"I can't breathe": Lay conceptualizations of racism predict support for Black Lives Matter

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ABSTRACT

We examined how individual differences in White individuals' lay conceptualizations of racism are related to support for Black Lives Matter and protests against inequality. In our study, a more systemic conceptualization of racism, along with other individual differences (e.g., beliefs about racial discrimination and White privilege, self-presentational concerns about appearing racist) significantly predicted greater support for the Black Lives Matter movement and specific actions (e.g., protesting, political pressure) used to bringing about racial equality. Further, these ideologies predicted support for both White people and People of Color working to address the issue, highlighting the strength people perceive in allies against inequality. However, those who reject these beliefs may seek to limit the methods by which individuals affected by racial inequality are permitted to use in challenging that inequality.

1. Introduction

In the weeks and months following the death of George Floyd (a Black man) at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, demonstrations across the United States have once again brought the public's attention to the problems of systemic racism. Grass-roots movements, such as Black Lives Matter, challenging racial stratification and police violence against Black people have received increasing levels of support (Pew Research Center, 2020). Yet despite increased beliefs that racial discrimination continues to be a problem in the U.S., many people condemn the recent protests (Monmouth University Polling Institute, 2020). In the present study, we examined individual differences in attitudes and beliefs related to beliefs about racial inequality in the U.S., support for political movements attempting to dismantle racial hierarchies, and support for different actions that could be taken to address it.

1.1. Beliefs about racial discrimination

Simply believing racism is a not a widespread problem in the United States likely coincides with believing current protests are unjustified. Many White people tend to believe racism has declined greatly since the civil rights era (Norton & Sommers, 2011). And although some progress

toward reducing racial disparities has been made, the belief that racism is a thing of the past is a central theme of modern racism (McConahay, 1986). People higher in this form of anti-Black prejudice likely believe political action taken by people to address racial discrimination is unwarranted. Believing racism is uncommon and trivializing People of Color's concerns about racial discrimination are related to perceiving less racism in the killing of Michael Brown and the militarized police response to community protests in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 (Miller & Saucier, 2018). Additionally, a large body of research reveals that modern racism predicts anti-egalitarian attitudes (e.g., Monteith & Spicer, 2000), and negative attitudes about policies that attempt to reduce racial inequalities (e.g., Awad et al., 2005; Crosby et al., 2006).

In short, believing that racial discrimination is uncommon is linked to negative attitudes about racial groups and opposition to collective actions that try to reduce racial inequalities. Yet, more blatant acts of violence, such as the killing of George Floyd, may be harder to dismiss as having nothing to do with race. Many people who are motivated to trivialize People of Color's concerns about the effects of prejudice may be forced to believe individual bigots still exist, while continuing to believe racism is not a systemic problem deeply embedded within society. Whether people believe racial disparities are the result a history of structural, cultural, and institutionalized racism (Nelson et al., 2013;

Salter & Adams, 2013) may be key to understanding support for movements that attempt to disrupt existing racial hierarchies.

1.2. Lay conceptualizations of racism

Individual differences in lay conceptualizations of racism may help explain why members of the dominant racial group might oppose efforts to challenge racial inequality (Salter & Adams, 2013; Salter et al., 2018). In nationally representative samples, White people in the U.S. tend to define racism as more of a problem of individual bigots, and conceptualize racism in terms of the blatantly racist beliefs and discriminatory behaviors intentionally committed by a few "bad apples" (Rucker et al., 2020). Additionally, White people tend to be less likely to define racism in terms of systemic problems operating independent of individual actions. Limiting what counts as racism may be one of the reasons why, compared to Black people, White people tend to perceive less racism in society today (Carter & Murphy, 2015); less racism in specific events, such as in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (O'Brien et al., 2009; Saucier et al., 2007); and why they are less likely to support criminal justice system reform (Rucker et al., 2020).

In addition to a lack of knowledge of systemic oppression, a motivational reason why White people tend to have more of an individualistic conceptualization racism, is that they are motivated to think of racism as extreme and intentional acts of racial aggression committed by individual bigots because this conceptualization racism protects their non-racist self-image (Adams et al., 2006; O'Brien et al., 2010; Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). Additionally, White people may be reluctant to conceptualize racism as a systemic problem because they do not want to believe they benefit from unearned racial privileges (Lowery et al., 2007; Phillips & Lowery, 2018; Powell et al., 2005). However, when reminded of their racial privilege, White people's attributions to racism in cases of police officer shootings of Black men increase (Cooley & Brown-Iannuzzi, 2019). In short, the extant research suggests beliefs about White privilege and systemic racism should predict attitudes about movements such as Back Lives Matter and the perceived appropriateness of actions taken to address racial inequality.

1.3. The present study

In the present study, we examined how individual differences in beliefs about the existence of racism and White privilege, different lay conceptualizations of racism, and self-presentational concerns about appearing racist predict support for Black Lives Matter, perceptions of whose responsibility it is to take action (White people or People of Color), and perceptions of the appropriateness of different actions that could be taken to address racial inequality. Broadly, we hypothesized higher levels of anti-Black prejudice, lower beliefs in White privilege, lower propensity to make attributions to prejudice, lower self-presentational concerns about appearing racist, and lower perceptions of racism as a systemic problem would be associated with less support for Black Lives Matter, perceptions of less racial inequality in the U.S., and lower support for protests against inequality.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Our project was preregistered using the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/wq8ny). We sought to recruit at least 196 participants (based on a power analysis $\rho = 0.20$, 0.80 power, $\alpha = 0.05$ for a correlational study) from the CloudResearch (Litman et al., 2017) software. After removing participants who did not identify as White and who did not complete all measures or correctly respond to captchas and attention checks, our final N was 225 participants (54% women, mean age = 39.40, $SD = 12.90$). Participants were paid $0.50 for their participation.

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Predictor measures

Unless otherwise noted, all predictor scales were completed on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scales.

2.2.1.1. Modern racism. To measure participants' beliefs about racial progress, they completed the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986). This scale consisted of 6 items (e.g., "*Over the past few years, racial minorities have gotten more economically than they deserve*").

2.2.1.2. White privilege beliefs. We used the White Privilege Attitudes Scale (Pinterits et al., 2009) to measure beliefs about White privilege. This scale consisted of 28 items (e.g., "*I intend to work toward dismantling White privilege*").

2.2.1.3. Propensity to make attributions to prejudice. We used the Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale (PMAPS; Miller & Saucier, 2018) to measure participants' tendencies to attribute prejudice as the cause of harmful behaviors toward People of Color. This scale consisted of 15 items (e.g., "*People discriminate against people who are not like them*").

2.2.1.4. Self-presentational concerns with appearing racist. To measure the extent to which participants are sensitive to their actions or behaviors being perceived as racially motivated, we used O'Dea and colleagues (in preparation) Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist Scale (SCARS). This scale includes 14 items (e.g., "*I do not discuss race with People of Color because of the fear of being called or perceived as racist*").

2.2.1.5. Lay conceptualizations of racism. We used three items from past research (O'Brien et al., 2009; Rucker et al., 2020) and created five new items to measure people's beliefs about racism being predominantly an issue of individual racists versus an issue of systemic oppression. Participants responded to these items on 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*) scales. Based on an exploratory factor analysis, two factors emerged measuring participants' perceptions that "Systemic Oppression" (e.g., "Discrimination that is built into our laws") and "Individual Acts of Prejudice" (e.g., "Individuals' beliefs about White racial superiority contribute to the problem of racism in the United States today"). These items and their factor loadings are presented in Supplementary Table 2. Participants also indicated the extent to which they perceive Individual versus Institutional discrimination is the bigger problem in modern society using a bipolar scale from 1 (*Racist individuals who have negative attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities*) to 9 (*Institutional practices that disadvantage racial and ethnic minorities*).

2.2.2. Dependent measures

2.2.2.1. Support for Black Lives Matter. Participants responded to 3 items assessing their support for Black Lives Matter, All Lives Matter, and Blue Lives Matter from 1(*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*), or indicated "I have never heard this phrase and, therefore, do not have an opinion on it" (which was treated as missing data). "All Lives Matter" is a common phrase in contemporary society in response to Black Lives Matter, and "Blue Lives Matter" is a phrase used to support law enforcement, colloquially used in direct contradiction to the Black Lives Matter movement. Participants also indicated their support for the Black Lives Matter movement using items we wrote to measure more specific perceptions participants may have toward the movement. These items and an exploratory factor analysis of these items are presented in Supplementary Table 1. Two subscales were identified measuring positive (e.g., "The Black Lives Matter movement draws appropriate attention to racial injustices") and negative ("The Black Lives Matter movement is anti-

White") perceptions toward the Black Lives Matter movement.

2.2.2.2. Responsibility to address inequality. We asked participants to identify whether they believe (yes/no) People of Color experience unfair disadvantages relative to White people. Participants responded to two items assessing, if there is an inequality between White people and People of Color in the United States, to what extent "each group should take action to address racial inequality in the United States" from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*a lot*). Participants also indicated whose responsibility it is more comparatively using a bipolar scale from 1 (*White people*) to 5 (*both*) to 9 (*People of Color*).

2.2.2.3. Protesting and overcoming inequality. Participants responded to 20 statements about how people in the United States should address inequality. Participants completed each of these items three times indicating: 1) how White people should address inequality, 2) how People of Color should address inequality, and 3) how they themselves should address inequality in the United States. These items are presented in Supplementary Table 3. Because we had three iterations of the same items applied to White people, People of Color, and themselves, we decided to more fully address the factor structure of these items. Using the initial iteration of participants' responses for how White people should address inequality, we conducted exploratory factor analysis. Four subscales emerged measuring the extent to which participants perceived people should "Gain Status" (e.g., "*Running for state office*"), "Aggressively Protest" (e.g., "*Forming militia*"), "Peacefully Protest" (e. g., "*Engaging in peaceful protests such as marches*"), and "Call upon representatives" (e.g., "*Calling their local representative*") to address inequality. We then used participants' responses to these same items for People of Color to conduct confirmatory factor analyses. The initial model had moderate fit ($CFI = 0.92$, $SRMR = 0.06$, $RMSEA = 0.12$). However, using the modification indices, we eliminated three items which yielded a model with excellent fit ($CFI = 0.97$, $SRMR = 0.05$, $RMSEA = 0.08$). This excellent fit was replicated on the items participants completed for themselves ($CFI = 0.97$, $SRMR = 0.05$, $RMSEA = 0.09$).

3. Results

We examined relationships among individuals' levels of modern racism, White privilege beliefs, propensity to make attributions to prejudice, Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, conceptualizations of racism as an individualized problem, conceptualizations of racism as a systemic problem, and their support for recent social movements (Black/Blue/All Lives Matter), support for protesting inequality, and perceptions of whose responsibility it is to address inequality (White people, People of Color).[1] These correlations are presented in Table 1.

Unsurprisingly, higher levels of modern racism were associated with significantly lower perceptions of racial prejudice as both an individualized issue, and a systemic issue. We then used Lee and Preacher's (2013) analyses to compare the strength of two correlations and, consistent with our hypotheses, this relationship was more strongly negative for the relationship between modern racism and perceptions of racism as a systemic issue than between modern racism and perceptions of racism as an individual issue ($z = -4.72$, $p < .001$). Further supporting our hypotheses, higher levels of modern racism were associated with significantly less support for Black Lives Matter, more support for Blue and All Lives Matter, lower perceptions that White and Black people should address the inequality (although these relationships were stronger for White people compared to People of Color; $z = -7.097$, $p < .001$), and lower perceptions that White people, People of Color, and

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[1] The raw data from this study are available by request to the first author.

they, themselves, should protest inequality peacefully or by calling representatives. Interestingly, higher levels of modern racism were associated with significantly greater perceptions that White people and they, themselves should protest aggressively (perhaps to maintain freedom to do so, consistent with White II & Crandall, 2017), but also that People of Color should protest aggressively (possibly to give licensure to discredit the movement; see numerous news stories since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement focusing on individual acts of looting and rioting rather than the message; e.g., Ballasy, 2020).

Also consistent with our hypotheses, higher levels of beliefs in White Privilege, Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice, Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, and beliefs that racism is a systemic problem were generally associated with greater support for Black Lives Matter, lower support for Blue/All Lives Matter (except in the case of Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist), greater perceptions that there is inequality in the U.S. and that White people and People of Color are responsible for addressing the inequality (except White Privilege), and greater perceptions that White people, People of Color, and they (the participant) should protest inequality by peacefully protesting or by calling representatives. Each of these was also positively associated with encouraging People of Color to gain status in society to protest inequality. Each of these were generally weakly correlated with endorsement of aggressive protesting with the strongest positive relationships being between White Privilege beliefs and endorsement of aggressive protesting by People of Color and themselves. These relationships supported our hypotheses that people with more egalitarian beliefs, lower thresholds for perceiving prejudice, and self-presentational concerns with appearing racist would report more support for actions to address inequality in the US.

3.1. Exploratory analyses

3.1.1. How lay conceptualizations about prejudice predict perceptions of social issues and how to address them

We wondered whether lay conceptualizations of prejudice as a systemic issue would more strongly (compared to lay conceptualizations of prejudice as an individual issue) predict support for efforts to address social inequalities between White people and People of Color. To test this, we examined partial correlations between conceptualizations of racism as a systemic problem (controlling for conceptualizations of racism as an individual problem) and each of our dependent variables as well as conceptualizations of racism as an individual problem (controlling for conceptualizations of racism as a systemic problem) and each of our dependent variables (see Table 2). Consistent with recent research (e.g., Rucker et al., 2020), our results showed that, controlling for conceptualizations of racism as an individual problem, higher beliefs in racism as a systemic problem were associated with significantly greater perceptions that there is inequality in the U.S., more support for Black Lives Matter, less support for Blue Lives Matter and All Lives Matter, greater perceptions that White people (including themselves) should take action to fight against inequality (although primarily in peaceful ways and by calling upon representatives), and greater support for People of Color protesting inequality across all four methods (gaining status, peacefully protesting, aggressively protesting, and calling upon representatives). Individualized conceptualizations about racism were generally unrelated to any of our dependent variables when controlling for systemic conceptualizations except that individualized conceptualizations were associated with greater endorsement of All Lives Matter and lower support for People of Color aggressively protesting.

3.1.2. Perceptions about how White people versus people of color should protest inequality

Using mixed modeling, we conducted a series of regressions predicting participants' perceptions of how White people versus People of Color should protest inequality in the U.S. Participant was treated as a

Table 1
Correlations between each of our predictors and dependent variables.

Variable	M	SD	α	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Modern racism	3.42	2.25	0.92	–					
2. White privilege	4.71	1.94	0.95	−0.53*	–				
3. Propensity to make attributions to prejudice	5.86	1.79	0.92	−0.72*	0.80*	–			
4. Self-presentational concerns with appearing racist	5.66	1.87	0.93	−0.04	0.18*	0.16*	–		
5. Systemic racism contributes to oppression	6.20	2.47	0.94	−0.65*	0.76*	0.79*	0.21*	–	
6. Individual acts of prejudice contribute to oppression	6.41	2.00	0.90	−0.44*	0.48*	0.58*	0.18*	0.66*	–
7. Racial inequality exists in the U.S.	0.24	0.43	–	−0.55*	0.55*	0.59*	0.17*	0.63*	0.37*
8. Support for Black Lives Matter	7.60	2.26	–	−0.52*	0.47*	0.52*	0.12*	0.52*	0.33*
9. Support for Blue Lives Matter	5.56	3.25	–	0.32*	−0.32*	−0.42*	0.10	−0.33*	−0.18*
10 Support for All Lives Matter	6.49	3.03	–	0.38*	−0.40*	−0.45*	0.09	−0.37*	−0.11
11. White people are responsible for addressing inequality	6.77	2.27	–	−0.58*	0.52*	0.65*	0.23*	0.65*	0.48*
12. POC are responsible for addressing inequality	6.56	2.02	–	−0.14*	0.06	0.17*	0.23*	0.21*	0.22*
13. Negative attitudes toward BLM	4.07	2.77	0.96	0.77*	−0.66*	−0.71*	−0.02	−0.69	−0.41*
14. Positive attitudes toward BLM	6.03	2.71	0.92	−0.61*	0.78*	0.78*	0.18*	0.77*	0.51*
15. Whites should gain status to protest inequality	5.69	2.29	0.92	0.04	0.12	0.09	0.21*	0.07	0.12
16. Whites should aggressively protest inequality	2.19	2.03	0.96	0.26*	0.28*	0.07	−0.04	0.07	−0.04
17. Whites should peacefully protest inequality	6.46	2.46	0.95	−0.61*	0.65*	0.73*	0.27*	0.70*	0.48*
18. Whites should call upon representatives to protest inequality	6.27	2.61	0.98	−0.41*	0.55*	0.63*	0.17*	0.57*	0.44*
19. POC should gain status to protest inequality	6.82	2.04	0.89	−0.37*	0.34*	0.41*	0.25*	0.43*	0.35*
20. POC should aggressively protest inequality	2.47	2.32	0.97	0.13*	0.34*	0.17*	−0.13	0.14*	−0.02
21. POC should peacefully protest inequality	6.69	2.42	0.95	−0.58*	0.57*	0.62*	0.26*	0.63*	0.42*
22. POC should call upon representatives to protest inequality	6.51	2.34	0.98	−0.40*	0.47*	0.53*	0.19*	0.54*	0.39*
23. I should gain status to protest inequality	4.72	2.26	0.85	0.08	0.29*	0.18*	0.11	0.11	0.13*
24. I should aggressively protest inequality	2.17	2.14	0.97	0.26*	0.30*	0.10	−0.05	0.10	0.01
25. I should peacefully protest inequality	5.79	2.82	0.96	−0.47*	0.74*	0.71*	0.21*	0.65*	0.46*
26. I should call upon representatives to protest inequality	5.56	2.96	0.99	−0.39*	0.65*	0.63*	0.06	0.58*	0.40*

Note. BLM = Black Lives Matter. POC = People of Color. "Racial inequality exists…" responses were coded as 1 = yes, 0 = no. We focused the reporting of this table on the relationships between the predictors and dependent variables. The full matrix is available upon request from the corresponding author. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

random factor while Modern Racism, White Privilege, Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice, Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, and conceptualizations of racism as a systemic issue were entered as covariates (all centered), along with a within-individual variable which was created based on whether participants were reporting perceptions that White people versus People of Color (coded as −1 and 1 respectively) should: 1) gain status (see Table 3), 2) aggressively protest (see Table 4), 3) peacefully protest (see Table 5), and 4) contact their representatives (see Table 6) to protest inequality. These criterion variables were tested in separate models. Because we were primarily interested in how our predictors interacted with the repeated measures variable of whether participants were reporting perceptions of White people versus People of Color, insignificant interactions were dropped from each of the models (original models are presented in Supplementary Tables 4–7; each revised model was compared to the originally specified model and resulted in a more parsimonious and better fitting model – AIC and BIC comparison values are given in the notes in Tables 3–6).

We found a significant interaction between Modern Racism and perceptions that White people versus People of Color should gain status and peacefully protest such that higher levels of modern racism were associated with marginally greater perceptions that White people, and insignificantly lower perceptions that People of Color, should gain status to protest inequality (thus, maintaining the existing status hierarchy). Higher levels of modern racism were also associated with significantly lower perceptions that White people and People of Color should peacefully protest inequality, but this relationship was stronger when participants were reporting for People of Color than for White people. There was also a significant interaction between Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist and whether participants were reporting that White people versus People of Color should aggressively protest. Participants who reported more Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist reported significantly less endorsement of both White people and People of Color aggressively protesting, but this relationship was significantly stronger when they were reporting for People of Color than for White people. There was also an interaction between the

Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice and participants' perceptions that White people versus People of Color should peacefully protest and call upon representatives to protest inequality. Higher levels of Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice were associated with significantly greater endorsement of White people peacefully protesting and calling upon representatives. However, these relationships were weaker (and insignificant for peaceful protesting) for People of Color. Similar to peaceful protesting, there was a significant interaction between the Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice and White versus People of Color calling upon representatives to protest inequality. Participants higher in the Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice reported significantly higher endorsement of White people and People of Color calling upon representatives. However, these relationships were significantly stronger when people reported for White people than for People of Color.

4. General discussion

People often have misconceptions about the manifestations of racial prejudice in modern society. To protect their self-image, many White individuals are motivated to conceptualize racism as a problem with individual bigots and downplay the existence of systemic racism (Adams et al., 2006; Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). Unfortunately, this restricted conceptualization of racism functions to fuel anti-egalitarian attitudes and decrease support for social reform (Rucker et al., 2020). The primary contribution of the present research is that it demonstrates how individual differences in lay conceptualizations of racism relate to support for Black Lives Matter and methods of protest attempting to disrupt existing social hierarchies. Consistent with our hypotheses, lower levels of racial prejudice, higher levels of White privilege beliefs, greater self-presentational concerns with appearing racist, greater propensity to make attributions to prejudice, and greater conceptualizations of racial prejudice as a systemic issue were generally related to perceptions of greater racial inequality, more support for Black Lives Matter, and more support for challenging the status quo through protest.

Our results indicate some White individuals may be motivated to

Table 2

Exploratory partial correlations examining whether lay conceptualizations as an individual versus a systemic problem predict perceptions of social issues and how to address them.

Variable	Lay conceptualizations as a systemic problem	Lay conceptualizations as an individual problem
1. Inequality in the U.S.	0.56***	−0.08
2. Black Lives Matter	0.42***	−0.01
3. Blue Lives Matter	−0.30***	0.05
4. All Lives Matter	−0.39***	0.18*
5. White people are responsible for addressing inequality	0.55***	0.12
6. POC are responsible for addressing inequality	0.13	0.09
7. Negative BLM attitudes	−0.65***	0.09
8. Positive BLM attitudes	0.68***	0.01
9. Whites should gain status to protest inequality	−0.01	0.11
10. Whites should aggressively protest inequality	0.12	−0.13
11. Whites should peacefully protest inequality	0.62***	0.04
12. Whites should call upon representatives to protest inequality	0.43***	0.11
13. POC should gain status to protest inequality	0.32***	0.12
14. POC should aggressively protest inequality	0.19**	−0.16*
15. POC should peacefully protest inequality	0.55***	0.05
16. POC should call upon representatives to protest inequality	0.42***	0.08
17. I should gain status to protest inequality	0.04	0.08
18. I should aggressively protest inequality	0.12	−0.09
19. I should peacefully protest inequality	0.53***	0.06
20. I should call upon representatives to protest inequality	0.47***	0.04

Note. The correlations presented above are partial correlations with lay conceptualizations of racism in modern society as either a systemic problem or an individual problem (controlling for the conflicting perception). Inequality in the U.S. was coded as 1 = yes, 0 = no. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

conceptualize racism as problematic individuals rather than a whole system, may attempt to distance themselves from responsibility for addressing inequality, and/or may seek to limit the methods by which individuals disadvantaged by that inequality are permitted to use in challenging that inequality. These defensive and privileged perspectives may serve to reinforce and protect a racist status hierarchy by means that are less obvious, but possibly more insidious in their subtlety, than outright perpetuation of blatant stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against People of Color. Thus, even while believing racism is inherent in the recent killing of George Floyd, for instance, White people may less likely to believe the system is at fault and in need of change, and therefore refuse to accept any responsibility for that system or its correction. Our research contributes to the extant literature by exploring how racism continues to manifest in a society that may condemn protest and resist change.

4.1. Limitations

Our study is limited by the correlational nature of our design and thus more causal tests of our hypotheses are needed. For example, a

Table 3

Mixed model predicting participants' perceptions that White people versus People of Color should gain status to protest inequality.

Variable	B	F(1, 219)	p	95% CI
MRS	0.03	0.13	0.716	−0.12, 0.18
WPAS	0.02	0.04	0.847	−0.19, 0.23
PMAPS	0.17	1.56	0.213	−0.10, 0.45
SCARS	0.21	11.27	<0.001	0.09, 0.34
Systemic oppression	0.08	0.95	0.330	−0.08, 0.25
Whites should or POC should	1.13	61.13	<0.001	0.85, 1.42
MRS*Whites should or POC should	−0.28	11.25	<0.001	−0.45, −0.12
Systemic oppression*Whites should or POC should	0.12	2.57	0.111	−0.03, 0.28

	B	t	p	95% CI
MRS*White or POC simple slopes				
Whites should	0.17	1.93	0.055	−0.00, 0.34
POC should	−0.11	−1.29	0.199	−0.29, 0.06

Note. Subject was treated as a random factor and the White should versus POC should variable was as −1 and 1 respectively. MRS = Modern Racism Scale, WPAS = White Privilege Attitudes Scale, PMAPS = Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale, SCARS = Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, POC = People of Color. All predictors were centered. We revised our model to not include insignificant interactions resulting in a significantly more parsimonious model (original AIC = 1885.95, revised AIC = 1882.87; original BIC = 1979.03, revised BIC = 1956.24; see Supplementary Table 4).

Table 4

Mixed model predicting participants' perceptions that White people versus People of Color should aggressively protest inequality.

Variable	B	F(1, 219)	p	95% CI
MRS	0.54	47.84	<0.001	0.39, 0.69
WPAS	0.60	30.18	<0.001	0.38, 0.81
PMAPS	0.15	1.15	0.284	−0.13, 0.43
SCARS	−0.21	10.51	0.001	−0.33, −0.08
Systemic oppression	0.01	0.00	0.946	−0.16, 0.17
Whites should or POC should	0.28	11.40	<0.001	0.12, 0.44
SCARS*Whites should or POC should	−0.12	6.97	0.009	−0.20, −0.03
SCARS*White or POC simple slopes				
Whites should	−0.15	−2.20	0.029	−0.28, −0.02
POC should	−0.27	−3.93	<0.001	−0.40, −0.13

Note. Subject was treated as a random factor and the White should versus POC should variable was as −1 and 1 respectively. MRS = Modern Racism Scale, WPAS = White Privilege Attitudes Scale, PMAPS = Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale, SCARS = Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, POC = People of Color. All predictors were centered. We revised our model to not include insignificant interactions resulting in a significantly more parsimonious model (original AIC = 1626.74, revised AIC = 1631.15; original BIC = 1726.74, revised BIC = 1698.91; see Supplementary Table 5).

longitudinal design could examine support for movements like Black Lives Matter before and after significant social events that bring attention to racism in the United States (e.g., the killing of Jacob Blake). Theoretically, these events would likely threaten beliefs that many White individuals have of a "post-racial society" in which race no longer matters (e.g., Umana-Taylor, 2016).

Table 5

Mixed model predicting participants' perceptions that White people versus People of Color should peacefully protest inequality.

Variable	B	F(1, 219–222)	p	95% CI
MRS	−0.24	11.59	<0.001	−0.37, −0.10
WPAS	0.15	2.36	0.126	−0.04, 0.34
PMAPS	0.30	5.94	0.016	0.06, 0.55
SCARS	0.20	12.08	<0.001	0.09, 0.31
Systemic oppression	0.23	9.16	0.003	0.08, 0.37
Whites should or POC should	0.23	7.61	0.006	0.07, 0.39
MRS*Whites should or POC should	−0.12	4.87	0.028	−0.22, −0.01
PMAPS*Whites should or POC should	−0.27	16.49	<0.001	−0.40, −0.14

	B	t	p	95% CI
MRS*White or POC simple slopes				
Whites should	−0.18	−2.39	0.017	−0.32, −0.03
POC should	−0.30	−3.97	<0.001	−0.44, −0.15
PMAPS*White or POC simple slopes				
Whites should	0.44	3.40	<0.001	0.19, 0.70
POC should	0.17	1.31	0.193	−0.09, 0.42

Note. Subject was treated as a random factor and the White should versus POC should variable was as −1 and 1 respectively. MRS = Modern Racism Scale, WPAS = White Privilege Attitudes Scale, PMAPS = Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale, SCARS = Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, POC = People of Color. All predictors were centered. Revised our model to not include insignificant interactions resulting in a significantly more parsimonious model (original AIC = 1583.07, revised AIC = 1577.92; original BIC = 1684.23, revised BIC = 1655.17; see Supplementary Table 6).

Table 6

Mixed model predicting participants' perceptions that White people versus People of Color should call upon representatives to protest inequality.

Variable	B	F(1, 219)	p	95% CI
MRS	0.07	0.81	0.370	−0.09, 0.23
WPAS	0.04	0.10	0.753	−0.18, 0.26
PMAPS	0.55	14.51	<0.001	0.27, 0.84
SCARS	0.08	1.36	0.245	−0.05, 0.21
Systemic oppression	0.25	8.20	0.005	0.08, 0.42
Whites should or POC should	0.25	4.92	0.028	0.03, 0.46
PMAPS*Whites should or POC should	−0.23	14.05	<0.001	−0.36, −0.11

	B	t	p	95% CI
PMAPS*White or POC simple slopes				
Whites should	0.67	4.51	<0.001	0.38, 0.97
POC should	0.44	2.94	0.004	0.15, 0.73

Note. Subject was treated as a random factor and the White should versus POC should variable was as −1 and 1 respectively. MRS = Modern Racism Scale, WPAS = White Privilege Attitudes Scale, PMAPS = Propensity to Make Attributions to Prejudice Scale, SCARS = Self-presentational Concerns with Appearing Racist, POC = People of Color. All predictors were centered. We revised our model to not include insignificant interactions resulting in a significantly more parsimonious model (original AIC = 1782.93, revised AIC = 1780.81; original BIC = 1878.75, revised BIC = 1846.87; see Supplementary Table 7).

Additionally, we acknowledge there is some necessary overlap in the theory and operationalization of the constructs we used as predictors (e. g., between perceptions of systemic racism and endorsement of modern racism). These should be understood as related predictors of support for Black Lives Matter that each tap into a common theme of perceptions of

racism. However, that lay conceptualizations of racism as a systemic problem accounted for greater support for Black Lives Matter than did conceptualizations of racism as individual acts of prejudice demonstrates the importance of understanding the nuances of beliefs about racism.

Our results are also limited by focusing on a single social movement—Black Lives Matter. Future studies should examine other social movements, such as #Metoo, to examine whether lay conceptualizations play a similar role in support for social movements that challenge gender hierarchies. We would expect many individuals more strongly view sexism and sexual assault as being the result of a few extremely sexist and misogynistic people rather than an issue with how society propels men upward in the social hierarchy compared to women. These views in turn may relate to less support for the #Metoo movement and condemn the actions of those seeking to challenge the status quo.

4.2. Implications

By condemning individual acts of bigotry, one can seemingly maintain an egalitarian self-image, while simultaneously opposing challenges to the status hierarchy (Adams et al., 2006; O'Brien et al., 2010; Unzueta & Lowery, 2008). Our findings suggest, to the extent people perceive racism as isolated incidents, rather than a systemic problem, they are less likely to support social movements that attempt to bring about systemic change because they do not agree with the fundamental basis of these movements. These beliefs may also translate into opposition to public policy aimed at dismantling social hierarchies between White individuals and People of Color, such as police and criminal justice reform (Miller et al., 2017; Rucker et al., 2020).

The United States is a nation that continues to be plagued by racism, culminating in racially motivated violence. The recent killing of George Floyd is yet another example of systemic racism resulting in individual tragedy. Our research has provided insights into the individual differences that allow White people, as majority group members in the U.S., simultaneously to believe in the existence of racial inequality and to fail to support, or even condemn, social movements motivated to address that inequality. Optimistically, our results show there is some support for social change, and we hope we may soon activate that support into societal efforts to change the system that continues to perpetuate racism at all levels, ranging from microaggressive to lethal expressions.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Stuart S. Miller: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Conor J. O'Dea:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Data curation, Formal analysis. **Donald A. Saucier:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi. org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110625.

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