Ethnic and University Identities across the College Years: A Common In-Group Identity Perspective

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The common in-group identity model advocates the creation of a superordinate group identity in order to reduce conflict between members of different ethnic subgroups. This study demonstrates that a university identity can serve as an effective common in-group identity for students from different ethnic groups. Longitudinal data were collected from an ethnically diverse sample of university students at the end of each year of college. Although ethnic identification tended to be correlated with status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies in a way that reinforces

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Ten years ago, we published our first article using this longitudinal data set in a volume of the Journal of Social Issues coedited by Michele Alexander and Shana Levin (Sinclair, Sidanius, & Levin, 1998). The topic of the volume was “Understanding and Resolving National and International Group Conflict.” The current article, written for a special issue of JSI dedicated to Michele, examines national group conflict. The focus of other work, conducted in collaboration with Michele, is international group conflict (Alexander, Levin, & Henry, 2005). Michele’s legacy is the passion for scholarly inquiry she instilled in her students and stirred in her colleagues. Her inspiration will always be with us.

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ethnic-status differences (i.e., these variables tended to be positively related for Whites but less so for ethnic minorities), the status-legitimizing variables were largely unrelated to university identification during each year in college. The longitudinal data also allowed us to examine these relationships over time. The relationships between ethnic and university identification and status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies did not change. Ethnic and university identities are discussed in terms of the common in-group identity model.

Increasingly, social and behavioral scientists are emphasizing the role of conflicting social identities in driving intergroup conflict. For example, some have argued that the troubles in Northern Ireland are fueled by competing social identities based on the religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics (Cairns, 1982). Similarly, Middle East specialists have described the conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories as a zero-sum struggle, not only over territory and resources, but also over the collective identities and national narratives of Israelis and Palestinians (Kelman, 2001; Rouhana, 1997). In the United States, scholars have contemplated the role of ethnic identity in contributing to the “disuniting of America” (Schlesinger, 1992). In light of arguments that conflicting social identities underlie intergroup conflict, Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) proposed a common in-group identity model of intergroup relations. This model argues that one way to reduce conflict between members of different groups is to encourage them to think of themselves in terms of a common superordinate identity.

The current research examines whether identification with a common superordinate university environment is likely to have the expected egalitarian consequences among students from different ethnic subgroups. Social dominance theorists have postulated and found that ethnic subgroup identification is related to status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies in a way that fosters intergroup inequities and conflict (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, the more White Americans identify with their ethnic group, the more they desire group inequality and are supportive of ideologies that promote it (e.g., racism). Because university environments are characterized by relatively egalitarian social forces, integration of social dominance theory and the common in-group identity model suggests that university identification should be free of such adverse relationships, forming an effective superordinate identity for students from different ethnic subgroups.

Although a substantial body of research has demonstrated the efficacy of the common in-group identity model (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), the present research is unique in that it employs a longitudinal design to follow the ethnic (subgroup) and university (superordinate group) identities of students during their 4 years at an ethnically diverse university. As American colleges and universities become increasingly diverse in numerical terms, many are struggling to manage diversity. The concept of managing diversity has received substantial attention in the field of organizational development, much of it centered on the positive
effects of valuing diversity on employee satisfaction and performance (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998; see also King, Hebl, & Beal, this volume). The debate surrounding issues of diversity in higher education has touched on similar topics. The successful management of an ethnically diverse student body involves ensuring that the social and academic adjustment of all students is unhindered by barriers related to ethnic group membership (Brewer, von Hippel, & Gooden, 1999).

As Dovidio, Saguy, and Shnabel observed in their contribution to this volume, in order to fully understand the dynamics within ethnically diverse social groups, we must understand relations between the subgroups that interact within the shared society (e.g., Whites and Blacks in the United States) or institution (White and Black students at a particular university). From the perspective of social dominance theory, the key to understanding intergroup dynamics within a shared social system is the notion that social systems vary in the extent to which they are hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Hierarchy-enhancing environments are characterized by social forces that promote greater group inequality (e.g., discriminatory housing policies and hiring practices). In contrast, hierarchy-attenuating environments are characterized by social forces that promote lower levels of group inequality (e.g., affirmative action programs).

Although the ethnic environment in the United States is characterized by tension between hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating forces, there are strong reasons to believe that the former predominates in this environment. Public opinion data show that a clear American ethnic hierarchy has persisted over the last several decades, with White Americans consistently ranked at the top of this status hierarchy, followed by Asian Americans, and Latino and African Americans consistently ranked at the bottom of this hierarchy (Smith, 1991). Coupled with this relatively stable ethnic status hierarchy, there is substantial evidence of institutional discrimination against Latinos and African Americans in several different sectors, including the criminal justice system, the labor market, the health care system, and the retail sales market (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Therefore, despite the presence of both hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating forces within the American ethnic environment, there are strong reasons to believe that inegalitarian forces predominate in practice.

Given the predominately hierarchy-enhancing nature of the ethnic environment in the United States as a whole, ethnic subgroup identification should have different meanings for members of different American ethnic groups. Members of high-status ethnic groups (i.e., White Americans) who identify with their ethnic group should want to maintain the dominant position of their group and thus be oriented toward maintaining intergroup inequity. In contrast, for members of low-status groups (e.g., Latino and African Americans), ethnic subgroup identification should imply a counterdominance orientation, or a rejection of the
system that relegates one’s ethnic subgroup to a subordinate position in the social hierarchy. Consistent with this reasoning, ethnic identification has been shown to be positively related to desires for group-based hierarchy and support for hierarchy-enhancing ideologies among White Americans but less positively, or even negatively, related with these variables among Latino and African Americans (Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). In sum, in the United States, ethnic subgroup identities may be imbued with either support for, or opposition to, group-based hierarchy, depending on ethnic group status.

In light of the differential attachment to status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies associated with ethnic subgroup identification, how might one seek to reduce intergroup strife? The common in-group identity model argues that in order to ameliorate intergroup conflict, we must encourage people to think of themselves in terms of superordinate identities that emphasize common goals, experiences, and outcomes that are shared by members of different subgroups (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; see also Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). When members of different subgroups think of themselves as members of separate groups less often and focus on being members of a single, superordinate in-group, the model suggests that they will come to view former out-group members as favorably as they previously viewed members of their original, limited in-group.

However, according to social dominance theory, it is not the case that identification with all superordinate groups should have this effect. Consider, for example, the case of American identification. As mentioned previously, American society as a whole can be considered a predominantly hierarchy-enhancing environment with respect to ethnicity. In light of this characterization of American society, social dominance theory suggests that it would not be an effective basis for a common in-group identity with ethnically egalitarian consequences; rather, American identity should connote group dominance and be differentially related to support for group hierarchy among high- and low-status American ethnic groups, similar to ethnic identity. Consistent with this assertion, higher levels of identification with and attachment to America have been shown to relate to greater classical racism, social dominance orientation (SDO), and ethnocentrism among White Americans but lower classical racism, SDO, and ethnocentrism among Latino and African Americans (Peña & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997; Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001).

Then what kind of environments should provide an effective basis of common in-group identity? Specific settings within American society can be considered relatively more hierarchy-attenuating, and therefore may provide a better basis for egalitarianism via common in-group identity. One such setting is the university environment. Although American universities suffer from ethnic disparities in admissions, grades, and other resources, there are reasons to believe that this
is a relatively more hierarchy-attenuating environment than American society at large. In support of this claim is a large and fairly consistent body of empirical research, using both cross-sectional and panel data, indicating that greater exposure to university education is related to greater endorsement of hierarchy-attenuating ideologies such as inclusive ethnic and social attitudes, lower levels of symbolic racism, and lower levels of SDO. For example, using a very large cross-section of students at the University of Texas (N > 5,000), Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, and Stallworth (1991) found that increasing educational exposure was associated with decreasing levels of group dominance orientation among each broad cluster of university majors. Similarly, using three indices of ethnic attitudes in seven randomly selected samples from four European countries (West Germany, The Netherlands, France, and Great Britain, total N = 3,788), Wagner and Zick (1995) found that increasing levels of education were associated with decreasing levels of both blatant and subtle ethnic prejudice (see also Bobo & Licari, 1989; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Hollister & Boivin, 1987; Kaiser & Lilly, 1975; Katsh, 1944; Knoke & Isaac, 1976; Lipset, 1982; McClintock & Turner, 1962; Plant, 1958; Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999). Finally, more recent work using the longitudinal data analyzed in this study also confirms the hierarchy-attenuating nature of the university environment. Specifically, Sidanius, Sinclair, and Pratto (2006) showed that students’ SDO scores significantly decreased between pre-college and senior year in college. More broadly, Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, and Sears (2008) showed that the liberalizing effects of college are evident in shifts on a wide variety of other measures across the college years: shifts to a more Democratic party identification, more liberal political ideology, reduced racial prejudice, greater egalitarianism, and more liberal positions on affirmative action, immigration, crime, and welfare.

Although one might worry that these hierarchy-attenuating effects are merely a matter of highly educated individuals learning how to give more socially desirable answers (see assertions of Jackman, 1978; Jackman & Muha, 1984; see also Weil, 1985), educational differences in ethnic prejudice remain strong and significant even when researchers use subtle measures of prejudice or employ more sensitive research designs (e.g., the bogus-pipeline design; Wagner & Zick, 1995; see Jones & Sigall, 1971). To the extent that American universities are a somewhat more hierarchy-attenuating setting within American society as a whole, social dominance theory suggests that a university identity can serve as an effective common in-group identity for students from different ethnic groups.

This Study

To test the prediction that students’ university identity is an effective basis for a common in-group identity, this study uses a longitudinal research design to examine the degree to which ethnic subgroup identification and university
superordinate identification differentially correlate with status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies (i.e., SDO, symbolic racism, perceptions of system legitimacy) among members of various ethnic groups over the college years. Ethnic identification should have the fractious effects suggested by social dominance theory and found in previous research. That is, it should be more positively related to desires for group-based hierarchy and support for status-legitimizing ideologies among Whites than among Latinos and African Americans. In contrast, integration of social dominance theory and the common in-group identity model predicts that because university environments are a relatively hierarchy-attenuating basis of superordinate identity, support for status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies should be virtually unrelated to university identification for all ethnic groups.

In addition to examining these hypotheses, our design and sample afford unique exploratory opportunities. The sample includes White, Latino, Asian, and African American university students who provided responses at the end of each of their 4 years of college. Although our predictions are most germane to comparisons between high-status (i.e., White Americans) and low-status ethnic groups (i.e., Latino and African Americans), and existing pertinent research generally focuses solely on such groups, we are also able to examine Asian Americans, an ethnic group of intermediate status (Smith, 1991). We explore two sets of relationships. First, given their intermediate status, it is likely that Asian Americans will be less inclined than White Americans to perceive ethnic identification as compatible with desires for group-based hierarchy and support for status-legitimizing ideologies. That is, ethnic identification should be less positively related to support for status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies among Asian Americans than White Americans. Second, given the relatively hierarchy-attenuating nature of university settings, university identity should behave similarly for all ethnic groups, including Asian Americans. That is, university identification should be similarly unrelated to support for status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies among Asian Americans as among members of all other ethnic groups.

The longitudinal design also provides the opportunity for replication of the predicted relationships over the 4-year span of the study and allows for an initial examination of changes in these relationships over time. Given the typical liberalizing effect of education, we may find a decrease in the perceived compatibility between ethnic identification and endorsement of status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies among all ethnic groups. Specifically, increasing socialization within a hierarchy-attenuating environment may stimulate awareness among members of high-status groups that inequalities in outcomes and opportunities exist among members of different ethnic groups in the United States. This increased awareness of the inequities that characterize American society may, in turn, lead these high-status group members to change their understanding of their ethnic identification such that they begin to separate it from their desires for group-based hierarchy and the ideologies that legitimize it. Exposure to a hierarchy-attenuating campus
environment might also improve the ability of members of low-status groups to discern the injustice they face, and thus also decrease the perceived compatibility between their ethnic identities and desires for group-based hierarchy and status-legitimizing ideologies. Although we expect weaker relationships overall between university identification and endorsement of status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies, the longitudinal design allows for an examination of changes over time in these relationships as well.

Method

Participants

Data were collected at four different time periods among a sample of students who were beginning their freshman year of college at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1996. These four waves of data collection took place at the end of the students’ first through fourth years in college (1997–2000).

A preliminary data set (not analyzed in this study) was collected through the mass administration of a survey in a summer orientation program prior to college entry.\(^1\) Our sampling frame at the end of the first year of college consisted of nearly all the students who returned the summer survey ($N = 2,156$).\(^2\) At the end of participants’ first through fourth years of college, they completed a telephone interview, which averaged 20 minutes in length and was conducted using the computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system run by the Institute for Social Science Research at UCLA. Our sampling frames at the end of the second through fourth years consisted of all the students who completed the interview at the end of the first year.\(^3\) Overall response rates for the 4 years were as follows: 82%, 82%, 66%, and 59%.\(^4\) Since this study focuses on identity issues within American ethnic groups, we only examine the responses of White, Asian, Latino, and African American students who were born in the United States (see Table 1 for the ethnic and gender composition of the sample for each year in college).

\(^1\)Approximately 95% of the incoming freshman class at UCLA attended the summer orientation program. Of the 3,877 students in the incoming freshman class in 1996, 32% were White, 36% Asian American, 18% Latino, 6% African American, and 8% were of another ethnicity or did not report their ethnicity.

\(^2\)The sampling frame at the end of the first year excluded 179 White and Asian American students who returned the summer survey but did not provide complete data and/or contact information. The sampling frame in Year 1 also included an additional 471 Latino and Black students who were added because of the low number of students from these ethnic groups in the precollege sample.

\(^3\)An additional 51 Black and biracial students were added at the end of the third year.

\(^4\)Of the White American participants in Year 1, 55% took part in the survey at Year 2, 46% at Year 3, and 41% at Year 4. The comparable numbers for Asian Americans are 68%, 55%, and 48%; Latino Americans 76%, 63%, and 55%; and African Americans 72%, 56%, and 46%. Although we found that Whites, and particularly White women, were somewhat less likely to complete the study than other groups, we did not find any evidence that their attrition was related in any systematic way to the ethnic attitudes we examined in the study (for detailed attrition analyses, see Sidanius et al., 2008, Appendix C).
Table 1. Ethnic and Gender Composition of the Sample for Each Year in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asians</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,288</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>749</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**

We measured participants’ levels of ethnic and university identification, desires for group-based hierarchy (i.e., SDO), and support for two status-legitimizing ideologies (i.e., symbolic racism and perceived system legitimacy) at the end of their first through fourth years of college.

Ethnic identification was measured with a three-item version of the UCLA ethnic identification scale (Levin et al., 1998; Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Sidanius et al., 1997; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004; Sinclair et al., 1998): (1) “How important is your ethnicity to your identity?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very important), (2) “How often do you think of yourself as a member of your ethnic group?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very often), (3) “How close do you feel to other members of your ethnic group?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very close) (Year 1 $\alpha = .84$, Year 2 $\alpha = .84$, Year 3 $\alpha = .85$, Year 4 $\alpha = .85$).

University identification was assessed with the question, “How often do you think of yourself as a UCLA student?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very often). The validity of this single-item measure can be seen in its associations with related constructs, such as feeling a sense of belonging on campus (“To what degree do you experience a sense of belonging or a sense of exclusion at UCLA?”) and commitment to being a student at the school until one’s studies are complete (“How likely is it that you would consider dropping out of UCLA before earning a degree?” reverse-coded). These correlations ranged from .36 to .44 (all $ps < .001$) and .24 to .36 (all $ps < .001$), respectively, over the four waves of data collection.

SDO was used as a measure of desire for group-based inequality and hierarchy (see Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree): (1) “It’s probably a
good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom,”
(2) “Inferior groups should stay in their place,” (3) “We should do what we can
to equalize conditions for different groups” (reverse-coded), and (4) “We should
increase social equality” (reverse-coded) (Year 1 $\alpha = .73$, Year 2 $\alpha = .72$, Year 3
$\alpha = .72$, Year 4 $\alpha = .72$).

Symbolic racism, a system-legitimizing ideology (Sidanius, Deveraux, &
Pratto, 1992; Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999), was measured by
a four-item scale. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed
or disagreed with the following statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree)
to 7 (strongly agree): (1) “Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for
equal rights,” (2) “Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less economically
than they deserve” (reverse-coded), (3) “The Irish, Italians, Jews and many other
minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same
without special favors,” and (4) “Blacks get less attention from the government
than they deserve” (reverse-coded) (Year 1 $\alpha = .59$, Year 2 $\alpha = .65$, Year 3 $\alpha =
.68$, Year 4 $\alpha = .72$).

Perceived system legitimacy was assessed by two items. Participants were
asked to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the following state-
ments on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree): “Differences in status
between ethnic groups are fair” and “It is unfair that certain ethnic groups have
poorer living conditions than other ethnic groups” (reverse-coded) (Year 1 $\alpha =
.41$, Year 2 $\alpha = .45$, Year 3 $\alpha = .47$, Year 4 $\alpha = .54$).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Mean levels of ethnic and university identification by ethnic group and year
in college can be found in Table 2 (see also Sidanius et al., 2008; Sinclair et al.,
1998).

Relationships between Ethnic Identification and Status-Legitimizing
Orientations and Ideologies

According to social dominance theory, ethnic identification should be more
positively related to desires for group-based hierarchy and status-legitimizing
ideologies among members of high-status groups (e.g., White Americans) than
among members of low-status groups (e.g., Latino and African Americans). Given
that Asian Americans are of intermediate status, it is likely that ethnic identification
will also be more positively related to desires for group-based hierarchy and
status-legitimizing ideologies for Whites than for Asian Americans. We test these
hypotheses for each status-legitimizing orientation and ideology in turn: SDO,
symbolic racism, and system legitimacy. For each status-legitimizing variable, we first used bivariate regression to determine the relationship between it and ethnic identification among each of the different ethnic groups. Then, we used a two-step, hierarchical multiple regression analysis to examine slope differences among the four ethnic groups.

Beginning with SDO, we used bivariate regression to determine the various slopes among each of the different ethnic groups for the regressions of SDO on ethnic identification. Then, in the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, SDO was regressed on the main effect terms for ethnic identification and ethnicity at the first step; next, the product terms for the interaction between ethnic identification and ethnicity were entered at a second step. To allow comparisons across ethnic groups, Table 3 reveals the unstandardized regression coefficients for the bivariate relationships between ethnic identification and SDO. As expected, these analyses demonstrated that ethnic identification and SDO tended to be more positively associated among White Americans than among Asian, Latino, and African Americans. Specifically, whereas White students who identified more with their ethnic group showed higher levels of SDO, students of other ethnic groups either showed no significant relationship or in fact showed lower SDO as they identified more with their ethnic group. For each year in college, the $R^2_{\text{change}}$ associated with the entry of the Ethnic Identification $\times$ Ethnicity interaction terms was statistically significant ($R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .02 to .03, all $p$s < .001), as was the overall

### Table 2. Ethnic and University Identification by Ethnicity and Year in College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
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<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identification</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
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<td>3.78c</td>
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<td>Latinos</td>
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<td>1.45</td>
<td>5.00b</td>
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<td>Blacks</td>
<td>5.85a</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>5.98a</td>
<td>.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>$p$ value for ethnicity effect</td>
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<td>$&lt; .001$</td>
<td>$&lt; .001$</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Identification</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$= .01$</td>
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Note. Within each year in college, superscripted letters that are the same across ethnic groups indicate that the groups do not significantly differ in identification, $p > .10$. Ethnic and university identification are measured on a 1–7 scale, with higher numbers indicating greater levels of the constructs.
regression model including all main effect and interaction terms (\(R^2\) ranged from .08 to .12, all \(p < .001\)).

As with SDO, we expected to find more positive relationships between ethnic identification and status-legitimizing ideologies for White students than for members of intermediate- and low-status ethnic groups. The same procedure was again used, this time with ethnic identification as the predictor and the status-legitimizing ideologies (i.e., symbolic racism and system legitimacy) as the outcome variables. Table 3 reveals the unstandardized regression coefficients for the bivariate relationships between ethnic identification and the status-legitimizing ideologies. As expected, these analyses demonstrated that ethnic identification and symbolic racism tended to be more positively associated among White Americans than among Asian, Latino, and African Americans. Specifically, whereas White students who identified more with their ethnic group showed higher levels of symbolic racism, students of other ethnic groups either showed no significant relationship or in fact showed lower symbolic racism as they identified more with their ethnic group. For each year in college, the \(R^2\) change associated with the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>(p) Value for Time Effect*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Social Domination Orientation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.10**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>(p &gt; .10)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.14**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>(p &gt; .10)</td>
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<td>-.14**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
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<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
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\(p\) value for ethnicity effect: \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\)

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\(p\) value for ethnicity effect: \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\) \(p < .001\)

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\(p\) value for ethnicity effect: \(p = .01\) \(p = .001\) \(p < .001\) \(p = .05\)

\*Time effect analyses are based on a listwise deletion procedure.
\*\* \(p < .10\), \* \(p < .05\), ** \(p < .01\).
entry of the Ethnic Identification × Ethnicity interaction terms was statistically significant ($R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .02 to .04, all $ps < .001$), as was the overall regression model ($R^2$ ranged from .13 to .14, all $ps < .001$).

Consistent with expectations, ethnic identification and system legitimacy also tended to be more positively associated among White Americans than among Asian, Latino, and African Americans. Although the relationships were not significantly different from zero for Whites, with few exceptions they were significantly negative for Asian, Latino, and African Americans. For each year in college, the $R^2_{\text{change}}$ associated with the entry of the Ethnic Identification × Ethnicity interaction terms was statistically significant ($R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .01 to .02, all $ps \leq .05$), as was the overall regression model ($R^2$ ranged from .05 to .09, all $ps < .001$).

In sum, consistent with previous research, ethnic identification had the fractional effects predicted by social dominance theory. Ethnic identification was more positively related to desires for group-based hierarchy and status-legitimizing ideologies among White Americans, the high-status ethnic group, than among members of lower status ethnic groups.

Changes over time. We speculated that there might be a decrease in the perceived compatibility between ethnic identification and status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies for members of all ethnic groups over the 4 years in college. To examine whether this was the case, we performed two LISREL structural equation analyses on each outcome variable for each ethnic group. In the first stage of these analyses, the regressions of a given status-legitimizing variable on ethnic identification were allowed to vary across the 4 years of college. In the second stage of the analyses, the regressions were constrained to equality across the four college years. Using a chi-square difference test, we then examined the deterioration in model fit when moving from the unconstrained to the constrained models. The results showed that there was not a single case in which the assumption of regression homogeneity resulted in a statistically significant decrease in model fit. In other words, the relationships between ethnic identification and the status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies (i.e., SDO, symbolic racism and system legitimacy) remained essentially stable over time for all four ethnic groups (see Table 3). It thus appears that being in the hierarchy-attenuating ethnic environment did not lead students to perceive their ethnic identification as less (or more) compatible with status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies as they progressed through college.

5These LISREL analyses were based upon listwise deletion criteria. Thus, the variance-covariance matrices used in the analyses only included respondents who had complete data for all relevant variables across all four waves of data collection.
Relationships between University Identification and Status-Legitimizing Orientations and Ideologies

According to the notion that university identity is an effective common in-group identity for students from different ethnic groups, desires for group-based hierarchy and support for status-legitimizing ideologies should be less related to university identification than they were to ethnic identification. Again, we examined the relationship between identification, this time university identification, and each system-legitimizing orientation and ideology (i.e., SDO, symbolic racism and system legitimacy) in turn.

The analyses of the relationships between university identification and status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies were conducted in the same manner as those for ethnic identification and these variables. Table 4 reveals the unstandardized regression coefficients for the relationships between university identification and the status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies. As expected, these analyses demonstrated that SDO and university identification tended to be unrelated

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Social Dominance Orientation

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Symbolic Racism

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System Legitimacy

Note. *Time effect analyses are based on a listwise deletion procedure.

*p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01.
among members of all ethnic groups. There were only two instances in which the relationships were significantly negative: for Latinos in Year 3 and African Americans in Year 4. For every year in college, the overall regression model including all main effect and interaction terms was statistically significant ($R^2$ ranged from .07 to .10, all $p$s < .001), but the $R^2_{\text{change}}$ associated with the entry of the University Identification $\times$ Ethnicity interaction terms was not significant ($R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .00 to .01, all $p$s > .10).

University identification and symbolic racism also tended to be unrelated among members of all ethnic groups. The only instances in which they were significantly positively related were for Whites and Asian Americans in Year 1. For each year in college, the overall regression model was statistically significant ($R^2$ ranged from .08 to .12, all $p$s < .001), but the $R^2_{\text{change}}$ associated with the entry of the University Identification $\times$ Ethnicity interaction terms was only significant in the first year of college (for Years 2, 3, and 4, $R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .001 to .003, $F$s < 1; for Year 1, $R^2_{\text{change}} = .01, F(3, 1,274) = 2.56, p = .05$).

Finally, university identification and system legitimacy tended to be unrelated among members of all ethnic groups as well. The only instance in which they were significantly negatively related was for African Americans in Year 4. For each year in college, the overall regression model was statistically significant ($R^2$ ranged from .04 to .05, all $p$s < .001), but the $R^2_{\text{change}}$ associated with the entry of the University Identification $\times$ Ethnicity interaction terms was not ($R^2_{\text{change}}$ ranged from .00 to .003, $F$s < 1).

In sum, as expected, university identification is likely to be an effective common in-group identity. While ethnic identification was related to desires for group-based hierarchy and support for status-legitimizing ideologies in a way that fostered conflict and inequities, university identification was virtually unrelated to these outcomes, suggesting that focusing on this superordinate identity would benefit relations between ethnic groups on campus.

**Changes over time.** We also examined changes over time in the relationships between university identification and the status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies. The analyses for these relationships are the same as those for the relationships with ethnic identification. As before, with one small exception, the results showed that the relationships between university identification and SDO, symbolic racism, and system legitimacy remained essentially stable over time for all four ethnic groups (see Table 4). The only mild exception to this general trend was the tendency for the relationship between university identification and symbolic racism to become somewhat less positive at the end of college than it was at the beginning of college among Asian American students. Overall, it thus appears that immersion in the hierarchy-attenuating ethnic environment did not lead students to perceive their superordinate university identification as even
Ethnic and University Identities

less compatible with the status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies as they progressed through college.

Discussion

The common in-group identity model advocates creation of a superordinate group identity in order to reduce conflict between members of different ethnic subgroups. This study examined the extent to which a university identity is likely to serve as an effective common in-group identity for students from different ethnic groups by comparing the relationships between ethnic identification and system-legitimizing orientations and ideologies with the relationships between university identification and these variables.

Ethnic Identification

As expected, results indicated that ethnic identification has the fractious implications for intergroup relations found in previous research. Support for status-legitimizing ideologies and SDO tended to be more positively associated with ethnic identification among Whites than among Latino and African Americans across the college years. Viewed from a social dominance perspective, this asymmetry stems directly from differences in the meaning of subgroup membership for members of dominant and subordinate subgroups in hierarchical social systems: For members of dominant subgroups, identification with the subgroup implies a dominance orientation, and so should be positively related to status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies because they maintain the dominant groups’ privileged position. For members of subordinate groups, by contrast, identification with the subgroup implies a counterdominance orientation, or a rejection of the system that relegates one’s group to a subordinate position in the social hierarchy, and so should be less positively related to status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies.

We also found that the relationships between ethnic identification and desires for group-based hierarchy and status-legitimizing ideologies exhibited by Asian Americans tended to be less positive than the relationships exhibited by White Americans, but not as negative as those exhibited by Latino and African Americans. These findings are consistent with the notion that Asian Americans occupy an intermediate status position in American society (Smith, 1991). According to social dominance theory, asymmetry in the relationships between subgroup identification and status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies should be greater between high-status and low-status groups than between high-status and intermediate-status groups.

Interestingly, the relationships between ethnic identification and status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies did not become less positive for Whites, or more negative for Asian, Latino or African Americans with longer time in the
hierarchy-attenuating college environment, as we had speculated they might. It may be the case that exposure to a university environment changes individuals’ satisfaction with group-based social hierarchies and the ideologies that legitimate them (e.g., Sidanius et al., 1991), but not the role of ethnic identification in informing this satisfaction.

Although these findings emphasize the potentially negative implications ethnic identification has for intergroup relations, it is important to acknowledge that ethnic identification is also associated with many benefits, particularly for members of low-status groups. For example, there is substantial research indicating that greater ethnic identification can be positively related to academic performance (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2003), positively associated with well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002; Seaton, Scottham, & Sellers, 2006; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, & Martin, 2006), and can aid in managing stress (Haslam, O’Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Haslam & Reicher, 2006). Therefore, although the university environment has a liberalizing effect on students’ intergroup attitudes and may be relatively more hierarchy-attenuating than American society at large, ethnic identification can still play a vital role in the lives of university students. Future research should examine how best to balance the benefits and costs of such identification, both on university campuses and in American society at large.

University Identification

Examining the relationships between university identification, based on a student body membership that all participants shared, and system-legitimizing orientations and ideologies yielded a very different picture than our examination of the relationships between these variables and ethnic identification. According to social dominance theory, effective common in-group identities are likely to develop within environments in which subgroups are treated equitably and are considered equal partners within the common in-group. When identification with a common in-group does not imply a willingness to dominate or be dominated within a hierarchical system, it should be unrelated to desires for group-based hierarchy and support for status-legitimizing ideologies. Consistent with the notion that university identity is this kind of common in-group identity, and contrasting the results for ethnic identification, SDO and the status-legitimizing ideologies tended to be unrelated to university identification during each year in college. Therefore, at the same time that exposure to the hierarchy-attenuating university environment may help to reduce intergroup conflict by improving students’ intergroup attitudes, thinking about themselves in terms of a superordinate group of university students may also promote group cooperation by shifting students’ attention away from issues of group dominance and intergroup inequities.
Importantly, Dovidio, Saguy, and Shnabel emphasized in their contribution to this volume that group cooperation is not always positive and group conflict is not always negative. The key to positive, cooperative dynamics within ethnically diverse superordinate groups is ensuring that all subgroup identities are respected and treated equally within the shared social system. For this reason, it is important that identification with the superordinate group be unrelated to status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies: Identification with the common in-group must not work to the advantage of some subgroups and disadvantage of other subgroups. Rather, the shared social system must be hierarchy-attenuating in nature in order for identification with the superordinate group to promote healthy, sustainable intragroup cooperation.

In closing, we must add the caveat that due to the correlational nature of our data, we can only speculate that shifts in ethnic identification actually caused the changes in endorsement of status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies that we observed in the data. Future experimental work on this topic is clearly warranted. If, as we suspect, endorsement of status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies is strengthened more by the enhanced salience of ethnic identity than university identity, stronger causal claims would be justified. Such claims would have far-reaching implications for efforts to reduce intergroup conflict on college campuses. These efforts should be directed at increasing the salience of students’ university identities, by stressing what all students have in common, and deemphasizing aspects of ethnic identity that heighten status-legitimizing orientations and ideologies. At the same time, such initiatives should be sensitive both to the needs of specific ethnic groups (as discussed by Dovidio, Saguy, & Shnabel in this volume) and to the benefits associated with ethnic affiliation, particularly for members of ethnic minority groups.

References


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