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*Pers Soc Psychol Bull* 2010; 36; 225 originally published online Dec 16, 2009;  
DOI: 10.1177/0146167209348617

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# Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: SDO Asymmetrically Predicts Perceived Ethnic Victimization Among White and Latino Students Across Three Years

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin  
36(2) 225–238  
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DOI: 10.1177/0146167209348617  
<http://pspb.sagepub.com>  


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## Abstract

Dominant groups have claimed to be the targets of discrimination on several historical occasions during violent intergroup conflict and genocide. The authors argue that perceptions of ethnic victimization among members of dominant groups express social dominance motives and thus may be recruited for the enforcement of group hierarchy. They examine the antecedents of perceived ethnic victimization among dominants, following 561 college students over 3 years from freshman year to graduation year. Using longitudinal, cross-lagged structural equation modeling, the authors show that social dominance orientation (SDO) positively predicts perceived ethnic victimization among Whites but not among Latinos, whereas victimization does not predict SDO over time. In contrast, ethnic identity and victimization reciprocally predicted each other longitudinally with equal strength among White and Latino students. SDO is not merely a reflection of contextualized social identity concerns but a psychological, relational motivation that undergirds intergroup attitudes across extended periods of time and interacts with the context of group dominance.

## Keywords

perceived ethnic victimization, ideological asymmetry hypothesis, legitimizing myths, social dominance, ethnic identity

Received August 4, 2008; revision accepted July 11, 2009

A WOLF found great difficulty in getting at the sheep owing to the vigilance of the shepherd and his dogs. But one day it found the skin of a sheep that had been flayed and thrown aside, so it put it on over its own pelt and strolled down among the sheep. The Lamb that belonged to the sheep, whose skin the Wolf was wearing, began to follow the Wolf in the Sheep's clothing; so, leading the Lamb a little apart, he soon made a meal off her, and for some time he succeeded in deceiving the sheep, and enjoying hearty meals. APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE.

—Æsop (6th century B.C.; 1909–1914)

Ethnic victimization is “the perception that the self and other members of one's ethnic group are targets of ethnic discrimination” (Sidanius, van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004, p. 106). Subordinate ethnic groups do, in fact, experience disproportionately bad living conditions and punitive sanctions (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Ogletree & Sarat, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and several lines of recent work investigate the antecedents and psychological consequences

when members of subordinate groups perceive this ethnic discrimination (for reviews, see Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Major & O'Brien, 2005). As both dominant and subordinate ethnic group members perceive discrimination, it is crucial to examine how the position of one's group within the societal hierarchy affects the meaning and consequences of perceived discrimination (see also Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Among members of dominant groups, perception of ethnic victimization may be an expression of social dominance motives: This is the central thesis of the current research.

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### Perceived Ethnic Victimization Among Dominant Groups

In his historical review, Bartov (1998) tracks a growing sense of victimization among majority Germans at the hands of Jewish citizens during the Weimar Republic and World War I. And he remarks of its culmination in the Nazi regime and the Holocaust that

. . . even while they were murdering Jews in unprecedented numbers, many of the perpetrators perceived themselves as acting in their own defense against their past and potential future victimizers. . . . The children, if allowed to survive, would take revenge; the women would bear more children; the elderly would tell the tale. Hence Germany's misfortune could only end by means of a terrible, final solution and [according to Himmler] genocide was "a harsh, but just atonement of Jewish subhumanity, whose execution merely proved the German nation's determination to survive against all odds and enemies." (pp. 784-785)

Ethnographic evidence likewise suggests that perceived ethnic victimization has been used by dominant ethnic groups to legitimize violence and aggression in several other serious conflicts and regions around the world, including Bosnia, Cyprus, Kosovo, the Crimea, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, and Sudan (Abdulganiyev, 2002; de Figueiredo & Weingast, 1997; Foley, 1999; Mertus, 2001; Murithi, 1998; Ozcelik, 2000; Richardson & Sen, 1996; Subotic, 2000). Importantly, Wohl and Branscombe (2008) also recently demonstrated that reminding Jewish people of the Holocaust decreased collective guilt for harm-doing in Palestine, and reminding Americans of 9/11 or Pearl Harbor decreased collective guilt for current harm-doing in Iraq.

Perceived ethnic victimization among members of dominant groups should also play a role in less dramatic intergroup conflicts. Several intergroup theories explain prejudice and discrimination with factors that reflect perceived ethnic victimization. For instance, anti-immigration stances may build upon beliefs that "they" come here and take "our jobs" and "our women" and "destroy our culture," as argued and demonstrated by intergroup threat theory (e.g., Stephan & Renfro, 2003). Hence, in this line of reasoning, members of the majority population perceive that they are the victims of immigrants "stealing" their jobs, and so forth. Symbolic racism theorists, in turn, argue that building blocks of racial resentment are the idea that affirmative action unfairly disadvantages Whites and the general position that subordinate racial outgroups have "gotten more than they truly deserve" (e.g., Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears & Henry, 2005). Furthermore, the notion of relative group deprivation can be used to understand a sense of ethnic victimization when members of a dominant group perceive their situation as one of disadvantage compared to the

subordinate group (see Walker & Smith, 2002). Indeed, opponents of affirmative action have argued that it is a form of "reverse discrimination"; these opponents of affirmative action include students at the very college campus where our current data were collected (e.g., Proctor, 2003). In sum, perceived ethnic victimization among dominants is likely an important and ubiquitous intergroup phenomenon, and we predict it has mobilizing effects for the enforcement of group hierarchy.

Perceived ethnic victimization, just like other intergroup phenomena, is affected by an existing group hierarchy that has markedly asymmetrical consequences for dominant and subordinate groups; it benefits dominant groups and handicaps subordinate groups. For example, Schmitt and Branscombe (2002) argue that the *meaning* and *consequences* of prejudice and discrimination vary as a function of group status. Subordinate groups perceive discrimination as stable and uncontrollable exclusion, implying extensive devaluation and rejection, whereas for dominant groups discrimination is more unstable and controllable with only localized implications. Therefore, the psychological consequences of discrimination are more damaging for members of subordinate groups than for members of dominant groups.

We suggest that the *antecedents of perceived ethnic victimization* may also differ between dominant and subordinate groups (see also Major et al., 2002). In particular, as dominant groups are in reality less confronted with discrimination than subordinate groups are, we argue that when they do perceive themselves as victims of ethnic discrimination it may in fact be motivated by their desire to maintain or further the existing hierarchy between ethnic groups. Here, we use longitudinal panel data over 3 years to explore the antecedents of dominant group members' perceptions of ethnic victimization. Do they differ from, or resemble, the antecedents of perceived victimization among members of subordinate groups? In particular, we examine whether the effects of social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and ethnic identification on perceived ethnic victimization are moderated by group status.

### Ethnic Identification and Perceived Ethnic Victimization

Much evidence suggests that perceived ethnic victimization may lead to increased group identification (e.g., Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002). Building on a social identity framework (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) that assumes that threats to the ingroup enhance group identification, the rejection-identification model (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) suggests that responding to prejudice by identifying with the disadvantaged group alleviates the harmful psychological effects of prejudice. Given the differences in severity, degree, and continuity of discrimination between dominant and subordinate groups, it is primarily subordinate groups that

seek to alleviate the detrimental effects of discrimination. Indeed, Schmitt et al. found that perceived discrimination heightened group identification among subordinate (women) but not dominant (men) group members. This line of reasoning seems to imply a longitudinal effect of perceived ethnic victimization on ethnic identification that is asymmetrical (i.e., moderated by group status).

On the other hand, group identification has also been argued to lead to increased perceptions of discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Levin, van Laar, & Foote, 2006; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003). For example, Major et al. showed that female gender identification predicted perceived gender discrimination in ambiguous situations. Several processes may drive such effects. When one identifies strongly with a group, the way the group is treated may become more salient so that signs of discrimination are also noticed more. It may also be difficult to feel victimized on behalf of an ethnic group without identifying, or at least being aware, of one's group membership in the first place. This should be the case for members of dominant and subordinate groups alike, suggesting that a longitudinal effect of ethnic identity on perceived ethnic victimization may be symmetrical across group status. Indeed, it has been found that ingroup friendships and membership in ethnic associations and fraternities lead to an increased sense of ethnic victimization for both White and minority college students across time. Crucially, these effects were partly mediated by ethnic identity (Levin et al., 2006; Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, & Sears, 2008; Sidanius, van Laar, et al., 2004; see, however, Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Although ethnic identification may have similar impacts on ethnic victimization across group status, other antecedents may differ. In particular, as the consequences of societal hierarchy differ across groups, the desire for group-based hierarchies should certainly have different effects on perceived ethnic victimization for members of dominant and subordinate groups.

### *Social Dominance Orientation and Perceived Ethnic Victimization*

Intergroup researchers drawing on different theoretical traditions concur that social myths, that is, ideological beliefs, attitudes, and convictions held by people with differing social status, have important social functions (e.g., see Jost & Banaji, 1994; Tajfel, 1984). Social dominance theory also specifies that hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and beliefs, providing moral and intellectual legitimacy to hierarchically organized social relations, are in large part consensually shared across the group hierarchy. These beliefs and reactions then coordinate hierarchical behavior among people from different social groups and ideologically enable the continuous reproduction of inequality (Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Research drawing on system justification theory (Jost &

Banaji, 1994) has also revealed a social and psychological need to accept the status quo in the societal hierarchy. Ironically, this tendency to justify the societal system may exist even among low-status groups that are disadvantaged by these very arrangements.

Still, because dominants profit more from group-based hierarchy than do subordinates, members of dominant groups should support group hierarchy (i.e., have higher SDO scores) more than subordinates do—and the gap in SDO should correspond to the gap in social status (e.g., Pratto et al., 1994; Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). This is found to hold whether we are dealing with stable group hierarchies among preexisting groups (Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003; Levin, 2004; Sidanius, Levin, Liu, & Pratto, 2000; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), or the status gaps between specific groups that people are primed to think about or perceive (Guimond et al., 2003, Studies 3 and 4; Levin, 1996, 2004; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003), or the relations between experimentally induced groups (Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994). Social ideologies and policies that enhance group-based inequality also serve the group interests of dominants more than those of subordinates. Hence, these hierarchy-enhancing social attitudes should also be more strongly driven by social dominance values for dominants than for subordinates: Not only should the levels of SDO vary with group status, but the effects of SDO should also be asymmetrical across the group hierarchy (Sidanius, Levin, et al., 1996, pp. 390-392).

Social dominance theory has long examined this ideological asymmetry hypothesis (see Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, Levin, et al., 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz, 1994). In their most extensive exploration of this phenomenon, Sidanius, Levin, and Pratto (1996) found ideological asymmetry in the relationship between SDO and 21 hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths (HE-LMs), including beliefs about system legitimacy, general sociopolitical ideology, measures of classical racism, social attributions for civil disturbance, redistributive social policy attitudes, and the attractiveness of careers in professions that generally function to further group hierarchy. That is, SDO had a stronger relation to these HE-LMs among Whites than among Blacks (see also Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1998). Using a large random sample from Los Angeles County, Mitchell and Sidanius (1993) also showed that SDO predicted support for the death penalty in significantly stronger ways among Whites than among low-status ethnic groups (see also Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998; Heaven, 1999; Lalonde, Giguere, Fontaine, & Smith, 2007, for further asymmetry examples in the context of women's rights and interracial marriages and adoptions).

Another consequence of this asymmetry is that SDO is positively associated with ingroup identification among

dominants but is negatively associated among subordinates (Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998; Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz, 1994). Also consistent with this asymmetry—and following the basic social identity conjecture that people generally seek to enhance the status of their group to the extent that they identify with it (i.e., gain positive distinctiveness; Turner, 1975)—members of relatively impermeable, high-status groups in relatively stable hierarchies have been found to identify more with the ingroup than members of low-status groups do (e.g., Ellemers, van Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). They also show more ingroup bias, especially on status-relevant dimensions when the status gap is perceived as legitimate (Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Hume, 2001; Brewer & Brown, 1998; Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Jost, 2001; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991).

Insofar as the dimensions of evaluation are perceived as relevant to the status hierarchy, the bias may be constrained by the objective reality of group dominance (Brewer, 2007). Nevertheless, if strongly identified members of high-status groups are especially prone to perceiving themselves as better than outgroups on dimensions that justify their dominant position, perhaps this makes them endorse the hierarchy between groups more, as tapped with their SDO scores. Based on this, we expect SDO and ethnic identification to be correlated and moderated by group status, but we leave the longitudinal, causal direction (or directions) of this association open.

By definition, if members of a group are victims of ethnic discrimination, they have unfairly restricted access to social and economic resources. Perceived ethnic victimization thus implies a moral request for a greater share of valued social resources for one's ethnic group in response. This implies that the asymmetric effects of SDO should extend to perceived ethnic victimization across the group status continuum: Because members of dominant groups do in fact enjoy disproportionately positive social treatment and conditions in society, their perceptions of ethnic victimization should reflect vigilant, motivated reactions to any perceived realistic threats (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) to this hierarchical status quo (for a similar account of this phenomenon from a social identity perspective, see Ellemers, 1993; see also Scheepers, 2009; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). In effect, they are wolves in sheep's clothing—using the socially acceptable cover as victims of discrimination to justify their groups' continued access to a disproportionate share of material and social resources. Hence, SDO should positively predict perceived ethnic victimization among dominant groups only.

In contrast, because members of subordinate ethnic groups are in fact more likely to be discriminated against, their perceptions of ethnic victimization should not be motivated by a desire to enforce and justify the existing group hierarchy. If anything, if subordinates do not perceive that

they are, in fact, victims of ethnic discrimination, this would serve to stabilize and justify the societal group hierarchy that handicaps them. Consequently, SDO should be unrelated to, or even negatively predict, perceived ethnic victimization among subordinate groups.

### The Present Research

Here, we examine the long-term effects of SDO and ethnic identification on perceived ethnic victimization and whether these effects are moderated by the status of one's ethnic group. More specifically, we use White and Latino students' SDO and ethnic identification scores as freshmen to predict their sense of ethnic victimization as seniors during college. Longitudinal cross-lagged analysis of this 3-year panel data permits us to test the direction of the hypothesized causal effects of SDO and ethnic identification on perceived ethnic victimization. Specifically, we test the following symmetrical and asymmetrical predictions:

1. Whites will have higher levels of SDO but lower levels of perceived victimization and ethnic identification than Latinos.
2. Using cross-lagged, longitudinal analyses, ethnic identification will predict increased perceptions of ethnic victimization equally among both Latinos and Whites over time (symmetry hypothesis).
3. However, following the logic of the rejection-identification work of Schmitt et al. (2002) would predict a differential effect of perceived group victimization on group identification as a function of group status. This is to say that there will be a positive effect of perceived group victimization on ethnic identity among subordinates (i.e., Latinos) but not among dominants (i.e., Whites; asymmetry hypothesis).
4. Using social dominance theory as a theoretical framework, we expect to find evidence of ideological asymmetry not only with cross-sectional analyses but with cross-lagged analyses as well. Hence, we expect to find evidence consistent with the claim that earlier levels of SDO affect the degree to which dominants (i.e., Whites) perceive themselves as victims of ethnic discrimination 3 years later, but this should not be the case among subordinates (i.e., Latinos). If anything, the longitudinal relationship between SDO and perceived group victimization should be negative among subordinates.
5. In line with previous work in both the social dominance and social identity traditions, SDO and ethnic identification should be associated within waves and moderated by group status such that this association is positive for dominants but negative for subordinates. However, the mutual, longitudinal effects of these constructs are as yet unclear.

## Method

### Participants

The data came from a five-wave panel study of undergraduates from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Because of the somewhat ambiguous and intermediate social status of Asian Americans and the small number of African Americans who participated in the study, we examined and compared the responses of the White and Latino subsamples only. We used those respondents who participated in the freshman wave in 1997 and the senior wave in 2000. Of the 550 White students who participated in the freshman wave in 1997, 310 (56.4%) participated in the senior wave in 2000. Of the 430 Latino students who participated in the freshman wave, 251 (58.4%) participated in the senior wave. Thus, the final sample for these analyses consisted of 561 students who participated in both the freshman and senior waves of data collection (i.e., 310 White and 251 Latino). On average, 51% of the White sample was female, whereas 59% of the Latino sample was female.

The data were collected by telephone interview during the spring term each year. The interviews averaged 20 minutes in length and were conducted using the computer-assisted telephone interview system run by the Institute for Social Science Research at UCLA.

### Attrition Analyses

To assess the degree to which those students who participated in all waves of data collection differed from those who did not, extensive attrition analyses were performed on study “persisters” (those present for all waves of the study) and study “dropouts” (those who dropped out of the study at some point; see Sidanius et al., 2008, Appendix C). The study dropouts were compared to the study persisters in terms of their demographic characteristics, precollege background, group identification, precollege sociopolitical attitudes, attitudinal orientations, behavioral intentions, expectations, attributions, and the consistency and stability of their precollege attitudes.

It was found that Whites, and especially White women, were somewhat more likely to drop out of the study than those of other ethnic groups. However, there was no evidence that their reduced participation rates were related in any way to their attitudes about ethnic diversity, racial prejudice, or ethnic identity. Furthermore, we did not find any systematic pattern of differences among attrition groups that would suggest enough selective attrition to provide alternative explanations for the main findings in this article. The results of the attrition analyses were essentially what one would expect from chance (see the details of these analysis in Sidanius et al., 2008, pp. 353-361).

### Measures

**Ethnic victimization.** This construct was measured by five items: (a) “I experience discrimination at UCLA because of

my ethnicity,” (b) “Other members of my ethnic group experience discrimination on campus,” (c) “Many professors at UCLA are biased against people of my ethnic group,” (d) “To what extent will prejudice and discrimination against members of your ethnic group impose barriers to their future outcomes?” and (e) “To what extent will prejudice and discrimination against you because of your ethnicity impose barriers to your future outcomes?” The response scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The average alpha reliability of this scale across the two waves of data was .83.<sup>1</sup>

**Ethnic identification.** This construct was defined by a three-item composite scale and the following items: (a) “How important is your ethnicity to your identity?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very important*), (b) “How often do you think of yourself as a member of your ethnic group?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very often*), (c) “How close do you feel to other members of your ethnic group?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very close*). The average reliability of this scale across the two waves of data was  $\alpha = .84$ .

**Social dominance orientation.** This construct was indexed by use of a shortened and balanced four-item scale: (a) “It’s probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom,” (b) “Inferior groups should stay in their place,” (c) “We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups” (reverse coded), and (d) “We should increase social equality” (reverse coded). The response scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), and all items were coded in the prodominance direction. The average reliability of this shortened scale across the two waves of data was  $\alpha = .73$ .

## Results

### Group Differences With Respect to Central Variables

Before proceeding to the heart of the analyses, we computed the means and standard deviations for the variables and the mean differences between the dominant and subordinate groups with respect to these variables using one-way ANOVA. As predicted in Hypothesis 1, dominants (i.e., Whites) had significantly higher SDO but lower victimization and ethnic identity scores than did subordinates (i.e., Latinos) across both waves of data examined (see Table 1).

### Ethnic Identity and Perceived Ethnic Victimization

Hypothesis 2 posits that the sense of ethnic victimization will increase with increasing levels of ethnic identification among both members of dominant and subordinate groups and to approximately the same degree (i.e., the symmetry hypothesis). Furthermore, the logic of the rejection-identification theory (see Branscombe et al., 1999) predicts that perceived ethnic victimization will differentially contribute to increased ethnic identity across time, depending upon the social status of the ethnic group in question: Perceived ethnic victimization

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviations for Major Variables Between 1997 and 2000 for Whites and Latinos

Variable	Whites ( <i>n</i> = 310)		Latinos ( <i>n</i> = 251)		ANOVA	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta$
Victimization 1997	2.21	0.89	3.35	1.08	187.24***	.50
Victimization 2000	2.11	0.93	3.42	1.11	232.42***	.54
Ethnic identification 1997	3.64	1.33	5.38	1.41	224.48***	.54
Ethnic identification 2000	3.62	1.32	5.21	1.44	184.89***	.50
SDO 1997	2.05	0.91	1.70	0.79	22.27***	.20
SDO 2000	1.93	0.86	1.68	0.79	13.05***	.15

SDO = social dominance orientation.

\*\*\**p* < .001.

will contribute to increased ethnic identification among members of subordinate groups but not among members of dominant groups (Hypothesis 3).

An initial and preliminary examination of this thesis can be obtained by merely inspecting the product-moment correlations between ethnic identity and victimization among the White and Latino samples both within and across waves (i.e., the 1997 and 2000 waves). It is noteworthy that all of these correlations are positive and statistically significant for both Whites and Latinos (see Table 2). Most important, although the correlation between perceived victimization in 1997 and ethnic identity in 2000 was positive among Latinos (i.e.,  $r = .21, p < .01$ ), as predicted, it was also positive and statistically significant among Whites ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ), somewhat at odds with the rejection-identification model.

However, to examine these issues more carefully, we computed cross-lagged analyses. We tested Hypotheses 2 and 3 by employing manifest variables structural equation analyses and modeling a simple cross-lag model in which a sense of ethnic victimization in 2000 is dependent upon (a) a sense of ethnic victimization 3 years earlier (in 1997) and (b) a sense of ethnic identity in 1997. The model also tests for the plausibility of a causal link between a sense of ethnic victimization in 1997 and one's degree of ethnic identification in 2000.

We explored these causal plausibilities by use of multiple-groups structural equation analysis employing LISREL 8.72. Because of the multiple-groups nature of the analyses, we submitted variance-covariance matrices as input (however, see product-moment correlations in Table 2). Maximum likelihood parameter estimates were used in all cases. Due to high levels of missing data for certain indicators over waves, we used manifest variables path analyses instead of estimating latent variable models. However, to take account of the fact that these manifest indicators are measured with less-than-perfect reliability, the models were estimated by

inserting the square roots of the reliable variance (estimated by using the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients) into the  $\lambda_x$  and  $\lambda_y$  matrices and also inserting the estimated errors terms into the  $\theta_\delta$  and  $\theta_\epsilon$  matrices (for a justification of this procedure, see Hertzog, 1985).<sup>2</sup>

The results in Figure 1 give the unstandardized parameter estimates for both Whites (outside of parentheses) and Latinos (inside of parentheses). There are four sets of parameters estimates in Figure 1 that are of primary interest: parameters *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*. Parameter *a* provides the covariances between ethnic identity and perceived ethnic victimization in 1997 among both Whites and Latinos. As can be seen in Figure 1, and as expected, this covariance was positive and statistically significant among both Whites and Latinos ( $\phi = .22, p < .05$ , and  $\phi = .25, p < .05$ , respectively). Parameter *b* provides the residual relationship between ethnic identity and a sense of ethnic victimization in 2000 among both Whites and Latinos. These residual relationships were negative and nonsignificant among both ethnic groups ( $\psi = -.04, ns$ , and  $\psi = -.09, ns$ , respectively).

We then tested Hypothesis 2 by inspecting the degree to which a sense of ethnic identity in 1997 appeared to affect a sense of ethnic victimization 3 years later, net of the effects of one's earlier sense of victimization (Parameter *c*). As expected, the evidence was consistent with the notion that one's degree of ethnic identity did, indeed, increase one's sense of victimization over a 3-year period. This effect was significant among both Whites ( $\gamma = .25, p < .05$ ) and Latinos ( $\gamma = .21, p < .05$ ). Furthermore, using an equality constraint for this parameter across both samples indicated that the covariance between ethnic identification and perceived ethnic victimization was essentially homogeneous across both Whites and Latinos,  $\chi^2(1, N = 561) = 0.10, ns$ .

Following the logic of the rejection-identification model, we tested whether perceived ethnic victimization in 1997 increased ethnic identification in 2000, especially among subordinates (see Parameter *d*). However, the empirical data did not support this asymmetrical prediction of the rejection-identification model. Thus, net of the effects of perceived ethnic identification in 1997, the causal path from perceived victimization in 1997 to perceived ethnic identification in 2000 was significant and positive among both the low-status group (i.e., Latinos:  $\gamma = .13, p < .05$ ) and the high-status group (i.e., Whites:  $\gamma = .18, p < .05$ ). If anything, the data tended to show that the causal pathway was somewhat stronger among dominants than among subordinates. However, use of a parameter equality constraint across samples showed that this parameter did not differ significantly between dominants and subordinates,  $\chi^2(1, N = 561) = 0.29, ns$ .

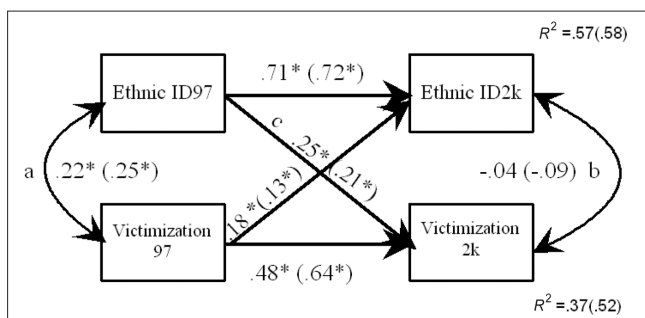
### Social Dominance Orientation and Perceived Ethnic Victimization

In contrast to the previous analyses, where we expected the relationship between ethnic identification in 1997 and

**Table 2.** Product–Moment Correlations Among All Variables Among Whites (below diagonal) and Latinos (above diagonal)

Variable	Victim 1997	Victim 2000	Ethnic identification 1997	Ethnic identification 2000	SDO 1997	SDO 2000
Victim 1997	1	.55***	.25***	.21**	-.03	-.13*
Victim 2000	.44***	1	.23***	.32***	-.07	-.18**
Ethnic identification 1997	.25***	.24***	1	.66***	-.18**	-.12*
Ethnic identification 2000	.16**	.27***	.55***	1	-.28***	-.26***
SDO 1997	.18**	.25***	.16**	.15**	1	.36***
SDO 2000	.09 <sup>+</sup>	.29***	.11*	.14*	.65***	1

SDO = social dominance orientation.  
 NOTE: Whites,  $n = 310$ ; Latinos,  $n = 251$ .  
<sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 1.** Cross-lagged analyses of the relationships between ethnic identity and ethnic victimization in 1997 and ethnic identity and ethnic victimization in 2000 among Whites (outside of parentheses) and Latinos (insides of parentheses)  
 NOTE: Path entries are unstandardized coefficients.  
 \* $p < .05$ .

victimization in 2000 to be essentially symmetrical across the ethnic status continuum, we predicted that SDO in 1997 should asymmetrically predict perceived ethnic victimization in 2000, all else being equal. That is to say that SDO should positively predict ethnic victimization among dominants (e.g., Whites) but not among subordinates (e.g., Latinos) where the relation should be significantly attenuated or even negative (Hypothesis 4).

Again, we started our appraisal of this hypothesis by inspecting the product–moment correlations between the SDO and the perceived victimization measures in the 1997 and 2000 waves (see Table 2). Consistent with our expectations, among Whites, SDO and perceived victimization were positively and significantly correlated in both the 1997 and 2000 samples (i.e.,  $r = .18, p < .01$ , and  $r = .29, p < .001$ , respectively). Most important, among Whites, SDO in 1997 positively, significantly, and relatively strongly related to victimization in 2000 ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ), but the relatively weak correlation between victimization in 1997 and SDO in 2000 was only marginal ( $r = .09, p < .10$ ). In contrast, among Latinos, to the extent there were significant correlations between SDO and victimization, these correlations were all negative.

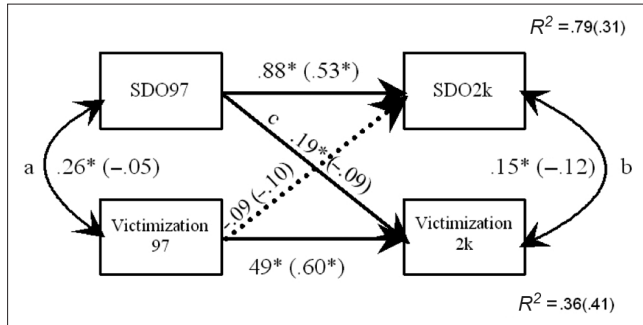
Although these results are consistent with expectations, we again performed cross-lagged analyses with the White and Latino samples to approximate the possible causal relationships among these variables across waves. Using LISREL and our estimates of the latent constructs for both the White and Latino samples, we examined the covariances between SDO and perceived victimization in the 1997 wave (parameter *a*), the residual correlations between SDO and victimization in the 2000 wave (parameter *b*), and the cross-lag causal paths between SDO in 1997 and victimization in 2000 (parameter *c*).

As can be seen by inspection of the unstandardized coefficients in Figure 2, the patterns of the relationships were consistent with expectations for all three paths. Among Whites, all three paths were positive and statistically significant (i.e.,  $\phi = .26, p < .05$ ;  $\psi = .15, p < .05$ ;  $\gamma = .19, p < .05$ , respectively), whereas the equivalent paths tended to be negative (although not significantly so) in all three cases among Latinos (i.e.,  $\phi = -.05$ ;  $\psi = -.12$ ;  $\gamma = -.09$ ). Furthermore, use of parameter equality constraints showed that these parameters were significantly more positive among Whites than among Latinos in all three cases; that is, homogeneity test (parameter/*a*):  $\chi^2(1, N = 561) = 5.10, p < .05$ ; homogeneity test (parameter/*b*):  $\chi^2(1, N = 561) = 7.63, p < .01$ ; homogeneity test (parameter/*c*):  $\chi^2(1, N = 561) = 5.45, p < .01$ . Thus, consistent with the bulk of the cross-sectional analyses of the asymmetry effect in the past (see, e.g., Fang et al., 1998; Mitchell & Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, Levin, et al., 1996), even these cross-lagged analyses indicate that the apparent longitudinal effect of SDO on perceived ethnic victimization is moderated by the status of one’s group such that the relationships are positive among dominants but not among subordinates.

In addition, the results in Figure 2 also suggest that any causal relationship between SDO and ethnic victimization is unidirectional and not reciprocal. Thus, although SDO appears to affect victimization, there is no evidence of the reverse relationship among either Whites or Latinos.

Altogether then, the pattern of results concerning the relationship between SDO and ethnic victimization was





**Figure 2.** Cross-lagged analyses of the relationships between SDO and ethnic victimization in 1997 and social dominance orientation and ethnic victimization in 2000 among Whites (outside of parentheses) and Latinos (insides of parentheses) NOTE: Path entries are unstandardized coefficients. \* $p < .05$ .

consistent with the asymmetry hypothesis (Hypothesis 4): These relationships (both panel and cross-sectional) were positive among dominants and significantly less positive, or even negative, among subordinates. Thus, among dominants but not among subordinates, the greater one's SDO, the more ethnically victimized one will come to feel.

### Ethnic Identification and Social Dominance Orientation

Next, we examined whether SDO and ethnic identification were positively associated among dominants, but negatively associated among subordinates (Hypothesis 5).

Again, inspection of the correlations in Table 2 demonstrated that this was in fact the case in both the 1997 (i.e.,  $r = .16, p < .01$ , and  $r = -.18, p < .01$ , respectively) and 2000 waves (i.e.,  $r = .14, p < .05$ , and  $r = -.26, p < .001$ , respectively). Interestingly, we also found asymmetrical correlations across waves. Among subordinates (i.e., Latinos), SDO in 1997 correlated negatively with ethnic identification in 2000 ( $r = -.28, p < .001$ ), as did ethnic identification in 1997 with SDO in 2000 ( $r = -.12, p < .05$ ). In contrast, among dominants (i.e., Whites), SDO in 1997 correlated positively with ethnic identification in 2000 ( $r = .15, p < .01$ ), as did ethnic identification in 1997 with SDO in 2000 ( $r = .11, p < .05$ ).

Note that among dominants and subordinates alike, the absolute size of the zero-order correlations as well their statistical robustness appeared larger when using 1997 levels of SDO to predict ethnic identification in 2000 than vice versa. However, when we estimated these mutual longitudinal relations in a cross-lagged model, they failed to reach significance. Hence, when controlling for baseline levels, it is not the case that SDO and ethnic identification cause or affect one another across this 3-year time frame.

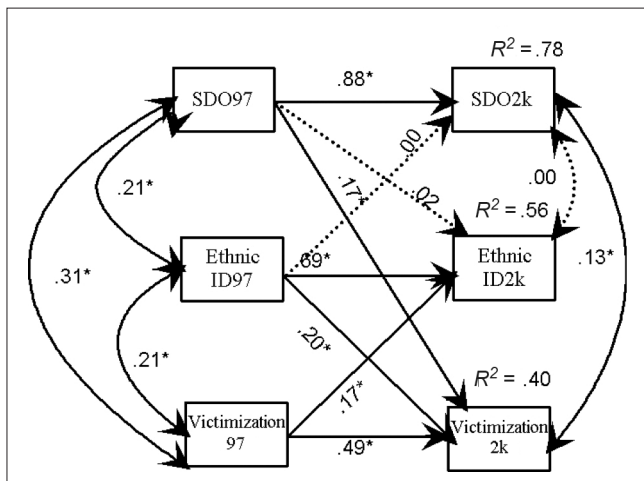
### A Comprehensive Model

Next we estimated a more comprehensive LISREL model in which we were interested in the question of whether or not both ethnic identity and SDO measured in 1997 might have effects upon perceived ethnic victimization in 2000, net of the effects of perceived victimization in 1997. To explore this first question, we restricted our analyses to Whites only, because the previous analyses had already shown that SDO did not appear to have causal relationships with a sense of ethnic victimization among Latino students.

As can be seen by inspection of the standardized parameter estimates in Figure 3, both ethnic identification and SDO measured in 1997 were found to be related to perceived ethnic victimization among Whites 3 years later, net of the effects of victimization in 1997 (i.e.,  $\gamma_{32} = .20, p < .05$ , and  $\gamma_{31} = .17, p < .05$ , respectively). Also of note was that, consistent with previous results among dominant groups, the correlation between ethnic identification and SDO in the 1997 wave was found to be significant and positive (i.e.,  $\phi_{21} = .21, p < .05$ ).

However, the data provided no support for any causal relationship across time between ethnic identity and SDO in any direction. The estimated effect of ethnic identification in 1997 upon SDO in 2000 was  $\gamma_{12} = .00$  and the estimated effect of SDO in 1997 upon ethnic ID in 2000 was  $\gamma_{21} = .02$ , neither of which was close to statistical significance. Finally, we also estimated the correlation between the error terms for SDO and ethnic identification in 2000. Once again, this coefficient was not close to statistical significance (i.e.,  $\psi_{21} = .00$ ). Altogether then, although there is evidence of a significant and positive correlation between SDO and ethnic identification in the 1997 wave (see Table 2 and Figure 3), there was no evidence of a causal relationships between these variables when controlling for their baseline levels.

Indeed, although the model in Figure 3 provides a good fit to the empirical data, that is,  $\chi^2(2, N = 310) = 0.27, p = .27$ , root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .032, specifying a trimmed model in which the causal paths between SDO and ethnic identity were eliminated, and the correlation between the residual SDO and ethnic identity scores in 2000 was eliminated gave an even more parsimonious fit to the data, that is,  $\chi^2(5, N = 310) = 2.72, p = .74$ , RMSEA = .000,  $p$  value for test of close fit (RMSEA < .05) = .93, goodness-of-fit index = 1.00, adjusted goodness-of-fit index = .99, comparative fit index = 1, normed fit index = .99. Lastly, as a final test of the predictive power of SDO across many years, we compared this trimmed model to one that excluded the path from SDO in 1997 to ethnic victimization in 2000. We found that omitting the causal path of SDO on ethnic victimization significantly deteriorated the fit compared to a model that included it,  $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 310) = 5.65, p = .02$ .



**Figure 3.** Cross-lagged analyses of the relationships between social dominance orientation, ethnic identity, and perceived ethnic victimization in 1997 and 2000 among Whites

NOTE: Path entries are standardized coefficients.

\* $p < .05$ .

## Discussion

Because perceived victimization may fuel extremely violent enforcement of the dominance hierarchy in situations of intergroup conflict (Abdulganiyev, 2002; Bartov, 1998; de Figueiredo & Weingast, 1997; Foley, 1999; Mertus, 2001; Murithi, 1998; Ozelik, 2000; Richardson & Sen, 1996; Subotic, 2000; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008), it is both theoretically and practically important to identify the factors that make people, who are in fact members of dominant groups, feel ethnically victimized. Accordingly, the current research tested if ethnic identification and SDO might be antecedents of perceived ethnic victimization and whether these processes differ for members of dominant and subordinate groups. Most importantly, our longitudinal, cross-lagged approach allowed us to examine the possible causal directions of these effects over a 3-year period.

The results showed clear support for the idea that, among both dominant and subordinate groups alike, the degree to which one perceives one's ethnic group as victimized is conditioned upon the degree to which one identifies with one's ethnic group to begin with. Our results imply that this effect applies equally to both dominant and subordinate groups (see also Levin et al., 2006; Major et al., 2003; Sidanius, van Laar, et al., 2004).

Also of interest was our test of the rejection-identification model (see especially Schmitt et al., 2002). Our data did not allow us to test the degree to which increased ethnic identification increases psychological well-being among members of stigmatized groups ethnic. However, we were able to test one critical component of the theory, namely, the causal link between perceived discrimination against the ingroup and increased ingroup identification (see

Schmitt et al., 2002). Although rejection-identification theorists argue that this effect will only be found among members of subordinate groups (see Schmitt et al., 2002), the present data suggest that this link is present among members of both dominant and subordinate groups.

It is quite possible that the critical component of the rejection-identification model—that the asymmetrical link between victimization and ethnic identification is moderated by group status—is itself context dependent. For example, in their major test of the rejection-identification model, Schmitt et al. found an association between perceived discrimination and ingroup identification among university women, but not among university men. Although contemporary universities tend to have slightly more women than men, this inequality in numbers is probably not large enough for men to feel themselves to be a shrinking and besieged “minority” on campus, or to feel that their dominant status as males is somehow being contested.

However, this sense of uncontested dominance for Whites was not quite so clear-cut on the multicultural UCLA campus. Although Whites have traditionally been in the clear majority at UCLA (e.g., consisting of 71% of the student body in 1973), this majority status began to seriously erode in the late 1980s. Thus, by the time our study was conducted in the late 1990s, Whites comprised merely 34% of the student body. Although empirical analyses have shown that Whites still comprise the ethnic group with the highest status on this campus (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), the multicultural policies and context of this campus do not allow this dominance to go completely uncontested.

It is quite possible that perceived victimization is unrelated to social identification among members of dominant groups only when the status of one's group is stable and uncontested. Conversely, the fact that Whites are no longer an overwhelming majority in the multicultural context of the current study site may have contributed to the association we found between perceived discrimination and increased ethnic identity within this dominant group. Although we are unable to test this specific proposal with the present data, it seems like a fruitful avenue for future research (see, in particular, recent demonstrations that high-status groups are threatened by unstable status relations; e.g., Scheepers, 2009; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005).

Our results were consistent with the expectations of the ideological asymmetry hypothesis generated by social dominance theory (see, e.g., Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto 1996). Social dominance theorists have long argued that there will be an asymmetrical relationship between SDO, on the one hand, and hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing ideologies and social policies, on the other hand. For more than a decade, the ideological asymmetry hypothesis—a fundamental feature of social dominance theory—has conjectured that the effects of SDO on hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing ideologies and social policies would be moderated by group status (see especially Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996; Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz,

1994; and Mitchell & Sidanius, 1993; see also Levin & Sidanius, 1999; Peña & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994; Staerklé, Sidanius, Green, & Molina, 2005). That is, because legitimizing myths, such as the perception of ethnic victimization among dominants, help justify the continued existence of group-based hierarchy, they should themselves be more strongly driven by group dominance motives (e.g., SDO) among dominants than among subordinates. Hence, social dominance and social identity theorists concur that SDO should be sensitive to the sociostructural context of group dominance (for a review, see Pratto et al., 2006).

Consistent with these asymmetrical expectations, although the dominant status of Whites on the UCLA campus might or might not be contested in one way or another, the asymmetrical and causal relationship between SDO and perceived ethnic victimization were still found to robustly hold. Thus, among Whites, there was evidence that earlier levels of SDO were one of the contributors to one's later feelings of ethnic persecution and victimization. Furthermore, to the extent that this path existed at all among subordinates (i.e., Latinos), it tended to be negative, rather than positive. This finding is congruent with the ideological asymmetry findings using cross-sectional data (i.e., Levin et al., 1998; Mitchell & Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Rabinowitz, 1994). Even more important, although perceived victimization also appeared to be affected by one's earlier level of group identification, SDO uniquely contributed to perceived victimization over and above the effects of ingroup identification. In addition, the data indicated that the connection between SDO and perceived ethnic victimization was unidirectional and not reciprocal. Thus, although there was evidence that SDO influenced later levels of perceived victimization, there was no evidence that this effect worked in the opposite direction.

Hence, the current work bears on the lively debate regarding the theoretical and empirical utility of the concept of SDO (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Pratto et al., 2006; Schmitt et al., 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 2003; Sidanius, Pratto, et al., 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2003). The fact that the effects of SDO have been found to be sensitive to social context has led some authors to conclude that SDO "is not a causal factor underpinning attitudes towards group dominance" (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007, p. 719) and that its predictive power may only "be due to participants responding to abstract statements about group dominance in terms of specific intergroup contexts" (p. 720) so that

. . . the apparent ability of SDO and RWA [right-wing authoritarianism] to predict support for a wide range of different forms of group dominance might be due to participants and researchers having a roughly similar

set of contexts in mind when they think about intergroup dominance and inequality. (p. 722)

At stake is whether, in addition to knowing *how much* people identify with different groups (and how permeable, stable, and legitimate the group context is), we must also know *which kinds* of social relationships people would prefer to exist between these groups: Do people only endorse hierarchy-enhancing ideology as a completely contextualized response to the positions they and their group hold in a societal web of relationships? Or do people, *ceteris paribus*, vary meaningfully in their motivation to create (or re-create) elementary kinds of relationships (i.e., communal, egalitarian, and hierarchical; cf. Fiske, 1991) between groups? If so, do these relational motivations have unique predictive power on intergroup attitudes and policy preferences?

Social dominance theory argues that individuals differ in their motivation to enhance structural hierarchies between groups and act and think accordingly. Indeed, SDO predicts resource allocations and acting to create dominance hierarchies between novel groups (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006; Sidanius, Pratto, & Mitchell, 1994) as well as attitudes toward new hierarchy-enhancing policies and myths (Pratto et al., 1994). This makes the argument that SDO only predicts support for hierarchy-enhancing attitudes and policies because participants were already thinking about them when answering the SDO scale problematic (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2003): Presumably participants, when completing the SDO scale, were not thinking about the novel, minimal groups and policies they had not yet heard about (see also Levene & Dickins, 2008). Furthermore, if SDO were nothing but "a contextualized response to specific intergroup relationships" and the identity concerns they raise (Lehmiller & Schmitt, 2007, p. 719; Schmitt et al., 2003; Turner & Reynolds, 2003), then ethnic identity should have a powerful, causal relationship to SDO across time. However, although ethnic identity and SDO have been found to be correlated within waves, we found absolutely no evidence of a causal relationship between these two constructs. Instead, both constructs have unique, and complementary, long-term effects on ethnic victimization, and we suggest they should both be appreciated as such.

Social dominance theory argues that the motivation to create and maintain between-group hierarchy interacts with the specific sociostructural context of group dominance (and hence the social identities it embeds), as implied by the ideological asymmetry hypothesis. For instance, scores of important work in the social identity tradition have persuasively argued and demonstrated that the legitimacy of a hierarchical group context moderates the extent to which it solicits bias among members of dominant groups (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Brewer & Brown, 1998; Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Hewstone et al., 2002; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). Social dominance theory would specify that people

also vary in their motivated proclivity to enforce status hierarchies in the first place. These relational proclivities make people differentially seek out hierarchy-enhancing institutions and roles and differentially endorse hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths. These ideologies, which make people perceive group dominance as legitimate, have asymmetrical effects, depending on where people are placed in the group hierarchy. That is, support for specific intergroup policies, and the attitudes and myths that legitimize them, are also undergirded by relational motivations to enforce a between-group hierarchy, and these motivations interact with the context of group dominance where they are expressed and realized.

Logically, this context sensitivity certainly need not undermine the causal, predictive power of SDO, and empirically, it is not the case that it does so. For instance, social dominance theorists have demonstrated that SDO levels vary with the nature and size of the status gap in the intergroup context participants are primed to consider, but that the individual, relative levels of SDO across contexts nonetheless remain relatively stable, as do their predictive power (Levin, 1996, 2004; Levin & Sidanius, 1999).

Of course, a dynamic motivation to enforce between-group hierarchy should selectively express itself in contexts that are relevant to such group dominance and not when the context is framed to be irrelevant (e.g., Lehmilller & Schmitt, 2007). In fact, our recent experimental work on status boundary enforcement shows that individual motivational differences for different kinds of between-group relations determine the effects of a specific intergroup context: For example, we found no main effect of whether a Muslim immigrant target assimilates or not on support for ethnic persecution of his group among non-Muslim respondents. But whereas SDO had no effect if a Muslim immigrant did not want to assimilate into the host culture, it did predict support for ethnic persecution when the immigrant target wanted to assimilate (and hence threatened the status boundaries of dominant groups). In contrast, whereas RWA had no effect on ethnic persecution when the immigrant target did assimilate, it significantly predicted persecution support among non-Muslim respondents when the immigrant target did not assimilate (see Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008; see also Guimond, Oliveira, Kamiesjki, & Sidanius, 2009, for a conceptual replication of the status boundary enforcement effect).

The fact that SDO appears to cause members of dominant, but not subordinate, groups to feel victimized, net of the effects of social identity, is also consistent with recent panel research findings from independent research teams. For example, Sibley, Wilson, and Duckitt (2007) demonstrated that SDO appears to cause hostile sexism over a 5-month period. Similarly, Amiot and Bourhis (2005) showed that SDO predicted discrimination on positive and negative outcome distributions in a minimal group paradigm 1 month later.

Despite these congruent findings across different research teams, we also need to sound a note of caution. Although panel designs do allow one to reach causal conclusions with a good deal more confidence than is possible when using cross-sectional designs, one must still keep in mind that longitudinal designs are incapable of supporting definitive causal claims. One cannot exclude the possibility that other factors may be driving the effect of SDO on ethnic victimization over time. Nevertheless, although well-controlled experimental research studies provide the only basis for reaching definitive causal conclusions, they usually provide snapshots of causal processes within short time frames only. This longitudinal study carried out over a 3-year period does strengthen our argument that the causal direction of the effect is from a motivation to enforce group-based dominance to perceiving oneself as victim of ethnic discrimination, rather than vice versa, and that this effect takes place among Whites only.

The sensitivity of SDO to the sociocultural context of group dominance in no way excludes its power as a unique motivation to structure and facilitate intergroup attitudes across time.

## Conclusion and Further Research

The current work suggests that perceptions of ethnic victimization are driven by the motivation to enforce continued group-based inequality among members of dominant groups. Because the ethnographic and historical literature documents that dominant groups have repeatedly employed ethnic victimization as justification for extremely violent persecution of outgroups, this has potentially grave ramifications. We suggest that it is important to further examine the consequences of perceived ethnic victimization among dominants: The field of intergroup relations should ask not only if, when, how, and why wolves get into sheep's clothing but also which sheep they use as cover for which kinds of predation.

## Acknowledgment

We are grateful to Thomas Kessler for his helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

## Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

## Funding

The authors declared that they received the following financial support for their research and/or authorship of this article: grants from the Russell Sage Foundation, the UCLA Office of the Chancellor, and the National Science Foundation (Award No. BCS-9808686). Lotte Thomsen was supported by a Winkler Foundation fellowship while conducting this research.

## Notes

1. In the senior wave, maximum likelihood (ML) factor analyses showed that the correlations among the five indices of victimization were adequately accounted for by one factor, accounting for approximately 61% of the total variance. In the freshman wave, ML factor analysis indicated the presence of two highly correlated ( $r = .52$ ) factors, where one factor dealt primarily with experienced discrimination (both personal and group) and the other factor dealt with perceived hindrances to future success (both personal and group).
2. We use LISREL notation for all parameters throughout the article. Thus,  $\phi$  refers to the unanalyzed covariance among exogenous variables,  $\gamma$  refers to the causal effect of an exogenous variable upon an endogenous variable, and  $\psi$  refers to the covariance between the error terms between two endogenous variables.

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