



Political and Racial Polarization and Its Intersection with Social Work

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Why does this matter?

- ▶ 2016 election
 - ▶ The election concluded less than a week ago and tensions are still high across the country.
 - ▶ There are mixed feelings, but these feelings are mostly negative on this campus
- ▶ More people becoming aware of social issues
 - ▶ “The Internet and social media are very powerful tools that can influence and shape human behavior. The social media has played a significant role in recent outbreaks of social protest and resistance. . .
 - ▶ . . . Occupy protests, the Arab Spring, the mobilization of resistance against the Government of the Ukraine or in Hong Kong was heavily dependent on the resources provided by the social media” (Furedi, 2014).
 - ▶ #blacklivesmatter, #notmypresident, etc.



Ground Rules

- ▶ Safe space
 - ▶ It's important for people of all backgrounds and ideologies to be able to speak their mind in a respectful manner.
- ▶ Discussion-based
 - ▶ I am not here to lecture—I am here to have a discussion with you all. Feel free to interrupt me at any time if you have a question.
- ▶ Avoid generalizations
 - ▶ *“If you like ____, you must be ____!”*
 - ▶ Generalizations add nothing to a safe discussion and do nothing but increase tensions and start arguments.



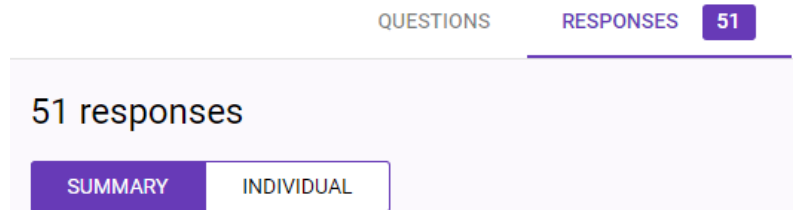
Trigger Warning: Racism

- ▶ In my opinion, a wide variety of people with different beliefs were represented in the survey.
- ▶ I didn't filter any content from the survey responses.
- ▶ To me, a mixed woman, none of the responses were particularly racist.
 - ▶ However, I cannot speak for all people of color, and I can see how some responses can make people of color uncomfortable.
 - ▶ I will try not to draw attention to these responses, but they will still be in the slides.



How did I conduct this research?

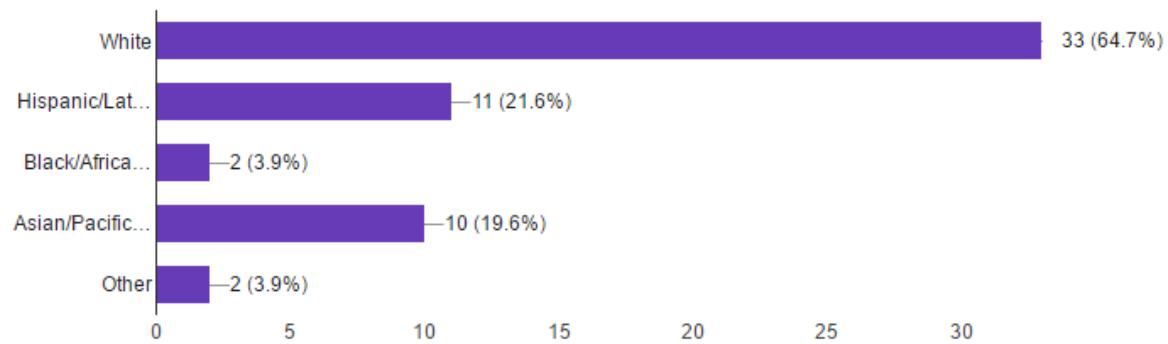
- ▶ Quantitative research
- ▶ Google Forms survey sent out to family, friends, and Facebook friends
 - ▶ The survey was short, but I added in a few optional questions if people wanted to elaborate.
 - ▶ I intended for the survey to be anonymous, and since I sent it out to a large group of people, I have no way of telling who is who.
 - ▶ 51 people responded in about 10 hours!



The survey questions

1. What race(s) do you identify with?
2. Who did you vote for in the 2016 presidential election?
3. Where do you fall on the political spectrum?
4. Do you believe that we are becoming more politically divided as a country?
 - ▶ Explain your answer (optional)
5. Do you believe that we are becoming more racially divided as a country?
 - ▶ Explain your answer (optional)
6. Should we try to be a color blind society or a color conscious society?
7. What do you believe is the percentage of mixed-race students that are currently enrolled at UIUC?
8. Donald Trump was recently elected as the next U.S. President. On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about the election outcome?
9. Optional opinion question #1 on controversial Washington Post article
10. Optional opinion question #2 on controversial Mic article

What race(s) do you identify with?

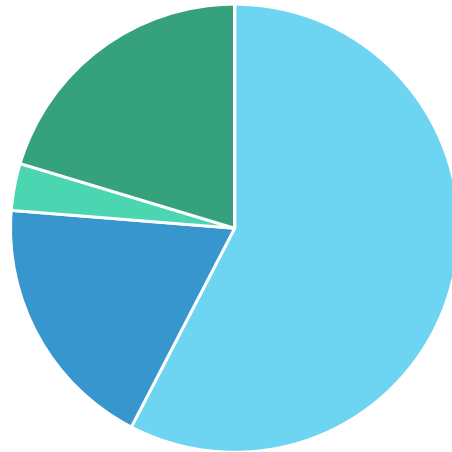


The people that put “other” wrote:
Pakistani
White and Middle Eastern

If the numbers seem off, that’s because I let people select more than one option.

If pie charts are easier for you to read...

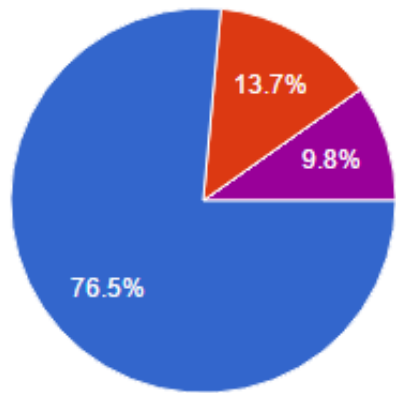
What race(s) do you identify with?



■ White ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ Black/African American ■ Asian/Pacific Islander



Who did you vote for in the 2016 presidential election?

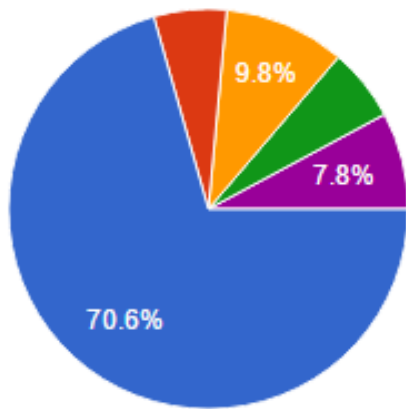


- Hillary Clinton
- Donald Trump
- Gary Johnson
- Jill Stein
- Did not vote
- Other

I can assume that most people that responded were on campus, and therefore more likely to be liberal or a Democrat.

(Garcia, 2016)

Where do you fall on the political spectrum?

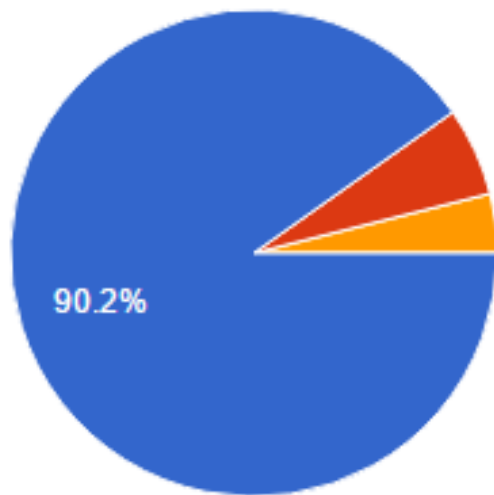


- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Moderate
- Don't know
- Other

Interestingly, while 7 voted for Trump, only 3 identified as a Republican. One Trump voter is a Democrat. One is unsure of their political standings. Two are independents.

(Garcia, 2016)

Do you believe that we are becoming more politically divided as a country?



- Yes
- Maybe
- No



(Garcia, 2016)

Please explain your answer to the previous question. (13/51 responded)

- ▶ This election year has brought up a lot of hatred and anger and made a huge gape between Trump supporters and Clinton supporters
- ▶ Look everywhere. The divides are real and scary
- ▶ I think that people are becoming very angry and have a hard time looking a past it. I hope that more political parties form and are given platforms. I think having more than two sides would be extremely beneficial.
- ▶ Everyone is making a mountain out of a molehill
- ▶ The split is so big and causing so many protests
- ▶ Rhetoric from both sides is becoming more hateful. On the one hand, trump has relegitimized open racism, on the other hand, many liberals don't understand or don't care that terms like "white privelege" alienate people, especially those who are not college educated
- ▶ Yes, we're becoming more divided, but mainly along income and educational lines.
- ▶ there's violence happening
- ▶ People are more focused on tearing one another down rather than uniting together
- ▶ I didn't vote because I was outside the country and my state is heavily blue. I believe we are being politically divided by our lack of empathy with one another.
- ▶ Others won't accept who won and are lashing out in anger instead of grieving and moving on.
- ▶ There's clearly an underlying drive of hate and fear from one side and a reaction of the hate and fear from the other
- ▶ Trump isn't as extreme as the media initially made him seem.

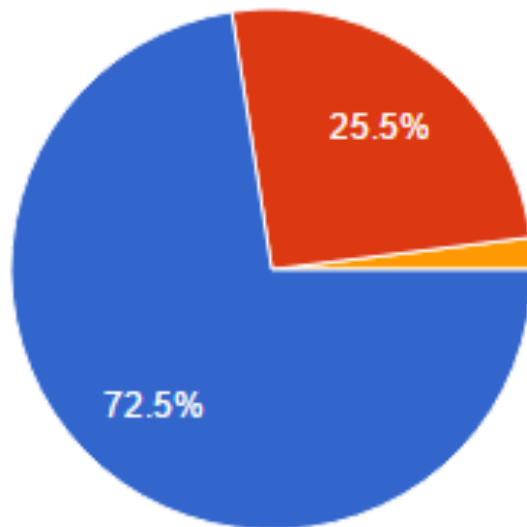
These were copied and pasted straight from the results form. There are spelling and grammatical errors, but I didn't want to edit anyone's response.

(Garcia, 2016)

Responses that stood out to me

- ▶ This election year has brought up a lot of hatred and anger and made a huge gap between Trump supporters and Clinton supporters
- ▶ I think that people are becoming very angry and have a hard time looking a past it. I hope that more political parties form and are given platforms. I think having more than two sides would be extremely beneficial.
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Do you believe that we are becoming more racially divided as a country?



- Yes
- Maybe
- No



(Garcia, 2016)

Please explain your answer to the previous question. (13/52 responded)

- ▶ As we move away from a whitewashed society, we are seeing more racial diversity and seeing lines drawn that we're previously ignored
- ▶ I believe there is a bigger divide between white people and minorities but I also believe there is some crossover.
- ▶ Look at the way media portrays any race issue. We are becoming more divided
- ▶ I think that some communities and places are making strides to ease racial tension where as others community leaders are turning a blind eye to it.
- ▶ Not sure if it's more racially divided than it was before but there's more attention on it
- ▶ The color of someone's skin is becoming increasingly more important when it really shouldn't be
- ▶ I think we were improving but there are a lot of people on both sides of these debates that are holding onto the past in a bad way
- ▶ I'm not sure if I would say racially divided- we're more aware of the divide now, I would say, but I don't know if the divide is/has necessarily increased.
- ▶ rise in hate crimes, someone literally pulled a knife on a muslim girl in a bus yesterday
- ▶ Yes, because it's easy to demonize people who don't look like you.
- ▶ It is becoming safer for minority identities to not interact with white people, which is very very sad.
- ▶ Black people commit the vast majority of crimes.
- ▶ Historic systematic racism and trauma on POC perpetuated by ignorantance also an unwillingness to understand other races and people different from "us"

(Garcia, 2016)

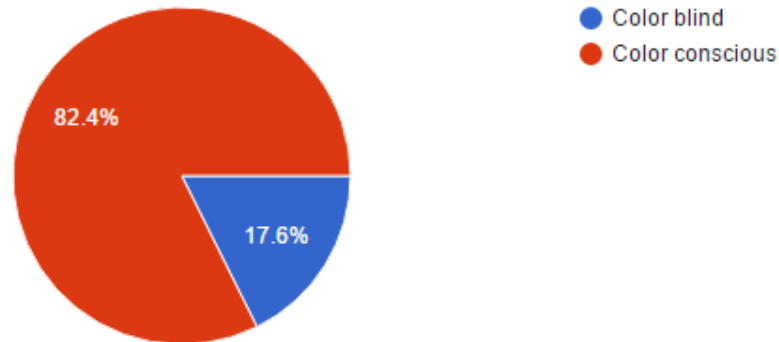
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Should we try to be a color blind society, or a color conscious society?

Review from class...

- Color blindness: Belief that race is not a factor in how we make sense of the world (Lux, 2016).
 - Most people are color blind until exposed to racial education (Rosenblum & Travis, 2012).
 - Diverse environment theory
- Color consciousness: Confronting the truth about race and racism in the United States (Lux, 2016).



(Garcia, 2016)

What do you believe is the percentage of mixed-race students that are currently enrolled at UIUC?

Percentage	x/51 who guessed that percentage
3%	1/51
4%	1/51
5%	2/51
8%	1/51
9%	1/51
10%	3/51
12%	1/51
15%	3/51
20%	6/51
25%	3/51
30%	7/51
33%	1/51
35%	1/51
40%	4/51
45%	1/51
50%	3/51
55%	1/51
60%	1/51
65%	1/51
70%	2/51
100%	1/51
Other/not sure	6/51

(Garcia, 2016)

Lets make that easier to read...

Percentage	x/51
3%-10%	9/51
12%-15%	4/51
20-25%	9/51
30-35%	9/51
40-45%	5/51
50-65%	6/51
70%-100%	3/51
Didn't know/no guess/other	6/51

Who was right?

- ▶ No one!
- ▶ Only 1175/44880 (~2%) of UIUC students self-identified as multiracial/mixed race

ethseifa16 [Protected View] - Excel

File Home Insert Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Tell me what you want to do

PROTECTED VIEW Be careful—files from the Internet can contain viruses. Unless you need to edit, it's safer to stay in Protected View. Enable Editing

V5 All students including multiracial and Hispanic

1 **Residency**

2 PUBLICATION DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2016 * This section uses the new Federal IPEDS guidelines for reporting racial and ethnic data.

3 on Census 10-day student statistics. Any Codebook changes made after For more information on these guidelines, see <http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/RaceEthnicity/index.cfm>

4 Students obtaining a second bachelor's degree are no longer counted separately.

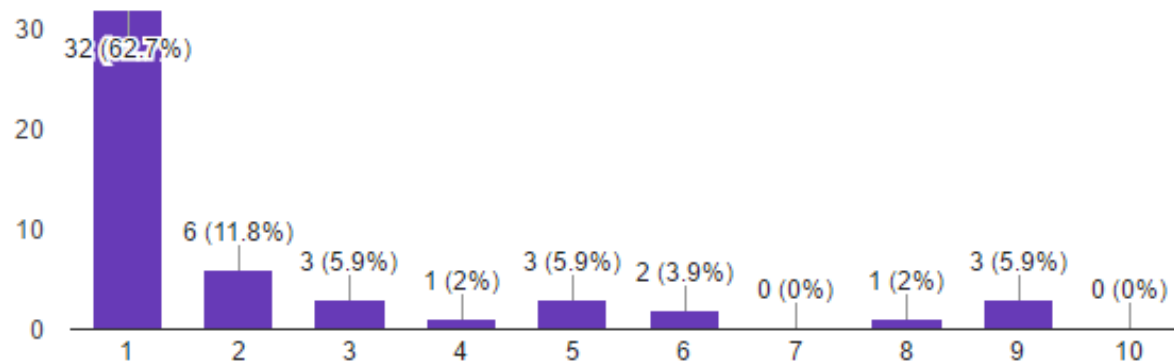
6	By Gender			By Self-reported Race/Ethnicity (NEW*)									All students including multiracial and Hispanic				By Residency		Aca Progre	
	Total	Men	Women	Unknown	Caucasian	Asian American	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Hawaiian/ Pacific Isl	Multiracial	International	Unknown	All African American	All Native American	All Hawaiian / Pac Isl	All Asian	Illinois		Non- Illinois
7																				
8	44880	24427	20452	1	19721	6633	2317	3949	35	17	1175	10700	323	2786	374	154	7585	27656	17224	
9	33467	18350	15117	0	15467	5867	1961	3453	22	24	987	5537	149	2344	292	138	6642	24510	8957	
10	10428	5737	4690	1	3575	694	326	444	12	3	170	5097	107	403	77	14	855	2580	7848	
11	965	340	645	0	679	72	30	52	1	0	18	66	67	39	5	2	88	566	419	
12																				

("UIUC...", 2016)

Discussion questions

- ▶ Why was there such a large difference in people's perceptions of mixed-race individuals?
- ▶ Are we more color blind than color conscious if we fail to see these differences in race?
- ▶ Do mixed race individuals feel that they need to choose to identify as one race over the other?
 - ▶ Is this a form of assimilation or acculturation? Is this something else?
 - ▶ Review from class...
 - ▶ "Assimilation: Relinquishing one's own culture in favor of the norms and behaviors of the dominant culture" (Carter-Black & Pineros, 2016).
 - ▶ "Acculturation: Individuals integrate elements of other cultures as they develop new identities" (Carter-Black & Pineros, 2016).

Donald Trump was recently elected as the next U.S. President. On a scale of 1-10, how do you feel about the election outcome?
1-absolutely terrible 10 - thrilled and excited



(Garcia, 2016)

Election feelings

- ▶ The majority feel absolutely terrible about the results of the election.
 - ▶ Could this be correlated with mental health?
 - ▶ Should we prioritize counseling for these individuals?
 - ▶ To play devil's advocate: Are people becoming too sensitive? Should we teach resiliency to those that were heavily affected?



Optional questions on controversial articles

[It's time to stop talking about racism with white people](#)

[I want a divided America](#)

The screenshot shows a Washington Post article. The title is "It's time to stop talking about racism with white people" by Zack Linly, dated September 7. The sub-headline reads "No more arguing with disingenuous folks who have nothing to lose." The article features a photo of a protest with signs, one of which says "MURKIN SHIT". A "Most Read" sidebar lists four items: 1. "I'm a Muslim, a woman and an immigrant. I voted for Trump." 2. "Liberal Democrats both out at DNC, say overclass needed to woo back working-class voters." 3. "Trump voters will not like what happens next." 4. "Trump meets with Obama at the White House as whirlwind transition starts."

The screenshot shows an Identities.Mic article. The title is "I want a divided America". The image shows a large crowd of people at a political rally, many holding "TRUMP 2016" signs. A man in a suit is visible in the foreground, and the text "I want a divided America" is overlaid on the bottom of the image.

Before we start...

- ▶ I purposely chose controversial articles.
- ▶ In my question, I only asked for people to provide their opinion on the article(s).
- ▶ I have no way of knowing if people actually read the articles or not.
 - ▶ I intended for it to be that way.
 - ▶ Sometimes, controversial article titles are enough to contribute to polarization and rising tensions.
 - ▶ You can't count on the general public to fully read through news articles or to fully pay attention to news stories.



PostEverything

It's time to stop talking about racism with white people

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No more arguing with disingenuous folks who have nothing to lose.



By Zack Linly September 7

Zack Linly is a poet, performer, freelance writer, community organizer and activist living in Atlanta.



Most Read

- 1 I'm a Muslim, a woman and an immigrant. I voted for Trump.
- 2 Liberal Democrats lash out at DNC, say overhaul needed to woo back working-class voters
- 3 Trump voters will not like what happens next
- 4 Trump meets with Obama at the White House as whirlwind transition starts

What is your opinion?

“Could it be that white people actually aren’t as concerned with supporting the police as they are in maintaining a counter-narrative to black complaints about racist police misconduct?”

“Could it be, and I’m just spit-balling here, but could it be that white folks are ... completely full of it?”

“This is why I submit that black people should simply disengage with white America in discussions about race altogether.”

(Linly 2016)

14/52 responses

- ▶ As much as I would love to never hear white people are racist again, I believe racism and injustice still needs a spotlight shone upon it in this country. I believe that white people should be talking to other white people. That we should all be listening to the people of color around us. While a lot of the time being told that white people are racist feels like a personal attack, and thus makes me want to discontinue the conversation, I know it is important for a black and other voices of color to be heard, and if the people of color in our society need to take a break from making their voices heard, then it should be our turn to speak on their behalf as they are willing to let us.
- ▶ I agree with it.
- ▶ I think that it has many valid points, but that everyone should be a part of the conversation for a solution. A lot of the deflective responses some Americans provide is from ignorance and education and understanding should be the focus, not exclusion. However, I am not African American so I acknowledge that I really don't know what it's like to hear those statements from their perspective.
- ▶ Well written, very truthful and to the point
- ▶ I understand the sentiment but i think that if you consider yourself and activist, you have to do things that are difficult
- ▶ Eh. I don't feel one way or the other
- ▶ It's a decent article, but I think the sentiment of the article misses the point.
- ▶ If you exclude a group of people you're not going to get any support from them. Excluding white people from the debate is just going to make racism worse
- ▶ Ignorant
- ▶ I think educating people is the most important part of activism and if you stop discussing racism and white supremacy, then you will not get anywhere other than widen the gap of how white people view other races.
- ▶ Racism steams from every person of color including white people. It's not a white person's problem, it's a human issue.
- ▶ If we stop talking about it, it allows racism to be normalized
- ▶ Blacks make whites look racist. Whenever a black person gets in trouble they say "I got in trouble because I'm black." Blacks try to blame whites for so many things.
- ▶ Incredibly sad and frustrating.

(Garcia 2016)

Responses that stood out to me

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- ▶ Incredibly sad and frustrating.



I want a divided America

What is your opinion?

“But there's a stark difference between coexisting and governing collaboratively with ideological opponents and indulging people whose views are toxic to democracy.”

“Yet the country has spent. . .the last year indulging Trump's supporters and their enablers. . .trying to understand the roots of their grievances. . .What we should be doing is condemning them, alienating them and shaming them out of public life.”

“We should want to be divided from these people. Trump's supporters have made a habit of spouting violent, hateful rhetoric, then decrying their critics' "divisiveness" and racially specific language.”

(Cheney Rice 2016)

9/52 responses

- ▶ While I understand the sentiment, and would love to distance myself from the hate I hear daily, I don't think we can abandon the hurtful and dangerous side of our society. Once we leave them, their social conscience is gone, creating an even more dangerous movement. We must stand our ground in society and believe that the fight we are on is worth it.
- ▶ not sure, alot of positives and negatives
- ▶ Maybe a bit biased. It's hard to trust an article that isn't from a site I've ever heard of. Possibly not a reputable article. I'm not sure. I'd have to check facts and if facts are correct then I would say it's terrible.
- ▶ While I can understand the sentiment, it's difficult to support this sort of article. I'm a bleeding heart liberal progressive, and I understand that many people are racist because they feel they have no choice. Let's not treat them like pedophiles, let's actually treat them.
- ▶ A divided America is not good for the future of the country. In past elections both sides accepted the results and came together after the election. That is not the case this time around. How are we supposed to solve our issues if we can't even get along?
- ▶ Disgusted and scared
- ▶ Trump spoke his heavily opinionated observation about a woman, she fired back with hate and spoke ill of him. A divided America is always created during elections- the difficult thing is every time after an election like this is the upcoming president will have to mend the differences and unite the people.
- ▶ If we divide our country, we all lose. That is the starting point of a very quick and destructive spiral.
- ▶ Also sad

(Garcia 2016)

Responses that stood out to me

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- ▶ If we divide our country, we all lose. That is the starting point of a very quick and destructive spiral.

How is this related to social work?

- ▶ *Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, or mental or physical disability.* - NASW Code of Ethics, 6.04 (“Code of ethics...” 2008).
- ▶ According to the survey, most believe that we are politically and racially divided.
 - ▶ On both ends of the political spectrum, this could lead to racism and discrimination.
- ▶ As future social workers or people with an interest in social work, we need to address the polarization issue and make sure that clients of all backgrounds have a safe space to express their concerns.
- ▶ Many people are displeased with the election. Their concerns are valid, but we must also teach resiliency and emphasize the strengths perspective
- ▶ Alienating individuals for their beliefs does nothing for the overall welfare of society.
- ▶ These are difficult issues to talk about, but they are issues that **should** be talked about.

Any other questions or topics that you want to bring up?



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