

The Racial Divide in Response to the Aftermath of Katrina: A Boundary Condition for Common Ingroup Identity Model

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The disastrous aftermath of Katrina brought to light a great rift between Blacks and Whites in the United States. Polls taken shortly after the disaster gave clear indication that many Blacks felt that the response to Katrina was slowed by racism. At the same time, many Whites felt that the residents of New Orleans were to blame for their predicament. To understand the causal role ethnic identity plays in shaping individuals' perceptions, the present study experimentally manipulated Whites' social identification and measured their perceptions of the Katrina disaster's aftermath. Our results indicate that White Americans exhibited greater prejudice when thinking of themselves as "American" (an identity seemingly inclusive of Blacks) than when identifying as "White American" or "European American" (an identity that seemingly excludes Blacks). This finding demonstrates a boundary condition to the Common Ingroup Identity Model, such that a dual identity is more conducive to positive intergroup relations when strong racial assumptions exist about the overarching identity.

National disasters can have a dramatic impact on the way individuals see their group identities. After the World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001, for example, Americans seemingly drew together and united as Americans,

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overlooking many internal differences for the sake of the common good.¹ The impact of Hurricane Katrina has in some sense been the opposite, with Blacks perceiving the slow response as the result of racism, and in particular perceiving President George W. Bush as not caring about Black² people (USA TODAY/CNN GALLUP, 2005).

In contrast to the racial divide apparent in opinion polls, President George W. Bush largely avoided any mention of race, instead promoting the unity of all Americans behind the common goal of helping victims (Bush, 2005). This strategy was presumably intended to unite all Americans in a common cause and a single overarching American identity, including all ethnic minority groups, or at least to minimize the salience of subgroup identity. This strategy is consistent with the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM; Dovidio et al., 1997; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993). CIIM postulates that by recategorizing outgroup members into the common ingroup, one's positive attitudes toward the ingroup would be extended to those previously construed as outgroup members.

Within the context of American race relations, there are several compelling reasons why the positive benefits of recategorization into a singular "American" identity may be limited. First, Devos and Banaji (2005) found that American participants implicitly associate the "American" category with being White, whereas the association between non-Whites and "American" is much weaker in comparison. Second, White privilege theory (McIntosh, 1988) asserts that Whites generally do not think of themselves as having an ethnicity, and may see themselves as "just American." To the extent that this is true, "American" is not an overarching, common identity that includes Americans of all races and ethnicities, but rather an exclusive one.

Third, contemporary formulations of CIIM (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) have acknowledged that having members of two subgroups (e.g., White and Black Americans) recategorize themselves as members of a single overarching category (e.g., Americans) may not always improve intergroup relations. It has been hypothesized that a boundary condition to CIIM may exist in cases where ethnic and racial categorizations are strongly entrenched (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In such cases, establishment of a dual identity, such as "White American," may be more conducive to positive intergroup relations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). We propose that this boundary condition does in fact exist, specifically in situations where racial assumptions about the overarching identity are deeply entrenched, such as in the United States, where American is typically seen as referring primarily to

¹ Notably, however, hate crimes against Arabic and Muslim Americans increased in spite of the large movement toward solidarity.

² In this article we use the label Blacks to refer to African Americans, and Whites to refer to European Americans. This is consistent with the relevant polls by USA TODAY/CNN Gallup, as well as the U.S. Census Bureau. Moreover, in our study, the participants used these labels to identify themselves.

Whites (Devos & Banaji, 2005). By contrast, when Whites identify themselves as “White American” or “European American,”³ it may actually reflect a tendency to acknowledge that the White American group is just one of the racial or ethnic groups that constitutes the American society. We expect that in cases where strong racial and ethnic assumptions exist about an overarching categorization, adopting a dual identity will be conducive to positive intergroup relations, at least for members of the hegemonic group. Moreover, the likely mechanism in this case is greater inclusion of minority group members into the common overarching identity, consistent with CIIM (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

This tendency to include minority members into the overarching group category when considering a dual identity can be understood via Grice’s conversational maxims (Grice, 1975). If “American” already means White, then talking about “White Americans” is uninformative and redundant, violating the maxims of quantity and relevance. It is then a fairly logical inference to make, that when “White American” is used, it is for the purpose of differentiating from other non-White Americans, thereby implicitly acknowledging the membership of other ethnic groups in the American society.⁴

Indeed, the “American” identity versus “White American” identity may invoke a different frame for categorization. According to Medin (1989; also Murphy & Medin, 1985), categorization is not driven simply by similarities of the features of the elements in the categories, but rather by an underlying theory that defines the categories. “American” is a national identity, and as such when Whites think of their “American” identity, it likely brings to mind the features that would differentiate them from foreigners. To the extent that the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture is seen as the defining essence of the “American” national identity (cf. Huntington, 2004), being White is likely linked to “American” and not being White linked to “Foreign” (Devos & Banaji, 2005). As such, ethnic minority groups would be seen as less “American” than Whites. By contrast, the “White American” identity invokes a categorization frame that compares Americans of different races and ethnicities, thereby acknowledging the fact that there are also non-White Americans.

In sum, for White Americans, the “American” identity is not an overarching common identity, whereas the “White American” identity may paradoxically imply

³There are several common categorization labels for Whites in America. Specifically, while the term European American is common in the published literature, the terms White, White American, Caucasian American, and Caucasian are at least as common in spoken usage. It is plausible that there are psychological distinctions between the terms, but we have no strong *a priori* hypotheses regarding what they might be.

⁴We do not mean to suggest that dual identification is as simple as a superficial label, but rather to suggest social categorization processes may occur using a similar logic to Grice’s maxims of communication, focusing on the importance of what is taken for granted or assumed and what is salient. Research on spontaneous self-concept makes a similar point about the dynamic change of one’s identity based on context (cf. McGuire, McGuire, & Winton, 1979; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976).

an inclusion of other ethnic groups in American society. As a result, it is possible that White Americans who endorse an “American” identity (a semantically more inclusive identity) and thus perceive other ethnic groups less as ingroup members, would show more prejudice against other ethnic groups than their counterparts who endorse a “White American” identity (a semantically more exclusive theory).

These predictions support the existence of a boundary condition within the CIIM (Dovidio, et al., 1997; Gaertner et al., 1993) in that an overarching, common identity (such as “American”) does not necessarily guarantee the formation of a larger ingroup, if there is a strong racial or ethnic assumption to that identity. That is to say, when the overarching identity is dominated by one hegemonic racial group and the representation of this dominance is widely shared in the culture, then the overarching identity is no longer inclusive in its meaning because it excludes rather than includes minority racial groups (cf. Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001). As such this boundary condition, if it exists, would be expected to occur in any nation that is dominated by a specific racial group.

The aftermath of Katrina provides a backdrop for testing these ideas. Polls (USA TODAY/CNN GALLUP, 2005) conducted shortly after the Katrina disaster and contemporary with the current study revealed a striking racial divide, indicating that Whites were less likely than Blacks to blame racism (while 60% of Blacks felt that the slow response after Hurricane Katrina was related to the majority of victims being Black, only 12% of Whites felt the same) and President Bush (37% of Blacks felt that President Bush deserved the most blame for the Katrina disaster versus 15% of Whites), but more likely than Blacks to blame the victims (27% of Whites felt the residents of New Orleans deserved most of the blame for the Katrina disaster, whereas 11% of Blacks felt the same).

Given this racial divide, if the “American” and “White American” identity indeed carry different meanings for White Americans, and are associated with different attitudes toward other groups, we should observe a systematic difference in White Americans’ attitudes toward the aftermath of Katrina as a function of their types of identification (i.e., “American,” “White American,” etc.). Specifically, we predicted that an “American” identity would be more likely to evoke prejudiced attitudes among White Americans than a dual identity, such as “White American” or “European American.”³ We expect prejudice to be most apparent in the form of victim blame (e.g., blaming the individuals who failed to evacuate before Katrina hit) and denial of racism (e.g., denial of the history of discrimination in the South). This is consistent with Symbolic Racism (McConahay & Hough, 1976): prejudice is not expressed through blatant expression of negative stereotypes about group traits (e.g., Blacks are unintelligent), but rather through attributions to individuals and denial of racism (e.g., Blacks are held back in society because many of them refuse to work as much as their peers, not racial discrimination).

To test these predictions, the present study was conducted on September 16, 2005 about two weeks after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans (August 29, 2005).

In the study, White American participants were induced to categorize themselves as “American,” “White American,” or “European American,” and the participants’ attitudes toward the aftermath of Katrina were subsequently measured. Minority member participants were also included in the study as they provide a valuable comparison for the relative levels of prejudice; however, for simplicity of administration, all minority member participants were induced to categorize themselves as “American.”

Method

Participants

Two hundred and thirty undergraduate students (average age = 19.6 years, 72% female) were recruited from an introductory-level personality psychology course. In return for their participation, the students received extra credit in the course. The group was racially and ethnically diverse, with 12 Black, 51 Asian, and 144 White students. The remaining 23 students reported more than one ethnicity or belonging to a smaller ethnic group (the largest of which was 5 Latino/as, though notably many of those reported belonging to multiple ethnic groups indicated Latina/o ethnicity) and these participants were excluded from the main analysis.

Materials

Identification Manipulation. To manipulate participants’ social categorization, we adapted the method used by Hong et al. (2004) in which participants were asked to write an essay from different identity perspectives, but focused on the same topic: How to improve American society. Specifically, all essay instructions started with the following text: “American society is facing a lot of problems nowadays. Domestically, America faces problems of unemployment, crime in the inner cities, and terrorism on American soil. Internationally, America faces political tension with many countries and a military and economic commitment to the Middle East.”

For the “American” condition, the instructions continued that “We would be interested in knowing your thoughts about how Americans, such as yourself can contribute to resolve these issues in America. Please write your ideas in the space below.” By contrast, the instructions continued, “We would be interested in knowing your thoughts about how your ethnic group (White-American, meaning any American of the white race)...” for the “White American” condition, and “We would be interested in knowing your thoughts about how your ethnic group (European-Americans, meaning any American with European ancestors, e.g., Irish-American, Italian-American, German-American, etc.) is different from other ethnic groups and how your ethnic group can contribute uniquely to build

a better America. Please write your ideas below.” for the “European American” condition. In addition, at the beginning of the essay, participants were given a stem to start their essay: “We as Americans,” “We as White-Americans,” and “We as European-Americans” for the respective conditions.

We included two dual identity conditions—a “European American” and a “White American” condition, because European American and White American are both common labels for Whites in the literature and daily discourse, yet do not have a widely accepted difference in meaning. To rule out the alternative explanation that some unique, nuanced meanings may be associated with “European American” or “White American” that might give rise to the predicted results, we included both conditions. We predicted that the two dual identity conditions would both display *less* prejudice than did their counterparts in the “American” condition, but did not predict any difference in prejudice levels between the two groups.

White participants were randomly assigned to one of these three conditions, while all ethnic minority participants were assigned to the “American” condition. This manipulation was done without the knowledge of the participants. We did not include a manipulation check after the essay in order to avoid activating participants’ own social identification.

Katrina Blame Measure. A measure was designed with the goal to assess the extent to which participants placed blame on the victims of Katrina, the authorities, and racial discrimination for the disastrous outcome of Katrina (see Table 1). Specifically, participants were asked to rate (on a Likert scale from 1, not at all, to 6, very much) the extent to which blame should be placed on federal authorities (the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the federal government, the president of the United States), regional authorities (the governor of Louisiana, the Mayor of New Orleans, local officials), and the victims (the individuals who failed to evacuate) for the outcome of Katrina; and to attribute the slow responses to Katrina (on a Likert scale from 1, not at all, to 6, very much) to the mismanagement of federal resources, lack of local coordination, individuals failing to evacuate the city, and the history of discrimination in the South.

Control Measures. Social dominance orientation and motivation to appear non-prejudiced may also affect participants’ likelihood of blaming the victims and denying racial discrimination. Measures of these individual differences were included for testing whether the effects of identity, if any, are above and beyond social dominance orientation and the participants’ motivation to appear nonprejudiced.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). The sixth version of the SDO Scale was included (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999); a high level of SDO is associated with higher support for social hierarchy and tolerance for societal inequality. The internal reliability of the measure in our sample was high ($\alpha = .92$).

Table 1. Factor loadings of the items in the Katrina blame measure

Items	Factor Loading (Bold indicates items included in respective scale.)			
	Federal	Regional	Racism	Victims
Blame: George W. Bush, the President	.88	.10	.19	-.08
Blame: The federal government	.87	.25	.18	.00
Blame: FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency	.77	.42	.13	.05
Cause: Poor coordination and communication by FEMA	.72	.34	.20	.06
Cause: The war in Iraq that drained away resources	.66	-.09	.32	-.08
Blame: Ray Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans	.18	.90	.05	.17
Blame: Local officials in New Orleans and Louisiana	.11	.89	.13	.12
Blame: Kathleen Blanco, Governor of Louisiana	.33	.85	.06	.14
Cause: The lack of preparedness by the local and state officials before Katrina hit	.42	.48	.17	.22
Cause: The history of segregation and discrimination in the South.	.23	.04	.87	-.12
Cause: Discrimination against African Americans during the evacuation and the relief efforts	.33	.01	.75	-.14
Cause: The environmental deterioration in the area over the years	.08	.27	.67	.13
Cause: The extreme poverty of many residents of New Orleans	.22	.06	.63	.29
Cause: The looters who created chaos in the city	-.00	-.04	.01	.86
Cause: The large number of people who had not evacuated prior to the hurricane	.02	.18	.09	.71
Blame: Criminals living in New Orleans	.06	.13	-.08	.70
Blame: The individuals who failed to evacuate the city	-.23	.32	.12	.52

Note. Blame: "To what extent should the following parties deserve blame on the devastation and sufferings of Katrina?" Cause: "To what extent do you think the following factors contribute to the slow response in the aftermath of Katrina?"

Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice. To assess participants' motivation to appear nonprejudiced, we included a measure of motives to appear nonprejudiced (Plant & Devine, 1998), which is composed of two subscales: an internal motivation to respond without prejudice scale (Internal Motivation Scale, IMS; $\alpha = .85$) and an external motivation to respond without prejudice scale (External Motivation Scale, EMS; $\alpha = 0.79$).

Procedures

All participants attended the same session and the study was conducted in a large lecture hall. Upon arrival, the experimenter and several assistants distributed an informed consent and questionnaire packet to each participant. The participants were instructed to work on the essay (the identification manipulation) in the first

5 minutes of the session. Afterward, the participants filled out the rest of the measures.

At the end of the experiment, participants were asked to write down their guesses about the experimental manipulation and the purpose of the study. Twelve participants (11 White participants: 2 from the “American” condition, 3 from the “European American” condition, and 6 from the “White American” condition; and 1 participant with mixed ethnicity) specifically pointed out that the essay was the manipulation or that there were different versions of the essay. These participants were excluded from the main analysis, leaving 196 valid cases for the main analysis.

Results

Factor Analysis and Reliability of the Katrina Blame Measure

Participants’ ratings on the Katrina blame measure were submitted to a principal components analysis with varimax rotation, which yielded four factors with eigenvalues over 1. Table 1 lists the factor loadings of the items on the four factors. The first factor accounted for 22% of the variance and was labeled Federal Authorities ($\alpha = .89$); the second factor accounted for 19% of the variance and was labeled Regional Authorities ($\alpha = .89$); the third factor accounted for 15% of the variance and was labeled Racism Blame ($\alpha = .77$); and the fourth factor accounted for 13% of the variance and was labeled Victim Blame ($\alpha = .70$).

Dependent Measures

Among the four factors (Federal Authorities, Regional Authorities, Racism Blame, and Victim Blame), Racism Blame and Victim Blame are germane to our main hypothesis. Specifically, we predicted that Whites in the “American” condition would place more blame on victims and less blame on racism when compared to Whites in the “White American” or “European American” conditions. To test this prediction, we can look at two different indicators: the absolute level of blame (i.e., the mean rating for the items loaded on each factor as per Table 1) and the relative level of blame (i.e., the ratio of the mean rating of a factor over the individual’s mean ratings across all factors).

Both indicators have strengths and drawbacks. The mean ratings do not control for the participants’ overall ratings. It is possible that some participants placed blame on all factors more than others did and thus obscured the relative blame they placed on each of the factors. Indeed, Whites in the “American” condition tended to place more blame overall than Whites in the dual identity conditions, $t(191) = 1.68, p = .09$. This suggests that relative blame ratings might be a more appropriate test of our hypotheses.

Table 2. Mean and Relative Ratings

Ethnicity/Manipulation Condition:	White/"American"	White/"White American"	White/"European American"	Asian/"American"	Black/"American"
Mean Ratings (<i>SD</i>)					
Victim	4.07 (1.18)	3.66 (1.04)	3.51 (1.16)	3.66 (0.95)	2.81 (0.83)
Racism	3.18 (1.14)	3.38 (1.11)	3.50 (1.22)	3.59 (1.16)	4.48 (0.76)
Regional Authorities	4.17 (1.23)	3.72 (1.23)	3.82 (1.30)	3.90 (1.16)	3.56 (1.18)
Federal Authorities	4.30 (1.26)	4.10 (1.26)	4.00 (1.32)	4.20 (1.16)	5.00 (0.62)
Relative Ratings (<i>SD</i>)					
Victim	1.05 (0.30)	1.01 (0.31)	0.97 (0.29)	0.96 (0.20)	0.70 (0.20)
Racism	0.80 (0.24)	0.91 (0.23)	0.93 (0.20)	0.93 (0.22)	1.11 (0.17)
Regional Authorities	1.05 (0.23)	0.98 (0.23)	1.02 (0.24)	1.01 (0.18)	0.87 (0.24)
Federal Authorities	1.09 (0.25)	1.08 (0.24)	1.07 (0.26)	1.08 (0.14)	1.25 (0.20)

Relative blame ratings, however, have a weakness as well, in that they force dependence between otherwise independent factors. For example, in calculating the relative level of Victim Blame, the Racism Blame rating was included among other factors in the denominator. It is then hard to determine if a high relative Victim Blame ratio is a result of participants blaming the victims strongly or blaming other factors, including racism, less.

To provide a comprehensive picture of the findings, we included both the mean blame ratings and the relative blame ratings in our analyses. The mean blame ratings and ratios of the four factors for each of the five groups are listed in Table 2.

Prejudice Level as a Function of Race and Ethnic Identification

The main prediction of the current study is that the "American" identity should evoke greater prejudiced attitudes than the "White American" and "European American" identities among White participants, whereas participants' attitudes in the two dual identity conditions should not differ from each other. In addition, because most of the Katrina victims were Blacks, we expected that Black participants would favor their ingroup and thus should blame the victims the least and racism the most, among the five groups. Because Asian Americans were not the main victims, they should display prejudice level that is more than that of Blacks, but not that of Whites.

To test these predictions, we submitted participants' ratings on the Katrina questionnaire to planned contrast analyses with the five groups arranged in the order of Whites in the "American" essay condition, Whites in "European American," Whites in "White American," Asian Americans, and Blacks. Contrast 1 tests the predicted difference between Whites in the "American" condition and Whites in the "European American"/"White American" conditions with contrast weights 1, -0.5, -0.5, 0, and 0 for the five groups respectively in the stated order. Contrast 2

tests whether there were differences between the two dual identity conditions with contrast weights 0, 1, -1, 0, and 0 for the five groups respectively. Contrast 3 tests whether there were differences between the two dual identity groups and Asian Americans in the “American” condition with contrast weights 0, 0.5, 0.5, -1, and 0 for the five groups respectively. Contrast 4 tested whether there were differences between Asian Americans and Blacks (where both groups were placed in the “American” essay condition) with contrast weights 0, 0, 0, 1, and -1 respectively. Because this set of contrasts is not mutually orthogonal, we used the Bonferroni correction for alpha, and therefore only results with p -values less than .01 (.05 divided by 4, rounded down to the nearest two decimal points) should be considered as statistically significant. Table 3 shows the results of the planned contrast analyses.

Only the Victim and Racism Blame scores for White participants in the “American” condition versus the “White American” and “European American” conditions pertain to our main hypothesis; therefore Contrast 1 is the main focus of our analysis. It is noteworthy that all of the findings pertaining to Contrast 2, which tests the differences between the dual identity conditions, were not significant. This suggests that the “White American” and “European American” conditions did not differ on any of the dependent or control measures.

Victim Blame. Our primary hypothesis predicts that Whites in the “American” condition will blame victims more than Whites in the dual identity conditions. As shown in Contrast 1, as predicted, Whites in the “American” condition placed more blame on the Victims ($t(191) = 3.38, p < .01$) than did Whites in the dual identity conditions; however, this difference on relative blame was not significant ($t(191) = 1.81, p = .07$).

Racism Blame. White participants in the “American” identity condition in general blamed racism significantly less than the White participants in the dual identity conditions but the difference did not reach statistical significance ($t(191) = -1.32, p = .19$). By contrast, their relative racism blame ratio was significantly less ($t(191) = -3.36, p < .01$). This indicates that White participants in the “American” condition denied racism relative to other factors, but not necessarily in an absolute sense.

Given that the Whites in the “American” condition tended to give a higher overall mean blame rating, it is possible that their mean rating toward racism was also inflated, putting it at roughly the same absolute level as the scores from the dual identity conditions, and resulting in a nonsignificant difference. To examine this further we conducted several dependent t -tests comparing mean Racism Blame and mean Victim Blame within the three White groups. The results of these tests indicated that Whites in the “American” condition felt racism was less important a factor than the victims themselves ($t(42) = -4.78, p < .01$). By contrast,

Table 3. Contrast *t* statistics

Ethnicity/ Manipulation Condition:	Victim Blame (Mean)	Racism Blame (Mean)	Regional Authorities (Mean)	Federal Authorities (Mean)	Victim Blame (Relative)	Racism Blame (Relative)	Regional Authorities (Relative)	Federal Authorities (Relative)
Contrast 1: White/"American" vs. Dual Identity	3.38 ^b	-1.32	2.13 ^a	.847	1.81	-3.36 ^b	1.60	-.37
Contrast 2: White/"White American" vs. White/"European American"	.69	-.31	-.92	-.05	1.04	.03	-1.35	.01
Contrast 3: Dual Identity vs. Asian/"American"	-.74	-.84	-1.11	-.77	.456	-.220	-.60	.13
Contrast 4: Asian/"American" vs. Black/"American"	2.52 ^a	-2.45 ^a	.87	-2.03 ^a	3.05 ^b	-2.66 ^b	2.02 ^a	-2.44 ^a

Note. ^a and ^b indicate *p*-values less than .05 and .01, respectively. We adopted a critical *p* of .01 because the four contrasts are not orthogonal.

this difference was not significant for participants in the dual identity conditions ($t(40) = -.93$, *ns.* for Whites in the “White American” condition, and $t(48) = .10$, *ns.* for Whites in the “European American” condition).

Minority Group Responses. Contrasts 3 and 4 examined the prejudice levels of Black and Asian American participants in comparison to Whites in the dual identity conditions and thus provided useful contextual information for our main findings. Specifically, as expected, Contrast 4 shows that the Black participants blamed the victims of Katrina significantly less and racism significantly more than did the Asian American participants at least in relative terms (less blame on victims for ratio scores [$t(191) = 3.05$, $p < .01$] but not significant for mean scores [$t(191) = 2.52$, $p = .01$]; more blame on racism for ratio scores [$t(191) = -2.66$, $p < .01$], but again not significant for mean scores [$t(191) = -2.45$, $p = .02$]). Contrast 3, however, did not show that Asian Americans displayed significantly less prejudice than did the White participants in the dual identity conditions.

As a whole, the results revealed from the planned contrasts were consistent with the national polls at the time of data collection (USA TODAY/CNN GALLUP, 2005) in that Whites in the “American” condition exhibited the most prejudice, whereas the Blacks in the “American” condition exhibited the least prejudice. In addition, interestingly, our study found that White participants in the dual identity conditions and Asian American participants in the “American” condition displayed prejudice levels lying between those of Whites and Blacks in the “American” condition.

Control Measures

While the results thus far provide support for the hypothesis, it is interesting to test whether the effects of social identification explain prejudice levels above and beyond the control variables, social dominance orientation (SDO), and motivation to appear non-prejudiced. To this end, we performed an ANCOVA using the same contrasts as in our primary analysis, except with SDO, IMS, and EMS added as covariates.⁵ The pattern of results from this analysis was unaltered with regard to Contrasts 1 and 2, the contrasts of primary interest, after controlling for participants’ SDO and the motivation to appear nonprejudiced (with the criterion of significance kept at p -values $< .01$). This provides evidence that the results found were not solely the effects of social dominance or motivation to appear nonprejudiced.

⁵When comparing the mean scores of the five groups on SDO and motivations to appear nonprejudiced, interestingly, the Asian group had markedly different scores from other ethnic groups. Specifically, Asian participants showed greater SDO than did White and Black participants. Asian participants also showed less internal motivation to appear nonprejudiced than did White participants in the dual identity conditions. The five groups did not differ on external motivation to appear nonprejudiced.

Interestingly, the ANCOVA also revealed significant (at $p < .05$) relationships between the three covariates (SDO, IMS, and EMS) and the blame measures. Specifically, a significant SDO main effect in predicting Victim Blame both as a mean score and a ratio ($F(1,188) = 5.29, p < .05$ and $F(1,188) = 10.15, p < .05$, respectively) indicating that across ethnic identification groupings, the more participants' endorsement of social dominance orientation, the more blame they placed on the victims (partial $r = .17, p < .05$ for the mean scores and partial $r = .22, p < .05$ for the ratio scores). In addition, the main effect of the Internal Motivation Scale (IMS) was significant in predicting Racism Blame both as a mean score and a ratio ($F(1,188) = 10.30, p < .05, F(1,188) = 4.93, p < .05$, respectively). Specifically, the higher IMS scores predicted more Racism Blame, (partial $r = .20, p < .05$ for mean scores and partial $r = .14, p < .05$ for ratio scores). In contrast to IMS, results for External Motivation Scale (EMS) indicated that participants with higher external motivation to appear nonprejudiced placed less blame on racism, though only for ratio scores ($F(1,188) = 5.59, p < .05; \text{partial } r = -.20, p < .05$). It is possible that participants with higher external motivation to appear non-prejudiced have adopted a color-blind strategy (Carr, 1997; Cose, 1997; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000; Williams, 1997) and thus denied racism in explaining the Katrina disaster.

Discussion

The Katrina disaster and the subsequent images of the suffering of its victims drove a wedge into American society, highlighting the Black and White divide. In spite of the racial division in perceptions of blame for the Katrina disaster, there has been overwhelming support for victims by Americans from all backgrounds and across the country. At the same time, facing an unpredictable natural disaster, in order to regain some sense of control, people are vulnerable to explaining the event by blaming the victims (Lerner, 1980). Against this backdrop, we contended that the "American" identity may invoke a categorization frame that excludes rather than includes Americans from an ethnic minority background. Therefore, we predicted that White Americans would exhibit more prejudice toward the victims of Katrina (assign more blame for the disaster to the individuals stranded in New Orleans, and less blame to racism) when identifying as "American" an overarching, common identity than when adopting the "White American" or "European American" identities. On the whole, these predictions were supported by our findings, and importantly, the pattern of findings remained the same when controlling for SDO and motivation to appear nonprejudiced, both of which were valid predictors of the dependent variables in their own right. This indicates that regardless of White individuals' inclination to support the social hierarchy or appear nonprejudiced, putting people in the "American" identity frame may ironically evoke prejudice toward a minority group. This pattern of results suggests a boundary condition to

the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Dovidio et al., 1997; Gaertner et al., 1993). We will focus on this argument next.

Implications for the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM)

We do not challenge the core applicability of the CIIM as there is ample evidence that it is valid in predicting intergroup perceptions, including within the context of race relations in the United States. For instance, Hong et al. (2004) used a similar manipulation as the current study (in fact, the present study borrowed the manipulation from Hong et al., 2004) to induce Asian Americans to adopt an overarching, inclusive “American” identity, or an exclusive “Asian American” identity, and found that the inclusive “American” identity was associated with lower prejudice toward Blacks than the exclusive “Asian American” identity (especially for those who believed that human character was malleable). As such, these findings suggest that the CIIM is applicable in alleviating prejudice when the overarching, common identity (“American”) is seen as *equally* inclusive for both groups involved.

The present study found the reverse pattern for White Americans, suggesting that the “American” identity is less inclusive for White American participants. Although “American” is logically inclusive of White, Black, and Asian Americans, within American culture “American” is understood to refer primarily to Whites (Devos & Banaji, 2005). As such, “American” is not an inclusive ingroup identity for Whites with regards to ethnic minority groups. This may be the result of a general process whereby the dominant ethnic group in a society tends to fuse their ethnic and national identity (Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001). The present study demonstrates that under certain circumstances, such as the existence of a hegemonic dominant ethnic group, national identity may be an exclusive identity. This situation forms a boundary condition to the formation of a singular overarching identity (i.e., an all inclusive “American” identity), as would be expected to be the ideal situation for intergroup relations and contact according to CIIM (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000).

When determining which identity will be effective in the context of CIIM, it is necessary to consider the societal context in which the categorization is made. An intriguing question is whether all groups in a society should pursue the same categorization process at the same time. While the current study provides demonstration that dual identity adoption may reduce prejudice for the hegemonic group, past studies (e.g., Hong et al., 2004) suggest that this is not necessarily the case for minority groups under some circumstances (e.g., when a minority group is perceiving another minority group).

Implications for Media Coverage during National Crisis

The Katrina disaster and its media coverage have provided a poignant example of the challenge of having all Americans seen as equally American. In particular,

the use of the word “refugee” to describe those displaced by the hurricane caused a great deal of controversy. The popular argument against the use of this word is that it is more aptly used to describe foreigners fleeing into America or another country than to describe Americans displaced within America. Prominent individuals such as Jesse Jackson have publicly decried its usage as racist, and argued that the use of the word “refugee” implies that the predominantly Black “refugees” are not American (Noveck, 2005). It is interesting to also note that fewer Whites (37%) than Blacks (77%) were bothered by the usage of the word refugee to describe those displaced by Katrina (USA TODAY/CNN GALLUP, 2005). In the interest of encouraging tolerance, it would seem prudent for the media to avoid such terms as “refugee” and to focus on the diversity of individuals who find themselves displaced. This issue serves as an illustration that the association of American with White is deeply ingrained, often coming into play without any intention on the individuals involved, or awareness of how it might be offensive. As such, it is clear that changing this cultural assumption may be quite difficult. Encouragingly, many media outlets quickly ceased usage of the term in response to public outcry, suggesting that a wide swath of America is sensitive to these concerns.

Limitations and Future Direction

The current study raises a number of issues where future study would be beneficial. In particular, it is possible that simply seeing the terms “White American” or “European American” may raise concerns of political correctness, or even feelings of guilt, either of which could render participants more reluctant to express prejudice. Notably, however, the current study found that controlling for motivation to appear nonprejudiced did not influence the results. Additionally, this experiment was conducted in a single, mass session, with participants from diverse racial and ethnicity background sitting in the same room. In spite of the fact that the White participants were sitting in a room that was 38% non-White, the “American” identity still evoked more prejudice than did the dual identity conditions. This again suggests that representation of “American” equals White is quite entrenched in American culture. It is possible that the observed differences in prejudice levels between “American” and dual identity conditions could have been even greater had the study been conducted in a homogeneously White setting, within which the “American” identity should be even more exclusively associated with being White. Future research is needed to systematically test the effects of social contexts on setting up different categorization frames, and thereby affecting the meanings of social identities and subsequent intergroup perceptions.

Additionally, it is possible that the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina produced a unique situation in American intergroup relations that may not generalize to intergroup relations outside the United States or even to the United States at a different time. On theoretical grounds, we doubt that this would be the case, as the exclusion of ethnic and racial minorities from full membership in the overarching

national identity has been hypothesized, observed, and commented on by a wide variety of researchers (Cheryan & Monin, 2005; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hewstone, 1996; Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001;). Moreover, the racial hierarchy between Whites and other ethnic minority groups is by no means limited to the United States. Similarly, many such racial hierarchies exist in other countries, as, for instance, France (e.g., White French versus North African French), United Kingdom (e.g., White British versus Black British and British Indians), and Germany (Ethnic Germans versus Ethnic Turks). That being said, it is likely that the disturbing feelings caused by the Hurricane Katrina disaster may have heightened participants' motivation to justify the sufferings by blaming the victims (Lerner, 1980), and thus magnified the differences between the identity groups. Future studies can test these ideas.

To conclude, the current study suggests a boundary condition to the CIIM, such that when racial assumptions exist about an overarching identity, it may not function as a common ingroup identity for the hegemonic racial group. In our study, we find that "American" may only be an inclusive ingroup identity under certain contexts. The meaning of social categories, especially ethnic categorization, depends on cultural and historical context. While it seems very attractive to make an appeal for individuals to see themselves as "Americans," this may sometimes ironically be less effective at achieving intergroup sympathy than reminding members of the dominant group of their own ethnicity and thus subtly suggesting that they are just one of the many groups that collectively form American society.

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