

The two faces of dominance: The differential effect of ingroup superiority and outgroup inferiority on dominant-group identity and group esteem

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Abstract

The present paper provides evidence that dominant-group members distinguish dominance framed as ingroup superiority from dominance framed as outgroup inferiority, and that ingroup superiority enhances esteem for, and thus identification with, the group more than outgroup inferiority. In Experiment 1, Democrats report higher levels of party identification after being told that Democrats won an election than after being told that Republicans lost the election. These effects are attenuated among dominant group members whose values are in conflict with how dominance was achieved. In Experiments 2a and 2b, unearned dominance framed as ingroup superiority resulted in higher levels of White identification than unearned dominance framed as outgroup inferiority among Whites who did not value meritocracy. In contrast, Whites who valued meritocracy did not increase their levels of identification with the group. In Experiment 2b, this interactive effect on racial identification was mediated by esteem for the group.

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People would rather identify with winners than losers. For example, people wear their team's apparel more after their team wins than after a loss (Cialdini et al., 1978). Individuals are also more likely to use the pronoun *we* when describing the team after a win, and to distance themselves from a losing team by using *they* after a team loss (Cialdini et al., 1978).

Importantly, not all victories are necessarily equal. There are two ways to describe victory: a team win or an opponent's loss. Although the outcome is the same—victory—the victors can perceive the victory as evidence of their team's superiority, or the losing team's inferiority. In addition, individuals' values allow them to distinguish between victories that count and those that do not; a win considered legitimate in one value system might be considered illegitimate in another. Research suggests that illegiti-

mate dominance is more aversive when framed as ingroup privilege rather than outgroup disadvantage (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). We suggest that this pattern might be reversed when dominance is perceived to be legitimate. We predict that individuals will have higher esteem for the ingroup and identify more strongly when dominance is framed as ingroup superiority as opposed to outgroup inferiority, but only when endorsed values do not challenge the legitimacy of the dominance.

The allure of dominant status

Research indicates that, all else equal, individuals prefer being members of dominant groups (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers, Doojse, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1992; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988). There are numerous reasons to prefer membership in dominant groups to membership in subordinate groups. In addition to the obvious benefit of access to valued resources, when

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dominance is perceived to be legitimate, dominant groups often enjoy greater esteem than subordinate groups (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Sidanius, 1993; Webster & Foschi, 1988). In fact, evidence suggests that the need for positive esteem can drive the desire for dominance (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

We suggest that how dominance is framed affects the amount of esteem dominant-group members experience as a function of their group membership. Specifically, we hypothesize that dominance framed in terms of ingroup superiority emphasizes features of the dominant group that account for its dominant position, but does not provide information about the outgroup. In contrast, dominance framed in terms of outgroup inferiority emphasizes features of the subordinate group that account for its subordinate position, but does not provide information about the dominant ingroup. Therefore, when dominance is perceived to be legitimate, ingroup superiority should result in more group esteem among dominant-group members than dominance framed as outgroup inferiority.

Although most theories of social hierarchy agree that individuals prefer dominant to subordinate status, theories such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the group position model (Blumer, 1958), and social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) suggest that individuals are only concerned with their group's position relative to outgroups. Evidence for our hypothesis would suggest that individuals are more interested in the position of their group than the position of the outgroup. This in turn might help explain why individuals appear to be more interested in ingroup-enhancement than outgroup derogation (cf. Brewer, 1979, 1999; Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Raden, 2003). We conducted three experiments to test our hypotheses.

Experiment 1

In the United States' 2006 midterm election, the Democratic Party took a majority of state governorships and congressional seats. We presented this information to self-identified Democrats as either a Democratic win or a Republican loss. We hypothesized that participants would identify more strongly with their group when told that Democrats won than when told that Republicans lost.

Method

Participants

A total of 29 self-identified Democrats (19 women, 10 men) ranging in age from 19 to 55 ($M = 32.17$, $SD = 10.83$) visited a website containing study materials. The sample had an average of 4.40 years of post-secondary education ($SD = 3.68$ years). Participants were recruited from an email list maintained by a private California university of individuals interested in receiving online survey

announcements. As payment, each participant was emailed a \$5 gift certificate from an online retailer.¹

Procedure

Participants were emailed a link to the study website. Participants first read a description of the 2006 midterm election outcome framed either as a Democratic win or a Republican loss. After reading the description, participants completed a measure of identification with their political party.

Manipulation and measure

All participants were given the following description of the study:

This study is about people's responses to the outcome of the United States 2006 midterm elections. Because not all individuals stay up to date about political events, in the next page, we will tell you what happened in the 2006 midterm elections. After reviewing this information, you will be asked about your reactions to the election outcome.

Manipulation of dominance frame. The midterm election results were presented as either ingroup superiority or outgroup inferiority. The *superior ingroup* condition read:

The Democratic Party won a majority of the state governorships and a majority in both the US House and Senate. Democrats have a 233–202 advantage in the House of Representatives, and a 51–49 advantage in the United States Senate.

The *inferior outgroup* condition read:

The Republican Party lost a majority of the state governorships and a majority of the seats in both the U.S. House and Senate. Republicans have a 202–233 disadvantage in the House of Representatives, and a 49–51 disadvantage in the United States Senate.

Political party identification. Participants' level of identification with their political party was assessed with a 7-item identity centrality scale modified to assess political identity (cf. Lowery et al., 2006, Study 4; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Sample items included, "In general, being a member of my political party is an important part of my self-image," and "Being a member of my political party is an important reflection of who I am" (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree, $\alpha = .90$).

¹ Participants reported in this paper were drawn from a national pool of individuals interested in participating in online studies. The pool contains over 3000 registered participants, and 64% are female. Ages in the pool range from 18 to 75 ($M = 31.96$, $SD = 10.37$) and 43% have a bachelor's or higher degree. Participants who completed one study were not eligible to take any of the other studies reported in this paper.

Results and discussion

We hypothesized that individuals would identify more with the ingroup (Democrats) when dominance was framed as ingroup superiority than when the same differential was framed as outgroup inferiority. As predicted, we found that Democrats had higher levels of identification with their political party when the midterm elections were framed as a Democratic win ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.09$) than a Republican loss ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(27) = 2.04$, $p = .05$. This result is consistent with the hypothesis that evidence of ingroup superiority causes higher levels of identification than evidence of outgroup inferiority. In the next two experiments, we explore whether a value that renders dominance illegitimate moderates the effect of dominance frames.

The fear of illegitimacy

Ingroup superiority might not always induce pride and identification with the ingroup; perceptions of superiority might decrease esteem for the dominant group when the superiority is seen as illegitimate (Hornsey, Spears, Creemers, & Hogg, 2003; Johnson, Terry, & Louis, 2005; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Given the legitimacy of democracy in the United States, the election outcomes described in Experiment 1 were likely perceived as legitimate, and as predicted, Democratic superiority resulted in stronger identification with the Democratic ingroup than Republican inferiority. However, if individuals perceive ingroup dominance as illegitimate, ingroup superiority might result in less esteem for and identification with the ingroup than evidence of outgroup inferiority. Highly-identified dominant-group members are particularly sensitive to evidence of illegitimate ingroup advantage (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Schifffhauer, 2007), suggesting that reducing their level of identification might be a method of minimizing discomfort associated with illegitimate advantage.

Perceptions of legitimacy depend upon the ideologies used to justify the status quo. For example, a belief in divine rights would result in much different judgments about the legitimacy of a monarchy than a belief in meritocracy. We suggest that when endorsed ideologies render dominance illegitimate, perceived ingroup superiority should not elicit greater esteem than outgroup inferiority.

Meritocracy, one widely endorsed ideology, stipulates that rewards should be allocated on the basis of individual inputs, such as hard work or talent, rather than meted out as a function of group membership ascribed at birth (Hochschild, 1981; Kluegel & Smith, 1979). It is often described as a legitimizing ideology because the belief that the world *is* meritocratic allows dominant group members to justify their dominant status (cf. Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Research has also shown that a strong belief that the world *should* be meritocratic can lead individuals to oppose redistributive social policies (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998; Davey,

Bobocel, Son Hing, & Zanna, 1999; Levy, West, Ramirez, & Karafantis, 2006; Son Hing, Bobocel, & Zanna, 2002). These results indicate that the idea of meritocracy may operate as a powerful ideology that both justifies the status quo and orients individuals' hierarchy-relevant choices and behaviors.

We suggest that although legitimizing ideologies typically justify the status quo, they also limit what can be justified. For example, if meritocracy is used to legitimize the hierarchy, evidence that the dominant group's position is not a function of merit should limit the esteem dominant individuals can extract from their group membership. Although individuals typically derive positive esteem from a dominant social position, concerns about violating values (e.g. meritocracy) can result in lower esteem and identity among members of dominant groups. Consistent with this possibility, a belief that the ingroup has unearned advantages results in feelings of guilt and negatively affect group identification (Iyer et al., 2003; Powell et al., 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999).

We suggest that value violations should only elicit a negative response among individuals who strongly endorse the violated value. Importantly, despite the prevalence of support for meritocracy, there is meaningful variation in support for this ideology (Davey et al., 1999). For example, variance in one measure of support for meritocracy, preference for the merit principle (PMP), has been shown to affect attitudes toward policies as a function of the policies' perceived violation of meritocracy (Bobocel et al., 1998; Son Hing et al., 2002). We hypothesize that individuals who do not strongly support the ideology of meritocracy will not be negatively affected by evidence that their group benefits from inequitable advantages. Among these individuals, evidence of inequitable bias should be irrelevant to how they perceive the group's dominance. Thus, we predict that even when ingroup superiority is explicitly inequitable, it will still result in greater esteem for and stronger identification with a dominant ingroup than outgroup inferiority.

We examine whether individuals' support for the ideology of meritocracy has an influence on whether dominance frame has an influence on White Americans' (the dominant racial group in the United States) esteem for the ingroup and their willingness to identify with their racial group. We predict that the belief that the world should be meritocratic will render unearned ingroup superiority illegitimate, and the implied value violation associated with unearned superiority will result in lower esteem and identification with the ingroup than the belief that outgroup inferiority is illegitimate.

Experiments 2a and 2b

In Experiments 2a and 2b, we studied White Americans' responses to perceptions of unearned dominance described either in terms of ingroup superiority or outgroup inferiority. We also measured how much individu-

als valued meritocracy to assess whether the willingness to accept unearned dominance as legitimate moderates the effect of dominance frame on Whites' level of racial identification and esteem for their group. We predict that Whites who do not value meritocracy will report greater esteem for and identify more strongly with their racial group after exposure to evidence of ingroup superiority as compared to outgroup inferiority, *even when explicitly told that racial group differences are due to bias*. In contrast, we predict that Whites who value meritocracy will have lower levels of esteem for and will not increase their levels of identification with their racial group when they perceive ingroup superiority as compared with outgroup inferiority.

Method

Participants

The Experiment 2a sample consisted of 74 White participants (54 women, 19 men, 1 unreported) ranging in age from 18 to 55 ($M = 27.27$, $SD = 11.38$). The sample had an average of 3.37 years of post-secondary education ($SD = 2.51$ years). The Experiment 2b sample consisted of 40 White participants (30 women, 9 men, 1 unreported) with ages ranging from 18 to 55 years ($M = 30.00$, $SD = 10.76$), and an average of 3.32 years of post-secondary education ($SD = 2.77$ years). In both experiments, participants visited a website containing study materials. Participants were recruited from the same pool described in Experiment 1. As payment, each participant was emailed a \$5 gift certificate from an online retailer.

Procedure

Participants were emailed a link to the study website. Upon linking to the website, participants read a description about a controversy over the SAT in which the scoring gap between Whites and minorities was described either in terms of White superiority or Black inferiority. In both cases, participants were told that the scoring gap was due to bias. Then participants completed measures of racial identification and preference for the norm of meritocracy. In Experiment 2b participants also completed a measure of private regard for Whites.

Manipulation and measures

All participants were given the following description of the study:

In this study, we are concerned with how people feel about the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). As you may be aware, education officials have expressed reservations about the validity of the SAT.

Manipulation of dominance frame. The group difference on the SAT was framed either in terms of ingroup superiority or outgroup inferiority. Participants in the *superior ingroup* condition read:

Some of the issues with the SAT include:

1. The SAT does not predict how well students do in school.
2. In 2002, the average combined score for Whites was 203 points more than the average combined score of Blacks.
3. The questions in the SAT have been shown to be biased in favor of Whites.

Participants in the *inferior outgroup* condition read:

Some of the issues with the SAT include:

1. The SAT does not predict how well students do in school.
2. In 2002, the average combined score for Blacks was 203 points less than the average combined score of Whites.
3. The questions in the SAT have been shown to be biased against Blacks.

Preference for meritocracy. We used the 15-item Preference for the Merit Principle (PMP) Scale to measure how much individuals value meritocracy (Davey et al., 1999). The PMP scale measures the degree to which participants believe that outcomes should be distributed on the basis of merit (ability and effort). None of the items reference race. However, the scale has been shown to affect attitudes toward race-relevant policies as a function of the policies' perceived violation of meritocracy (Bobocel et al., 1998; Son Hing et al., 2002). Sample items include, "The effort a worker puts into a job ought to be reflected in the size of the raise he or she receives," and "Qualifications ought to be given more weight than seniority when making promotion decisions," (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree; Experiment 2a $\alpha = .78$; Experiment 2b $\alpha = .68$).

White racial identification. To measure participants' levels of identification with their racial group, we first asked them to classify themselves into one of five racial/ethnic groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Asian-American/Pacific Islander, African-American/Black, Caucasian/White, or Hispanic/Latino. Immediately following this self-categorization, participants were presented with an 8-item scale designed to measure racial identity centrality (cf. Lowery et al., 2006; Sellers et al., 1997). The scale consists of items such as, "In general, being a member of my racial group is an important part of my self-image," and "Being a member of my racial group is an important reflection of who I am" (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Somewhat disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 6 = Strongly agree; Experiment 2a $\alpha = .83$; Experiment 2b $\alpha = .74$).

Esteem for the ingroup. In Experiment 2b, participants' esteem for their ingroup was measured using the private regard subscale of the collective self-esteem scale (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The items administered were: "I often regret that I belong to my racial/ethnic group"

(reverse scored), “In general, I’m glad to be a member of my racial/ethnic group,” “Overall, I often feel that my racial/ethnic group is not worthwhile” (reverse scored), and “I feel good about the race/ethnicity I belong to” (1 = Strongly agree, 7 = Strongly agree; $\alpha = .74$).²

Results and discussion

Preliminary analyses

Distribution of PMP. Because meritocracy is widely endorsed, we closely examined the distribution of our participants’ responses to ensure that the any effects of this variable were not due to a small number of extreme individuals who do not value meritocracy. Comparison of the mean (Experiment 2a, $M = 5.03$, $SD = .73$, Experiment 2b, $M = 5.31$, $SD = .65$) and median (Experiment 2a, median = 5.00, Experiment 2b, median = 5.30) PMP scores suggested that the distribution was not unduly influenced by a small number of extreme responses. Also, an examination of skew diagnostics indicated that PMP was not significantly skewed (Experiment 2a skew = $-.046$; Experiment 2b skew = $-.097$, both z ’s < 1).

Effect of dominance frame on PMP. Because our measures of preference for meritocracy came after our dominance frame manipulation, we examined whether dominance frame affected how much participants valued meritocracy. It did not; PMP scores did not differ across conditions in either Experiment 2a (ingroup superiority, $M = 5.10$, $SD = .75$, outgroup inferiority, $M = 4.95$, $SD = .70$, $t(72) = .89$, $p = .40$) or Experiment 2b (ingroup superiority, $M = 5.36$, $SD = .65$, outgroup inferiority, $M = 5.25$, $SD = .66$, $t(38) = .53$, $p = .60$).

Distinction between group esteem and identity. Because identity centrality and group esteem are commonly discussed as two related aspects of identity, we sought to validate the distinction between our operationalizations of the two constructs. In order to better determine the factor structure, we analyzed the items in a larger sample of participants (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988). In this sample ($N = 163$, 120 women, 41 men, 2 unreported), we collected the measures of group esteem ($\alpha = .81$) and identity centrality ($\alpha = .81$) used in Experiment 2b. A principle axis factor analysis produced two oblimin rotated factors ($r = .28$, $p < .001$), corresponding to our constructs, that

explained 61.47% of the variance. The factor loadings are presented in Table 1.

White racial identification

Experiment 2a. To test the hypothesis that unearned ingroup superiority results in stronger identification than outgroup superiority, but only among those who do not value meritocracy, we dummy coded Dominance frame (1 = superior ingroup, -1 = inferior outgroup), mean-centered PMP, and created an interaction term by computing the cross-product of these two variables. We then regressed racial identification on these variables (Aiken & West, 1991). Consistent with our hypothesis, we found a significant Dominance frame \times PMP interaction on racial identification, $B = -.37$, $SE B = .14$, $\beta = -.30$, $p < .01$, see Fig. 1. Our analyses revealed no main effect of dominance frame on levels of racial identification, $B = .04$, $SE B = .10$, $\beta = .05$, $p = .68$. There was a main effect of PMP, such that the more participants valued meritocracy, the less they identified with the White racial group, $B = -.32$, $SE B = .14$, $\beta = -.26$, $p < .05$.

To further probe the interaction, we conducted simple slopes analyses at one standard deviation above and below the mean of PMP. These analyses revealed that individuals who had a low preference for meritocracy were significantly more identified with the racial group in the *superior ingroup* condition than the *inferior outgroup* condition, $B = .31$, $SE B = .14$, $\beta = .34$, $p < .05$. In contrast, individuals with a high preference for meritocracy tended to have lower levels of identification in the *superior ingroup* condition than the *inferior outgroup* condition, $B = -.23$, $SE B = .14$, $\beta = -.25$, $p = .11$.

Experiment 2b. We conducted the same analyses reported for Experiment 2a on Experiment 2b participants’ racial identity. Replicating Experiment 2a, there was a significant interaction between dominance frame and PMP on White racial identification, $B = -.51$, $SE B = .22$, $\beta = -.35$, $p < .05$ (see Fig. 2). There was also a marginally significant main effect of dominance frame, such that individuals in the *ingroup superior* condition were more highly identified with the group than individuals in the *outgroup inferior* condition, $B = .22$, $SE B = .14$, $\beta = .24$, $p = .12$. There was no main effect of PMP on levels of racial identification ($p = .77$).

Replicating Experiment 2a, simple slopes analyses indicated that individuals with a low preference for meritocracy reported higher levels of identification in the *superior ingroup* condition than the *inferior outgroup* condition, $B = .55$, $SE B = .20$, $\beta = .60$, $p < .01$. In contrast, individuals with a high preference for meritocracy did not differ in their identification with the group across conditions ($p = .59$).

These results are consistent with the hypothesis that when individuals do not value meritocracy, even *unearned* dominance framed as ingroup superiority results in higher levels of identification with the dominant group than

² The CSE consists of four separable subscales, however, we only administered the private regard subscale. Our hypotheses focus on how dominance frame affects individuals’ evaluations of the ingroup; thus the subscales that assess beliefs about the way others perceive the ingroup (public regard) and beliefs about one’s worthiness as a group member (membership) are not relevant to our hypotheses. Also, previous research has demonstrated that the racial identity measure used in the studies operates as expected when modified for White participants (Lowery et al., 2006); therefore we used this measure rather than the CSE identity subscale.

Table 1
Factor loadings of group identification and group esteem items used in Experiment 2b

	Factor loadings	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
<i>Identity items</i>		
Overall, being a member of my racial group has very little to do with how I feel about myself ^a	.623	
In general, being a member of my racial group is an important part of my self-image	.761	
Being a member of my racial group is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am ^a	.646	
I have a strong sense of belonging to my racial group	.711	
I have a strong attachment to other members of my racial group	.577	
<i>Group esteem items</i>		
I often regret that I belong to my racial group ^a		.581
In general, I'm glad to be a member of my racial group		.843
Overall, I often feel that my racial group is not worthwhile ^a		.614
I feel good about the race I belong to		.829

Note: Only factor loadings equal to or greater than .30 are reported.

^a Item was reversed for scoring.

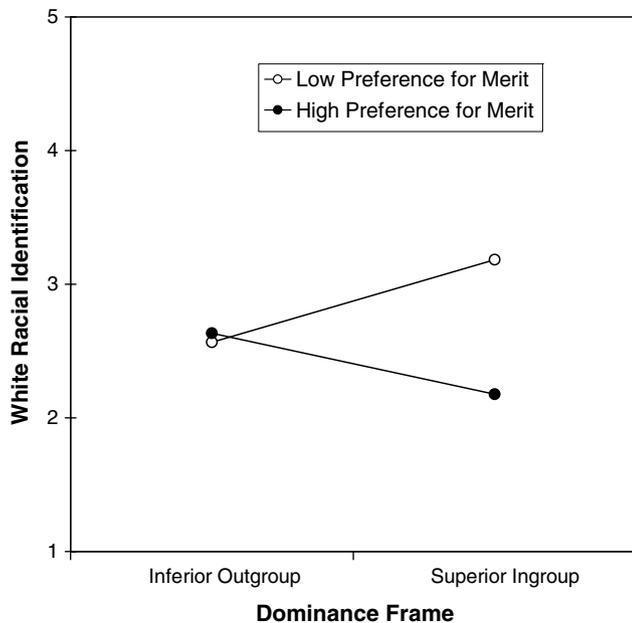


Fig. 1. White racial identification as a function of Dominance Frame and Preference for Meritocracy (Experiment 2a).

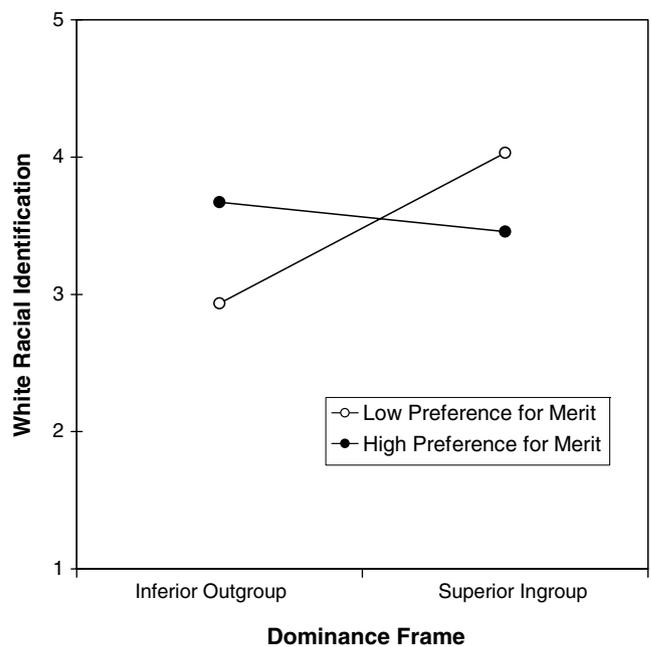


Fig. 2. White racial identification as a function of Dominance Frame and Preference for Meritocracy (Experiment 2b).

dominance framed as outgroup inferiority. In contrast, when individuals value meritocracy, unearned dominance framed as ingroup superiority tends to result in lower levels of identification with the dominant group than dominance framed as outgroup inferiority.

Esteem for the ingroup

We reran the above analyses, replacing racial identification with group esteem. As predicted, there was a significant interaction between dominance frame and PMP on ingroup esteem, $B = -.75$, $SE B = .23$, $\beta = -.46$, $p < .005$, see Fig. 3. There was a marginally significant main effect of PMP, such that the more individuals valued meritocracy, the more esteem they had for the group, $B = .41$, $SE B = .23$, $\beta = .26$, $p = .08$. There was no main effect of dominance frame ($p = .99$).

Simple slopes analyses conducted at one standard deviation above and below the mean of PMP indicated that among individuals with a relatively low preference for meritocracy, the superior ingroup condition resulted in higher levels of esteem for the ingroup than the inferior outgroup condition, $B = .48$, $SE B = .21$, $\beta = .47$, $p < .05$. In contrast, individuals with a relatively high preference for meritocracy reported lower levels of esteem for the ingroup in the superior ingroup condition than in the inferior outgroup condition, $B = -.48$, $SE B = .21$, $\beta = -.46$, $p < .05$.

Mediational analysis

We predicted that the interactive effect of Dominance frame and PMP on racial identification would be mediated by esteem for the ingroup. Consistent with this possibility,

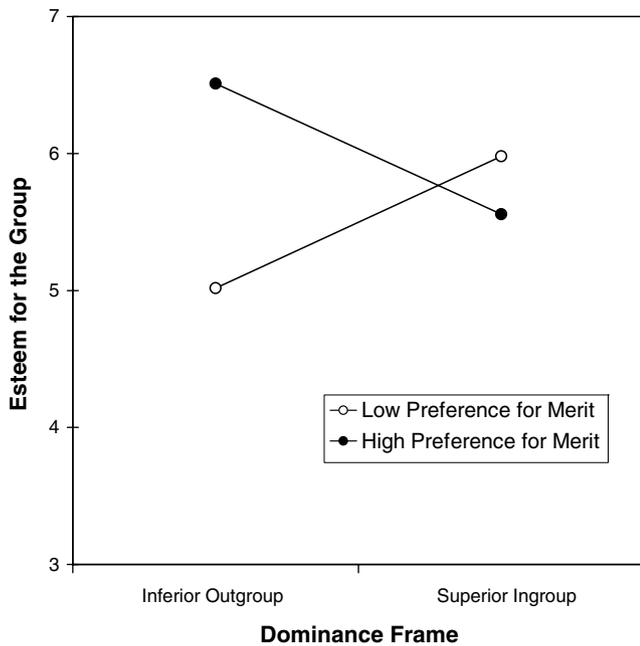


Fig. 3. Esteem for the White ingroup as a function of Dominance Frame and Preference for Meritocracy (Experiment 2b).

in Experiments 2a and 2b the Dominance frame \times PMP interaction predicted levels of racial identification. In Experiment 2b, the same interaction term also predicted esteem for the ingroup. In addition, there was a significant positive relationship between esteem for the ingroup and racial identification, $r = .30, p < .05$.

In Experiment 2b, to test the final component of the mediation hypothesis, we ran a simultaneous regression of dominance frame, PMP, and the interaction term on racial identification, controlling for the effect of ingroup esteem (Baron & Kenny, 1986). As shown in Fig. 4, the previously significant Dominance frame \times PMP interaction on racial identification dropped to non-significance when esteem for the ingroup was included in the analyses (Sobel $z = 2.10, p < .05$).

It is also possible that the dominance frame \times PMP interaction on esteem for the group is mediated by identification with the group. To test this possibility, we reran the

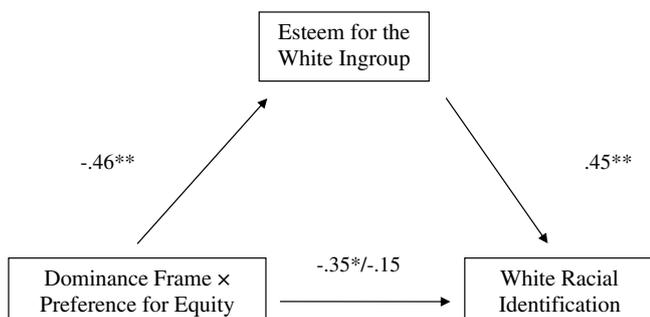


Fig. 4. Standardized coefficients for mediation of Dominance Frame \times Preference for Meritocracy interaction on White racial identification by Esteem for the White ingroup (Experiment 2b). Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

above analyses, but with esteem for the group as the outcome variable, controlling for the effect of racial identification. The significant Dominance frame \times PMP interaction remained significant, $B = -.72, SE B = .28, \beta = -.36, p < .05$ (Sobel $z = .95, p = .34$).

General discussion

The present work provides evidence that ingroup superiority generates more positive esteem for and higher levels of identification with the group than outgroup inferiority. In addition, we found that this effect was attenuated or even reversed among individuals who perceived dominance as illegitimate.

All of the experiments demonstrated that when group differences are perceived to be legitimate, individuals report higher levels of identification when the ingroup is perceived to be superior than when the outgroup is perceived to be inferior. Specifically, Democrats identified more strongly with their political party when told that their party won the election than when told the opposing party (Republicans) lost the election. Replicating this effect, in Experiments 2a and 2b, Whites who did not support the ideology of meritocracy identified more strongly with and reported higher levels of esteem for the group when their racial group’s unearned dominance was framed as ingroup superiority than when it was framed as outgroup inferiority. However, Whites who strongly endorsed meritocracy reported lower levels of identification with and esteem for the ingroup after exposure to ingroup dominance compared to outgroup inferiority. Thus, Experiments 2a and 2b provide support for the hypothesis that values that affect the perceived legitimacy of dominance can moderate the effect of dominance frames. Experiment 2b also provided evidence that the changes in White racial identity were driven by changes in Whites’ esteem for the ingroup.

Although we hypothesize that the ideology of meritocracy moderates individuals’ responses to dominance frame, it is possible that individuals’ perceptions of dominance affect their support for meritocracy. If ingroup dominance violates a particular value (e.g. meritocracy), individuals might be motivated to downplay the importance of the value to avoid the specter of illegitimacy. Thus, if dominance frames affect support for meritocracy, it suggests that the value of meritocracy rendered the group’s outcome illegitimate, otherwise there would be little benefit in reducing support for the value. Therefore, even if dominance frames affect individuals’ support for meritocracy, this value should, as it does in our studies, still function as a moderator.

If, as we suggest, dominance framed as ingroup superiority emphasizes positive features of the ingroup, it might result in higher perceived levels of ingroup status. In contrast, dominance framed as outgroup inferiority might not enhance the ingroup’s status to the same degree. It is also possible that dominance frames affect the nature of the social comparisons that individuals make; perhaps

dominance framed as ingroup superiority elicits more downward social comparisons than outgroup inferiority. Future research is necessary to explore these possibilities.

We believe that the effects reported here have important implications for a variety of situations. For example, the increased level of identification with one's political party could affect the likelihood of attending political rallies, displaying party paraphernalia, or contributing to campaigns. Framing the election outcome as one's party's win as opposed to the opposition's loss could also increase the perceived mandate of the winning party's political agenda. Although we did not examine the way individuals perceived others to perceive their group, it is certainly possible that meta-perceptions are also affected by dominance frame. This may offer an interesting avenue for further research.

In the case of race and similar dimensions of social categorization (e.g., gender, caste, class), the implications might be even more profound. Evidence suggests that the strength of identification with a dominant social group can reduce the willingness of dominant-group members to acknowledge the existence of unearned advantages and the willingness to give these advantages up (cf. Lowery et al., 2006; Lowery, Knowles, Unzueta, 2007). Thus, dominance frames can have important implications for the way individuals experience and respond to social inequity.

Our results might also shed light on the way values affect individuals' experience of group membership. We hypothesized that among individuals who value meritocracy, unearned ingroup superiority highlights the ingroup's violation of the value more than undeserved outgroup inferiority, and therefore ingroup superiority would result in lower levels of esteem and racial identification than outgroup inferiority. The reported results provide mixed evidence for this hypothesis. The magnitude of the effect of dominance frame among individuals who valued meritocracy on racial identification was small to non-existent. However, the effect on esteem for the ingroup was considerably larger. This pattern of results might reflect ambivalence experienced by dominant-group members when their group violates an important value. Although the value violation reduces esteem for the group, benefits of dominant-group membership other than positive esteem might continue to push toward identification. This possibility may be an interesting avenue for future research.

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