

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Diasporic Consciousness in African Immigrants' Support for #BlackLivesMatter

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Abstract

The goal of this research is to provide a diaspora-centered analysis of Black identity politics by illustrating how African populations navigate their diasporic identities and imposed racial boundaries when engaging with social movements like #BlackLivesMatter. Extending scholarship on Black immigration and Black politics, the present study highlights the processes by which racial histories, U.S. racial hierarchies, and gender hegemony guide African immigrants' and children of African immigrants' individual conceptions of Blackness as well as their political engagements. Using a qualitative design (N = 28 semi-structured interviews), I examine first-, 1.5-, and second-generation Africans' connections to #BlackLivesMatter, a racial justice social movement mobilized in response to the police killings of African American men and women. Findings illustrate that while all participants express an implicit connection to #BlackLivesMatter by drawing attention to the visual aspects of their superordinate Black racial identity, there are certain sources of *diasporic fragmentation* that lead to racial distancing, intraracial group contention, and subsequent disconnections from the movement. Deconstructing the notion of Black political behavior as homogeneous, findings also suggest that political solidarity does not require uniformity in interests: when engaging in collective action, it is possible to express racial linked fate while also expressing substantial differences in culture and knowledge systems.

Keywords: African immigrant; diaspora; collective behavior and social movements; linked fate; Black identity; transphobia

Introduction

The formation and enactment of ethnoracial identities—particularly those that are a product of the African diaspora—are bound by geographical locale and social, cultural, and political context (Nagel 1994; Omi, and Winant 2014). Though there are certainly universal aspects of race that speak to the global experiences of Black populations (Maldonado-Torres 2007), there is no such concept as a “racial essence” or an implicit, Transworld identity that characterizes all Black peoples. It is possible for

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individuals within a particular racial group to embody characteristics tied to that group while also experiencing a discordance in upbringing, cultural traditions, knowledge systems,¹ attitudes, and self-perceptions. When discussing Black politics in the United States, a race-critical lens is especially pertinent as Black Americans' collective interests and behaviors are understood as a political monolith. In a review of literature on the multiplicity of racial identities, political scientist Lauren Davenport (2020) notes that while there is "a plethora of studies on racial fluidity... in the fields of sociology and social psychology, [less] attention has been given to the relationship between racial fluidity and politics" (233).

I extend this assertion by contending that racial fluidity *and diaspora* are often not considered in studies of Black politics, namely those that examine Black collective identity and collective action. Growing migrant populations from Africa, the Caribbean, and other countries in Latin America to the United States has increased ethnic diversity among Black Americans (Tamir 2021). These migrations illustrate Black immigrants' unique experiences of being racialized primarily as Black or African American in the broader U.S. context while being ethnicized as Jamaican, Colombian, or Kenyan in other spaces. Growing scholarship from sociology and political science has aided in the development of more nuanced empirical studies that investigate the complexities of Black identity formation, interethnic relations and coalitions, group consciousness, and political action (Greer 2013; Bailey 2001; Smith 2014; Hordge-Freeman, and Loblack 2020; Austin 2018; Nunally 2010; Model 2008; Rogers 2006; Waters 1990, 1999; Roth 2012); nevertheless, African immigrants have remained undertheorized and understudied in the present literature.

This research provides a granular look at how diaspora operates through first-, 1.5-, and second-generation African immigrants' identity-making processes, with specific insights on which elements of their diasporic consciousness elicit alignment with the #BlackLivesMatter racial justice movement and which elements elicit contention. Diasporic consciousness links the globality of Blackness (and anti-Blackness) with the complexities of the African diaspora. It acknowledges both the hegemonic power of race—rooted in global European imperialism and the shared histories, collective memory, and corporeality of Blackness—and the "regionalized effects of culture and language" that engenders heterogeneity in Black identities (DeWalt 2013, 4). As a theoretical orientation, it identifies the conditions by which pan-ethnic Black populations in the United States work in coalition, form solidarities, and develop a group consciousness as well as the conditions by which interethnic distancing and intraracial conflict occur (Smith 2014). Drawing upon this epistemological formulation, I introduce the concepts of *diasporic cohesion* and *diasporic fragmentation* to explore the various processes by which 28 African immigrants and children of African immigrants link their diasporic consciousness to #BlackLivesMatter.

From Pan-Africanism to Diasporic Consciousness

Parallels between African Americans'² relentless contentions around systemic racism—historically preceded by European settler colonialism, the enslavement of African peoples, and their subsequent state-sanctioned subjugation

(i.e., Jim Crow)—and African countries' colonial liberation struggles illustrate both the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness and organized resistance *against* anti-Blackness. Pan-Africanism—as an ideology, a praxis, and a movement—gives prominence to this relationship between oppression and resistance by accentuating the globality of Black suffering and materializing an agentially constructed Black consciousness across the African diaspora. Rooted in resistance to Western colonial projects that naturalize notions of White superiority and Black/African inferiority, pan-Africanist ideals emphasize notions of peoplehood and kinship to unite the Black diaspora and mobilize a race-based identity politic (Garvey 2004 [1921], 2021 [1920]; DuBois 1915). These pan-African identities create bonds of solidarity “which allows African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-Latins to ally with continental Africans” under a shared history and collective conscience (Appiah 1993, 180).

Though Pan-Africanism holds utility in conceptualizing the collective memories of Black subjugation and mobilizing large-scale resistance to colonial and racial injustices, it has a tendency to homogenize and romanticize the continent of Africa and Blackness more generally. The African diaspora's shared histories, struggles, and identities cannot be understood in isolation from migration patterns—both forced and voluntary—that have led to difference, dispersal, and discontinuity across the globe (Patterson, and Kelley 2000). As Stuart Hall (1990) explains, the narrative of a “collective ‘one true self . . . which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” imposes “an imaginary coherence” across the diaspora (223–224). The consequences of these “pseudo-solidarities” that emanate from an uncritical pan-Africanist praxis are particularly relevant in the context of Black identity in the United States (Gilroy 2000, 6).

African immigrants' conceptualizations of Blackness do not always align with the same dominant ideologies tied to American conceptualizations of Blackness. The cultural esthetics and signifiers tied to U.S. Blackness through centuries of racial turbulence have ultimately narrowed its boundaries, suggesting that “authentic” Blackness is tied to the histories and racial politics of the United States (Medford 2019; DeWalt 2013; Hall 1993). When negotiating conflicting dialects of race, African immigrants, as well as U.S.-born Africans who retain their parents' ethnic heritage, draw from various geopolitical and cultural contexts to better understand their sense of self and their social positioning in the U.S. context. In doing so, they develop a diasporic consciousness, what Candis Watts Smith (2014) defines as:

the (mental) tightrope that people of African descent who live in the U.S. walk as they try to balance their superordinate racial identity (and the political interests associated with it) with their subgroup or ethnic identity and its closely associated political interests. (7)

Distinct from pan-African theories of group consciousness, a theory of diasporic consciousness “both appreciates the factors that lead to unity among Blacks and problematizes the notion that unity will always be the best characterization of Black politics as diversity increases” (Smith 2014, 16). Specifically, it considers the possibility for concurring processes of unity *and* dissimilarity by critically

interrogating the classificatory power of race alongside differences in colonial histories, ethnic cultures, generation status, and levels of acculturation that may produce disparate explanations for African immigrants' political behaviors in comparison to African Americans' and other Black diasporic populations' (66). For instance, discordances in the racial knowledges and cultural dogmas of the United States among Africans and African Americans may lead to intraracial discourses that influence their collective political engagements, such as racial contestation—individual or group contentions over an imposed racial boundary (Vargas, and Kingsbury 2016; Vargas, and Stainback 2016)—or ethnoracial dissonance—racial/ethnic minorities' “disidentification with, and from, racial schemas made available to them” (Hordge-Freeman, and Veras 2020, 47).

This discordance, however, is likely to be more prominent among the first- and 1.5-generation than the second-generation. A robust literature suggests that first-generation Black immigrants tend to position their ethnic identity as more salient and central than their racial identity, leading to disidentification or distancing from U.S. Blackness (Smith 2014; Waters, Kasinitz, and Asad 2014). These immigrants typically migrate to America in pursuit of the “American Dream” and consequently view the nation in a distinct, idealistic manner (Ogbu, and Simons 1998; Greer 2013); in contrast, the second-generation Black immigrants (or immigrants racialized as Black, such as Dominicans) have been documented to align more with African Americans' understandings of Black identity and U.S. race relations (Roth 2012; Waters 1994), suggesting that familiarity with U.S. racial politics and intimate connections to U.S. Blackness is largely dependent on the length of residency in America. The second-generation's familiarity with American racial histories and social institutions (e.g., K-12 education systems) as well as their proximity to African American communities alleviates most intragroup divisions and discordances that those in the first- and 1.5-generation are likely to grapple with.

#BlackLivesMatter, Colorblind ideology, and The Weight of Blackness

In 2013, #BlackLivesMatter expanded from a social media hashtag to an international social movement following the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin. Over the past decade, the social movement has catalyzed global visibility on the racial violence inflicted on Black Americans (Nwakanma 2022). #BlackLivesMatter seeks to “end racist state-sanctioned violence and the mass caging of Black and Brown people” and reinvest resources “from the carceral and military state to education, health, and safety, creating a just, democratically controlled economy” (Robinson, and Kelley 2020, xii–xiii). It shines a light on oppressive systems that systematically and intentionally target Black lives. In a 2014 Black feminist manifesto titled “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” Alicia Garza, one of the three Black queer women who founded the movement, wrote:

Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. [. . .] Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum.

It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. (Garza 2014)

Nevertheless, for some, #BlackLivesMatter is seen as militant and anti-American. Heavily influenced by colorblind racism and racial apathy (Drakulich et al. 2021; Riley, and Peterson 2020), critics of #BlackLivesMatter view its focus on Blackness as socially exclusive—a sort of “reverse racism”—and instead argue for a more “inclusive” axiom of #AllLivesMatter. These critics deploy colorblind ideologies of *abstract liberalism*—haphazard applications of American meritocratic ideals of “equal opportunity” (political liberalism) and “individual choice” (economic liberalism) to explain racial inequality—and *cultural racism*—attributions of racial stereotypes and derogatory cultural characteristics like non-traditional values and unorthodox family structures to explain racial minorities’ social positioning in comparison to whites’—to undermine #BlackLiveMatter’s contention that anti-Black racism is a central aspect of U.S. society (Bonilla-Silva 2017). For other detractors, the movement is viewed as draconian given its radical calls for the dismantlement of power structures (banning violent police tactics or abolishing the police altogether) and a restructuring of the political economy (reparations for descendants of enslaved peoples).

The masking of #BlackLivesMatter by anti-Black colorblind rhetoric and dogmatic countermovements (e.g., #AllLivesMatter, #BlueLivesMatter) presents several predicaments for African populations. Firstly, #BlackLivesMatter’s aims at achieving racial justice directly affects all peoples racialized as Black, including foreign-born Africans who may or may not self-identify as such. The U.S.’ all-encompassing framework of race orients African identities alongside other Black diasporic communities and engenders their implicit connection to #BlackLivesMatter. The movement itself can thus be characterized as a *mobilizing structure* with political goals and interests that cross ethnic boundaries (Okamoto 2006); however, Africans’ intrinsic connection to #BlackLivesMatter may become complicated if the grievances and values tied to the movement are in direct conflict with the knowledge systems and cultures tied to their respective ethnic identities. Additionally, given the widespread lack of support for the movement by White Americans (Riley, and Peterson 2020), Africans may be discouraged from fully supporting #BlackLivesMatter for fear of not being accepted in White/American society, despite the social benefits the movement may elicit. This is consistent with modern perspectives in assimilation theory that suggest immigrants engage in “selective acculturation” and familiarize themselves with the interests of the dominant group—which, in this case, is resistance to #BlackLivesMatter—to gain cultural capital and other forms of upward social mobility while maintaining elements of their own ethnic or cultural identities (Portes, and Rumbaut 2001).

In the face of imminent threat or violence such as police brutality, however, Africans immigrants may deploy their diasporic consciousness by relegating their ethnicity as secondary to their racial master status to express solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter. Previous studies on the political linkages between African Americans, Caribbeans, and Africans suggest that “when events or circumstances affect Black people due to the color of their skin,” their superordinate racial attachments take precedent over their ethnic attachments (Greer 2013, 138; Nunally 2010).

Black immigrants do not arrive in the United States as nebulous, isolated persons; rather, they “enter the imaged American community as cognizable racial subjects” whose experiences of racism help them understand their positioning in the U.S. racial order (Carbado 2005, 651; Grosfoguel 2008). Thus, African communities’ connections to the racial justice movement may be rooted in linked fate, the notion that the well-being and interests of the individual is dependent on or closely linked to that of the collective group. Commensurate with Michael Dawson’s (1994; 2001) seminal work on racial linked fate in African American collective political behavior, the salience Africans place on their Black racial identity and their corresponding knowledge of the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism in the United States are likely to be primary factors in their rationale for engaging with #BlackLivesMatter.

Data and Methodology

Data for this study are drawn from 28 semi-structured interviews collected from April 2021 to July 2021. This time period marked approximately 1 year since waves of Black Lives Matter protests were seen across the States following the publicized murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd. All participants were familiar with #BlackLivesMatter at the time of the interview, 10 of whom participated in at least one protest in 2020. See appendix for a table of participant characteristics.

The sample consists of individuals that (1) racially self-identified as Black, African American, or African and (2) identified an African country as their (or their parents’) birth country. While I acknowledge that thousands of ethnicities exist in Africa and the use of “African” as a pan-ethnic identity conflates these complexities, the choices of “Black,” “African American,” and “African” were intentionally given to ensure that eligibility criteria for the study were met and to assess how participants self-identified when presented with broad racial categories. In their initial racial self-identification, 22 participants identified as “African,” three of whom identified as “African” in addition to one or two of the other choices (e.g., “Black and African”). Five participants identified as “African American,” and only one participant identified as “Black.” After the initial racial self-identification, participants were prompted to expand upon their choice.

Immigrant generation status was also central to the study’s sampling strategy. First-generation ($n = 8$) refers to individuals who were born in an African country and migrated to the United States at or after age eighteen. 1.5-generation³ ($n = 11$) refers to individuals who were born in an African country and migrated to the United States before they reached age eighteen. And, second-generation ($n = 9$) refers to individuals who (a) were born in the United States and (b) have at least one parent who was born in an African country.

Sixteen women and 12 men make up the sample. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 71, capturing diverse cycles of immigration and a diverse range of experiences. Most of the participants possessed a bachelor’s ($n = 8$), master’s ($n = 8$), or doctorate ($n = 2$) degree from institutions in the United States, England, or their respective home country that differ in prestige, structure (e.g., 4-year undergraduate structures in the United States vs. 3-year undergraduate structures in England), and branches of knowledge, dependent on the national context. Nineteen participants

expressed ties to West African countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone), five to South African countries (Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Angola), three to East African countries (Kenya, Ethiopia), and one to a Central African country (Cameroon). Each immigrant generation group consists of participants from at least three of these regions.

Information about the study was dispersed online via Facebook pages that specifically targeted foreign-born Africans living in the United States. Participants were also recruited through established personal and professional networks at universities (1 southwestern private university, 1 southwestern public university, 1 southeastern flagship public university) and local cultural and political organizations using snowball recruitment, a form of convenience purposive sampling. Interested parties responded to digital and physical flyers advertising the study. During the study debrief after each interview, I asked each participant to share the flyer with eligible persons in their personal networks. Given the location of the universities and organizations I recruited and snowballed sampled from, many of the participants resided in large metropolitan cities in southern states. Similarly, because the immigrant organizations I had personal access to and snowballed from were primarily Nigerian advocacy groups that were ethnically homogeneous and had members whose networks did not typically extend outside of their own distinct ethnic/national identity, the sample is overrepresented by those who were born in or have parent(s) that were born in Nigeria.

Data sources

Demographic questionnaire

Before each interview, a demographic questionnaire was administered audibly. The questionnaire elicited information about the participants' racial self-identification, gender, age, marital status, birth country, parents' birth country, current place of residence, education, and political views.

Interview guide

The semi-structured interview was broken up into five sections (all administered at once): (I) Upbringing, (II) Ethnoracial identity and belonging, (III) Anti-Black racism, police brutality, and racialization, (IV) Political participation and allyship, and (V) Black Lives Matter.

Literature on ethnoracial identity and engagement with #BlackLivesMatter informed the interview guide. I adopted questions akin to those used in Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman and Angelica Loblack's (2020) study on Afro-Latinxs and how their unique ethnoracial negotiations influenced their support for #BlackLivesMatter. These questions provided insight on the participants' engagement with #BlackLivesMatter while invoking an intimate reflection on how they conceptualize their ethnic identities in the context of U.S. racial politics (e.g., "What do you think it means to be an African immigrant [or a child of African immigrants] in America?").

Similarly, Álvaro Corral (2020) examined Latinx-Black relations and Latinxs' attitudes toward the #BlackLivesMatter social movement by administering surveys

that evoked respondents' positions on racial ideology, racial prejudice, and racial inequality. Though I did not include non-African participants in my sample, I adopted similar questions (e.g., "What are your thoughts on racism in American society?") with the hope of fostering insightful discussion with the participants on racial discourse in America, racial linked fate, and racial group consciousness.

Analytical approach

The interviews ranged from approximately 40 minutes to 100 minutes. Given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, each interview was conducted virtually through Zoom and audio recorded. For confidentiality, pseudonyms were used during the interview, in all interview notes and memos, and will continue to be used throughout the paper.

Immersing myself in the narrated experiences of the participants, I conducted all interviews, transcriptions, and analyses. Though this approach allowed me to better understand the nuance in how participants understood themselves, others, and #BlackLivesMatter in relation to their respective diasporic identities, I am not able to confidently standardize and generalize the narratives of 28 individuals to the wider African population in the United States. That said, my intention is not to determine representativeness but to explore the transferability of Smith's (2014) theory of diasporic consciousness to a specific population, context, and sociopolitical domain. The narratives of the 28 participants in the present study are thus a starting point to a larger investigation of diasporic consciousness in U.S. Black politics.

Following Johnny Saldana's (2016) practical framework for carrying out critical qualitative research, interviews were systematically coded and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. All interviews were conducted and transcribed before going through the raw data and "open coding" words and phrases that aligned with the conceptual patterns of the study's theoretical framework as well as the analytical memos I wrote after each interview. I paid particular attention to participant narratives concerning formations of ethnoracial identity, conceptualizations of Blackness (both in the United States and their home country), and sentiments about police brutality, anti-Black racism, and #BlackLivesMatter. These patterns were primarily elicited by the questions: "Do you think African immigrants and Black Americans are perceived or treated differently in U.S. society?"; "Should African immigrants and their children participate in the #BlackLivesMatter movement?" Sections I and II of the guide provided me with context on the participants' early socializations surrounding racial identity and racism, migration experiences (for the first- and 1.5-generation), intraracial interactions, and other cultural dynamics.

With this, I was able to systematically evaluate the factors that influenced participants' breadth and depth of engagement with #BlackLivesMatter and compare trends within and across generations. These trends have been divided into two comprehensive categories: (I) Sources of cohesion and alignment, and (II) Sources of fragmentation and contention.

Findings

Sources of Cohesion and Alignment

There are various conditions that drove the African immigrants and children of African immigrants to feel a sense of cohesion and alignment with #BlackLivesMatter and its goals. The sources of cohesion that drove the participants' solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter include expressions of racial group consciousness and linked fate shaped in relation to their diasporic consciousness and in the context of racial violence.

"You're African, but you're also Black": Solidarity in the Face of Anti-Black Racism

Though most African immigrants and children of African immigrants in the present study retained elements of their ethnicity when racially self-identifying (i.e., identifying as "African" as opposed to "Black" or "African American"), when they themselves or their children were put in direct opposition with racial violence, an implicit connection to the collective Black consciousness was realized and certain ethnic/cultural characteristics became less salient.

Take Farah (1.5-generation Nigerian), for instance. When describing how she grappled with race upon migrating to the United States at 14-years-old, she explained feeling like "a unicorn" and "an anomaly" at the Florida boarding school she attended because she felt as though she could not fully connect with her African American peers. Early in the interview, she reflected on one instance of racial contestation while filling out a demographics form:

I remember struggling the first time I saw the option to check your race. It said "Black" or "African American." I would get pissed. I was doing the SATs and I was like, "I'm not Black and I'm not African American. I'm African, but where's the option for African?" [...] Africans don't think we're Black. When you're in Africa, you don't think you're Black.

Here, Farah perceived the U.S.' racial categorization system to be a point of contention because it did not align with her own self-definitions of racial identity, nor did it align with the conditions by which race operates in Nigeria. She effectively racially distanced herself from the Black collective of the United States, suggesting that there is a clear distinction between identifying as African and identifying as African American or Black. Later on, however, Farah's articulations of her racial identity in relation to the larger Black collective evolved when the interview conversation shifted to discussions of anti-Black racism and police brutality:

When issues like racial discrimination are happening, they are happening to both of us because we look the same. I would say that that has made me begin to visualize the experiences of African Americans differently, and it made me not separate myself from them. [...] It's a problem for me just as it's a problem for African Americans.

Farah was not alone in this shift in perception of Black consciousness and linked fate. Tomi, a 1.5-generation Nigerian who also did not identify as Black, came to a similar realization as the interview progressed to discussions on racism, police brutality, and the racialization of Black populations. When I asked Tomi, “Do you think that Africans and African Americans are perceived or treated differently in U.S. society?”, she answered:

Tomi: I do. I think they’re perceived and treated differently. It’s on both ends. Africans conduct themselves differently and so we’re perceived differently. It’s a perception but also a presentation thing.

Interviewer: Present in what way? Do you have an example?

Tomi: We show up differently. When we speak, we speak differently. We don’t speak from the perspective of hurt, the history of hurt, and the subjugation and all that.

Interviewer: So, you’re saying Africans living in the United States don’t have the burden of—

Tomi: Yeah, our burden is different. Our burden is that we come to take advantage of opportunity and so we’re very mindful of that. I think the other side is that we come with blinders on too, and we’re not as aware of the suffering of the people who were born here. We’re dismissive of it, which we shouldn’t be. [. . .] We should join the fight, for sure. [. . .] That was the other realization I had. When my kids are walking down the street, nobody’s asking if they’re African, of African descent, or Black or whatever. They just see what they see.

As I probed Tomi, she ultimately heeded to the notion that African immigrants and their children are not immune from anti-Black racism in the United States, and accordingly, racial distancing and “us vs. them” statements (“We show up differently”) subsided. Expanding upon their individual expressions of support for #BlackLivesMatter, other participants also centered racial linked fate when explaining why other African immigrants and children of African immigrants should become engaged in the movement:

When it comes to things like Black Lives Matter, every Black African and Black American should be involved. We are talking about racism here. –Cynthia, first-generation Zambian

Whether you’re fair skinned, brown skinned, dark skinned— nobody can tell if you’re Ghanaian, Nigerian, or from Mississippi. Nobody can tell, so we’re going to live the same experiences. Anybody that’s willing to oppress another person is not going to tell the difference. –Ben, second-generation Nigerian

When they [African Americans] feel, you feel because your skin is Black too. You’re African, but you’re also Black. –Layla, first-generation Ethiopian

African people definitely feel the same consequences as Black Americans. We all live in the same bubble, might as well pop it together. –Pierre, 1.5-generation Cameroonian

Despite only six participants self-identifying as Black or African American at the start of the interview, all 28 African immigrants eventually yielded to the essentializing effect visual distinctions, like skin tone, have on their lived experiences, particularly in the context of police brutality. When shifts in racial linked fate and group consciousness occurred, the participants' shared corporeality with African Americans was drawn upon to represent their own individual struggles and well-being in the face of racism. Specifically, when up against racial threat or violence, whether it be directly or by proxy, Africans, regardless of generation status, drew upon their shared racialization—*not* a shared racial self-identification—with other Black diasporic populations to form alliances.

Shaped by processes of racial naturalization that obscures any and all ethnic, national, or cultural differences, Blackness in the United States is particularly totalizing. In this vein, the threat or experience of anti-Black racism was the “technology of naturalization” through which the Africans in the study *became* Black Americans (Carbado 2005; also see Medford 2019). State-sanctioned racial violence does not stop to ask if a Black person (or person racialized as Black) is from Accra or Los Angeles before it arrests, imprisons, or shoots. The realization of the inescapable corporeal experience of Blackness engendered the participants' implicit connection to #BlackLivesMatter.

Diasporic Consciousness and Support for #BlackLivesMatter

Diasporic consciousness was endorsed within and across all three generations to explain an implicit connection to and support for #BLM. For instance, in describing how he viewed the goals of #BlackLivesMatter and his role in it, Ben (second-generation Nigerian) asserted:

Yes, we grew up in a Nigerian household, but when we walk out the door, we all live the same experiences when it comes to racial injustice or police brutality. [...] The Black Lives Matter movement has just one agenda which is to reduce, if not eliminate, police brutality.

Here, Ben drew attention to one of the focal goals of #BlackLivesMatter while making his superordinate racial identity salient and connecting it to that of African American communities'. Though cognizant of the distinctiveness of his upbringing in a Nigerian home, Ben identified with the lived realities of other Black diasporic populations by voicing the shared nature of the grievances that #BlackLivesMatter addresses. In doing so, Ben associated the political interests tied to his Black racial identity with the particularities of his ethnic identity, and he embodied a racial conscience that extended beyond his Nigerianness.

African immigrants who migrated to the United States without ever experiencing anti-Black racism in their home country also deployed diasporic consciousness when articulating their connection to #BlackLivesMatter, but did so by highlighting their personal experiences of racism in the United States. In our conversation, Kofi,⁴ a 1.5 generation Ghanaian, described various racist incidences in his workplace and at school that left him feeling distraught:

One day, I came into work with my afro. I took out my braids and one of my coworkers was like, “Oh, you came with the puff!” and laughed. “So, what are you going to do with it?” I was like, “I can’t just have my afro at work?” I was confused.

[. . .] Freshman year, I had a lot of racial encounters, and it’s just disappointing. Especially for me living in Ghana for so long, I didn’t experience this. When it does happen, it just takes me aback. Like this is actual reality?

Growing up in a country where “Black was never the minority,” Kofi had little familiarity with how anti-Blackness and racial discrimination manifests in the contemporary United States. His lack of familiarity with racial violence in the United States is also evidenced by the intense sadness and confusion he reported feeling after hearing about George Floyd’s death:

I watched the video, and I was . . . I started crying. I was like, “How does this happen?” I watched the whole thing, and it just broke me. What kind of hatred do you have to have in your heart to be able to do that to a human being? It didn’t make sense to me.

Similarly, Eniola, a first-generation Nigerian immigrant, reported never experiencing anti-Black racism in her home country. In her recollections of learning about U.S. racial histories, she noted:

When I came here [to the United States], I learned about Black Americans and U.S. slavery in government and history class. When I did history class . . . oh Lord. It took me some time before I could get over it. Anytime I get into the talk of Blackness, superiority, and minority issues, it moves me to tears.

Because their upbringing did not equip them with the same racial knowledges that U.S.-born Black Americans (including U.S.-born Africans) are afforded, both participants responded to #BlackLivesMatter and the police killings that catalyzed its mobilization in ways that cannot be separated from their diasporic consciousness. This finding should not be misconstrued to imply that Eniola and Kofi had absolutely no conception of the ontologies of Blackness and the colonization of the United States before migrating; rather, it suggests that their prolonged residencies in the United States allowed them to garner unmediated insight into the histories and reifications of anti-Black racism in the United States, leading to an increased consciousness with the Black collective. The intricate emotionalities that emanated from Kofi’s and Eniola’s first-hand exposure to anti-Blackness were followed by their respective expressions of support for the movement:

Black Lives Matter is there to make actual change. It’s a whole movement to make people understand that Black lives do matter. I think it’s an uprising. People call it riots? Nah, we’re not rioting. We’re standing for our rights. We’re here to make a difference. –Kofi

Personally, I get the whole logic behind Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter, to me, is a movement asking for equality and justice. [...] We want equality, racial justice, and to treat people as humans. Period. –Eniola

Both Kofi and Eniola aligned with #BlackLivesMatters' central mission of racial equality and expressed racial group consciousness with African Americans ("We're standing for *our* rights", "We want equality") as justification for their engagement. Hence, not only shared racialization but also shared emotions of threat, anxiety, and frustration served as powerful sources of diasporic cohesion, bolstering a sense of racial identity salience and mediating support for #BlackLivesMatter.

Yet, while the data have shown that there are certain conditions that drive African immigrants' and the second-generation's political coalition with African Americans and #BlackLivesMatter, an adoption of colorblind logics and discrepancies over which Black lives matter also impacted participants' engagement with the movement, leading to *diasporic fragmentation*.

Sources of Fragmentation and Contention

The second thematic category is broken down into two sources that instigated a disconnection or a hesitance to fully support or engage in the #BlackLivesMatter movement. These sources are expressions of colorblind ideology and intolerance toward #BlackTransLivesMatter.

"Being in America is a privilege": Colorblind Rationalities

Colorblind ideology⁵ in the form of abstract liberalism, cultural racism, and minimization of anti-Black racism in the United States was adopted by six participants (three first-generation, three 1.5-generation) in relation to #BlackLivesMatter. These participants expressed an implicit connection to and support for #BlackLivesMatter while simultaneously deploying colorblind logics that curtailed and undermined its grievances.

In his interpretation of anti-Black racism in the United States, Joshua (1.5-generation Nigerian) expressed that race and racism are not as central to social inequality and social hierarchies as they have been in the past. When asked about his thoughts on racism and police brutality in America, he responded by stating that while he "[agrees] with protesting against racism and police brutality" and he does not "want to sound mean or anti-Black", "we [Black people] have come a long way":

I remember a time where there were no Black players, and now, the majority of professional basketball players that make millions of dollars are African American. [...]. It's way better now. We have better opportunities. We are living a better life.

The abstract liberalism tenet of colorblind racism is illustrated in Joshua's response. Though he acknowledges that the United States is not a post-racial society, Joshua compares the realities of Black professional athletes in 2020 to a time when

racial segregation in sports was the norm to rationalize the notion that substantial racial progress has occurred. By relying on ideas of economic liberalism, Joshua minimizes the very real implications of race and racism on the economic conditions and lived realities of all Black Americans.

After probing Joshua on the hyper-awareness of police brutality against Black Americans in the past year, he continued to justify his declaration of American progressivity by assigning liability to victims of police brutality. Explaining his stance in greater detail, he asserted:

To me— in some of the cases, I'm not saying all of them— we get ourselves in that situation. [. . .] It's getting a bit better, but if I get pulled over by police and I'm a Black man, I don't cooperate and I don't do what I'm supposed to do, should I be shot? I would say maybe yes, maybe no, based on how I act.

Here, Joshua includes himself as part of the larger Black community to validate the notion that Black people must “cooperate” and do what they are “supposed to do” to avoid unlawful treatment by the police. Other participants expressed sentiments similar to Joshua's by blaming victims of police brutality for the crimes committed against them. These participants suggested that, in comparison to African Americans, Africans behave in the “right” way to avoid racial prejudice and violence:

It matters how you conduct yourself in a situation. I've never heard of an African—an African-born African—who is caught up in a situation like this. I think there were maybe one or two in history. [. . .] It's a heartbreaking situation, but I find myself wanting to make sure that I and my children know that when you're in the presence of the police, you're not there to prove a point.
—Tomi

We're not the ones disrespecting the law, doing things illegal and trying to find ways to get away with it in the public eye where it needs to be recorded, displayed, written about, and talked about for months to where it starts a movement. [. . .] We are leading by example by staying out of the media as people from foreign nations in America. —Charlie, 1.5-generation Nigerian

Of the 28 participants interviewed, 18 detailed experiencing hostile anti-African and anti-Black racism ranging from Akin (first-generation Ghanaian) lamenting on being called a “double nigger” by the same police officer he was attacked and wrongfully arrested by to Layla being berated and told to “go back to Africa” in her predominantly White neighborhood. Unfortunately, being African and conducting oneself in what is deemed to be the “right” way are not enough to avoid racism. Attributing deficient cultural aspects like aggressiveness, disobedience, and petulance as the justification for why African Americans are victimized and criminalized by the police is not only inaccurate, but it is also a form of cultural racism—another central aspect of colorblind ideology (Bonilla-Silva 2017).

Minimization of anti-Black racism in the United States was another form of colorblind ideology deployed by participants. Echoing the rhetoric of

countermovements like #AllLivesMatter, Akin was hesitant to fully engage in #BlackLivesMatter because he felt that it “should be receptive of all races.” Even after describing a brutal personal encounter with police officers in Dallas, TX and expressing emphatic support toward #BlackLivesMatter’s grievances against racial violence, he stated that the movement “should be for all Americans because a human being is a human being.” Joshua expressed a similar sentiment: “It’s all about humanity. What happened to George Floyd happened to a human.” Though accurate in proclaiming that all people, regardless of race, *should* be treated equally, Akin and Joshua effectively undermine the centering of anti-Black racism in #BlackLivesMatter’s grievances by diminishing the distinct ways race is reified to dehumanize and devalue the lives, agencies, and humanities of Black people, particularly as it relates to police interactions.

Other participants minimized the prevalence of anti-Black racism in the United States by comparing the struggles #BlackLivesMatter addresses to the struggles faced in their respective birth countries. Seventeen of the 19 first- and 1.5-generation African immigrants in the study described their migrations as being primarily motivated by work, educational opportunities, and a stable government, what Eniola called “a new life and greener pastures.” Among these participants were Fatima (first-generation Kenyan) and Tomi who left behind state violence and rampant unemployment in Kenya and Nigeria to pursue the “American Dream.” With an emblematic appreciation for the United States, Fatima and Tomi minimized the grievances of #BlackLivesMatter by comparing them to issues in their own countries:

We have third world problems. We have trouble with getting water and electricity, so some things are just not a big deal back there. [. . .] Yes, people get shot here, but there? They’ll shoot you, they’ll rape you, they’ll cut you. They’ll do all kind of stuff. –Fatima

There are privileges and protections here [in the U.S.] that are not present in Nigeria. Nigeria does not have a functioning police system. If something goes wrong as it did when I was there– we had armed robbers come to our home– you don’t just pick up the phone and call 911. I want to see the United States do better and do well, but I’m also very aware of how well they’re already doing. –Tomi

Here, diasporic fragmentation is deployed differently from those who used other forms of colorblind ideology to downplay the grievances of #BlackLivesMatter. Both Fatima and Tomi used minimization rhetoric to critique the demands of the movement not because they did not support it or because they rejected the reality of anti-Blackness in the United States, but because their upbringing acquainted them with different social problems and atrocities they believed to be more insidious than the grievances of #BlackLivesMatter. By virtue of their respective experiences of material deprivation and policing in their home countries, racial turmoil and violence in the United States were perceived differently for Fatima and Tomi.

None of the second-generation expressed diasporic fragmentation to #BlackLivesMatter using colorblind rhetorics of minimization, economic liberalism,

or culturally based arguments of deficiency. These participants' intimate knowledges of U.S.' racial histories and political structures thwarted their adoption of colorblind logics as a source of fragmentation:

The heightened awareness [of police brutality] is for people who are not Black. Black people have been observing this, we've been experiencing this since the beginning of American history when police officers were then called slave catchers. So, police brutality is nothing new for Black people. –Kemdi, second-generation Nigerian

Racism is real. [. . .] What we see now is not new. I just think that we're able to capture it in mass and share it out in different ways, so that it is constantly in your face and your attempt to be disconnected from it is now ignorance. – Jemma, second-generation Zimbabwean

Everyone's lives matter, yes, but the kind of pain that African Americans have been going through for the past X amount of years is incomparable to the other groups. [. . .] This isn't Nigeria, everyone doesn't look like you. You're not the majority anymore, you're a minority here. –Omar, second-generation Nigerian

Taken together, these findings suggest that not only are countries of origin and generation status important factors in the participants' adoption of colorblind rationalities when engaging with #BlackLivesMatter, so too are their proximity to U.S. institutions and their existing knowledge of, and experience with, the U.S.'s all-encompassing racial order.

(Some) Black Lives Matter: Homophobia and Transphobia

An unexpected source of diasporic fragmentation that arose from the interviews was the denunciation of Black transgender people and LGBTQ+ rights from #BlackLivesMatter. While none of the 28 participants explicitly denied that anti-Black racism and police brutality exist in the United States nor did any of the participants openly object to Africans' participation in #BlackLivesMatter, two expressed low linked fate with the Black LGBTQ+ community and an accompanying hesitance to fully engage in the social movement.

In the wake of George Floyd's killing in the summer of 2020, high rates of violence and discrimination toward Black and Latina transwomen made the headlines of mainstream online news sources and social media platforms (Fischer 2021). This heightened awareness catalyzed the mobilization of #BlackTransLivesMatter in 2020, shortly after the mobilization of its sister movement #BlackLivesMatter. Two participants—Prince (second-generation Nigerian) and Tomi—were aware of this heightened awareness and voiced feeling a disconnect from #BlackLivesMatter, believing it to have been “hijacked” and “derailed” from its original goals. Prince said:

Irrespective of how you feel about us [Black people], our lives are worth something. And that's what I thought it [#BlackLivesMatter] was initially, but then a whole bunch of gay shit starting seeping in. A whole bunch of transgender

stuff. I can't support something I don't fully understand and I don't fully agree with. I feel like people initially used that platform to bring attention to one cause, and then they clandestinely tried to introduce other causes in it and use the same momentum to accommodate it. I'm not with all that.

When I asked Tomi about the goals of the movement, she answered with a similar response to Prince's:

Tomi: I think it's been hijacked. [...] I do think that the Black Lives Matter movement is not focused on what we think it's focused on. I think it's become something else. It's not the solution that we think it is because there are other interests involved and one of those is gender identity and... what's all of that stuff?

Interviewer: LGBTQ rights?

Tomi: Yes, yes. There's definitely some conflation of that in there. [...] I think that, in general, political movements tend to snowball and pick up whatever they think will broaden their base like gay rights or gender rights or whatever.

Ironically, questions about #BlackTransLivesMatter, gender and sexuality, and transphobia and homophobia in the Black community were not asked at any point during any of the interviews. Neither Prince nor Tomi specified whether they were aware of the queer identities of the movement's founders or of the manifesto that represents Black LGBTQ+ rights as a core part of the movement's grievances. Their sentiments, offered in response to the question "What are your thoughts on the goals of the movement?", suggest that Prince and Tomi viewed the increased visibility of Black LGBTQ+ rights as a strategic move by the founders and their supporters to broaden popularity for the movement as opposed to it being an integral part of its grievances.

In each of their respective interviews, however, both participants acknowledged the pervasiveness of racism and police violence in U.S. society. Before I asked Tomi about her thoughts on the goals of #BlackLivesMatter, she asserted that "injustice anywhere is injustice for us all" to explain why "Africans need to join [the movement] and learn something from not putting up with injustice." Likewise, before asking Prince about the goals of the movement, he expressed "actively protesting in Houston" while sporting "I Can't Breathe" bumper stickers on his car. Prince and Tomi's simultaneous support for #BlackLivesMatter and overt opposition to #BlackTransLivesMatter exemplifies their understanding of the Black transgender community as separate from the "Black lives" in #BlackLivesMatter.

Joshua and Samuel's (first-generation Nigerian) articulations of gender and sexuality in Nigeria may provide some context in understanding Prince and Tomi's contentions. While discussing their largest culture shocks between the United States and their country, they said:

One of the biggest culture shocks for me was sexuality. The lifestyle here [in the United States] was just so different. [...] I grew up with one father and one

mother. All the other stuff was not open or accepted. There's nothing like gay or bisexual. –Joshua

I remember when Obama wanted to talk to the presidents in Africa to tell them to accept gays. He said those who are gay in society should be allowed to come out openly and say they are gay. The presidents in Africa were too smart for Obama. They told him, “Those are not our problems. In the areas we have problems, those are the areas we focus on. Not gays.” Who cares about gayness in Africa? It's not even part of our culture. –Samuel

Although they did not explicitly mention #BlackTransLivesMatter in their respective interviews, Joshua's and Samuel's understandings of gayness suggest that transphobia as a source of diasporic fragmentation may be rooted in the belief that tolerance of queer identities and same-gender relations are intrusive Western imports. To be sure, the omission of Black gender and sexual minorities from #BlackLivesMatter is not exclusive to the Africans in the present study. The marginalization of Black trans and queer folks from the Black community is a common sentiment among the “average Black citizen” (Bunyasi, and Smith 2019, 208; Cohen 1999; Cohen, and Jackson 2016). Still, it is important to consider the imperial histories and discourses that shape the distinct ways transphobia and homophobia operate in Africa in contrast to the United States.

African nations' resentment toward Western colonial systems of gender and sexuality, religious-based discourses of heteronormativity, and an insatiable mission to preserve hegemonic African masculinities are all plausible explanations for the gender hegemony⁶ elicited by Prince, Tomi, Joshua, and Samuel (Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid 2012; Ratele 2014; Matlon 2022). For instance, scholarship on gender and sexuality in Nigeria has maintained that the Yorùbá people (the ethnic group to which Prince and Tomi belong) did not have a gender binary before British colonialism (Matory 2008); so, Prince and Tomi's denunciation of #BlackTransLivesMatter may be a reproduction of a Nigerian gendered order that attempts to maintain hegemonic forms of cisheteropatriarchy. Their self-identifications with conservative political views may have also influenced their intolerance of Black trans activism. Such backgrounds are consistent with other Black Americans who possess similar opinions of #BlackTransLivesMatter's integration with #BlackLivesMatter (Bunyasi, and Smith 2019).

Nevertheless, the prejudiced ideologies of gender and sexuality that Prince, Tomi, Joshua, and Samuel drew from in their responses were not uniform across all interviews. For other participants who were also aware of the contentions surrounding Black LGBTQ+ advocacy and #BlackLivesMatter, the integration of #BlackTransLivesMatter was viewed in a different light. When asked about whether all Africans should support #BlackLivesMatter, these participants answered:

I've heard some people say that the reason they wouldn't support the Black Lives Matter movement is because they are trying to further the rights of LGBTQ and I'm like, “They're all Black people. We're all Black people, so every Black person deserves rights.” –Kofi

The Black Lives Matter movement centers all aspects of identity, but some individuals have tensions with that. All of it is trauma, all of it is racism. We are complex people. They are still Black lives. –Jemima

It is not clear whether unfamiliarity with the rise in Black trans assaults and killings, media misrepresentations of #BlackLivesMatter's agenda, conservative political or religious views, or the historical politics of gender and sexuality in Nigeria led to the transphobic sentiments and subsequent disconnections from the movement by Prince and Tomi. In any case, Prince and Tomi's inability to view all Black lives as equally valuable was an unexpected, yet notable source of diasporic fragmentation in their engagement with #BlackLivesMatter, even when group consciousness was made salient through the visual aspects of their race. As Bunyasi, and Smith (2019) note, declarations of racial linked fate "is not a panacea for Black solidarity" (207).

Conclusion

Centering the diasporic, transnational processes that guide the identity formations and political engagements of 28 African immigrants across three generations, this research explores the processes by which diasporic consciousness is used to connect to (or disconnect from) the #BlackLivesMatter racial justice movement. I introduce the concepts of *diasporic cohesion* and *diasporic fragmentation* to identify and interrogate the interwoven relationship between political solidarity and political contestation among an understudied group of Black immigrants. Diaspora, as an analytic tool, seeks to overcome legacies of European colonialism that have produced hegemonic, monolithic modes of seeing, being, and knowing about the modern world, particularly as it relates to race, ethnicity, and nation (Walcott 2020; Butler 2001). The study's theoretical grounding in the racial fluidity of Blackness and the ever-present weight of diaspora offers a compelling response to postcolonial scholars' call for the integration of social theory that directly deconstructs racial hegemony (Go 2016; Grosfoguel 2008). Further, it provides a starting point for better understanding the ways African populations navigate their diasporic consciousness—the histories, knowledge systems, and cultural traditions tied to their ethnicity alongside the U.S.'s all-encompassing framework of race—to build political coalitions.

As Hordge-Freeman, and Loblack (2020) found in their similar study on the triple consciousness of Afro-Latinxs and their support for #BlackLivesMatter, "political solidarity does not require uniformity" (530). But contrary to Hordge-Freeman and Loblack's findings that revealed several Afro-Latinx respondents' rejection or non-support for #BlackLivesMatter, none of the participants in the present study declared overt opposition to #BlackLivesMatter. In fact, all 28 African immigrants and children of African immigrants in the present study expressed an implicit connection to the movement by drawing attention to the visual elements of race, specifically skin tone, to affirm their shared racialization and shared struggle with other Black diasporic populations (namely African Americans) and to substantiate their connection to #BlackLivesMatter. Context was fundamental in shaping the participants' racial and political orientations toward the movement. The acknowledgment that racial violence via policing impacts all Americans racialized as Black

drove the participants' expressions of racial group consciousness, racial linked fate, and racial identity salience as well as their subsequent support for the movement.

Various participants deployed their diasporic consciousness by expressing both diasporic cohesion *and* diasporic fragmentation when articulating their engagements with #BlackLivesMatter. The conditions of diasporic fragmentation these participants expressed—colorblind ideology and transphobia, to be specific—resulted in the curtailing of #BlackLivesMatters' grievances and a hesitance to support the movement in its entirety. As these participants described their reluctance to fully engage with #BlackLivesMatter, some vocalized offensive, pejorative sentiments regarding race, gender identity, and sexuality. With this, it is imperative that I clarify the intent behind this work. It is *not* to espouse anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric or to validate intraracial division through racist exploitations of "cultural" differences. While I do not endorse these views, I chose to include them in the paper to highlight how internalizations of anti-Blackness and other systems of oppression have the potential to be both a source of racial contestation *and* a justification for distancing from #BlackLivesMatter.

Such sentiments also show how some participants engaged their diasporic consciousness in ways that led to both unity *and* discord with #BlackLivesMatter. These participants—like Akin, Tomi, Fatima, Prince, and others—acceded to the shared racialization and resultant shared struggle Africans and African Americans face due to the constraints of the U.S.' absolutist racial order while simultaneously possessing certain values and beliefs about U.S. Blackness, anti-Black racism, and Black trans-people that acted as a barrier to full, unmitigated support for the movement. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that while diasporic consciousness was deployed by the participants in various ways when engaging in political discourses on Blackness and anti-Black racism as foreign persons, their racialization functioned as a superordinate master status of categorization that prompted their solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter, even when diasporic fragmentation arose.

Though the sample is represented by four regions of the African continent (West, East, South, and Central), it is overrepresented by Nigerian immigrants, children of Nigerian immigrants, and West Africans across all generations. Additionally, all but two participants (Imaan and Pierre) migrated from, or had parents that migrated from, Anglophone countries. Future studies should extend this research to interrogate how region—specifically the cultures, languages, colonial contexts, and religions tied that region—may influence African populations' diasporic consciousness in relation to their ethnoracial identity formations and their subsequent political engagements.

Future research may also opt for a more comparative analysis: How do Africans express their diasporic consciousness in the United States in relation to that of Afro-Latinxs? Afro-Caribbeans? How will the diverse array of diasporic Black identities alter the racial politics of the United States and the potential for cross-ethnic political alliances? The cultural enactments Black immigrants take with them to the United States will continue to challenge the notion of a monolithic pan-ethnic Black identity. As noted by Medford (2019), "taking multiple modalities of Blackness seriously means moving beyond narratives that equate Blackness with being or becoming African American and the singular meaning of African American" and, instead, contextualizing Blackness—and Black politics—as

nuanced, unfixed, and plural (2). Engaging with these questions will nuance our understanding of how the hegemonic racial schemas and diasporic processes tied to race impact Black identity formation as well as Black political engagement and collective behavior.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2023.10>

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Notes

1 Knowledge systems are manifestations of knowledge production, or the processes by which seemingly objective truths about the world are embedded within the power structures of a society and naturalized among the population (Foucault 1990). I use this concept to contextualize the participants' knowledge of Blackness, U.S. racial histories, racial hierarchies, and racial stratification in relation to their diasporic consciousness.

2 I use "African American" to refer to the total or partial descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States and "Black American" to refer to all Black diasporic populations living in the United States, including African Americans.

3 "1.5-generation" is used by immigration scholars to describe individuals who were born abroad but educated in whole or partially in the United States. Scholars use different age parameters to define the 1.5-generation. I chose to operationalize the 1.5-generation as Africans who migrated to the United States before age 18 to reflect the experiences of those who were partially schooled in their country of origin and in the United States.

4 Kofi migrated to the United States at 9-years-old and moved back to Ghana after approximately 18 months. He migrated once again at age 18 and has been residing in the country since.

5 In sociologist and critical race theorist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's (2017) text *Racism Without Racists*, he presents four tenets of colorblind racism in his conceptual formulation: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. The participants in the present study used several tenets of colorblind racism, albeit in overlapping ways. For instance, both abstract liberalism and cultural racism tenets were drawn upon in order to undermine anti-Black racism in the United States and #BlackLivesMatter's grievances of racial violence (minimization tenet).

6 Gender hegemony refers to the naturalization of patriarchy and hetero-desire that institutionalizes and reproduces normative beliefs of gender identity, sexual relationality, and gender/sexual difference in all arenas of social life (Schippers 2007).

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