critical understanding has been formulated of how racism and capitalism are structurally entangled, forming one social and historical agent that structures society and human interaction through one system of racial capitalism (Fraser, 2016, p.172). The term is introduced by Robinson (1983) as a critical addition to Marx and Engels' theorisation of capitalism. Melamed (2015), in addition to Robinson's theorisation, explains that:

*“Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups [...] accumulation require[s] loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires. Most obviously, it does this by displacing the uneven life chances that are inescapably part of capitalist social relations onto fictions of differing human capacities, historically race” (p. 77).*

This understanding of racism thus paints the issue not as an individual entity but as taken up in a system of racial capitalism that uses racial inequalities to keep accumulating. Thus, in seeking to understand how racial capitalism plays a central role in structuring the capital order and the production of social separateness, a historical view of the construction of race must be taken (Melamed, 2015, p.78). The following paragraphs attempt to give such an overview.



*Racial Capitalism: Primitive Accumulation, Kapitalverhältnis and Expropriation*

Following Marx, Robinson (1983) states that American slavery “was a particular historical development for world capitalism that expropriated the labour of African workers as primitive accumulation” (p. 200). Indeed, Fraser (2016) argues that it was within the mercantile capitalist era of the 18th century that the process of primitive accumulation found its violent start through plundering cultural items and stealing Black bodies (p. 173). An extensive system of expropriation followed in the New World, in which Black labour became an essential cornerstone of an international economy. American slavery thus became “a subsystem of world capitalism” through which “the tissue of the nation would develop, coded by its slave past” (Robinson, 1983, p. 200).

The process of primitive accumulation, which started during slavery and continued into the industrial age of capitalism, extracted people, primarily Black, from social relations and put them into “Kapitalverhältnis” (capital-relations) in which their labour was expropriated and accumulated for the profit of the elite (Melamed, 2015, p. 80). In the industrial age, Black workers once again became predisposed to expropriation through capitalism, a dual system that “partitions, divides, and separates groups between political geographies *and* is the dominant relation to flow between and bind them” (Melamed, 2015, p. 81). Fraser (2016) adds to this thought by stating that capitalism, “on Marx’s view, is not an economy but a social system of class domination” (p. 164). Thus, as Black workers entered the “free” labour market of capitalism, they did not do so out of choice. Being excluded from class privileges based on race, Black workers had to sell their labour-power and all its economic and social surplus to survive, and the ruling elite could exploit this “free” labour for profit (Fraser, 2016, p. 164).

Racial capitalism thus builds on Marx’s theorisation of capitalism, but while Marx theorises a two-step process of exchange and exploitation, Fraser (2016) introduces a third: non-economic expropriation, or “accumulation by other means” (p. 166). This perspective shows capitalism as a social order that takes possibilities and resources away from Black workers to expand as “a world-system for profit and governance” (Melamed, 2015, p. 79). Thus, at the intersection between capitalism’s economic and political force, White labour is exploited, and Black labour is expropriated. Socially, this continued the ideological myth that White workers, based on their skin colour, were worth more than the “subordinate” Black labourers (Roediger, 1991, p. xx; Robinson, 1983, p. 203). According to Fraser (2016), it is this “joint determination” that anchored racial hierarchy in capitalist society (p.

170). While this determination enabled slavery in the New World, it now causes significant racial disparities in the modern era.

Indeed, one and a half centuries after the official abolition of slavery in the U.S., capitalism and racism still exist in a state of dualism, interconnected and interdependent in their meaning and function. Fraser (2016) argues that racial capitalism consists of two regimes in the modern era, the first being the “state-managed capitalism” (p. 175) of the 19th and 20th century that was expressed in the form of Jim Crow laws. However, decades after this racial system was challenged by the Civil Rights Movement, racial capitalism continues through the modern-day system of “financialised capitalism” (Fraser, 2016, p. 176). Central to this form of capitalism is the “state-financial-racial violence nexus” (Melamed, 2015, p.78), in which the economic and political systems have combined into one system of racial violence governance that enables capital accumulation based on race while justifying violence through police killings, health disparities, and underfunding. In the following paragraphs, some critical systems of this new regime will be highlighted, such as the off-shoring of expropriation, mass incarceration, financial debt, and the standardisation of racism within corporations.

#### *Racial capitalism in 2020, the Crisis of Modern-day Slavery, and Forms of Debt*

Fraser (2016) argues that there is a connection between racial capitalism and crises, as “expropriation serves as a critical, albeit temporary, fix for restoring profitability and navigating crisis” (p. 168). Indeed, due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, the consuming masses were kept in lockdown for an extended period of time, introducing another crisis as capitalistic accumulation came to an almost standstill. Following this crisis, Black communities were hit financially, with a sharp rise in unemployment and Black-owned business bankruptcies, and more frequently fell victim to the COVID-19 virus than White people. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 crisis is only one of many crises characteristic of financialised capitalism (Streeck, 2016, p. 34). Due to the constant state of “fixing for restoring profitability” of the past decades, expropriation has grown significantly within the regime and expresses itself in different racial systems, of which a few will be named below.

One system is the continuation of slavery through other forms, such as off-shored labour and prison labour. Indeed, the end of slavery in the United States did not end capitalistic slavery, as its world economy allowed racist politics to cross international borders (Robinson, 1983, p229; Fraser, 2016, p.172). Large systems of expropriation now remain in what used to be the peripheral colonies of the West and have recently settled in

BRICS countries. These countries have become the new drivers of accumulation and capitalist expansion (Fraser, 2016, p.176). Even in the United States, slave labour still exists in the form of the “prison-industrial complex” (Davis, 2003, p.86). Mass incarceration of disproportionately Black men, and increasingly Black women as well, has become an economy of its own, as prison labour has become a large part of the function of private, federal and state prisons, with labourers often offered a wage lower than the minimum wage per hour in the United States (Prison Policy Initiative, 2017). As Davis (2003) states, “[Black men and women] are considered dispensable within the “free world” but as a major source of profit in the prison world” (p.95). Indeed, while slavery was abolished by the 13th Amendment in 1865, one exception remains: punishment for crime (Prison Policy Initiative, 2017). Thus, while Black men and women fall victim to the prison-industrial complex, the system of slavery officially abolished one and a half decades ago remains a systemic part of modern-day society.

Another characteristic of financialised capitalism is *predatory inclusion*, “a process wherein lenders and financial actors offer needed services to black households but on exploitative terms that limit or eliminate their long-term benefits” (Seamster & Charron-Chenier, 2017, p.199). Predatory inclusion leads to a process of debt accumulation in which “expropriation has become ubiquitous” but affects Black people more specifically than White people (Fraser, 2016, p.176). Two debt systems are most damaging, namely, educational debt and sub-prime loans. The former is a type of racialised debt that forms due to the high valuation and financialisation of U.S. higher education. While an aura of possibilities and freedom hangs around education, and financialisation offers the promise of financial investment returns, this promise is concentrated primarily on wealthy White colleges, while increasing financing costs concentrate within poorer and Blacker institutions (Eaton et al. 2016). Seamster and Charron-Chenier (2017) find that Black students often show lower completion rate, lower earnings, and higher unemployment (p. 200). Thus, while student loans are equally high between White and Black students, the differences in profit allow more significant debt issues to form for Black students. The latter form of racialised debt is that of higher loans and mortgages for Black house-owners and entrepreneurs. Lower wages, higher consumer spending costs, and increased access to credit types such as sub-prime loans, enable Black people to more quickly end in debt (Dwyer, 2018, p.237; Beeman, Silfen Glasberg, Casey, 2010, p.27). Thus, hidden by commodity culture and the American Dream, these forms of debt meanwhile aid racial capitalism in “defining social inclusion and exclusion, directing life chances, and facilitating oppression” (Dwyer, 2018, p.237).

### *Corporate Responsibility and the Standardisation of White Labour*

As crucial to the current state of racial capitalism are the internal systems which function to uphold racial capitalism internally, on the corporate workspace. Below, a few of these systems are named.

One of these systems is that of diversity rhetoric. Over the past decades, a rhetoric has grown through which corporations can exert responsibility and action for diversity while ignoring the specific conversation around racism (Wade, 2004, as cited in Brown, 2004, p. 1496). Referring to this focus on diversity, Melamed (2015) argues that it indeed “(...) *minoritises, homogenises, and constitutes groups as separate through single (or serial) axes of recognition (or oppression), repels accountability to ongoing settler colonialism, and uses identitarianism to obscure shifting differentials of power and unstable social relations*” (p.79). This homogenisation thus sets off different groups as simultaneously singular and different from the standard White labourer. Indeed, Wade (2004, as cited in Brown, 2004) argues that a more specific focus on racism in corporations would positively benefit the discussion and improve corporate culture to more equality.

However, another system plays an additional role, namely the standardisation of White male labour, around which an “aura of freedom” hangs. This system draws a sharp contrast with the devalued aspect of Black labourers, who have always worked within a subjected position. According to Fraser (2016), this system still regulates the position of Black workers in the labour market (p. 172). Langvoort (2004, as cited in Brown, 2004, p. 1496) finds that those who rise high up the corporate ladder often have three essential qualities more often associated with White males, namely overconfidence, risk tolerance and ethical mouldability. However, these are not necessarily positive attributes, and Langvoort (2004, as cited in Brown, 2004, p. 1496) finds that a more diverse ladder would lead to better business. However, more often, those at the top of the ladder oppose these efforts, and those who do rise to the top may take part in door-closing activities (Carbado & Gulati, 2004, as cited in Brown, 2004, p. 1497).

Other research has also looked into the way post-racist and anti-racist values dominate corporate life. For instance, Noble and Roberts (2019) analyse how values of freedom, intellect, and the myth of meritocracy led to White male dominance within technological corporations such as Google and Facebook (p.15). Similarly, Mercado (2018) argues that corporations take up social issues in commodified messages, arguing that “the commodification of messages of antiracism operate alongside tried and true techniques and logics of ‘exploitation, expropriation, [and] expulsion’ of racialised and colonised peoples

and lands” (p. 1). An instance of such an expulsion by corporate America can be found in the Flint water crisis, in which racial capitalism led to the poisoning of the mostly Black population of Flint in 2014 (Pulido, 2016). The city, built around the factory of General Motors, attracted a large community of Black factory workers until their work became off-shored in the 1980s. Three decades after the corporation abandoned the Flint population, racial governance and shrinking investments allowed malpractices to take place in the water system, through which the inhabitants were poisoned with lead. This specific event shows how Black bodies are considered surplus once they are no longer needed by the racial system of expropriation (Pulido, 2016, p.2).

### *The Morbid Symptoms of Racial Capitalism*

Thus, in concluding the literature, capitalism is not a system in which racial tendencies are accidental, but capitalism *is* racial capitalism, a system in which accumulation for profit relies entirely on the inequalities between White and Black workers. Through the devaluation of Black labour, Black life within American capitalism has become surplus. The modern-day effects of this are seen in the way slavery as a system has continued into new forms, such as off-shored low-wage labour and private prison factories, predatory inclusion that leads to significant disparities in debt and more specific instances such as the poisoning of Flint’s population. In 2020 specifically, new factors had added to the crisis of racial capitalism. It is in this condition of crises that expropriation grows as racial capitalism attempts to fix itself. As Fraser argues: “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (2016, p.177).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In light of the previous literature on racial capitalism, it is thus of interest to analyse the way corporations respond to issues of racism in modern-day society. The current research takes inspiration from CRT to develop a deeper understanding of the frameworks through which racial capitalism functions on a day-to-day basis. CRT is “an approach that offers a radical lens through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society” (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011, p. 1). CRT literature thus understands racism as the product of power relations that are both infrastructural and systemic. The current research attends to and builds upon Bell’s *Interest-Convergence dilemma* (1980) and Freeman’s *perpetrator perspective* (1978) to analyse the response of corporations around BLM 2020.

Bell (1980) argues in his article “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma” that the outcome of the named case and the consequent end to school segregation were enabled by a short period of time in which there was no conflict of interest. He presents the principle of interest convergence, in which the interests of Blacks are only provided when this benefits and is accommodated by the interests of Whites (Bell, 1980, p. 523). He argues that white stakeholders are “not simply those concerned about the immorality of racial inequality, but also those whites in policymaking positions able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow the abandonment of segregation” (Bell, 1980, p. 524). The principle of interest convergence thus introduces a tool to understand the exchanges between Black interest and White interest, not only in education but, as will be argued further, also in corporations.

Another essential tool is introduced by Freeman (1978), who argues that racism can be analysed either through the victim's perspective or the perpetrator. While the victim's perspective sees racism as a series of conditions, the perpetrator perspective sees racism as a series of actions (Freeman, 1978, p. 1052). He argues that “the perpetrator perspective presupposes a world composed of atomistic individuals whose actions are outside and apart from the social fabric and without historical continuity” (Freeman, 1978, p. 1054). From this perspective, racism is thus not systemic but individual. Two principles work within this perspective, namely that of fault and causation. The principle of fault allows racism to be shifted away from the perpetrator and to the victim's responsibility, merit, and fate. Second, the principle of causation regards racism as accidental or caused by past wrongdoings over which present perpetrators would have no control (Freeman, 1978, p. 1056). According to Freeman (1978), certain events can undermine the perpetrator perspective within society, putting forward for a brief moment the victim's perspective instead. However, the perpetrator remains dominant and continues to sketch the outlines of racism even in modern-day society (Freeman, 1978, p. 1057).

The two theories by Bell (1980) and Freeman (1978) are thus used as analytical tools in addition to the literature on racial capitalism to analyse corporate responses to BLM in 2020. In the following section, the study will be outlined.

## **Methodology**

The current research aims to unearth an essential interaction of modern-day racial capitalism, namely, how American corporations interacted with BLM in 2020. In the following section, the executed study is outlined.

### *The Method*

The chosen method for the study was a qualitative thematic analysis. According to Bryman (2015), qualitative research puts “emphasis on how individuals interpret their social world and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (Bryman, 2015, p.33). A qualitative approach thus allowed the research to focus on corporate interpretations of #BlackLivesMatter and their position and responsibility within racial capitalism as a social reality. In addition, a *thematic analysis* was undertaken, through which general themes could be extracted from the data sample (Bryman, 2015, p.697).

### *Framing the data*

In order to structure the data, the study took a framework approach in which two overarching *corporate action frames* were established to sketch a complete image of corporate responses to BLM. The data was divided into two frameworks. First, the *external action frame* analysed the social media posts of corporations on Twitter and Instagram, enabling insight into how corporations portray their efforts around societal issues to be. Second, the *internal action frame* analysed the web pages of corporations that addressed racial (in)equalities and diversity efforts, enabling insight into the ways corporations acted upon their external promises. Five subframes were further established, *leadership, action, acknowledgement, support, and silence*, to analyse whether discrepancies took place between corporations' internal and external action frames and the position of corporations relative to each other. These frames enabled the study to position corporate responses and unearthed important themes and subthemes. For further explanation of the frames' content, refer to Table I, “*Further clarification of the measures for the external and internal action frames*” of the appendix.

### *The Sample*

The study examined the corporate action frames of the 25 top-earning American corporations according to the 2020 ranking by Fortune (Fortune, 2020). The corporations belonged to the industry leaders of *technology* (Amazon, AT&T, Apple, Alphabet, Verizon Communications, Microsoft), *healthcare and wholesale* (AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health, McKesson, Walgreens Boots Alliance, CVS Health, UnitedHealthGroup, Cigna), *food & drug stores* (Costco Wholesale, Walmart, Kroger), *banking and finance* (JP Morgan Chase, FannieMae, Bank of America, Berkshire Hathaway), *automotive* (Ford Motors, General Motors), and *petroleum refining* (ExxonMobil, Chevron, Marathon Petroleum).

### *The Analysis*

As discussed previously, both the external and internal corporate action frames of the corporations were analysed. The external responses of the corporations were analysed on Twitter and Instagram. The study examined corporate posts related to the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the consequent BLM protests, Juneteenth, and the trending hashtags #BlackOutTuesday and #SupportBlackBusiness. Posts were hand-coded, both through text and visuals, by the following themes: action/reaction, direct/indirect terms, positive/negative terms, reference to the catalysing events, trend participation, support of BLM or the Black community, making of donations, taking of responsibility, and announcement of goals/programmes. Then, the posts and corporations were placed within one of the five corporate action frames. A timeframe of 3 months was applied to examine the posts, ranging between the 26th of May 2020 (the first day of BLM protests) until the 31st of August 2020, as corporations were expected to react within that timeframe.

The internal responses of the corporations were analysed through the websites of the corporations, specifically through the web pages that focussed on diversity, inclusion, sustainability, and racial equity. The study used an archive system (archive.org) to analyse whether the specific pages had been added or updated after BLM in 2020. As the internal analysis focussed mainly on the sustained action towards racial equity, the pages were analysed no later than the 26th of May 2021, allowing a timeframe of a year for corporations to state their response. The pages were hand-coded through the following themes: timeframe of page update, amount of click-throughs needed to reach page, direct/indirect terms, positive/negative terms, reference to catalysing events, support of BLM or the Black community, taking of responsibility, mention of existing policy and policy change, goals



and programmes named, measurability of the effort, and focus on external/internal action. Then, the corporations were placed in one of five internal action frames. After the external and internal coding was complete, the frame alignment of each corporation was analysed to unearth further resemblances and differences.

## Results & Analysis

Combining the literature from racial capitalism and the tools from CRT, the following results section analyses the findings in three different sub-sections. In order to answer the research question, the first sub-section will discuss how the top-earning corporations of the United States responded to BLM in 2020. Then, the following sub-sections will discuss how the racial system of expropriation remains visible within their responses. The findings of the study, consisting of an overview of the corporate action frames, programme focus and extracted quotes, can be found in the appendix under ‘*Table II. Findings of Corporate Action Frame per Corporation*’. For reference during the following analysis, the frame alignment of the corporate action frames is first presented. The analysis will also make further use of a variety of extracted quotes to illustrate the results.

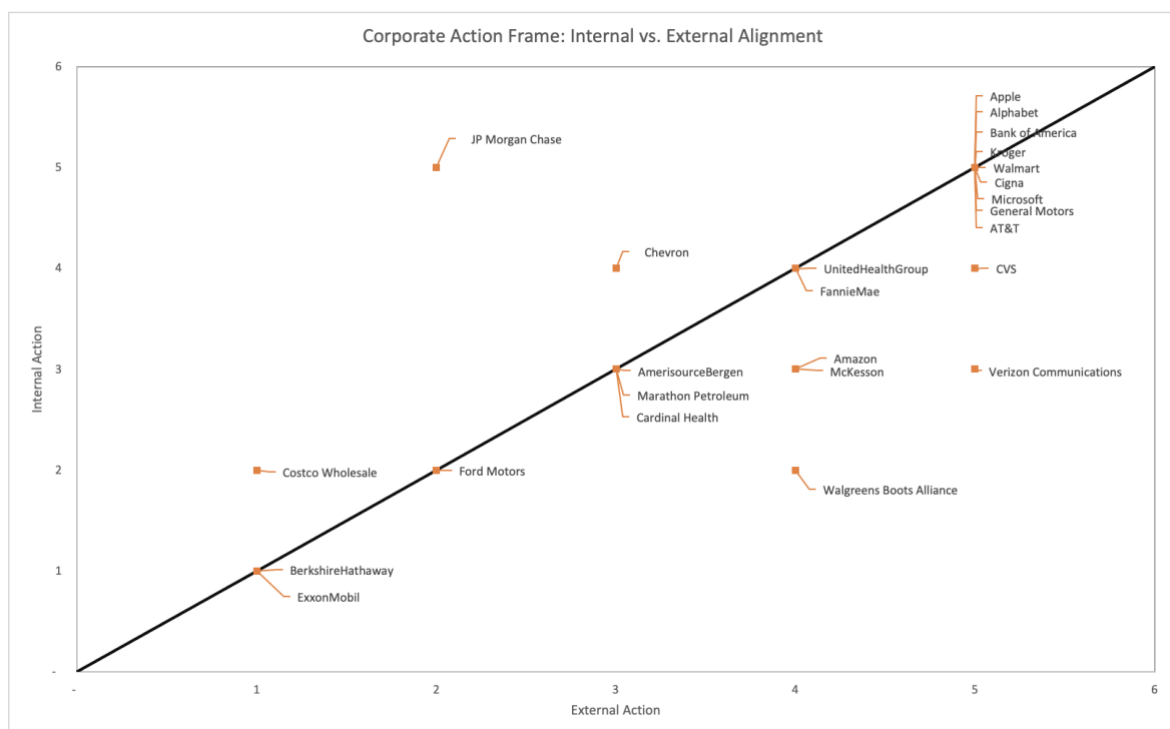
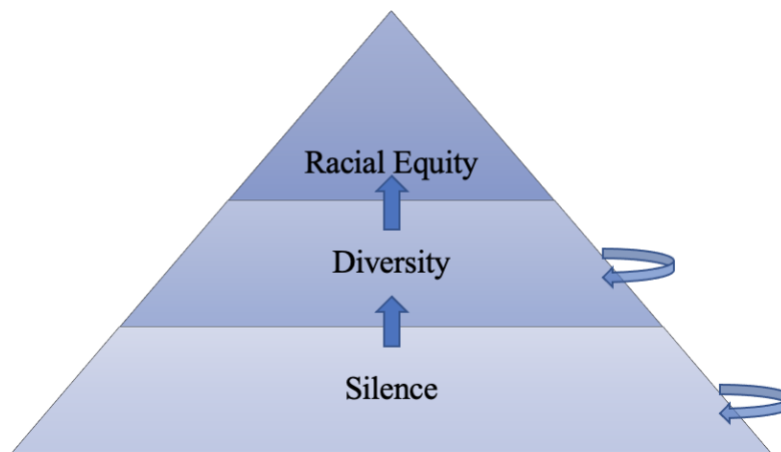


Figure 1. Frame Alignment of Internal vs External Corporate Action Frame per Corporation. 1=Silence, 2=Acknowledgement, 3=Support, 4=Action, 5=Leadership.

### The Two-Step Process Towards Equity

A specific response pattern was found during the analysis of corporate responses to BLM 2020, named here *the two-step process towards equity*. This process shows that corporations either updated or developed a focus on diversity or moved from diversity to racial equity. In the following section, this two-step process will be analysed.



*Figure II. Two-Step Process Towards Racial Equity*

### *Focus on Diversity*

The first component of the two-step process, the focus on diversity, shows that many corporations focussed on diversity and inclusion internally following BLM 2020 (*see Table II in the appendix*). It was found that a total of 16 corporations shifted the dialogue around racism towards an overall focus on diversity, in which efforts were communicated for not only the Black community but also women, veterans, disabled workers and the LGBTQ community. The following example by Marathon Petroleum shows how corporations were able to use the diversity rhetoric in their response in order to ignore or bypass the issue of racism following BLM 2020:

*“At Marathon Petroleum we work every day to Enhance Life's Possibilities through diversity in culture, background, perspective and experiences. Together, we are working to make a positive difference. #ProudToBeMPC”* (Marathon Petroleum, 2020)

Indeed, following Melamed (2015) and Wade (2004, as cited in Brown, 2004), the positive message of “diversity in culture, background, perspectives and experiences” enables Marathon Petroleum to ignore the issue of racism by including multiple oppressed groups in their effort, while simultaneously homogenising their experiences. The issue of racism thus becomes communicated as a diversity of “perspective”, the killings of Black people as a diversity of “experiences”, and severe inequalities as diversity in “background”. Communicating such a focus on “diversity in culture” thus flattens the issue of race, as it

attempts to compare and make compatible the oppression of Black people with the oppression of other groups.

Similarly, corporations communicated a focus on specific diversity groups, which include all groups besides White males, even when they are the main population of corporate America's workforce:

*"We also support several Employee Networks focused on key populations – including females, LGBTQ, veterans and ethnicity"* (Marathon Petroleum, n.d.)

*"Our Office of Minority and Women Inclusion (OMWI) is dedicated to diversity and inclusion programming, engagement, strategic planning, metrics, and reporting."* (FannieMae, 2021)

Indeed, such rhetoric enables the standardisation of White male workers, as their exclusion from diversity and inclusion efforts naturally places oppression outside the White male perspective. However, this is not to say that White males should be included in diversity efforts, but instead, that the focus on diversity homogenises different oppressions while simultaneously ignoring the severe inequality between them and the White male oppressor. Indeed, following Fraser (2016), a distinction is thus created between the valued White, male labourer and the subjected, devalued labour of all who fall under the focus on diversity. Furthermore, by placing diversity outside the position of the White male, it simultaneously ignores the connection that they have, historically and currently, with the role of the oppressor within racial capitalism.

One other way that the issue of racism is ignored is by communicating diversity as a previous effort that is already part of corporate culture:

*"It has always been Costco policy that employees deserve an environment free from all forms of unlawful employment discrimination"* (Costco Wholesale, 2021)

*"Our history of making good on our promise to do good"* (Verizon, 2021)

Indeed, many corporations highlighted past policies, putting forward a post-racial perspective on the matter. By arguing that diversity efforts are already in place or have been previously made, present issues of racism are ignored and made invisible. Meanwhile,

corporations can place themselves beyond race, as their culture is already inclusive, against “unlawful employment discrimination”, and has a history of “making good”.

Thus, the focus on diversity following BLM 2020 shows that corporations often shifted focus to messages of diversity and inclusion by treating separate oppressed groups as one homogenised factor. By excluding White males from this focus, corporations are thus able to ignore the historical connection between White and Black labourers in racial capitalism. Further, by focusing on past policies, corporations can take a post-racial perspective in response to BLM, as their efforts have already been made. All in all, the focus on diversity reveals how corporations are able to shift focus from the issue of race to a positive image of diversity and inclusion. Meanwhile, the “unequal differentiation of human value” remains, through which capital is able to keep accumulating (Melamed, 2015, p. 77).

### *Focus on Racial Equity*

The second component of the two-step process shows that three corporations moved to a focus on racial equity following BLM 2020. These corporations thus continued their external promises by focussing on the issue of race internally as well. This process can be seen in Apple’s step from an “Inclusion and Diversity” page to an additional “Racial Equity and Justice” page in 2021, and Cigna’s incorporation of “Advancing the Race Dialogue” and JP Morgan’s addition of “Advancing Black Pathways” pages at the end of 2020. Three other corporations, Walmart, Alphabet and Microsoft, maintained focus on diversity pages but added click-through links that led to different pages or blog posts addressing racial equity.

Interestingly, the focus on racial equity communicated specific actions that similarly bypassed the systemic characteristic of racial capitalism. Nevertheless, the intention to address systemic racism is communicated externally:

*“We have unfinished business in the effort to end systemic racism. Apple will be a force for change”* (Apple, 2020)

*“The goal of the center will be to address systematic racism in society head-on”* (Walmart, 2020)

However, analysing the web pages more critically, it is found that both corporations name three significant commitments: the education of minorities, the supporting of economic equality, and advocating for criminal justice reform. Addressing the education of minorities,

Walmart focusses on building pipelines for high demand, higher-wage jobs while investing in Black workers without college degrees for senior-level positions (Walmart, 2021), and Apple focusses on “creative expression” and “inspiring” innovators in STEM and coding pipelines (Apple, n.d.). Following Eaton et al. (2016), these focusses feed into the higher valuation and financialisation of education rather than addressing systemic issues such as educational debt and concentrations of financial investment returns. Similarly, the focus on economic equality is explicitly aimed at uplifting a small group of business owners. For instance, Apple’s commitment to “making more room at the head of the table for Black and Brown businesses” (Apple, n.d.), and Walmart’s support of “Black entrepreneurs with existing businesses that supply goods and services to the retail industry” (Walmart, 2021) focus on the advancement of businesses related to their industry. What is more, Carbado and Gulati (2004) argue that those who do rise to the top are susceptible to taking part in door-closing activities (As cited in Brown, 2004, p. 1497).

By focussing on advancing specific minorities in education and existing businesses in their field, these corporations do not address systemic racism but instead create a small group of profiteers while enabling those corporations to uphold an ideology of “racial equity” to their name. Simultaneously, the focus on education and economic equality within the issue of systemic racism enables these corporations to take part in a regulating role, as they are able to attach worth to educational and economic freedom while meanwhile deciding on the position of Black people within those ideologies (Noble & Roberts, 2019).

Similar to the focus on education and entrepreneurship is the focus on health, such as seen in Cigna’s response:

*“Acts of racial injustice can bring on many emotions. Find strategies for maintaining your well-being and resources to take action and build better understanding”* (Cigna, n.d.).

Cigna’s focus on racism as an issue of individual well-being enables a post-racist perspective of racism, as they treat racism as an “emotion” instead of addressing the significant health disparities brought on by modern-day racial capitalism, which has been enlarged during the COVID-19 pandemic. While their position as a health insurance corporation could enable them to respond to these systemic issues, they instead minimise racism to a factor comparable to other challenges such as dental health, substance use, and eating disorders, as mentioned on their page (Cigna, n.d.).

In conclusion, while these corporations claim to address the systemic character of racism and focus on racial equity, their attempts nevertheless minimise and individualise the consequences of racial capitalism. By creating distinct and solvable issues within education, entrepreneurship, and well-being they are able to bypass the systemic character of racism, thus enabling the White values of racial capitalism to proceed. Thus, even though the study found that corporate responses were measurable through a two-step process, neither focus truly confronted the systemic characteristic of racial capitalism. Having now sketched an outline of the corporate responses, the following sections will build on CRT theories to specifically answer how the system of expropriation of racial capitalism remains visible in their responses.

### **The Path of Least Resistance: Interest Convergence in Corporate Responses**

The study revealed multiple instances in which Bell's theory of interest convergence played a role in corporate responses to BLM. As Bell (1980) argues, white stakeholders are "not simply those concerned about the immorality of racial inequality, but also those whites in policymaking positions able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow the abandonment of segregation" (p. 524). The following section introduces examples of corporate responses in which economic and political advances visibly drove the accommodation of Black interests during BLM 2020.

First, the economic interest behind corporate responses to BLM 2020 is made visible through a "shift in focus" found in the external and internal responses. The following examples illustrate how, externally, a concern with the "immorality of racial inequality" is first communicated:

*"AmerisourceBergen is guided by our purpose and principles, and unity in our responsibility to create healthier futures necessitates action to address and attack systematic #inequality"* (AmerisourceBergen, 2020)

*"We absolutely denounce hatred, racism, stereotyping and bigotry in any form"* (Walgreens Boots Alliance, 2020)

The following extracts, however, show how corporations were instead concerned with the economic advances following BLM 2020:

*“To create healthier futures and accelerate business results by inspiring the best and brightest global talent across all dimensions of diversity to perform at their full potential”*  
(AmerisourceBergen, 2021)

*“We know that diverse teams improve our performance, drive our growth and enhance engagement among ourselves and with our customers and suppliers.”* (Walgreens Boots Alliance, 2021)

Indeed, while these corporations first upheld a facade of moral values externally, their internal responses show the economic interest that formed the basis of their engagement during BLM 2020. The focus on attacking systemic inequality is indeed replaced by the intention to accelerate business results, performance, growth and engagement. Interest convergence is thus made visible here as economic interest, as the acceleration of Black employees is directly connected to increased profit accumulation. Corporations thus increased focus on improving their education and career possibilities, as it not only created value for individual Black workers but accelerated profit accumulation as well.

Second, political interests also played a role in the corporate responses to BLM 2020, as increased focus was put on corporations and their responses on social media. Through hashtags such as #SilenceIsViolence, corporations were put in a position where they either had to react or face backlash due to a non-responsive attitude (Nguyen, 2020). Some corporations, such as Berkshire Hathaway and ExxonMobil, decided on the latter approach, as their more invisible position as an investment corporation and petroleum refining corporation, respectively, may have enabled them to avert responsibility. However, other corporations may have been able to bypass backlash and save their profit systems by temporary focussing on Black interest. At least two corporations were found to take this strategy, where they are able to react and simultaneously avoid real change. Amazon, for instance, donates a sum of money to social justice organisations, stating that:

*“We stand in support of organisations that are making a difference”* (Amazon, 2020)

Amazon thus effectively diverts focus from internal change by supporting organisations that are “making a difference”, while potentially accommodating their own political interests to continue their own profitable system of expropriation. General Motors, on the other hand, internalises a significant goal following BLM:



*“During 2020, as social and racial justice protests escalated across the U.S., GM took decisive actions and aimed to lead by example and stand up against injustices prevalent in society by setting a goal to become the world’s most inclusive company” (General Motors, 2020)*

However, the goal to become “the world’s most inclusive company” may be more symbolic than it is attainable. Indeed, instead of genuinely addressing systemic racism, such a goal instead feeds into the political interest of the corporation, as General Motors was only recently connected to the lead poisoning of the Black community of Flint (Pulido, 2016). Thus, large yet unattainable promises may have less to do with morality and more with diverting focus from past wrongdoings.

Interest convergence thus becomes visible in the responses of corporations. Indeed, economic interest in the acceleration of Black workers may have enticed corporations to react. Meanwhile, political interest may have played a role as corporations faced potential backlash online. Thus, while the interest of Black people was temporarily accommodated following BLM, corporations were able to shift the narrative away from real, systemic change.

### **The Focus on Individualisation: The Perpetrator Perspective**

The study also revealed how Freeman’s (1978) perpetrator perspective remained dominant in the corporate responses. According to Freeman (1978), the perpetrator perspective takes an atomistic view of racism, seeing it as outside of the social fabric and without historical continuity. Within corporate responses, the perpetrator perspective manifested through the uplifting of individual Black people through education and entrepreneurship programmes and focusing on individual perspectives on social media. In the following sub-section, examples of responses will indeed illustrate how corporations were able to fit the issue of racism into their own capitalist perspective.

#### *Focus on Education*

Among the wide variety of goals introduced in response to BLM 2020, education programmes became an important focus for a large group of corporations. Examples of such programmes can be found in Apple and Alphabet’s commitments, which commit a part of

their effort to educating minorities by, among other things, investing in representation in STEM fields:

*“Education is critical to our commitment to racial equity”* (Alphabet, 2020)

*“We know STEM (science, engineering, technology, and mathematics) is the backbone of our modern economy. A solid education in STEM can unleash any young person’s potential. So we’re partnering with schools serving Black and Brown students to enrich their STEM programming.”* (Apple, 2021)

At first, programmes towards education may seem a positive step for corporations to take in light of BLM 2020. However, following Freeman’s theorisation on the perpetrator perspective, it may be stated that such programmes take the perpetrator's perspective instead of the victim. Utopian in nature, the perpetrator perspective believes that racism is dependent on actions instead of conditions, that it is individual instead of systemic. Racism, in the perpetrator perspective, is dependent on fault and causation and can be solved through the responsibility and merit of the victim. Educational programmes such as those introduced by Apple and Alphabet thus attempt to uplift individual Black persons, even temporarily, in an attempt to fix racism that they, from their perspective, deem atomistic.

An explicit example of the way education is deemed critical within the issue of racism, and simultaneously atomistic, is through the following response of UnitedHealthGroup:

*“Our hearts are heavy with the tragic death of George Floyd. We’re doing our part to help create a more equitable society by establishing an educational trust for his children”* (UnitedHealthGroup, 2020)

While UnitedHealthGroup argue that they are doing their “part to help create a more equitable society”, the focus on the education of George Floyd’s children thus minimizes the systemic character of the racism at the heart of his death and of many other Black people in American society. These instances thus show what the perpetrator perspective deems as racism: actions, not conditions, based on individual merit and responsibility. Furthermore, in taking the role of the educator, corporations emphasize individual possibilities in

education, thus atomizing racism to solvable issues through, for instance, the financialisation of education.

### *Focus on Entrepreneurship*

Another way the atomistic view of the perpetrator perspective comes to light is through the corporate focus on entrepreneurship. Indeed, in response to BLM 2020, multiple corporations focus on the uplifting of specific individuals in entrepreneurship programmes:

*“Externally, we have joined OneTen, a coalition of companies and leaders committed to training, hiring and advancing 1 million Black Americans over the next 10 years into family-sustaining jobs with opportunities for advancement”* (General Motor, 2020)

*“This month marks 10 years of our TFI program, designed to support Black, Latinx, and other young men of color prepare for college and career success”* (JP Morgan Chase, 2020)

Again, the perpetrator's perspective visibly views racism as dependent on the fault, responsibility and merit of the victim. Through the invitation to participate in entrepreneurship programmes, corporations are thus able to offer equal opportunities to the few, while maintaining the capitalistic system that creates the unequal positions of the many.

The focus on individual merit was similarly apparent in how some corporations offered their social media reach to a handful of Black businesses. Although such behaviour was widely encouraged on social media through #SupportBlackBusinesses, the focus on only a few businesses becomes more symbolic and atomistic than impactful, and shows how businesses were selected based on merit:

*“Nearly 40% of Black-owned businesses are on the brink of closure. For the next few weeks we're turning over our platforms to #SupportBlackBusiness. Tag the ones you want to see highlighted in our #SmallBusinessTakeover”* (Verizon Communications, 2020)

While these initiatives give exposure to those highlighted, they do not help the 40% of Black-owned businesses on the brink of closure, but instead symbolically uplift individual entrepreneurs based on merit (here, popularity through tags). Indeed, such instances maintain succeed in upholding the utopian facade of capitalist possibilities for Black

entrepreneurs, while meanwhile allowing the systems of racial capitalism to disproportionately affect their chances.

### *Focus on Individual Perspectives*

Finally, by focussing more specifically on the external responses of corporations, the findings show how some corporations put forward a focus on individual perspectives in an attempt to “take part in the conversation”, while meanwhile positioning themselves as saviours. An instance of such an approach can be seen in the following tweet by Walmart, which was posted as part of a series to highlight Black and African American experiences and voices in their “community”:

*“I’m 25 now and I was 17 when my mom, grandmother, and big brother passed away. I had to be the man of the house and raise my sisters, so I dropped out and got my GED. I always said I’d go back, but family and bills came first. Last year, I got hired by Walmart store #3658 and after five months, my co-manager approached me and asked, ‘What if you could get a college degree for just a dollar a day through Walmart’s Live Better U program?’. I’ve always loved tech, but it was never the right time for school financially. But after 17 days of being enrolled in college at @SNHU, I was promoted to supervisor. I finished my class even with the pandemic going on—I worked hard. And there’s opportunity to move up, especially with my degree, whether it’s being an assistant manager, co-manager or running my own store. Walmart helped me grow, got me in school without debt and this is just the beginning. A degree is worth so much.” Paul—sky is the limit for you. We can’t wait to see what you do next” (Walmart, 2020)*

This tweet indeed shows how Walmart's initial attempt to share individual perspectives on the situation soon became encompassed by the perpetrator perspective. Instead of discussing the impact of the death of Paul’s family and the financial issues that followed, which would serve as a prime example of the systemic impact of racism, the Black employee in question is congratulated on his effort and merit as a Walmart employee. Turning to the idea of fault, he explains how he was able to lift himself out of those issues through Walmart’s entrepreneurship programme. While this perspective may indeed be well-meant, it shows how deep the influence of the perpetrator perspective runs within America’s capitalist society. While Paul’s perspective touches on the systemic disparities in Black deaths, financial debt, unfinished education, Walmart is thus able to position themselves and their

programme as the saviour within all those issues. Indeed, through such a perspective, systemic racism does not have to be addressed, as the focus on the lifting of specific individuals is able to eradicate personal experiences with the system.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the current research finds that while the large majority of studied corporations did react to BLM 2020, the focus of their responses quickly shifted from the addressing of systemic racism towards tools and practices that enabled the continuation of racial capitalism's system of expropriation.

The corporate action framework showed that while most corporations reacted externally to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, their internal response varied largely. Named *the two-step process to racial equity*, corporations were found to focus mainly on diversity efforts, while a small handful of corporations moved from diversity to a focus on racial equity. In order to address the focus on diversity, the research built upon existing literature on racial capitalism, arguing that the focus on diversity homogenises oppression while enabling the inequalities between White and Black labour to remain. Simultaneously, by including all but White men in the effort, the role of the White male as oppressor remained hidden, enabling the system of expropriation to continue its accumulative movement. While significant contrasts were seen with diversity, the focus on racial equity similarly allowed racial capitalism to continue, as focus was put on minimising racism to distinct and solvable issues of education, entrepreneurship, and health well-being. Thus, even as the study found that corporate responses were measurable through a two-step process, neither focus truly confronted the systemic characteristic of racial capitalism.

By building on CRT theories, the second part of the research focused on how racial capitalism and its system of expropriation remained visible in their responses. Through Bell's (1980) interest convergence theory, the research found multiple instances in which the interest of the Black community was often temporarily accommodated to support the economic and political interest of the corporations. Interest convergence is made visible as economic interest, as corporations focus on the profitability of Black advancement, and as political interest, as increased pressure is put on corporations to respond online.

Then, through Freeman's (1978) perpetrator perspective, the analysis reveals how corporations were able to uplift Black individuals through an atomistic perspective on racism which ignores the system's systemic character. By focussing on individual education and entrepreneurship, racism thus became communicated as based on fault, merit and responsibility of Black people. Similarly, external focus was also put on individual Black-owned businesses and the experiences of Black employees. By individualising the experiences and consequences of racism, corporations were able to position themselves as

saviours while ignoring the social fabric and historical continuity of racial capitalism, of which they are the current legacy.

Recalling Fraser's (2016) quote, "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (p. 177), the research thus concludes its most important finding. Through the study and analysis, it becomes clear that racial capitalism continues to underlie the function and focus of top-earning American corporations, made visible in their response and action following the death of three innocent Black citizens. The multiple crises of financialised capitalism have thus enabled the morbid symptoms of racial capitalism to continue expropriating Black labour. Meanwhile corporations are able to avert real systemic change by symbolically uplifting individual Black labourers. Thus, while the increased visibility of corporations online has put relative pressure on more active and respondent behaviour, the tools of oppression that are characteristic to racial capitalism are able to continue the system of expropriation that still dominate modern-day society.

As previously mentioned, many corporations have, at the time of writing, indeed not yet materialised the large sum of money that was pledged following BLM 2020. Meanwhile, the modern-day system of expropriation continues to destruct Black lives through off-shored slavery, mass incarceration, racial debt and enlarged health disparities. It is here that the impact of racial capitalism becomes clear: as the old is dying, the new cannot be born. Indeed, the research shows a bleak future for racial justice. As racism remains structurally entangled with modern-day American capitalism, Black labour and life remains devalued, dispensable, and expropriated through a cycle which, for the past 400 years, has not yet been broken.

#### *Limitations and Further Research*

Due to the vastness of data and the high percentage of duplicate posts, the research decided to exclude other social media platforms such as Facebook. Future research could therefore focus more specifically on Facebook as an essential platform. The research was also limited to the main handle of the corporations, while corporations often owned a variety of different companies and social media accounts. Future research into the similarities and differences in responses from different companies under the same corporations could show a fundamental analysis of the connection between brand identity and their response to social issues. The research also did not take into account the comments of consumers. Future

research could look at these responses, such as appraisal or backlash, to understand more precisely the relationship between corporations and consumers in social issues as racism.



## Bibliography

Alphabet [@Google]. (2020). *Education is critical to our commitment to racial equity. We're making a \$1M @googleorg grant to @DonorsChoose to support Black* [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved on June 14, 2021, from <https://twitter.com/Google/status/1276236625408856065>

Amazon [@amazon]. (2020). *Amazon stands in solidarity with the Black community — we remain steadfast in our support for our employees, customers, partners* [Instapost]. Instagram. Retrieved on June 14, 2021, from [https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-2\\_QnpDTV/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-2_QnpDTV/)

AmerisourceBergen [@amerisourcebergen]. (2020). *AmerisourceBergen is guided by our purpose and principles, and unity in our responsibility to create healthier futures necessitates action to* [Instapost]. Instagram. Retrieved on June 14, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CA-dgqsHziS/>

AmerisourceBergen. (2021). *Diversity & Inclusion*. Retrieved on May 26, 2021, from <https://www.amerisourcebergen.com/about-us/diversity-and-inclusion>

Anderson, M., Barthel, M., Perrin, A., Vogels, E.A. (2020). #BlackLivesMatter surges on Twitter after George Floyd's death. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved on the 12th of March 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/10/blacklivesmatter-surges-on-twitter-after-george-floyds-death/>

Apple [@apple]. (2020). *Apple is taking action to fight systemic racism. "The unfinished work of racial justice and equality call us all to* [Instapost]. Instagram. Retrieved on May 26th 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBUb2QMFQAa/>

Apple. (2021). *Racial Equity and Justice Initiative*. Retrieved on May 26th, 2021 from <https://www.apple.com/racial-equity-justice-initiative/>

Balu, N., Venugopal, A., Thevenot, B. (2020). Factbox: Corporations pledge \$1.7 billion to address racism, injustice. *Reuters*. Retrieved on June 13, 2021, from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-pledges-factbox-idUSKBN23H078>

- Beeman, A., Silfen Glasberg, D., & Casey, C. (2010). Whiteness as Property: Predatory Lending and the Reproduction of Racialized Inequality. *Critical Sociology*, 37(1), 27-45.
- Bell, D.A. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma. *Harvard Law Review*, 93(3), 518-533.
- Brown, D. A. (2004). Fighting racism in the twenty-first century. *Washington and Lee Law Review*, 61(4), 1485-1500.
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press: Fifth Edition.
- Chevron [@Chevron]. (2020). "If we're all the same, who's going to challenge us to think outside the box?" Learn more about what Chevron [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved on June 14, 2021, from <https://twitter.com/Chevron/status/1293328883450892288>
- Chevron. (2021). *Diversity and Inclusion. Enabling human progress*. Retrieved on May 26th 2021, from <https://www.chevron.com/sustainability/social/diversity-inclusion>
- Cigna. (n.d.) *Advancing the Race Dialogue*. Retrieved on May 26th, 2021 from <https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/health-wellness/topic-racial-equity>
- Cigna. (2021). *Diversity and Inclusion*. Retrieved on May 26th, 2021 from <https://www.cigna.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility/report/our-people/diversity-and-inclusion>
- Ciszek, E., & Logan, N. (2018). Challenging the dialogic promise: how Ben & Jerry's support for Black Lives Matter fosters dissensus on social media. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 30(3), 115-127.
- Costco Wholesale. (2021). *Sustainability: Employees*. Retrieved on May 26th, 2021 from <https://www.costco.com/sustainability-employees.html>
- Davis, A. (2003). *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press: New York.
- De Oca, J., Mason, S., Ahn, S. (2020). Consuming for the Greater Good: "Woke" Commercials in Sports Media. *Communication & Sport*, XX(X), 1-23.

Dwyer, R.E. (2018). Credit, Debt, and Inequality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44, 237-261.

Eaton, C., Habinek, J., Goldstein, A., Dioun, C., Garcia Santibanez Godoy, D., Osley-Thomas, R. (2016). The financialisation of U.S. higher education. *Socio-Economic Review*, 14(3), 507-535.

Edwards, F. L., & Thomson, G. (2010). The Legal Creation of Raced Space: The Subtle and Ongoing Discrimination Created through Jim Crow Laws. *Berkeley Journal of African-American Law and Policy*, 12, 145-168.

FannieMae. (2021). Diversity and Inclusion. Retrieved on May 26 2021, from <https://www.fanniemae.com/about-us/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion>

Ford Motors [@Ford]. (2020). *This year's #ESSENCEFest has gone virtual, and we're proud to be part of it! We're celebrating our 12-year partnership with* [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved June 19, 2021, from <https://twitter.com/Ford/status/1279196385397616640>

Fortune. (2020). Fortune 500. Fortune. Retrieved on March 21, 2021, from <https://fortune.com/fortune500/2020/search/>

Francis, J., & Robertson, J. (2021). White spaces: how marketing actors (re)produce marketplace inequities for Black consumers. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(1-2), 84-116.

Fraser, N. (2016). Expropriation and Exploitation in Racialized Capitalism: A Reply to Michael Dawson. *Critical Historical Studies*, 3(1), 163-178.

Freeman, A. (1978). Legitimising racial discrimination through antidiscrimination law: critical review of supreme court doctrine. *Minnesota Law Review*, 62(6), 1049-1120.

General Motors. (2020). Creating an Inclusive Culture. Retrieved on May 26, 2021, from <https://www.gmsustainability.com/material-topics/fostering-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/creating-an-inclusive-culture.html>

Grier, S. A., & Poole, S. M. (2020). Will Social Marketing Fight for Black Lives? An Open Letter to the Field. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 26(4), 378-387.

Herbert, N. (2020). “Woke-Washing” a Brand: Socially Progressive Marketing by Nike on Twitter and the User Response to it. *Tidskrift för ABM*, 5(1), 54-70.

JP Morgan Chase [@JPMorgan]. (2020). *Congratulations to the 2020 class of the JPMorgan Chase Fellowship Initiative, you inspire us. This month marks 10 years of* [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved on June 19, 2021, from <https://twitter.com/jpmorgan/status/1272952611507826689>

Koeze, E., Popper, N. (2020). The Virus Changed the Way We Internet. The New York Times. Retrieved on the March 17, 2021, from <https://www-nytimes-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html>

Kim, J. K., Overton, H., Bhalla, N., & Li, J. Y. (2020). Nike, Colin Kaepernick, and the politicization of sports: Examining perceived organizational motives and public responses. *Public Relations Review*, 46(2), 101856.

Marathon Petroleum [@MarathonPetroCo]. (2020). *At Marathon Petroleum we work every day to Enhance Life's Possibilities through diversity in culture, background, perspective and experiences. Together* [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved on June 19, 2021, from <https://twitter.com/MarathonPetroCo/status/1273326983666114561>

Marathon Petroleum. (n.d.). *Diversity and Inclusion*. Retrieved on May 26, 2021, from <https://www.marathonpetroleum.com/Sustainability/Diversity-and-Inclusion/>

Melamed, J. (2015). Racial Capitalism. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 1(1), 76-85.

Mercado, B. (2018). Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of Reproduction and Survival. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 00(0), 1-2.

Messer, C.M. (2021). *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: Crafting a Legacy*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan

Mogaji, E. (2020). The Brand Goodness Quadrant: Positioning the Brand and their BLM Statements. *Available at SSRN*.

Nguyen, T. (2020). Consumers don't care about corporate solidarity. They want donations. *Vox*. Retrieved on March 12, 2021, from <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/6/3/21279292/blackouttuesday-brands-solidarity-donations>

- Noble, S. & Roberts, S. (2019). Technological Elites, the Meritocracy, and Postracial Myths in Silicon Valley. *UCLA Previous Published Works*.
- Ozbilgin, M.F. & Erbil, C. (2021). Social Movements and Well-being in Organisations from Multilevel and Intersectional Perspectives: The Case of the #blacklivesmatter Movement. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Wellbeing*.
- Prison Policy Initiative. (2017). *Section 3 The Prison Economy - Prison labor - Prison Index*. Prisonpolicy.org. Retrieved on June 14, 2021, from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/prisonindex/prisonlabor.html>
- Pulido, L. (2016). Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 27(3), 1-16.
- Quiroz-Gutierrez, M. (2021). American companies pledged \$50 billion to Black communities. Most of it hasn't materialised. *Fortune*. Retrieved on June 13, 2021, from <https://fortune.com/2021/05/06/us-companies-black-communities-money-50-billion>
- Robinson, C. J. (1983). *Black Marxism: The making of the black radical tradition*. London: Zed.
- Roediger, D.R. (2007). *The wages of whiteness: race and the making of the American working class*. London; New York: Verso.
- Rollock, N., & Gillborn, D. (2011) *Critical Race Theory (CRT)*. *British Educational Research Association*.
- Schulz, M. (2017). An analysis of corporate responses to the Black Lives Matter movement. *Elon J. Undergraduate Res. Commun*, 8(1), 55-65.
- Seamster, L. & Charron-Chenier, R. (2017). Predatory Inclusion and Educational Debt: Rethinking the Racial Wealth Gap. *Social Currents*, 4(3), 199-207.
- Sobande, F. 2019. Woke-washing: "Intersectional" femvertising and branding "woke" bravery. *European Journal of Marketing*.
- Streeck, W. (2016). *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System*. London: Verso.

UnitedHealthGroup [@UnitedHealthGrp]. (2020). *Our hearts are heavy with the tragic death of George Floyd. We're doing our part to help create a more* [Tweet]. Twitter.

Retrieved on June 19, 2021, from

<https://twitter.com/UnitedHealthGrp/status/1267794235601928193>

Verizon Communications [@Verizon]. (2020). *Nearly 40% of Black-owned businesses are on the brink of closure. For the next few weeks we're turning over our* [Tweet]. Twitter.

Retrieved on June 19, 2021, from

<https://twitter.com/Verizon/status/1277662894163988480>

Verizon Communications. (2021). *Citizen Verizon*. Retrieved on May 26, 2021, from

<https://www.verizon.com/about/responsibility>

Walgreens Boots Alliance [@Walgreens]. (2020). *Our commitment to the communities we serve is absolute. Therefore, we promise to:* [Tweet]. Twitter. Retrieved on May 26, 2021,

from <https://twitter.com/Walgreens/status/1269053513323216897>

Walgreens Boots Alliance. (2021). *Diversity and Inclusion Report*. Retrieved on May 26,

2021, from <https://www.walgreensbootsalliance.com/corporate-responsibility/diversity-and-inclusion-report>

Walmart [@walmart]. (2020). *We know it takes more than talk. It takes action. We are taking steps to address racism head-on and accelerate* [Instapost]. Instagram. Retrieved on

June 19, 2021, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBEpdPEjzSd/>

Walmart [@walmart]. (2020). *I was born and raised in Chicago. I'm 25 now and I was 17 when my mom, grandmother, and big* [Instapost]. Instagram. Retrieved on June 19, 2021,

from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCd6ThmlWhu/>

Walmart. (2021). *Center for Racial Equity*. Retrieved on May 26, 2021, from

<https://walmart.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion/center-for-racial-equity>

Wilson, J. A. (2020). *Understanding branding is demanding.... Journal of Marketing Management, 36(13-14), 1178-1189.*



## Appendix

**Table I. Further clarification of the measures for the external and internal action frame**

<b>Measures of ...</b>	<b><i>External Corporate Action Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Internal Corporate Action Frame</i></b>
<p><b>Silence</b></p> <p><i>A corporation stays silent around BLM 2020. However, they do focus on other topics within the timeframe.</i></p>	No related posts during timeframe; no terms used	No page update following BLM 2020; no related page; no terms used
	No reference to catalyser; no support of BLM	No reference to catalyser; no support of BLM
	No trend participation; no donations/goals/programmes; no responsibility	No mention of policy change; no donations/goals/programmes; no responsibility; no existing policy
	1+ other posts during timeframe; no social media handle	No external or internal action taken; no measurability of efforts
<p><b>Acknowledgement</b></p> <p><i>A corporation shows acknowledgement of BLM 2020 by referring to the events indirectly, but no further support is offered.</i></p>	1+ related post during timeframe; indirect and positive terms	Minor page update of diversity effort following BLM 2020; indirect and positive terms
	No reference to catalyser; no support of BLM	No reference to catalyser; no support of BLM
	No trend participation; no donations/goals/programmes; no responsibility	No mention of policy change; no donations/goals/programmes; focus on existing policy
	1+ other posts during the timeframe	No new external or internal action taken; no measurability of new efforts
<p><b>Support</b></p> <p><i>A corporation “supports” BLM 2020 by addressing the situation and offering support but does not introduce specific goals or programmes.</i></p>	1+ direct post during timeframe; direct and positive terms	Page update of diversity effort following BLM 2020; direct and positive terms
	Recognition of catalyser; support of BLM	Recognition of catalyser; support of BLM
	No trend participation; no	No mention of policy change; no



	donations/goals/programmes; acknowledgement of responsibility	donations/goals/programmes; focus on existing policy; acknowledgement of responsibility; focus on support
	1+ other posts during the timeframe	No new external/internal action taken; no measurability of new efforts
<b>Action</b>  <i>A corporation “takes action” in response to BLM 2020 by showing support, through small contributions, promise to reform, or through more extensive contributions such as donations.</i>	1+ direct post during timeframe; direct and negative/positive terms	More significant page update on diversity effort following BLM 2020; direct and negative/positive terms
	Reaction to catalyser; support of BLM	Reaction to catalyser; support of BLM
	Potential trend participation, use of the online platform; donations or small efforts; no goals/programmes; referring to responsibility	Potential mention of policy change; donations or small efforts; no goals/programmes; focus on existing policy; referring to responsibility
	1+ other posts during the timeframe	The promise of external/internal action; potential measurability of efforts
<b>Leadership</b>  <i>A corporation “takes leadership” in response to BLM 2020 through showing support, taking action, and posting about (planned) goals and programmes.</i>	1+ direct post during timeframe; direct and negative/positive terms	More significant page update or new page on “racial equity” following BLM 2020; direct and negative/positive terms
	Reaction to catalyser; support of BLM	Reaction to catalyser; support of BLM
	Potential trend participation, use of the online platform; new goals/programmes; taking of responsibility	Mention of policy change; new goals/programmes; focus on existing policy; taking of responsibility
	1+ other posts during the timeframe	Taking of external or internal action; potential measurability of efforts

**Table II. Findings of Corporate Action Frame per Corporation**

<i>Position in Top 25 based on Revenue</i>	<i>Corporations</i>	<i>External Action Frame</i>	<i>Internal Action Frame</i>	<i>Diversity or Racial Equity Focus</i>	<i>Goals, Programmes, Donations</i>	<i>Quotes from external/internal response</i>
1	Walmart	<b>Leadership</b>	Leadership	Racial Equity	\$100 million 5-year pledge to set up a Centre for Racial Equity  Short-term series to highlight Black voices	<i>“The goal of the center will be to address systematic racism in society head-on”</i>  <i>“(…) Paul—sky is the limit for you. We can’t wait to see what you do next”</i>
4	Apple	Leadership	Leadership	Racial Equity	\$100 million long-term programme “Racial Equity and Justice Initiative”	<i>“We have unfinished business in the effort to end systemic racism. Apple will be a force for change.”</i>  <i>“We know STEM (science, engineering, technology, and mathematics) is the backbone of our modern economy. A solid education in STEM can unleash any young person’s potential. So we’re partnering with schools serving Black and Brown students to enrich their STEM programming.”</i>
5	CVS	Leadership	Action	Diversity	\$600 million investment advancing inequality faced by the Black community	
9	AT&T	Leadership	Leadership	Racial Equity under Diversity	Advocate for systemic change, tell the story, make a difference in education and the workforce  Give a platform to Black employees and businesses online	

11	Alphabet	Leadership	Leadership	Racial Equity under Diversity	Long-term plan to improve representation, build products for equal opportunity, focus on closing gaps in education, entrepreneurship	<i>“Education is critical to our commitment to racial equity”</i>
13	Cigna	Leadership	Leadership	Racial Equity	Building Equity and Equality Program Grant of \$250,000 to advance representation	<i>“Acts of racial injustice can bring on many emotions. Find strategies for maintaining your well-being and resources to take action and build better understanding”</i>
18	General Motors	Leadership	Leadership	Diversity	Donation of \$10 million to promote inclusion and racial justice Setting up of advisory boards Self-paced learning programme employees	<i>“During 2020, as social and racial justice protests escalated across the U.S., G.M. took decisive actions and aimed to lead by example and stand up against injustices prevalent in society by setting a goal to become the world’s most inclusive company”</i>  <i>“Externally, we have joined OneTen, a coalition of companies and leaders committed to training, hiring and advancing 1 million Black Americans over the next 10 years into family-sustaining jobs with opportunities for advancement”</i>
20	Verizon	Leadership	Support	Diversity	Donation of \$10 million to racial justice charities  Give a platform to Black employees and businesses online	<i>“Our history of making good on our promise to do good”</i>  <i>“Nearly 40% of Black-owned businesses are on the brink of closure. For the</i>

						<i>next few weeks we're turning over our platforms to #SupportBlackBusiness. Tag the ones you want to see highlighted in our #SmallBusinessTakeover”</i>
21	Microsoft	Leadership	Leadership	Racial Equity under Diversity	Clear Vision Impact Fund with multiple investments ranging between \$3- \$500 million for education and entrepreneurship  Give a platform to Black employees online	
23	Kroger	Leadership	Leadership	Diversity	A \$5 million fund to improve diversity Create diversity council Learning programme employees Give a platform to Black businesses online	
25	Bank of America	Leadership	Leadership	Diversity	\$1 billion 4-year commitment to support the economic opportunity of which \$400 million to job initiatives and entrepreneurship and \$25 million to launch an institute of racism	
3	Amazon	<b>Action</b>	Support	Diversity	A \$10 million donation to 11 organisations	<i>“We stand in support of organisations that are making a difference”</i>
7	UnitedHealthGroup	Action	Action	Diversity	Setting up a trust fund for the education of George Floyd’s children A \$10 million donation to rebuild Twin Cities and advance racial equity	<i>“Our hearts are heavy with the tragic death of George Floyd. We’re doing our part to help create a more equitable society by establishing an educational trust for his children”</i>
8	McKesson	Action	Support	Diversity	Setting the goal to have an open	

					discussion internally Acknowledge privilege	
10	Walgreens Boots Alliance	Action	Acknowledgement	Diversity	Reopening affected stores Ensuring healthcare Continue diversity committee	<p><i>“We absolutely denounce hatred, racism, stereotyping and bigotry in any form”</i></p> <p><i>“We know that diverse teams improve our performance, drive our growth and enhance engagement among ourselves and with our customers and suppliers.”</i></p>
24	FannieMae	Action	Action	Diversity	Close business on Juneteenth Keep industry accountable Increase representation	<i>“Our Office of Minority and Women Inclusion (OMWI) is dedicated to diversity and inclusion programming, engagement, strategic planning, metrics, and reporting.”</i>
10	AmerisourceBergen	<b>Support</b>	Support	Diversity	Diversity council Support of ERGs	<p><i>“To create healthier futures and accelerate business results by inspiring the best and brightest global talent across all dimensions of diversity to perform at their full potential”</i></p> <p><i>“AmerisourceBergen is guided by our purpose and principles, and unity in our responsibility to create healthier futures necessitates action to address and attack systematic #inequality”</i></p>
15	Chevron	Support	Action	Diversity	Education focus both internally and externally	

					Diversity council Support of ERGs	
16	Cardinal Health	Support	Support	Diversity	Diversity council	
22	Marathon Petroleum	Support	Support	Diversity	Support of ERGs	<p><i>“At Marathon Petroleum we work every day to Enhance Life’s Possibilities through diversity in culture, background, perspective and experiences. Together, we are working to make a positive difference. #ProudToBeMPC”</i></p> <p><i>“We also support several Employee Networks focused on key populations – including females, LGBTQ, veterans and ethnicity”</i></p>
12	Ford Motors	Acknowledgement	Acknowledgement	Diversity	Focus on a proud history of inclusion	
17	JP Morgan Chase	Acknowledgement	Leadership	Racial Equity	The programme “Advancing Black Pathways” improving education and career opportunities	<i>“ This month marks 10 years of our TFI program, designed to support Black, Latinx, and other young men of color prepare for college and career success.”</i>
2	ExxonMobil	Silence	Silence			
6	Berkshire Hathaway	Silence	Silence			
14	Costco Wholesale	Silence	Acknowledgement	Diversity	Self-paced learning programme employees Code of Ethics	<i>“It has always been Costco policy that employees deserve an environment free from all forms of unlawful employment discrimination”</i>

## CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

### INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website ([http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page\\_id=17](http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17)). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

### PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Racial Capitalism, Interest Convergence and the Perpetrator  
Perspective: An Understanding of Corporate Responses to #BlackLivesMatter  
in 2020

Name, email of student: Georgie Bews, 515529gb@student.eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: dr. Bonnie French, french@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 18/02/2021 – 5 months

Is the research study conducted within DPAS      **YES - NO**

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?  
(e.g. internship organization)

## **PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS**

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - **NO**

*If 'NO': skip to part V.*

- NO If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES -

*Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).*

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES -  
NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*



### **PART III: PARTICIPANTS**

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO  
*Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).*
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

---

---

---

---

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

---

---

---

---

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

*Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.*

*Continue to part IV.*

**PART IV: SAMPLE**

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

---

---

*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

---

---

*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

---

---

*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

*Continue to part V.*

**Part V: Data storage and backup**

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

\_\_\_\_\_ The data is online data and publicly accessible. Thus, the data is stored on my computer's iCloud account in the 'data' folder in my thesis folder

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.*

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

\_\_\_\_\_ The researcher (Georgie L. Bews)

\_\_\_\_\_  
How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

\_\_\_\_\_ The data has been backed-up everytime it was used for the research

\_\_\_\_\_  
In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

\_\_\_\_\_ N.A. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.*

## **PART VI: SIGNATURE**

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Georgie Bews

Name (EUR) supervisor: dr. Bonnie French

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Georgie Bews', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bonnie French', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.