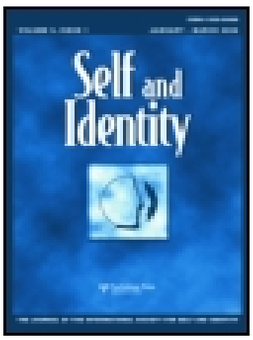

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More than a black and white issue: ethnic identity, social dominance orientation, and support for the black lives matter movement

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ABSTRACT

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement is the civil rights issue of our time, with opinions being fractured along racial lines. We examine how the relationship between identity constructs and BLM support operates differently among African Americans and White Americans. Our findings show ethnic identity predicts African Americans' attitudes on BLM, but is a poor predictor of White Americans' beliefs. Conversely, social dominance orientation better predicts White Americans' opinions of BLM, but does not associate with BLM attitudes among African Americans. The interaction of these constructs among White American respondents suggests that as White Americans discuss racial issues, the impact of social dominance is negated – leading to positive evaluations of BLM. These processes have implications for communication about racial issues.

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African Americans; race; ethnic identity; social dominance orientation; black lives matter

On the evening Saturday, 13 July 2012, erstwhile neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman was acquitted of the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. On the surface, though sad, this particular turn of the wheels of justice appears fairly innocuous in terms of societal impact. That is not the case. The incident has garnered national attention, not just because of the race of its victim (African American) and perpetrator (Hispanic Caucasian), but for two other reasons: First, Zimmerman deployed "stand your ground" in his defense, a controversial law under which a person who feels threatened is under no obligation to flee and can use up to, and including, deadly force for self-defense. Second, the incident served as a catalyst for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement.

Opinions about racial issues have long been bifurcated along racial lines. Opposition to programs based on race could stem from the belief that they give one group advantages over the other in the battle for finite resources. For example, legacy or Affirmative Action programs in hiring could give one equally-qualified applicant and advantage over another when competing for the finite resources of jobs and money. BLM is different. It in no way seeks to redress past grievances by giving preferences to one group over another. It takes no advantages from White Americans. It just asks that African Americans be treated with the same caution and respect as White Americans by police. At its core, its purpose is to promote equality. The perceived purpose of BLM varies. The BLM Movement has been

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called the "civil rights issue of our time" (Holt, 2017), and as such, factors that lead to support or rejection of it could be fractured along racial lines. It is widely known that White Americans and African Americans view racial topics vastly different depending on context, their attachment to their racial group, and their ideas about social dominance (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Research on the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) shows that reactions to racial topics can be influenced by an amalgam of factors beyond just phenotypical differences (Sellers et al., 1998). Here we take a nuanced look to identify which psychological constructs inform people's attitudes about the BLM Movement.

We believe ethnic identity, a concept that has consistently been shown to better explain group behaviors than just race alone (Phinney, 2000; Smith & Silva, 2011), will predict how African Americans feel about the BLM Movement. However, White Americans tend to have lower measured levels of ethnic identity than African Americans (Phinney, 1996). Consequently, we believe that ethnic identity will be a poor predictor of how White Americans feel about BLM. Instead, we believe their opinions will be better gauged by their orientation toward social dominance.

Critical race scholars have often addressed the societal power imbalance between African Americans and White Americans (Anderson, 2016; Isenberg, 2016). Notably, Feagin and Feagin (2011) likened this relationship to a ladder in which White Americans have historically sat at the top while African Americans – for various reasons – have remained cemented on the bottom rung. Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle's (1994) theory of social dominance orientation examines how individuals in the dominant group relate to this power disparity. The more an individual believes this de facto racial caste system is justified and must be maintained, the more that person is oriented toward social dominance (Simmons & Parks-Yancy, 2014). White Americans, often having greater social capital, and greater access to resources, tend to have a greater orientation toward social dominance than African Americans.

People's connection to their ethnicity might not only trigger their orientation toward social dominance, but can also influence their perception of racial issues. Research on the multidimensionality of race shows that the degree to which an event makes race salient (e.g. being the only African American in a room) can influence the degree to which some African Americans perceive the event through the lens of race (Sellers et al., 1998). White Americans who highly identify with being "White," (meaning devoid of an ethnic group, compared to European American, which highlights their ethnic heritage), are more likely to be prejudiced against minorities and reject the need for multicultural programs that highlight diversity (Morrison & Chung, 2011).

Attitudes toward racial issues are notoriously complex (Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014). Hence, we conduct this analysis to examine some of the factors – such as ethnic identity and social dominance orientation – that go beyond just race and can influence people's attitudes about BLM.

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is largely defined as the degree of buy-in a person has regarding their attachment to their particular racial group (Resnicow et al., 2009). The theory is multi-faceted and has been used to predict people's behavior (Phinney, 2000; Smith & Silva, 2011). Race often involves visible phenotypical traits (e.g. skin color, hair texture, etc.).

Ethnic identity is more expansive, including customs, shared language, traditions, and pride in a group's accomplishments (Hecht & Ribeau, 1991; Smith & Silva, 2011; Wong & Longshore, 2008).

The strength of ethnic identity is that it can provide accurate predictions about individual behaviors, even within the same racial group (Cross & Cross, 2008; Resnicow et al., 2009). For example, an African American who strongly identifies with issues that disproportionately affect African Americans could have a vastly different reaction to BLM than another person in the same racial group who, though also African American, shows no interest or connection with issues surrounding African American empowerment (Sellers et al., 1998). Consequently, ethnic identity has proven to be a better predictor of behavior and attitudes than race alone (Cross & Cross, 2008; Williams, 1994).

African Americans often have higher measured ethnic identity than White Americans, likely due to a unique history in the United States that has been hallmarked by oppression, discrimination, and disparately negative treatment (Cross & Cross, 2008; Sellers et al., 1998). Further, due to the American legacy of Jim Crow segregation, housing discrimination, racial bias, and police brutality – that disproportionately affect African Americans – we predict that African Americans will not only have more favorable attitudes toward BLM than White Americans, but also that their opinions about the BLM Movement will be predicted by their levels of ethnic identity. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H1: African Americans will have a more favorable opinion of BLM than will White Americans.

H2: For African Americans, BLM attitudes will be positively associated with ethnic identity.

White Americans are far less likely to view race or ethnic identity as a self-defining trait that guides their decisions (Appiah, 2003; Appiah, Knobloch-Westerwick, & Alter, 2013; Phinney, 2000). White Americans' racial identity is highly complex. Helms' work (Helms, 1990) on race proposed that whiteness is created in a six-stage process. The first three steps involve coming to terms with, and understanding the benefits of whiteness, while also disavowing any ties to racism. The second three progress from that point and explain how White Americans create a non-racist White identity. Subsequent work using Helms' model finds that different stages of this process can inform White Americans' preferences. Using the selection of a counselor as an example, Helms and Carter (1991) found that racial identity can influence both the preference, and the strength of White Americans' for counselors of a particular race, gender, and social class, but only for White counselors. White American participants' strength of preference for African American counselors was not predictable based on their (White Americans') racial identity. Coupled with the aforementioned work by Morrison and Chung (2011), which finds that Whites' willingness to engage with racial programs can fluctuate based just on label in which they are described, we believe White Americans' racial identity might not be a central determinant of how they feel about racial issues. Since we are examining this possibility in an exploratory context, we present the following as a research question rather than a hypothesis:

RQ1: For White Americans, are BLM attitudes associated with ethnic identity?

Should ethnic identity be a poor predictor of White Americans' attitudes on BLM, further investigation of the basis of their racial attitudes is warranted. As mentioned earlier, White

Amercians' experiences are vastly different than those of African Americans, especially with regard to their interactions with police. Some scholars propose that society is comprised of by hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing institutions. Gutierrez and Unzueta (2013) propose that programs like affirmative action aim to destroy society's racial hierarchy by providing advantages to traditionally disadvantaged groups to shore up differences that arose from past injustices. However, other institutions like the justice system, seek to maintain – or even strengthen – the racial hierarchy by giving more benefits to the dominant group (like lighter sentences for crimes done by White Americans in this instance), and stronger punishments (e.g. more jail time to African Americans) to the group that is already more disadvantaged. The long-term effect of these processes is that the advantaged group continues to improve upon their status as the dominant group, while the more disadvantaged group remains stagnant at their lower level. Given the possibility that the police, enforcing the rules of the justice system, can be viewed in relation to either maintaining or changing the racial hierarchy, we further examine opinions about BLM using social dominance orientation in order to evaluate individuals' desire to keep or change the status quo.

Social dominance orientation

Social dominance orientation is premised on the idea that society is comprised of groups whose relationships can be viewed as a tiered hierarchy in which dominant groups at the top rule over subordinate groups that sit at the lower levels (Pratto et al., 1994). People with a high orientation toward social dominance are more likely to demonstrate this trait when they feel their group's position in the hierarchy is threatened (Pratto & Shih, 2000).

A central tenet of social dominance is that persons who demonstrate this belief often do so because it benefits their group. In the context of the BLM Movement, we believe it is plausible and applicable because, even though the Movement in no way states an objection to the lives of White Americans, some Whites view BLM supporters as a hate group (Capehart, 2016; Lim, 2016). In response to the BLM Movement, a counter group – All Lives Matter – has been started largely by White Americans who seemingly believe that BLM literally means that *only* the lives of Black people matter (Coates, 2015). This finding was validated in a 2015 survey that found that 81 percent of likely White American voters believe that All Lives Matter reflects their point of view (Rasmussen Reports, 2015). In this way, views on BLM can be interpreted as a racial either-or proposition, a fact that is reaffirmed in research on cognition and race which shows that some White Americans view race as a zero-sum game in which a gain by another racial group is perceived as a loss for them (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

As the group in power, perhaps White Americans high in social dominance orientation could view the BLM Movement as a threat to the status quo, and thus respond negatively to it in order to maintain their elevated position in the racial hierarchy. Social dominance orientation has been theorized as a form of in-group preference (Gutierrez & Unzueta, 2013). Adherents to it will often support policies that maintain inequalities, even if the in-group does not realize any actual benefits from that support (Gutierrez & Unzueta, 2013). However, social dominance is not an immutable trait. White Americans being open to discussing their ethnic heritage has been found to suppress their levels of social

dominance and prejudice while simultaneously increasing their willingness to accept teaching about multiculturalism and funding diversity-related programs in schools (Morrison & Chung, 2011; Morrison et al., 2010). As mentioned earlier, since BLM has been construed as a race-based movement by some White Americans, we hypothesize that social dominance will influence their view of BLM. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H3: For White Americans, ethnic identity will interact with their orientation towards social dominance to affect their attitudes toward BLM.

Because we believe ethnic identity operates differently for African Americans than it does for White Americans, ethnic identity might not have the same effect of reducing social dominance orientation and its effect on BLM support. Thus, we also hypothesize that:

H4: For African Americans, ethnic identity and orientation toward social dominance independently associate with BLM attitudes, but they do not interact with one another.

Theoretical models explicating each of the hypothesized relationships are shown in Figure 1. In order to assess these relationships, we conducted a survey which measures support for the BLM Movement, as well as respondents' ethnic identity and social dominance orientation. Importantly, we examine how these processes operate *within* groups of African American and White American respondents, as testing these relationships using the same scale for both groups is likely to miss important within-group processes. The results highlight the complexity of race-related attitudes and the importance of considering various identity constructs when studying racial issues.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited and remunerated through Qualtrics, an online survey panel of United States residents. In total, 541 U.S. adults (age 21 and older) participated in this

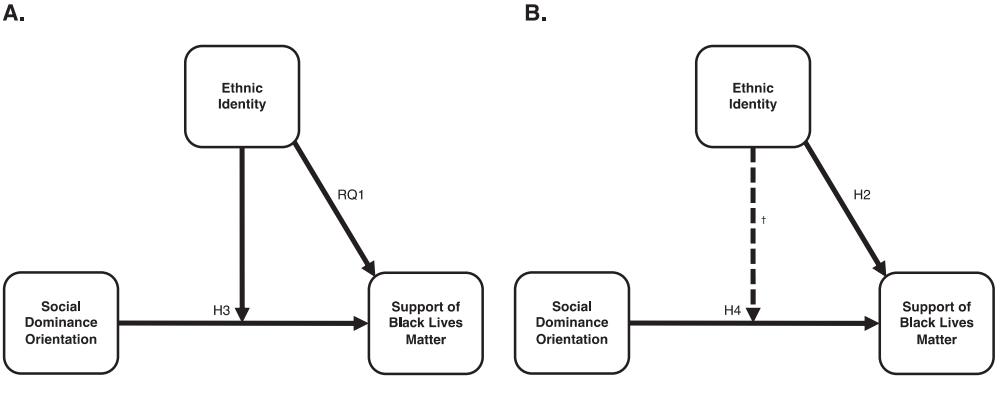

Figure 1. Theoretical models of the relationships between ethnic identity, social dominance orientation, and support for BLM for White American respondents (panel A) and African American respondents (panel B). Labels correspond to the hypotheses tested in models 2 and 3. note that hypothesis 1 is not pictured, as it pertains only to racial differences in the dependent variable. †hypothesis 4 predicts that no significant interaction exists for African Americans, indicated here by a dashed line.

study.[1] Half of the participants recruited were female (n = 270), and the other half of the sample was male (n = 271). Likewise, approximately half of the participants were African American (n = 271), and half were White American (n = 270). African Americans were oversampled so that more equitable comparisons could be made between those respondents and the White American sample. The sex and race of participants were sampled such that the African American and White American sub-samples were composed equally of women and men.

Participants' age was measured categorically. Sixty-two respondents (11.46%) were age 21 to 24, 96 respondents (17.74%) were age 25 to 34, 93 respondents (17.19%) were age 35–44, 105 respondents (19.41%) were age 45 to 54, 91 respondents (16.82%) were age 55 to 64, and 94 respondents (17.38%) reported their age as 65 years old or older. The proportion of respondents who fall into each of these categories matches the national distribution of age (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).[2] In the analyses that follow, age was not found to vary significantly between the African American and White American samples; χ^2 (25) = 32.73, p = .14.

Measures

Ethnic identity

Respondents' *ethnic identity* was first measured using the ethnic identity subscale of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992; Ponterotto, Gretchen, Utsey, Stracuzzi, & Saya, 2003). This scale is composed of 10 items with responses ranging on a 1 to 4 scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (see Table 1). Responses showed evidence of strong reliability, Chronbach's α = .87, 95% CI = [.85, .88]. We thus opted to create an index by averaging the 10 items. Overall, respondents reported moderate-to-high levels of *ethnic identity;* M = 2.94, SD = 0.56, African Americans: M = 3.08, SD = 0.52, White Americans: M = 2.80, SD = 0.56. African American respondents had significantly higher ethnic identity than their White American counterparts; t(535.42) = 6.20, p < .001, d = .52.

Social dominance orientation

Social dominance orientation was measured using Pratto et al.'s (1994) *social dominance orientation* (SDO) scale. The scale has been found to correlate strongly with prejudices against African Americans (Whitley, 1999). The scale contains 15 items which relate to one's denigration of other social groups (see Table 2). The questions do not contain information pertaining to exactly which social group (e.g. racial, religious, or gender groups) a respondent is supposed to consider. Rather, questions pertained more to support for social hierarchies in general. Response options range on a 1 to 7 scale from feeling "Very Negative" to "Very Positive." Eight of the 15 items in the scale were reverse-coded so that larger values indicated greater SDO. Responses to these scale items evinced strong reliability, Chronbach's α = .89, 95% CI = [.87, .90]. We created a SDO index by averaging the 15 items. Overall, respondents showed low *social dominance orientation:* M = 2.57, SD = 1.10, African Americans: M = 2.37, SD = 1.04, White Americans: M = 2.77, SD = 1.11. White American respondents had significantly higher orientation toward social dominance compared to African American respondents; t(536.39) = 4.30, p < .001, d = .37.

Table 1. Multigroup ethnic identity measure – ethnic identity subscale.

Question Text	*M*	*SD*	α – Item Removed
I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	2.80	0.91	.85
I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	2.37	0.96	.86
I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	3.27	0.69	.86
I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	2.60	0.97	.86
I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	3.29	0.68	.86
To learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	2.66	0.93	.85
I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.	3.22	0.71	.85
I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	2.81	0.89	.85
I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	3.06	0.80	.85
I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	3.32	0.68	.86

Note. Response options ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4). The overall reliability of the scale is high; α = .87, 95% CI = [.85, .88].

Table 2. Social dominance orientation scale.

Question Text	*M*	*SD*	α – Item Removed
Some groups are simply inferior to other groups.	3.02	2.07	.88
In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.	2.85	1.99	.88
It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.	2.85	1.96	.88
To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.	2.74	1.91	.88
If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.	2.95	2.07	.88
It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.	2.79	1.95	.87
Inferior groups should stay in their place.	2.77	1.99	.88
†It would be good if groups could be equal.	4.86	1.37	.88
†Group equality should be our ideal.	4.55	1.57	.88
†All groups should be given an equal chance in life.	5.09	1.28	.88
†We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.	4.51	1.50	.88
†Increased social equality is a good idea.	4.64	1.50	.88
†We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.	4.82	1.46	.88
†We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.	4.32	1.79	.89
†No one group should dominate in society.	4.63	1.66	.89

Note. †Items were reverse-coded prior to factorization. Response options ranged from "very negative" (1) to "very positive" (7). The overall reliability of the scale is high; α = .89, 95% CI = [.87, .9].

BLM attitudes

The dependent variable for each of the analyses that follow is a respondent's *support for the Black Lives Matter Movement*. We constructed an attitudes scale composed of six items, each measured from 1 to 7 (see Table 3). These questions assess respondents' perceptions of BLM and its supporters using a variety of characteristics. These items are highly reliable, Chronbach's α = .97, 95% CI = [.97, .98]. Rather than assessing each of these items individually, we opted to create an averaged index, resulting in a scale of attitudes from completely negative (1) to completely positive (7). Overall, *support for Black Lives Matter* was positive, though there is considerable variability in the sample which we hope to explain in the analyses that follow: $M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.86$, African Americans: $M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.41$, White Americans: $M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.95$.

Table 3. Black lives matter attitudes scale.

Question Text	*M*	*SD*	α – Item Removed
My personal attitude about the Black Lives Matter movement is that I: "Dislike it a great deal" (1); "Like it a great deal" (7)	4.72	1.98	.97
In my opinion, the Black Lives Matter movement is: "Very bad" (1); "Very good" (7)	4.86	1.95	.97
My opinion about the Black Lives Matter movement is: "Very unfavorable" (1); "Very favorable" (7)	4.76	2.00	.97
In terms of the Black Lives Matter movement, I think what protesters are doing is: "Very unwise" (1); "Very wise" (7)	4.57	1.98	.97
In my opinion, the Black Lives Matter movement will ultimately prove to be: "Very unbeneficial" (1); "Very beneficial" (7)	4.71	1.93	.97
To what extent do you agree that the Black Lives movement is necessary? "Very unnecessary" (1); "Very necessary" (7)	4.86	2.06	.97

Note. The overall reliability of the scale is: α = .97, 95% CI = [.97, .98].

Control variables

We include several demographic control variables in the analyses to demonstrate the robustness of individually held racial constructs in predicting attitudes towards BLM. First, *gender* was categorically distinguished between male (0) and female (1) participants, of which there were a roughly equal number in our sample. We measured respondents' *age* categorically, as outlined above. We then measured *income* categorically as household yearly salary: <$20,000 ($n$ = 143; 0), $20,000-$35,000 (n = 110; 1), $35,000-$50,000 (n = 91; 2), $50,000-$75,000 (n = 105; 3), $75,000-$100,000 (n = 52; 4), and >$100,000 ($n$ = 40; 5). *Education* was also measured categorically: elementary or less (n = 2; 0), high school (n = 201; 1), 2-year/junior college or trade school (n = 163; 2), 4-year college (n = 127; 3), master's degree (n = 38; 4), and Ph.D./J.D./M.D. (n = 10; 5). A respondent's self-reported *residence* was coded as rural (n = 121; 0), suburban (n = 235; 1), or urban (n = 185; 2). Finally, since these racial constructs are theorized to vary systematically between White American and African Americans, the inclusion of a *race* categorical variable (White American = 0; African American = 1) may indicate the need for further analyses which separately investigate the role of ethnic identity and social dominance orientation among participants in each group.

Results

In order to assess whether White American and African American respondents differ in their support for the Black Lives Matter Movement (hypothesis 1), we conducted a *t*-test to compare the means of the Black Lives Matter attitudes scale. Overall, White American respondents had a significantly lower assessment of Black Lives Matter (M = 3.99, SD = 1.95), compared to African American respondents (M = 5.50, SD = 1.41); t (489.19) = -10.35, $p < .001$, d = .89. This indicates a large difference (Cohen, 1988) in BLM attitudes between White American and African American respondents, supporting hypothesis 1.

Before turning to between-group comparisons, we conducted an overall assessment of the relationships between these constructs and several demographic variables, as well as race, and BLM attitudes. To do so, we introduced these scale items step-wise into the OLS regression model alongside demographic control variables. This allows us to demonstrate how ethnic identity and social dominance orientation are robustly associated with BLM attitudes above and beyond personal characteristics which are often

thought to correlate with racial attitudes. The demographic variables included in the first step are a respondents' gender, their age, income, education level, and residence, while ethnic identity, social dominance, and their interaction are introduced in the second step. As mentioned previously, ethnic identity and social dominance orientation are both inherently tied to one's racial identity, and so we included *race* (White American = 0; African American = 1) independently in the third step. Significant changes we observe in this third step serve as the impetus for further analyses.

We estimated three steps of an OLS regression model (see Table 4, Model 1), using standardized scales for *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, and *BLM attitudes*, because each were measured on different scales. Step one of the model introduces several demographic control variables: *gender, age, income, education*, and *residence*. Of these variables, only the $75,000-$100,000 category of *income* (compared to < $20,000; β = -.38, SE = .17, $p < .05$) and suburban (compared to rural; β = .25, SE = .11, $p < .05$) and

Table 4. Regression models predicting black lives matter attitudes.

	Model 1			Model 2	Model 3
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	White Americans	African Americans
Female	−.02 (.09)	−.07 (.08)	−.06 (.08)	−.10 (.12)	.06 (.12)
Age (ex. 21 – 24)					
25 – 34	.18 (.16)	.04 (.15)	.18 (.14)	.11 (.19)	−.003 (.27)
35 – 44	.21 (.16)	.09 (.15)	−.03 (.14)	−.12 (.24)	.26 (.21)
45 – 54	.25 (.16)	.12 (.15)	−.03 (.14)	−.22 (.24)	.35^{+} (.21)
55 – 64	.15 (.17)	−.10 (.15)	−.18 (.14)	−.42^{+} (.24)	.27 (.22)
>65	−.08 (.17)	−.17 (.15)	−.04 (.14)	−.21 (.20)	.45^{+} (.26)
Income (ex. < $20k)					
$20k – $35k	−.19 (.13)	−.20^{+} (.11)	−.17 (.11)	−.30^{+} (.18)	−.08 (.16)
$35k – $50k	−.15 (.14)	−.20 (.12)	−.13 (.12)	.002 (.19)	−.31^{+} (.18)
$50k – $75k	−.05 (.13)	−.07 (.12)	−.04 (.11)	−.17 (.18)	.05 (.17)
$75k – $100k	−.38* (.17)	−.35* (.16)	−.17 (.15)	−.18 (.22)	−.12 (.27)
> $100k	.04 (.19)	−.08 (.17)	.10 (.17)	.32 (.24)	−.53^{+} (.29)
Education (ex. Elementary)					
High School	.36 (.70)	−.16 (.64)	.26 (.61)	‡	.07 (.66)
2–year/Junior College/ Trade	.21 (.71)	−.31 (.64)	.09 (.61)	−.18 (.15)	−.13 (.67)
4–year College	.41 (.71)	−.16 (.64)	.29 (.61)	.09 (.17)	.03 (.67)
Master's	.25 (.72)	−.18 (.66)	.33 (.63)	.09 (.22)	.08 (.71)
Ph.D./J.D./M.D.	.64 (.77)	−.02 (.70)	.48 (.67)	.33 (.37)	−.24 (.86)
Residence (ex. Rural)					
Suburban	.25* (.11)	.19^{+} (.10)	.09 (.10)	.11 (.14)	−.13 (.18)
Urban	.49*** (.12)	.39*** (.11)	.20^{+} (.11)	.38* (.17)	−.17 (.18)
Ethnic Identity	–	.31*** (.04)	.22*** (.04)	.11^{+} (.06)	.41*** (.06)
Social Dominance Orientation	–	−.29*** (.04)	−.25*** (.04)	−.30*** (.06)	−.17** (.06)
Interaction (MEIM x SDO)	–	.06^{+} (.04)	.09* (.04)	.13* (.05)	−.02 (.06)
African American (ex. White American)	–	–	.68*** (.09)	–	–
F (df)	2.24 (18, 522)	7.93 (21, 519)	10.95 (22, 518)	3.90 (20, 249)	4.26 (21, 249)
R^2	.07	.24	.32	.24	.26
Δ R^2	–	.17	.07	–	–
Adj. R^2	.04	.21	.29	.18	.22
n	541	541	541	270	271

Note. Standardized OLS regression estimates shown with standard errors and excluded categories of indicators in parentheses. Model 1 uses *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, and *BLM attitudes* scales which were standardized across all participants. Models 2 and 3 use scales which were standardized within White American and African American subsamples, respectively. ‡The White subsample did not contain anyone with an elementary education level, and so "High School" serves as the excluded category for education in Model 2. $^{+}p < .1$, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

urban *residences* (β = .49, *SE* = .12, $p < .001$) were significantly associated with BLM attitudes. Step two indicates that, for all participants, *ethnic identity* (β = .31, *SE* = .04, $p < .001$) and *social dominance orientation* (β = –.29, *SE* = .04, $p < .001$) are both significantly associated with BLM support, while the interaction of these constructs is not significant (β = .06, *SE* = .04, p = .09). Moreover, the addition of the relationship between *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, and their interaction into the model, adds substantially to the amount of variance in BLM support that can be explained as the adjusted R^2 increased from .04 in step 1 to .21 in step 2.

Finally, in step 3 we introduced respondents' *race*. Here, we found that the effect of those two demographic indicators (*income* and *residence*) dissolved and the variance in BLM attitudes explained by the model jumped by 7%. Furthermore, the measured effect of both *ethnic identity* and *social dominance orientation* attenuated considerably, while the interaction of those two constructs was now found to be significant. This suggests that ethnic identity and social dominance orientation both function differently in African American and White American groups. In order to disentangle these relationships, we conducted two additional regression analyses – one each for White American and African American participants – using *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, their interaction, and the aforementioned demographic controls, to predict *BLM attitudes*. The models that follow use scales that were standardized within each subsample to better assess within-group processes.

To test hypothesis 2, assessing a positive relationship between African American respondents' ethnic identity and their attitudes toward the Black Lives Matter Movement, a standardized OLS model was estimated regressing *BLM attitudes* on *ethnic identity* (both standardized within the African American subsample), controlling for gender, age, income, education, and residence. The omnibus model was significant, indicating good model fit; F (19, 251) = 4.17, $p < .001$, R^2_{adj} = .18. Ethnic identity was found to be significantly associated with BLM attitudes; β = .44, *SE* = .06, t = 7.65, $p < .001$. These findings support hypothesis 2.

Next, research question 1 asks whether a similar relationship between one's ethnic identity and support for Black Lives Matter exists for White American respondents. The standardized OLS regression overall model indicates good model fit. However, less than half of the variance in *BLM attitudes* is explained in this model compared to the same model for African American participants; F (18, 251) = 2.42, $p < .01$, R^2_{adj} = .09. Ethnic identity was not found to significantly correlate with BLM attitudes for White American participants; β = .08, *SE* = .06, t = 1.21, p = .23. This result indicates that ethnic identity operates differently for these two populations.

Hypothesis 3 seeks to distinguish how these different mechanisms (i.e. ethnic identity and social dominance orientation) relate to White Americans' attitudes toward the BLM Movement, and the degree to which these processes interact with one another. To this end, a standardized OLS model was estimated regressing *BLM attitudes* on *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, the interaction of the MEIM and SDO scales, and demographic controls (see Table 4, Model 2). Overall, the model fit well, and a substantial increase in explained variance was observed compared to the model which only included *ethnic identity; F* (20, 249) = 3.90, $p < .001$, R^2_{adj} = .18. The independent effect of *ethnic identity* on *BLM attitudes* still failed to reach significance; β = .11, *SE* = .06, t = 1.82, p = .07. Meanwhile, the independent effect of

social dominance orientation on *BLM attitudes* was significant and negative; $\beta = -.30$, $SE = .06$, $t = -5.00$, $p < .001$. This suggests that derogation of outgroup individuals by White American respondents corresponds with negative attitudes toward the Black Lives Matter Movement. However, the interaction of *ethnic identity* and *social dominance orientation* was significant and positive; $\beta = .13$, $SE = .05$, $t = 2.29$, $p < .05$. This suggests that, for White American respondents, who are comparatively *low* in their orientation toward social dominance, the contributory effect of ethnic identity is negligible; that is, *BLM attitudes* in this group are relatively high and remain so across all levels of *ethnic identity*. For White American respondents who are comparatively *high* in their social dominance orientation, the effect of ethnic identity is attenuating. This is in line with previous research showing that engagement with ethnic identity influences White Americans' attitude toward racial issues (Morrison & Chung, 2011; Morrison et al., 2010). In other words, White American respondents who are high in social dominance orientation, but who have low levels of ethnic identity, have very negative attitudes toward BLM. However, among White Americans with similar levels of social dominance orientation and higher ethnic identity, BLM support is strong, even to the point that the difference in BLM support between high and low social dominance orientation is insignificant. The dynamics of this interaction are illustrated in Figure 2 (Panel A).

Finally, hypothesis 4 assesses the same interaction in the African American sub-sample. A similar OLS model regressing *BLM attitudes* on *ethnic identity, social dominance orientation*, the interaction of these two constructs, and controls, was estimated using the

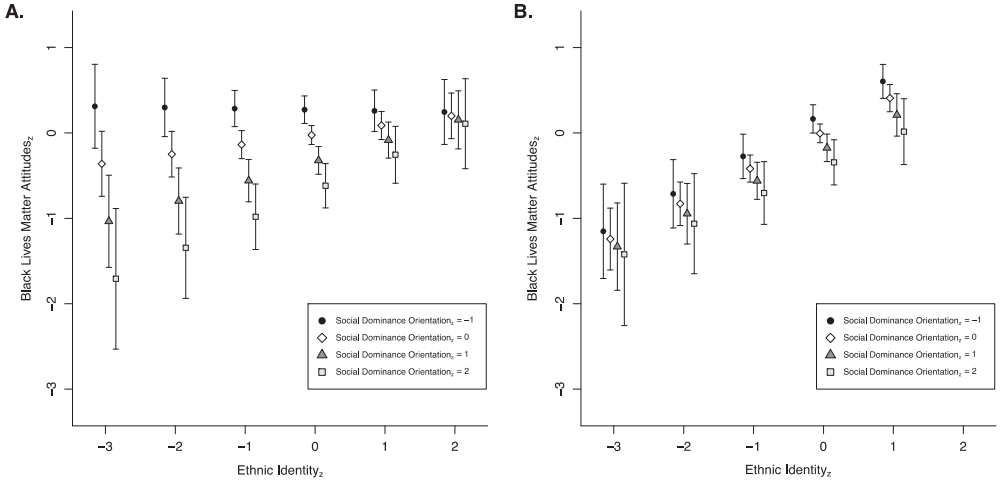

Figure 2. Marginal effects plot of the interaction of social dominance orientation and multigroup ethnic identity measure on black lives matter attitudes for White American respondents (panel A) and African American respondents (panel B). Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Shape and color of the points denotes standard deviation units from −1 to 2 of SDO. Points were staggered along the x-axis to avoid overlapping confidence interval bars. MEIM values for each of the points are at standard deviation intervals from −3 to 2 for White American respondents, and from −3 to 1 for African American respondents. All standardizations were completed within the corresponding sub-sample. Estimates and confidence intervals were assessed using the "effects" package in the *R* statistical program (Fox, 2003; Fox et al., 2017).

standardized scales for the African American participants. The omnibus model was significant, indicating good model fit, but the increase in variance explained seen in the White American group over the bivariate model is not nearly as pronounced in this model (compared to the model testing hypothesis 2); $F(21, 249) = 4.26$, $p < .001$, $R^2_{adj} = .20$. Just as in the model testing hypothesis 2, *ethnic identity* has a significant and positive direct effect on *BLM attitudes* among African Americans; $\beta = .41$, $SE = .06$, $t = 7.04$, $p < .001$. *Social dominance orientation* also has a significant and direct effect on *BLM attitudes* for African Americans; $\beta = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $t = -2.75$, $p < .01$. However, unlike the interaction model tested among White American respondents (hypothesis 3), the interaction of *ethnic identity* and *social dominance orientation* was not a significant predictor of *BLM attitudes* among African American respondents; $\beta = -.03$, $SE = .06$, $t = -0.44$, $p = .66$. This suggests that the two mechanisms – ethnic identity and social dominance orientation – operate independently of one another (Figure 2, panel B). This finding is drastically different from the results of the White American sub-sample, suggesting that these processes work in very different ways depending on the race of the person in question.

Discussion

The BLM Movement has been likened to a modern civil rights movement with African Americans showing greater support for the issue – which affects them more directly than White Americans, for whom the issue is more a distal concern (Holt, 2017). Racial attitudes are complex and multidimensional (Sellers et al., 1998). Understanding the myriad of factors that influence racial attitudes can go beyond measuring differences we can observe, such as skin color. Our findings show that differences in skin color, though significant, might only be part of the picture that explains people's attitudes on racial issues.

Although we present just one study looking at one racial movement, our results open the possibility that differences in how African Americans and White Americans view race can go beyond what we can see, and could be the result of different group experiences throughout the history of the United States. Group oppression cannot help but heighten people's awareness that they are part of an ethnic group. African Americans' ancestors fought to end slavery during the Civil War, against Jim Crow segregation in its' aftermath during the Civil Rights Movement, and today African Americans fight not to get shot in disproportionate numbers by police in the Black Lives Matter Movement. Our findings might have captured the resonant echo of that experience and demonstrate the reality of what African Americans' have always known in America: Race matters, and to understand how they feel about an issue that influences them, one has to be collaterally measure their buy-in with their ethnic identity. Hence, it is not surprising that ethnic identity, though not solely explaining, more strongly explains African Americans' attitude toward BLM than it does for White Americans.

White Americans, comparably, live in a vastly different world. Able to cloak their ethnic differences in the amorphous category of "White," they are more capable of having additional factors influence their stance on a racial issue. This evolution of Italian, Polish, et al., being subsumed under the broad category of "White" also could speak to the nature of American history, but our findings show that White Americans' racial attitudes are fairly complex. Consider the common narrative surrounding White Americans' ethnic identity: It is usually portrayed that White Americans who identify

strongly with their ethnic group are White Supremacists, and that in turn correlates with their propensity to denigrate racial minorities. If this were the case, then we would expect to find that higher ethnic identity in White American participants corresponds with more negative attitudes towards the Black Lives Matter Movement. However, the findings of this bivariate test indicate that no such relationship exists.

For White American participants, the multi-group ethnic identity measure (MEIM) and social dominance orientation (SDO) scores independently correspond with attitudes toward BLM. Social dominance operates in a way that is consistent with the narrative about White Supremacy and is consistent with previous research findings regarding racial prejudice (Whitley, 1999). That is, support for things like "stepping on other groups to get ahead" or "use of force against other groups to get what you want" corresponds with increasingly negative attitudes about the Black Lives Matter Movement. We find this relationship in the African American subsample too, which suggests both that social dominance orientation measures a value system that is in conflict with the stated ideals of BLM, and that views on social dominance transcend race in its effect on attitudes regarding racial issues. Ethnic identity, as measured using the MEIM scale, operates in the opposite direction. That is, for increases in behaviors (e.g. "talking to others") and cognitions (e.g. "pride in accomplishments") relating to respondents' ethnic group, support for BLM increases. This holds for both the African American and the White American subsamples, suggesting that this, too, transcends racial boundaries.

However, the findings relating to the interaction of ethnic identity and social dominance orientation in the African American and White American subsamples (respectively) highlight differences in the relationship between the ethnic identity and social dominance orientation between these two groups. For African American respondents, the interaction is not significant, meaning that social dominance orientation does not moderate the effect of ethnic identity on BLM attitudes. On the other hand, among White American participants, the interaction of social dominance orientation and ethnic identity is strong and significant, indicating substantial moderation of these effects. This, paired with the finding that the bivariate relationship between the multi-group ethnic identity measure and BLM attitudes resulted in drastically different effect sizes strongly suggests that ethnic identity operates very differently between White American and African American groups.

We suggest that to gain insight into these differences, it is necessary to parse the items in the multi-ethnic identity measure. Phinney (1992), in constructing the scale, argues that the behavioral and cognitive practices which the measurement items assess should result in equal strength of one's identity with *their own*[3] ethnic group, regardless of the race of the individual. This appears to be the case with African American respondents in our study, as the strong relationship with BLM attitudes indicates greater buy-in to the goals and values of BLM. However, since this buy-in is more vicarious for White Americans, the positive relationship with the multi-ethnic identity measure found in the interaction model might indicate that the measure is, at least in some way, measuring orientation toward other ethnic groups as well. Take some of the behavioral items for example: "To learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group," and "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs" both tap into behaviors which may result in heightened awareness of racial issues in a general sense, in addition to the greater sense of in-group identity. Future research should further test this supposition.

Recent research on the intergroup contact hypothesis (e.g. Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Ramasubramanian, 2012; Wojcieszak & Azrout, 2016) finds that discussion along cross-racial social connections which pertains to racial issues result in more positive assessments of out-group members in White Americans. This is theoretically similar to research in political communication that suggests social network diversity corresponds with increased awareness of "the other side" (Mutz, 2002). Applying these frameworks to our findings, it is conceivable that there exists a middle ground between intergroup contact and no contact at all in which individuals discuss race-related issues with other in-group members. Such behaviors can increase exposure to the issues and the argument repertoires, where no exposure exists in the absence of those behaviors. This would explain why greater ethnic identity attenuates and can even negate the negative effect of social dominance orientation on support for Black Lives Matter in the White American subsample.[4] This remains an important focus for future research; perhaps an experiment manipulating in- and out-group social contact could assess these differences in a causal, rather than correlational fashion.

In a racial group context, these findings show that the principle which guides the attitude of White Americans who oppose Black Lives Matter is not "racial pride" per se, but the form in which racial pride manifests: the subjugation of other groups whom they feel are inferior to their own group, and against whom, several options, including the use of force, should be used to maintain their own racial group's dominance. Although this is found in both African American and White American respondents, social dominance orientation is an especially strong indicator of which White Americans oppose Black Lives Matter. In step with the tenets of social dominance theory, these people believe in maintaining the status quo. Despite the claims of Blue Lives Matter and All Lives Matter activists, we find that opposition to Black Lives Matter is not driven by the idea that all lives matter equally; instead, it is driven by the belief that non-Black lives should matter *more* than the lives of African Americans. Making African American lives matter equally challenges the status quo, and therefore must be opposed in order to maintain White Americans' status at the top of the racial hierarchy. We suspect, too, that these constructs color people's interpretation of communication about racial issues.

Ethnic identity and social dominance orientation could, in theory, moderate effects in both mass-mediated and interpersonal contexts. Greater buy-in as evinced by ethnic identity – both through direct experience (as is the case for most African Americans) and through vicarious identification (as is the case for some White Americans) – could, for example, elicit greater elaborative processing of messages (e.g. Hovick & Holt, 2016). Perhaps in bringing different groups together and highlighting the salience of both African Americans' and White Americans' ethnic diversity, we can rectify the belief that some groups *should* occupy a lower status than others. Perhaps in doing so we can then move closer to the ideal that not only do Black lives matter, but they should matter equally.

Notes

1. Qualtrics uses opt-in panels, a form of non-probability sampling. The participation rate (the number of valid responses divided by the total number of invitations answered) for this study is 83.75%.
2. We sampled on other nationally-representative (United States) characteristics as well, including household income, educational attainment, and rural/suburban/urban residence. See the "control variables" subsection for more details regarding the distribution of these demographics.

3. Phinney (1992) posits that a different subscale – Other Group Orientation – relates to one's strength of connections to ethnic groups beyond the one that individual most identifies with. We did not include these measures, as we were only concerned with in-group identity. Further research is required to assess the distinction (and perhaps overlap) between these subscales.
4. For African Americans, in-group contact about race related issues also strengthens support, not through exposure to out-group related issues, but through in-group sharing of personal experiences.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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