TRACING TRANSNATIONAL PROTESTS FOR RACIAL EQUALITY:

BLACK LIVES MATTER IN HUNGARY AND POLAND

By

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ABSTRACT

On May 25, 2020, the brutal murder of a Black man named George Floyd by a White Minneapolis police officer sent shockwaves through the United States and around the world. By June 9, massive protests had mobilized in over 40 countries, indicating the global reach of these domestic conversations concerning racial injustice. However, much of the contemporary discourse surrounding racial equality, Whiteness, and White supremacy is dominated by the perspective of the United States in ways that fail to address opinions from countries whose unique perceptions and places in global history are not acknowledged as spaces in which valuable contributions to this global discourse might be found. This raises the question of how the normative values of global movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM) are received, localized, and contested when transnational conversations are triggered—often in real-time, due to the prevalent use of social media and the 24-hour news cycle.

Utilizing theories and concepts from International Relations scholarship on norm diffusion and contestation, this thesis explores how Hungary and Poland understand and address their own histories, perspectives, and motivations in relation to the BLM movement, how BLM may or may not have influenced these understandings, and what future opportunities exist for expanding conversations about this topic to include their viewpoints.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INCIDENT

BY COUNTEE CULLEN
(For Eric Walrond)

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

We often had political discussions, in which we all shared similar positions but expressed ourselves differently. Bobbi, for example, was an insurrectionist, while Melissa, from a grim pessimism, tended to favour the rule of law. Nick and I fell somewhere between the two of them, more comfortable with critique than endorsement. We talked one night about the endemic racism of criminal justice in the US, the videos of police brutality that we had all seen without ever seeking them out, and what it meant for us as white people to say they were 'difficult to watch', which we all agreed they were although we couldn't fix on one exact meaning for this difficulty. There was one particular video of a black teenage girl in a bathing suit crying for her mother while a white police officer knelt on her back, which Nick said made him feel so physically ill he couldn't finish watching it.

I realise that's indulgent, he said. But I also thought, what good even comes of me finishing it? Which is depressing in itself.

We also discussed whether these videos in some way contributed to a sense of European superiority, as if police forces in Europe were not endemically racist.

Which they are, Bobbi said.

Yeah, I don't think the expression is 'American cops are bastards,' said Nick.

Melissa said she didn't doubt that we were all a part of the problem, but it was difficult to see how exactly, and seemingly impossible to do anything about it without first comprehending that. I said I sometimes felt drawn to disclaiming my ethnicity, as if, though I was obviously white, I wasn't 'really' white, like other white people.

No offence, Bobbi said, but that's honestly very unhelpful.

I'm not offended, I said. I agree.

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Conversations with Friends
By Sally Rooney
2017

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INTRODUCTION

Boston, Massachusetts, United States: July 2013

Instead of going out on this humid, Saturday night I have gathered with friends in the living room of my apartment, all four of us perched on the edge of the same couch. The verdict is in for the trial of George Zimmerman.

It has been over a year since this story broke national headlines, with reporters revealing no one had been arrested for the murder of an unarmed, 17-year-old Black boy named Trayvon Martin on February 26, 2012. Shot by Zimmerman while walking home from a convenience store with an iced tea and packet of candy, it takes until April 2012—after an online petition demanding Zimmerman's arrest reaches 1.3 million signatures[1]—for charges to be filed.

The tension in the air is palpable as we turn toward the television.

"We the jury find George Zimmerman, not guilty."

It feels as if all the oxygen has been sucked out of the room.

Later that night a young Black woman named Alicia Garza posts what she calls "a love letter to Black people" on Facebook. "I continue to be surprised at how little Black lives matter. And I will continue that" she writes, "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter." Her friend Patrisse Cullors comments on the post, reconfiguring the phrase into the

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[1] Harmeet Kaur CNN, "10 Petitions That Made the Biggest Impact This Decade," CNN, December 31, 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/22/us/top-petitions-decade-change-trnd/index.html.

counterclaim: "#BlackLivesMatter."[2] Two days after the verdict, #BlackLivesMatter

emerges on social media for the first time and goes viral.[3]

Boston, Massachusetts, United States: May 2020

After three months at home, I break my first Covid quarantine and head to the streets

of my city. As thousands of us gather, we are joined simultaneously by crowds of people all

over the country—and the world—who come together to protest the murder of a Black man

named George Floyd at the hands of a White Minneapolis police officer.

"Black Lives Matter" signs spring up across my neighborhood while books about

White supremacy and structural racism top the *New York Times* bestsellers list.[4] People who

were previously apolitical are politicized. Suddenly, everyone is talking about things I have

spent my entire life trying to understand. There is hope in the late spring air. Like this time,

maybe, finally, we have reached the tipping point.

"If you don't dominate your city and your state, they're going to walk away with

you," the President warns.[5] National Guard units show up to back local police with tanks and

armored vehicles. In response, thousands of more people head to the streets. My friends from

abroad ask if I am okay. They say it looks like the US is on fire. Social media and the news

are showing clips of vandalism and violence and a narrative utterly disconnected from my

own experiences. Later researchers will find that more than 93% of all BLM protests in the

US that summer were peaceful.[6]

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[2] Jelani Cobb. 2017. "The Matter of Black Lives." *The New Yorker*. 2017.
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/where-is-black-lives-matter-headed.
[3] Leah Asmelash, "How Black Lives Matter Went from a Hashtag to a Global Rallying Cry," CNN, July 26, 2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/26/us/black-lives-matter-explainer-trnd/index.html.
[4] Elizabeth A. Harris, "Books on Race Filled Best-Seller Lists Last Year. Publishers Took Notice.," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2021, sec. Books, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/15/books/new-books-race-racism-antiracism.html.
[5] Be Jonathan Karl, *Betrayal : The Final Act of the Trump Show* (New York, New York: Dutton, An Imprint Of Penguin Random House Llc, 2021), 41.
[6] Roudabeh Kishi and Sam Jones, "Demonstrations & Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020," ACLED, September 3, 2020, https://acleddata.com/2020/09/03/demonstrations-political-violence-in-america-new-data-for-summer-2020/.

Vienna, Austria: June 2021

"But why can't I say 'ni**er?'" another White person at another party in Vienna asks me. As one of the few visible minorities in most of the places I go in Austria, the regularity with which I am confronted by this question is no longer surprising. Typically, it comes from somebody from Central or Eastern Europe and the reasoning is usually the same: It is different for us, we do not have the same history, the same baggage that Americans do, the same understanding of race and racism, the same issues, the same problems, the same slavery. We do not have the same associations and so we cannot be considered racist if we use the same words, and, also, they are words we learned from the hip hop and movies you exported to us. It is just not the same.

At times I can be stubborn and demonstrate a certain inflexibility of thought— especially where things I consider related to morality are concerned. I still bristle, but I have learned to bite my tongue in order to allow people to speak. I am endlessly curious about what makes European and American conversations about race so dramatically different. Sometimes I think I understand the nuances of my own country better when I try to explain them to someone from outside of it.

Vienna, Austria: Present Day, 2022

The previous stories represent my attempts to situate this thesis within the context of contemporary events and my own positionality as an American woman of color. My time at Central European University (CEU) has demonstrated to me, in a myriad of fascinating and often painful ways, how often transnational conversations about race and racism do not adequately encompass differing perspectives and sociocultural understandings. As someone who believes deeply in racial equity and justice, I have taken a personal interest in how Europeans, particularly Central Europeans, navigate their own histories of ethnic tensions,

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where these conversations might overlap with conversations about race that are currently dominated by scholarship and discourse from the US,[7] and if there are opportunities for analysis and collaborative meaning-making that extend past our previously siloed interpretations and conceptions.

Seeking to unpack these queries further, I focused my research on two of the more than 40 countries[8] that hosted Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in 2020: Hungary and Poland. These countries were selected for a number of reasons, including their ethnic homogeneity, the unique space they occupy in European history and contemporary affairs, and my own personal-professional connections to their activist communities. In doing so, I posed the question: how are the transnational impacts of BLM received, localized, and contested in the domestic contexts of Poland and Hungary?

This thesis begins with an overview of the literature I found most relevant when constructing the theoretical framework for this piece, drawing key concepts from International Relations (IR) scholarship on norm diffusion and contestation. These concepts were subsequently broadened to include analysis of non-traditional pathways for assessing norm diffusion, contestation and adaptation, in the hope of contributing new understandings to the existing literature regarding how perspectives on global race dynamics are constructed and perceived. The following chapters explore how conversations sparked by the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests surrounding racial equality emerged in the contexts of Poland and Hungary through analysis of empirical trends that developed over the course of key informant interviews and discussion groups conducted for this project. After analyzing key trends and

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[7] Michelle Christian, "A Global Critical Race and Racism Framework: Racial Entanglements and Deep and Malleable Whiteness," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5, no. 2 (July 9, 2018): 169–85, https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649218783220.

[8] Savannah Smith, Jiachuan Wu, and Joe Murphy, "Map: The Rallying Cry Heard 'Round the World,'" NBC News, June 9, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/map-george-floyd-protests-countries-worldwide-n1228391.

challenges from conversations across these groups, it concludes with an assessment of the

practical contributions these insights might promise for more robust transnational discourse

in the future.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis combines conceptual and empirical analysis, utilizing literature on norm diffusion and contestation to unpack the ways in which the international impacts of BLM are received, localized, and contested in the domestic contexts of Poland and Hungary. Eleven key informant interviews (KIIs) (five from Hungary and six from Poland) were conducted online from April-May 2022 with experts and activists, the majority of whom are nationals of these countries. Additionally, two discussion groups with nationals from Hungary and Poland were held in person, the first on May 2, 2022, at CEU's Budapest campus and the second on May 11, 2022, in Warsaw at Uniwersytet SWPS.

Key informant interviews ranged from 60-100 minutes and the semi-structured interview guide used for these interviews can be found in Appendix A. These KIs were primarily professionals working on antiracism efforts in the corporate, not-for-profit, or academic spheres. Consent to record all but one of the interviews was granted. The recorded interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed to inform the direction of subsequent discussion group conversations, alongside notes from the unrecorded interview. A breakdown of KIs can be found in Appendix B.

Discussion group participants (DGPs) were aged 24-30 (born between 1992-1998) and this age range was chosen for its higher utilization of social media (a key diffusion tool of BLM) and inferences that may be garnered regarding the potential for future resonances of the movement.[9][10] The discussion was moderated by the author with the use of a semi-structured interview guide which can be found in Appendix C. The discussions were recorded, but all participants were promised anonymity in order to increase the comfort levels

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[9] "Topic: Social Media Usage in Hungary," Statista, n.d., https://www.statista.com/topics/6592/social-media-usage-in-hungary/#dossierKeyfigures.

[10] "Topic: Social Media Usage in Poland," Statista, n.d., https://www.statista.com/topics/5296/social-media-usage-in-poland/.

of those involved as they discussed such challenging subject matter. Both focus groups were approximately 100 minutes long. Demographic data from the participants and the interview guide can be found in Appendix D, but it is of interest to note that all but one DGP identified as White, while most key informants identified as Romani, Black, or belonging to some other minority group.

I was fortunate to be able to use a combination of connections from CEU and Humanity in Action-Polska (a human rights organization that hosted me as a fellow in Warsaw, Poland, in the summer of 2018) to connect with the first KIs and discussion group participants. After this initial outreach, non-probability, snowball sampling was used to identify the remainder of KIs. The remaining DGPs were recruited via posts to relevant Facebook groups of local universities, human rights groups, news agencies as well as email lists from local universities and human rights networks.

Transcripts from the discussion groups were then thematically analyzed and all KI interview transcripts re-assessed for linkages between the two sites of empirical collection.

Ethical considerations and limitations:

The primary limitation of this study is that the author does not speak Polish or Hungarian, and as such all interviews and materials were conducted or produced in English. Additionally, the majority of KIs and discussion group participants hailed from capital cities and held either a Bachelor or master's level degree. As such, the findings are limited to a narrow, highly educated segment of Hungarian and Polish society. Finally, situating the conversation with the US as the starting point ignores other important influences from both domestic and international predecessors, with this narrowing of scope deemed necessary for the production of this thesis within the 10,000-word limit.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

In seeking to unpack how the transnational dialogue related to BLM has evolved in the domestic contexts of Hungary and Poland, this work constructs its theoretical foundation by drawing from IR literature on norm diffusion and contestation and specifically the concepts of localization, national identity construction, and norm entrepreneurship. Typically viewed at the international level and analyzed through state-to-state interactions, norm diffusion and contestation in the constructivist understanding of IR recently sought to unpack growing resistance to the liberal international order (LIO) and global peacebuilding regime along with the translation of legal norms related to international human rights and their domestic equivalents.[11] While BLM emerges from the United States as a contestation movement against racialized structural discrimination, it is still recognizably diffused from the center of the LIO, and as such acquires some of the attributes of a hegemon-produced liberal project, which can essentially classify it as a target of contestation by illiberal states. The transnational—and often informally diffused—nature of BLM activism and its related discourses are markedly different from traditional state-level diffusion models; however, they still reinforce the normative supremacy of the LIO. As such, norms scholarship can help to situate the movement's global positionality while also providing insight into its local manifestations.

Conceptually, the structure of a norm exists at the intersection of an identified problem, the associated social and moral values relevant to that problem, and the accompanying behaviors that are perceived or prescribed as ways to address the problem that

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[11] Oliver Jütersonke et al., "Norm Contestation and Normative Transformation in Global Peacebuilding Order(S): The Cases of China, Japan, and Russia," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (July 29, 2021): 945, https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab060.

is posed.[12] Finding its scholarly lineage in the field of Anthropology, norm diffusion was traditionally understood as a hierarchical dissemination of expected values, policies, and behaviors from the "legitimate" center to a predominantly passive periphery.[13] However, recent critical scholarship on agential constructivism seeks to move beyond the paradigm of norm "makers" and "takers" to unpack the transformative power of local agency in norm shaping. By providing an alternative model for addressing the critique that traditional norm scholarship overemphasizes Western dominance in norm creation,[14] it highlights a mutually dependent combination of localization and translation,[15] wherein domestic actors may accept the normative values emerging from the international context, but reject or adapt how they are applied on the local level.[16] Concurrently, the associated practice of "vernacularization" operates as a critical diffusion tool by translating existing terminology into contextually appropriate localized words and meanings.[17] Understanding "congruence" or how domestic and international norms fit together is another significant move of this scholarship, with the levels of "cultural match" between sites implying more or less resonation and domestic change.[18] While states like Hungary and Poland may have similar challenges related to structural discrimination, their ongoing ambitions to remain culturally distinct from the LIO create more incongruence between local and international norms than may exist if this discourse was not almost exclusively generated by Western voices.

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[12] Carla Winston, "Norm Structure, Diffusion, and Evolution: A Conceptual Approach," *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 3 (July 31, 2017): 640, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066117720794.

[13] Hüsrev Tabak, "Diffusionism and beyond in IR Norm Research," *Global Society* 35, no. 3 (December 2, 2020): 328, https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2020.1850428.

[14] J Andrew Grant, "Agential Constructivism and Change in World Politics," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (March 23, 2018): 257, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viy021.

[15] Lisbeth Zimmermann, Nicole Deitelhoff, and Max Lesch, "Unlocking the Agency of the Governed: Contestation and Norm Dynamics," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 2, no. 5 (September 3, 2017): 692, https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2017.1396912.

[16] A. P. Boesenecker and L. Vinjamuri, "Lost in Translation? Civil Society, Faith-Based Organizations and the Negotiation of International Norms," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5, no. 3 (October 7, 2011): 347, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijr018.

[17] Zimmerman, "Unlocking the Agency," 694.

[18] Amitav Acharya, "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism," *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (2004): 243, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3877858.

Contestation is understood as the expression of disapproval of a norm in either discursive or non-discursive mediums.[19] It can be directed at the validity, content, or application[20] of a norm, and this process can serve to either undermine the normative claims to correctness and diminish subsequent impacts both domestically and internationally, or to rearticulate the norm's relationship and implementation in a local context. If this rearticulation is introduced to existing international discourses, it may serve to make the norm stronger over time;[21][22] however, a recurrent challenge recognized by the literature is that local rearticulations lack processes for direct feedback into norm development on the global level, which has a limiting effect on their transformative potential.[23] As such, contestation against or justification as to why a developing norm is not relevant can be seen as underscoring the acceptability of the norm's existence,[24] even as it seeks to undermine it. The more new actors a norm reaches, the more contestation is likely to emerge as differing understandings and analyses of the norm and its context are elucidated.[25] The bulk of the literature on norms tends to focus however on formal, institutionalized mechanisms for contestation and not informal arenas like social media or non-political international events. As will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters, these mediums provide alternative pathways for feedback that can and should be analyzed as legitimate avenues for contestation and norm adaptation.

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[19] Xinyu Yuan, "The Chinese Approach to Peacebuilding: Contesting Liberal Peace?," *Third World Quarterly*, May 20, 2022, 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2074389.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Nicole Deitelhoff and Lisbeth Zimmermann, "Things We Lost in the Fire: How Different Types of Contestation Affect the Robustness of International Norms," *International Studies Review* 22, no. 1 (December 31, 2018): 52, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viy080.

[22] Natalie Zähringer, "Taking Stock of Theories around Norm Contestation: A Conceptual Re-Examining of the Evolution of the Responsibility to Protect," *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 64, no. 1 (2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329202100106.

[23] Zimmerman, "Unlocking the Agency," 695

[24] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 892, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2601361.

[25] Antje Wiener, "Contested Compliance: Interventions on the Normative Structure of World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 10, no. 2 (June 2004): 195, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066104042934.

From these interpretations, the racial hierarchies that were historically used to legitimize slavery and colonialism can be understood as norms that predate activism against their global influence and form the basis of intersubjective understandings of Whiteness and White supremacy—whether consciously realized or not.[26] While BLM is produced as a form of norm contestation to the legalized, structural discrimination against Black people in the United States, the diffusions of racial equity trainings, policies, and statements of support through international agencies, corporations, and intergovernmental organizations—like those belonging to the European Union (EU)[27] and United Nations (UN)[28]—create new sites of norm generation around antiracism that are successively contested both domestically and internationally. The different layers of BLM create a complex interplay among the origin site, the US, and secondary sites that localize and reinterpret the movement's key frames. Emerging in the so-called "age of hybridity," which refers to a "complex web of competing norms" in which states may cooperate economically, but substantively disagree on the direction and implementation of sociopolitical norms,[29] the conversation is further complicated by the role of multinational corporations headquartered in the West who may engage in antiracism efforts because they view it as beneficial to their bottom lines or capitalist aims and then export related policies and trainings to subsidiary offices.[30]

The legitimizing supranational support of entities like the UN and EU mirrors previous LIO norm diffusion, which in turn sparks reactionary or contesting grievance frames

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[26] Jemima Pierre, "Slavery, Anthropological Knowledge, and the Racialization of Africans," *Current Anthropology* 61, no. S22 (October 1, 2020): S220–31, https://doi.org/10.1086/709844.

[27] Jean Beaman, "Towards a Reading of Black Lives Matter in Europe," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 59, no. S1 (September 2021): 103–14, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13275.

[28] E. Tendayi Achiume, "Black Lives Matter and the UN Human Rights System: Reflections on the Human Rights Council Urgent Debate," EJIL: Talk!, December 15, 2020, https://www.ejiltalk.org/black-lives-matter-and-the-un-human-rights-system-reflections-on-the-human-rights-council-urgent-debate/.

[29] Ziya Öniş and Mustafa Kutlay, "The New Age of Hybridity and Clash of Norms: China, BRICS, and Challenges of Global Governance in a Postliberal International Order," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 45, no. 3 (May 6, 2020): 124, https://doi.org/10.1177/0304375420921086.

[30] Shelley Zalis, "Why Allyship Is Good for Business," *Forbes*, November 10, 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/shelleyzalis/2021/11/10/why-allyship-is-good-for-business/.

that are grouped together with previous oppositional stances by illiberal states.[31] This us vs. them liminality extends to discourse about racial equality as states seek to reinforce notions of the irrelevance of Western norms in their own societies and rearticulate BLM as a mere emanation of ongoing imperial or neocolonial projection. As will be discussed in the empirical chapters, these pervasive attitudes—which precede the movement's most recent iterations—can fundamentally handicap local norm entrepreneurs who seek to redevelop the BLM frames on issues like police brutality or ethnic discrimination within a domestic context, as the primary contestation is linked to the much larger context of the LIO.

As this thesis focuses primarily on the effectiveness of BLM's local mobilization and conceptual proliferation capacities in Hungary and Poland, localization, national identity construction, and norm entrepreneurship are taken from the IR literature on norms to inform analysis of the movement's impacts and limitations.

a) Localization

Localization can be defined as the space within which norm entrepreneurs (who can be activists, experts, celebrities, or other types of advocates)[32] attempt to articulate congruence between an externally emerging norm and local customs.[33] As Amitav Acharya argues, "localization goes further" than mere framing, grafting, or rearticulation because it requires "active construction" on the part of local norm entrepreneurs. Instead of directly imitating or mimicking the norm, local actors may emphasize, add to, or subvert certain elements depending on the context.[34] The credibility of these norm entrepreneurs is then

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[31] Tereza Capelos et al., "Reactionary Politics and Resentful Affect in Populist Times," *Politics and Governance* 9, no. 3 (August 27, 2021): 187, https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i3.4727.
[32] Daisuke Madokoro, "International Commissions as Norm Entrepreneurs: Creating the Normative Idea of the Responsibility to Protect," *Review of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (August 6, 2018): 101, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210518000219.
[33] Acharya, "How Ideas Spread," 241
[34] Thomas R. Eimer, Susanne Lütz, and Verena Schüren, "Varieties of Localization: International Norms and the Commodification of Knowledge in India and Brazil," *Review of International Political Economy* 23, no. 3 (February 16, 2016): 451, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2015.1133442.

linked to their localized knowledge and participation in their country's "prior normative debates," as this communicates to domestic audiences that they are not acting solely on behalf of foreign "agents" or the ideological influences of outsiders.[35] In this way, normative ideas may be "borrowed" from international movements but must be reimagined in ways that are compatible with local beliefs and practices.[36] Here, the previously mentioned tools of translation and vernacularization can be strategically utilized to aid local construction of the norm. Contestation of new norms may also take on highly localized forms and offer significant insights, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, into the limitations and opportunities of the space within which norm entrepreneurs are able to operate.

b) National identity construction

Described by Rogers Smith as "among the most normatively significant and behaviorally consequential aspects of politics," identity is a particularly important variable in understanding norm localization and contestation.[37] If a norm is understood as a "standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity,"[38] what does it mean when—as previously discussed—a state like Hungary or Poland does not see its identity as aligned with that of the norm generators'? As the empirical chapters will explore, this feature has a direct impact on the amount of "cultural match" and congruence available for domestic norm entrepreneurs to call upon as they attempt to articulate the norm's local resonance. The discourse around the norm itself can be seen as a form of identity construction, in which "social knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships—not only regulate behavior but also

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[35] Acharya, "How Ideas Spread," 244-248
[36] Ibid.
[37] Rawi Abdelal et al., "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics* 4, no. 04 (December 2006): 695, https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592706060440.
[38] Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 891.

constitute the identity of actors."[39] For Hungary and Poland, their membership in the EU implies a specific sort of liberal international identity, but their unique sociohistorical perspectives and recent ideological disagreements denote different processes of identity construction—ones that are strongly based in the contestation of dominant Western frames. This process of identity construction in relation to new norms can occur on both state and individual levels,[40] with specific behaviors expected from group members who share certain identities.[41] Importantly, collective identity underpins how actors perceive their "instrumental and material interests"[42] when engaging in normative discourse, while perceptions on which behaviors are appropriate or legitimate are often tied to ethnic and/or geographical orientation.[43] As such, norm acceptance is frequently more successful when it is perceived as not "fundamentally altering [the] existing social identity" of its diffusion targets.[44] As will be presented in the empirical chapters, perceptions that the expected "appropriate" behaviors associated with importing BLM activism fundamentally differ from Hungarian and Polish practice consistently appear as a site of contestation and as a limiting force on the movement's effective diffusion.

    c) Norm entrepreneurship

First appearing in Cass Sunstein's "Social Norms and Social Roles," norm entrepreneurs are classified as people who aspire to change social norms via political participation and constituent mobilization.[45] In Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's

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[39] Thomas Risse, "'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 5, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2601316.

[40] Dorota Heidrich and Justyna Nakonieczna-Bartosiewicz, "Young Activists as International Norm Entrepreneurs: A Case Study of Greta Thunberg's Campaigning on Climate Change in Europe and Beyond," *Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs* 25, no. 2 (July 5, 2021): 121, https://doi.org/10.33067/se.2.2021.6.

[41] Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 902.

[42] Abdelal, "Identity as a Variable," 700

[43] Ibid.

[44] Acharya, "How Ideas Spread," 248.

[45] Cass R. Sunstein, "Social Norms and Social Roles," *Columbia Law Review* 96, no. 4 (May 1996): 903–68, https://doi.org/10.2307/1123430.

expansion, they evoke Ethan Nadeleman's depiction that these people are "transnational moral entrepreneurs," moral proselytes and, in Lawrence Lessig's description, both manage and design the architecture of normative meaning.[46] Importantly, they also engage in rearticulation and persuasion processes, transfiguring original frames into new ones with localized connotations. The motivations of norm entrepreneurs have been identified in the literature as "empathy, altruism, and ideational commitment" and/or their own personal-political interests, the latter of which appears to have stronger influence when assessing BLM in Hungary and Poland. Although coherent interest articulation is a necessary part of the norm diffusion, the individualized nature of these motivations means that not all advocates will share the same understanding of what goals the movement is hoping to achieve.[47]

For the purposes of this thesis a distinction is borrowed from Acharya between the traditional definition of a norm entrepreneur, or someone who advocates for normative change at the origin site, and domestic or local norm entrepreneurs who translate and vernacularize the original normative framework to support domestic projects.[48] Domestic norm entrepreneurs interface directly with culturally specific classifications of appropriate and inappropriate actions in order to push their agendas forward and do so through a variety of measures, the most prevalent of which are framing and grafting. Framing in this instance, refers to language that "names, interprets, and dramatizes"[49] the issues at hand, while grafting is defined as "incremental norm transplantation" whereby a new norm is linked with an already accepted normative practice that makes its domestic introduction more palatable.[50]

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[46] Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics, 897
[47] Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics, 897-899
[48] Acharya, "How Ideas Spread," 248
[49] Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics, 897
[50] Acharya, "How Ideas Spread," 244

The following empirical chapters will utilize the core concepts of norm entrepreneurship, national identity construction, and localization to organize key findings and inform their analysis. However, as the above discussions drift more toward idealized versions of how localized manifestations of social movements *should* occur, the concepts of norm entrepreneurship and localization are slightly expanded to include the "dog who didn't bark"[51] or rather sites where these actions may have been attempted, but not fully realized.

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[51] Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Norms, Institutions, and National Identity in Contemporary Europe," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 86, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600966?seq=1.

CHAPTER 2: HUNGARY—BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

For an ethnically homogenous country that sees the majority of its minority population stemming from migrants and Romani citizens,[52] the 2020 BLM protests provided renewed sites of activism and resistance. Upon further analysis, these sites reveal the complex sociopolitical landscape of a post-socialist country that, according to interviewees and discussion group participants, often feels caught between two worlds: Western vs. Eastern Europe, the multiracial West vs. pan-ethnic East, and the EU vs. Russia—while trying to carve out space for their own national identity and legitimacy on the global stage. These tensions, alongside complex internal politics that trend toward democratic backsliding and conservative authoritarian rule,[53] speak to only some of the uniqueness of how the global BLM movement was received, localized, and contested in this country. As one DGP surmised: "We don't want to be Eastern Europe, but we still don't want to be the Western. We are central, we are different. We are Hungary."[54]

2.1 Diffusion and reception of BLM in the Hungarian context

For DGPs, who ranged in age from 24-28, the influence of social media was perceived as the dominant vehicle through which information about the first BLM protests in the US was transmitted. "My first exposure was American and not Hungarian for sure," noted one participant who learned of George Floyd's death on TikTok. Others recalled Facebook and Instagram as the sites where they initially heard the news and watched videos of the growing protests. DGPs noted that both liberal and conservative media from the US made its

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[52] "Hungary - World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples," Minority Rights Group, June 19, 2015, https://minorityrights.org/country/hungary/.

[53] Michael Bernhard, "Democratic Backsliding in Poland and Hungary," *Slavic Review* 80, no. 3 (2021): 585–607, https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2021.145.

[54] All quotes in the following empirical chapters that are attributed to DGPs or KIs come from interviews conducted for this thesis by the author from April-May 2022.

way to Hungary online, and that very quickly counter narratives portraying looting, destroyed storefronts, burnt cars, and other forms of vandalism began to spread throughout Hungarian social and subsequently state-run media.

Due to the movement's viral social media presence, almost all KIs and DGPs noted the "trendy" nature of the movement as integral to its reproduction in the Hungarian space. "It was so weird for me, that like 16–17-year-old kids [in Hungary] were talking about Black Lives Matter," said one DGP, "Not because it's not important and not because it's not a huge social problem in the US, but they are not interested in social problems in the US. They were following a trend." Interviews with Hungarian-Romani activists corresponded to this sentiment, observing that while discussions about BLM emerged among young people and recent university graduates who were sympathetic to the movement's aims, they failed to incorporate elements of domestically oriented self-reflection. "They don't give a damn about what's happening to the Roma," one KI remarked, before elaborating on her perception that it is easier to superficially support American BLM protests on social media "because the US is very far away, and we don't have to identify with what's happening there." This distanced perspective which allowed feelings of solidarity—but not responsibility—to be experienced in the Hungarian space was repeatedly remarked upon by both KIs and DGPs.

2.2 Hungarian localization of BLM

Activists recalled positively that a local university student reached out to Romani organizations to see if they would consider joining the Budapest BLM protest in June 2020 and that the bulk of the organizing for the event, which was held outside of the US Embassy, was produced, and supported by climate change activists. None of the DGPs recalled attending the protest, but KIs who were present called the turnout "disappointing" with "less people than at a concert." In an effort to capitalize on the momentum of the moment, Romani activists organized a second, side-protest aimed at opening a dialogue that would compare the

structural and discriminatory challenges faced by Roma in Hungary to those faced by the Black community in the US. "Maybe I don't have to tell you," said one KI, elaborating that despite the large number of Hungarian-Romani living in the capital city, "There were even less people at that small part of the big protest. We were like 20, maximum." Participants at the event were primarily identified by DGPs and KIs as foreigners and students from other countries, underscoring the difficulty of using the moment to spark constructive domestic dialogue. "People are scared to import the BLM here," explained one DGP as he reflected on why the BLM protest in Budapest was not widely attended, "because they just see the burning cities and we don't want that."

Many discussed the differences between Hungarian and American activism as critical to why the physical protest garnered limited success. This was attributed at times to the country's relatively recent transition to democracy. "I just want to add something about lack of activism in Hungary," said one DGP, "Don't forget that 35 years ago, we didn't have elections, basically. So, our parents were raised in a totally different system." Another remarked that her mother "has been going to protests her whole life" and has been participating in activism since 1989 but feels disillusionment to the point of questioning the purpose of protest in a political system in which similar demands have repeatedly gone unrecognized. Concerns were also raised about a fear of violence from counter protesters, citing an alternative understanding of police brutality characterized by a lack of action or interference on the part of the police to protect protestors—and racial and ethnic minorities in particular—when groups described as skinheads and footballers instigated confrontations. Finally, anxieties about facing subtle but concerning retaliatory action from employers, colleagues, friends, or neighbors were also raised as reasons for not participating, with one DGP remarking, "I just heard so many people from my group of friends saying, "Oh, I

wouldn't go [to BLM protests]—what if someone sees me and it causes a problem in my school and my work?"

The most successful localization of BLM in Hungary discovered in this research came in the form of online podcasts and panel discussions by Romani activists, who used the temporarily increased interest in racial equality to hold events on racism, colorism, LGBT, and other diversity and inclusion issues. "I didn't really have the capacity to, you know, raise my voice [before]," remarked one KI who is a Romani activist in Budapest, "So then this series of happenings kind of shifted my actions. I think [they] made us start these kinds of narratives." The narratives referred to were described as directly imported from the US, with concepts like White fragility, White saviorism, and White supremacy explained as "things that don't really reach Hungary yet," and the 2020 BLM protests as the catalyst that created opportunities and space to introduce these ideas. "The uniqueness of these talks is that finally Roma people are talking about this," the KI continued, recalling that 10-15,000 people viewed the first discussion on racism in Hungary, with interest declining in subsequent weeks and particularly after Covid-19 quarantine regulations were lifted.

Perhaps the most visible symbol of the movement's enduring transnational impact came in the form of a BLM statue that was erected and destroyed in Budapest in April 2021 within the course of 24 hours. Only one-meter in height, the piece was a 3-D replica of the Statue of Liberty in New York, but distinctively depicted on bended knee with her arm raised in a fist (a traditional Black power gesture), in rainbow instead of the customary sea-green coloring and holding a plaque reading "Black Lives Matter." Created by Hungarian sculptor Péter Szalay, it attracted considerable attention with Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán's chief of staff Gergely Gulyás characterizing BLM as "basically a racist movement," commenting that, "The racist is not the person who opposes a BLM statue, but the person who erects one." However, Krisztina Baranyi, the mayor of the 9th district in Budapest, where

the statue was erected used the opportunity to remark on the goals of the BLM movement, including ending police brutality and racism, declaring them to be "just as relevant in Hungary as anywhere else."[55]

"At first it was very upsetting," one KI recalled when discussing the destruction of the statue, "But then I realized it's actually good to have some kind of representation of where we are at right now, so we can actually talk about it. Because often where nothing happens, it's hard to talk about or point at it because there's nothing to represent the problem. The oppression is sort of invisible."

2.3 Hungarian national identity construction

As the visibility of BLM increased in Hungary, so too did contestation against the normative liberal values the movement produced. DGPs recalled in particular Prime Minister Orbán's statements about football players kneeling in support of antiracism during the 2021 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Championships. The move was popularized in the US and is heavily associated with BLM. "Taking the knee before a sports game is alien to us," Orbán remarked.[56] Instead Hungarian players chose to point to the UEFA "Respect" badges on their uniforms, of which one of the core tenets is antiracism,[57] while Hungarian fans booed kneeling players from opposing teams.[58] Orbán subsequently defended this behavior remarking, "We see that it [kneeling] started in slave-owning

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[55] Shaun Walker, "Budapest Black Lives Matter Artwork Sparks Rightwing Backlash," *The Guardian*, January 5, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/budapest-black-lives-matter-artwork-rightwing-backlash.

[56] "Viktor Orban: 'Hungarians Only Kneel before God,'" Catholic Arena, June 10, 2021, https://www.catholicarena.com/latest/orbankneel100621.

[57] UEFA.com, "RESPECT Campaign Launched at UEFA EURO 2012 | inside UEFA," UEFA.com, June 6, 2012, https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/mediaservices/mediareleases/news/01fe-0f880f317d91-7784c6906138-1000--respect-campaign-launched-at-uefa-euro-2012/.

[58] Tamás Vaski, "Hungarian Fans Boo and Whistle at Irish Football Team for Taking the Knee*," Hungary Today*, June 9, 2021, https://hungarytoday.hu/hungarian-football-fans-ireland-euro-2020/.

countries…which Hungary never was,"[59] highlighting a resistance to antiracism efforts and practices that are perceived as emerging from a colonial lens and indicating contestation not necessarily toward the validity or content of the norm, but to the application of its prescribed behaviors in Hungarian society which were viewed as an intrusion from the LIO.

Colonialism was repeatedly mentioned as a marker that separates Western and Hungarian identity construction, with the problems of racism perceived as uniquely attributable to systems that were created by colonial countries, without considering how Whiteness and its associated privileges are reproduced on the international scale. "To me, we don't really have race," said one KI, "We don't talk about race. In this region, we don't use the word even in academic literature. [But] we know in Western Europe, they do have people of color because they were the bad guys. They colonized all these territories." Additionally, while DGPs relayed that they do not associate being White with being Hungarian, there was reflection that they do not assume people of color that they may see on the street in Budapest to be Hungarian, indicating, as many of these conversations did, a subconscious association of Whiteness with Hungarian national identity.

Significantly, desire to dispute the relevance of BLM in Hungary was seen as arising from repeated failures by the international community to focus on Hungarian oppression and discrimination, particularly within the EU, making them reluctant to expand their emancipatory aspirations to include BLM. "While you're in a trauma," said one KI, "It's really hard to recognize a larger trauma." Many noted that Hungarian traumas stemming from the 1920 Treaty of Trianon in which large swaths of Hungarian territory were given to neighboring countries as part of the World War I peace treaty, World War II and the

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[59] Associated Foreign Press, "Hungarian Prime Minister 'Agrees' with Fans Booing Irish Footballers Taking a Knee," The42, June 10, 2021, https://www.the42.ie/hungary-ireland-5462919-Jun2021/.

subsequent Soviet occupation, and the lingering effects of communism are not recognized or incorporated into transnational discourse about discrimination.

"We are being judged and handled as if we have the same privilege and gaze toward this topic as Western Europe," remarked a KI, "And we don't… until these things are acknowledged, people will hold onto the victim narrative because our traumas are not being seen. Not even being addressed." There was however a belief that these traumas have been utilized by Orbán and state-run media to consolidate political power through propaganda campaigns that rely heavily on the victim narrative to construct Hungarian national identity. "It's beneficial for them [the government] for the people to stay in trauma," said one KI, who highlighted a perspective also shared in the discussion group that while distancing Hungary from the historical Western colonial narrative, government officials were reconfiguring the narrative of decolonization to defend Hungarian resistance to EU norms and alleged impositions of the LIO and to characterize Hungary as a victim of colonialism by countries like Austria and Russia. This tactic is particularly effective due to the saturation of the media market by the ruling party Fidesz, which currently controls approximately 80% of the country's media[60] and underscores how delicately intertwined these narratives have become.

2.4. Hungarian norm entrepreneurs

Hungarian-Romani activists emerged as the most active local norm entrepreneurs during the summer of 2020 but faced a number of challenges in translating BLM frames into new, localized understandings. Amongst those interviewed there were numerous discussions about the movement's applicability and usefulness to domestic activism and education. Many KIs and DGPs felt that BLM protesters in the US benefited from higher levels of visibility

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[60] "Hungary | Reporters without Borders," rsf.org, n.d., https://rsf.org/en/country/hungary.

regarding discrimination against Black people within American society and media and that Romani people in Hungary did not have access to the same political and institutional levers. Difficulties in articulating what Romani activism in Hungary stands for was also discussed. "How does this relate to our land, our situation, Roma, the Romani oppression? It is really hard for [Hungarians] to see that it does relate very closely on many, many levels," said one KI. One DGP noted, "I feel like where it originated, it meant something, it had a certain meaning. And we could never create that association to the word, to the whole movement here," before noting they felt that pre-existing frames for BLM were copy-pasted onto the Hungarian context with limited effectiveness. "It feels like it's not really related to how we live here." One Hungarian KI who was living in the US at the time of the 2020 protests recalled difficulties in trying to translate and contextualize the importance of the movement to Hungarian friends on social media, describing it as "Like coming from the moon or speaking a different language. It's just not coming across."

One DGP opined that Romani communities are far more segregated than Black communities in the US and for this reason Hungarian-Romani activism "probably needs a way different approach than that of Black Lives Matter," indicating potential issues with grafting Romani activist discourse and frames onto the BLM narrative. While it was generally agreed that a rearticulation in the Hungarian context would require bringing the goals of BLM back to strictly Hungarian problems, there was discordance among interviewees about what this would mean. For example, DGPs (none of whom come from a racial minority background) did not believe police brutality to be a Hungarian issue, while Romani activists elevated this as one of the biggest challenges for the Roma population and one of the core BLM messages they would like to reproduce.

The lack of Black people in Hungary combined with a sentiment that the US has a very specific way of defining racism "that does not apply to Eastern Europe in general" were

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often emphasized. "In Hungary, this word [racism] kind of threatens everyone," said one KI, "They don't want to associate with it." Others noted a resistance to using the word "race" due to the legacy of World War II and its eugenic connotations, creating difficulties in directly translating the discourse. DGPs were also quick to identify themselves as "not racist," but as perhaps having a different understanding of the term than how it is utilized in American discourse, reflecting that they are "skeptical" of its transmittance into Hungarian vernacular, and that they do not attach the same meaning to it. "I don't really know if racism is actually something that is able to capture what is going on here?" queried one DGP, before the group began to discuss how Whiteness is conceptually very different in Hungary. Here it was again noted that this difference stems from Western colonial legacies, but the group concurred that the semantics and nuances of these distinctions were difficult for them to characterize or substantively grasp.

For now, activists say they are extremely careful with how they translate and vernacularize conceptions of race and racism—especially when asked to provide workshops in Hungarian schools. "We say, 'You have stereotypes, you have prejudices.' This is what we say, because if we said, "You are racist,' they would get so offended we would never have a chance to facilitate or lead workshops again. So, we have to kind of censor our staff in a way." "Ethnic identity" was also considered as a counter to the word "race" that could be used to produce the same antiracism discourse more gently.

A final challenge for domestic norm entrepreneurs raised by DGPs and KIs was a strikingly pervasive belief that Hungarian discourse is not culturally suited to disagreement and debate about such complex issues, and that spaces like the discussion group are not readily available to allow for critical thought and reflection. Respondents noted passive aggressive response patterns in which frustrations about such specific attention on problems that are not Hungarian were repeatedly expressed—particularly by those outside the capital

city of Budapest. As one Hungarian-Romani activist explained, "[People think] we don't have anything to do with it. And why would my life be different to now? How would [BLM] change our quality of life? Bread prices are still the same. The gas prices are the same, the jobs are—we have our same issues, and nobody's helping us. It's not really thinking about the whole composition of how things connect."

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

While assessing the interplay among localization, national identity construction, and norm entrepreneurship, clear issues in articulating and constructing a localized version of BLM in Hungary were identified. In particular, a lack of congruence or cultural match due to unique emanations of national identity construction and a lack of recognition by the international community of historical traumas appeared, while struggles with translation and vernacularization were also present. Importantly, the avenues for diffusion and contestation did not appear solely through government or supranational channels, but on social media and at sporting events as well, which created non-traditional empirical sites with valuable insights into the movement's discourse and the affective understandings it produced in the Hungarian context. The direct import of concepts from the US related to racism and White supremacy and Hungarian attitudes toward them indicate an ongoing process by norm entrepreneurs— who face a number of challenges in creating meaningful reproductions of the BLM frames— to attempt to graft these discourses onto domestic conversations. However, this may be due to sociopolitical challenges faced by Hungarian-Romani activists that predate BLM, and as such attempts at localizing the movement could be seen as contributing to the necessary condition of credibility for domestic norm entrepreneurs in future conversations about the topic. As noted in the theoretical chapter, specific assumptions about the prescribed behaviors expected for normative engagement in BLM are directly linked to identity, and it is clear from this case

study that Hungarian national identity and national perspectives on colonialism and the LIO

play an enormous role in shaping how BLM was received, localized, and contested in this

country.

CHAPTER 3: POLAND—BETWEEN TWO MOVEMENTS

Since 2015 Poland has undergone a surge of activism in opposition to current president Andrzej Duda and his party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (abbreviated as PiS and translated as Law and Justice). Abortion and LGBT rights alongside the Polish justice system have experienced dramatic curtailments in freedoms[61] and protests peaked in 2020[62] and 2021[63] as activists and ordinary citizens fiercely resisted the ongoing infringements. Years of resistance have in turn exhausted the mobilization capacities of Polish protestors, leading many interviewees to report having to prioritize which issues they could give energy to or, in some cases, deciding to no longer engage in Polish protest culture at all. As one DGP put it: "After that wave, when I was once again protesting day in and day out, I was like, 'I'm done.' Unless they are literally murdering us, I'm not going anywhere."

3.1 Diffusion and reception of BLM in the Polish context

The 2020 BLM protests entered the Polish discourse at a complex political time, right before the presidential election and during particularly strong LGBT activism. "It's perhaps a question of competition between those two movements," one KI remarked, and this sentiment is echoed in analysis of the Polish BLM protests done by the German Center for Integration and Migration (DeZim) who referred to BLM as "overshadowed" by contentious domestic politics.[64] Similar to the Hungarian case, BLM was often perceived as "a very isolated

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[61] "Poland: Crackdown on LGBT Activists," Human Rights Watch, August 7, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/08/07/poland-crackdown-lgbt-activists.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Agnieszka Holland and Olga Tokarczuk, "Poland's LGBTQ Protests Are Glimmers of Hope in an Illiberal Dystopia," *The Guardian*, July 1, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jul/01/poland-lgbtq-protests-polish-activists.
[64] Noa Milman et al., "Black Lives Matter in Europe: Transnational Diffusion, Local Translation and Resonance of Anti-Racist Protest in Germany, Italy, Denmark and Poland," *Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung*, July 2, 2021, 25, https://www.academia.edu/70370925/Black_Lives_Matter_in_Europe_Transnational_Diffusion_Local_Translation_and_Resonance_of_Anti_Racist_Protest_in_Germany_Italy_Denmark_and_Poland.

American problem" that did not have profound relevance to Polish culture—that is until it was transformed into domestically focused activism. "[It is a] Polish kind of thinking that we are so innocent," said one KI, and "this approach was kind of pushed away and [people] said that we have no colonies and so on." As in Hungary, Polish DGPs recalled "hashtag activism" and expressions of solidarity with the US movement that they did not believe extended to domestically focused conversations about racism in Poland. "The effect it had might have been, and that's just my guess, might have been like, very limited to, like a very liberal, educated [people]," said one DGP.

The dominant influence of Western media in Poland was mentioned by many as key to spreading messaging about BLM. While the current government has launched a "re-polonisation" campaign aimed at bringing more of the country's media under state control, 75% of all print media in the country is still foreign-owned.[65] Media analysis of the protests noted that there was a far larger focus on US and international BLM protests than on those in Poland, with *Rzeczpospolita*, described as "the number one opinion-forming medium" in the country, publishing 65 articles about international BLM protests and only two on Polish BLM protests in 2020.[66] "To understand Poland, you need to understand that this is a country that actively takes part in pop culture—pop culture that has been so heavily dominated by America—without understanding much of the context," said one KI, "They [Poles] were looking at something they don't understand within the greater context of racism and they were commenting on it."

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[65] Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "Polish Government Wants to Curb Role of Foreign Media | DW | 09.11.2020," DW.COM, November 9, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/poland-plans-limitations-foer-foreign-owned-media/a-55534861.
[66] Milman, "Black Lives Matter in Europe," 28.

3.2 Polish localization of BLM

In the weeks following the 2020 American BLM protests, seventeen Polish BLM protests were reported in eleven cities,[67] marking a much stronger exposure to domestic audiences than in Hungary. However, while Hungarian-Romani activists positively recounted White environmental rights activists reaching out to them for their input and involvement, all Polish KIs expressed concern that White protest organizers (who were identified as first-time activists)[68] did not involve the (admittedly small) Black-Polish civil society in their planning. Many remarked that the ongoing culture of protest in Poland led to a problematic knowledge gap in which LGBT and abortion rights activists with little knowledge of BLM and antiracism efforts threw themselves into the discourse with a lack of education on race and racism. This was perceived as, at least temporarily, having a negative contribution to the narrative when Polish BLM protests were treated as "trendy" and "almost like a social event that you need to show up to" for those already engaged in other forms of activism. "These people sometimes come with a lot of ignorance," one KI explained, before reflecting: "but protesting can be a great learning experience."

A localized version of BLM organized by Black Polish women called "Don't Call Me Murzyn" proved to be the most effective and enduring offshoot of the movement. "Murzyn," a Polish word for "black person" with roots in the English word "moor," is often used in place of "czarny" which translates to "black." The word has been historically debated in Poland because it is commonly used by White people who argue it has no negative connotations, while it is perceived as pejorative by Black Poles (a cursory Google image search of the word helps to underscore this point). The issue gained enormous exposure after a photo of Bianka Nwolisa at a BLM protest in Warsaw on June 4, 2020, went viral. In it the

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Milman, "Black Lives Matter in Europe," 26.

10-year-old holds a pink sign emblazoned with the words, "Stop Calling Me Murzyn." As one DGP described it, the image was considered by many to be very "powerful" and "quite new to the Polish context, because you don't really see those communities speaking up about how they're treated in Poland." Following this, on June 9, five Black-Polish women posted a video titled "#DontCallMeMurzyn" in which they discussed their personal experiences with racism and discrimination in Poland. Within weeks the video amassed over 50,000 views[69] and the Polish Museum of Modern art invited the women to design a panel discussion on the issue and offered to host and promote the talk. Later Nwolisa would appear on the September 2020 cover of Polish *Vogue* under the heading "Hope."

Out of all the BLM frames, the issue of police brutality proved to have the most universal resonance within the Polish context. Counter protests by neo-Nazis and White nationalists combined with an absence of police protection for BLM protestors was discussed, with the lack of police involvement in this case, as in Hungary, also identified as a form of police brutality. "It is traumatic. It is very scary to realize I'm putting my life in danger to protest," said one DGP. A KI who is a Black-Polish activist recalled receiving death threats on Instagram when she posted about BLM, but casually recounted, "They weren't as horrible as it sounds," indicating an accepted expectation of violence or violent rhetoric when engaging in antiracism activism.

Additionally, the death of George Floyd came two days after the 10-year anniversary of the murder of Nigerian migrant Maxwell Itoya in Warsaw by Polish police. As one KI described it: "Events from our past resurfaced," with others noting that at the time of Itoya's death in 2010 there had been very little coverage or interest in the incident. When the 2020

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[69] Olga Mecking and Ruth Terry, "#DontCallMeMurzyn: Black Women in Poland Are Powering the Campaign against a Racial Slur," Time, August 7, 2020, https://time.com/5874185/poland-racism-women-murzyn/.

BLM protests began, renewed awareness of Itoya's story emerged, with issue linkage between American and Polish police brutality.

3.3 Polish national identity construction

Resistance to the BLM narrative in Poland operated along similar lines of argumentation to Hungary, with the exception that government officials were not perceived as engaging directly with the BLM frames. At the 2021 World Cup for example, Polish players also chose not to take the knee while Polish fans booed opposing teams that did. At the same time, the hashtag #nieklekamy translated as "we don't kneel" trended on Polish Twitter.[70] Comparable arguments to those found in Hungary appeared, including that kneeling is something one only does before God and that the movement has nothing to do with Poland as they are not responsible for colonial transgressions,[71] indicating contestation about both the validity and application of the norm in the Polish context. The absence of national census metrics[72] that could properly account for the number of Black people in Poland was also mentioned as an issue, with many of those interviewed believing that there are higher numbers of Black Poles than is documented or accounted for. "I don't believe this whole thing that there's very few of us," said one Black-Polish KI, "I believe that there's way more and just they're—nobody's actually monitoring it."

Similarly to Hungary, past traumas and victimization by the global community along with a lack of colonies were highlighted as key reasons why the BLM narrative can be resisted as entirely irrelevant to the Polish context. "This question of racism and violence is different to us because how can a victim of racism be racist?" said one KI. "Of course, they can be, but I

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[70] Sian Norris, "Poland vs England: World Cup Match in Racism Row – Byline Times," *Byline Times*, March 31, 2021, https://bylinetimes.com/2021/03/31/poland-vs-england-world-cup-match-in-racism-row/.
[71] Ibid.
[72] As this was explained to the author, the Polish census does not currently classify citizens by race and for this reason, anyone born in Poland can be counted as a White Pole.

think the Poles don't want to think that they are racist because they consider themselves to be victims."

Poland's right-wing government was identified by everyone interviewed as repeatedly utilizing the frame of Polish victimization at the hands of the European Union, Western powers, and particularly Germany as a way to silence criticism of their actions and any attempts to elevate discourse about racism in Poland. As in Hungary, those interviewed identified past traumas from World War II and the Soviet Union as a "tool" used by the government to consolidate power, construct national identity, and project a narrative that racism is an American or Western problem. Unlike in Hungary, Poles did articulate a very clear association of Whiteness with Polishness, with one KI remarking, "With Poland it's not just Whiteness, it's nationalism. It's nationalism that extends to Whiteness because to be Polish you have to be White." One KI who is White and works for a multinational corporation in Warsaw described "heavily advocating for having more conversations about race at our local hub" during the 2020 BLM protests but said, "This was always met with a lot of resistance from senior leadership. The argument is always that we're such a White country."

3.4 Polish norm entrepreneurs

Black-Polish activists expressed feeling relieved and hopeful when the protests began in the US. "Something that I was shouting about for years, finally, was being listened to and it got this public attention," said one KI who described 2020 as a "wake-up call" for Polish companies, who began to request more diversity and inclusion workshops with a specific focus on antiracism. All of the activists interviewed perceived the US BLM protests to have given them the power, exposure, and leverage necessary to domestically engage comparable challenges regarding racism, police brutality, and oppression.

The significance of "#DontCallMeMurzyn" was also raised by all KIs and DGPs during conversations about BLM, with this local emanation exemplary of a successful translation and vernacularization of local issues into a broader transnational context. In March 2021 the efforts of the campaign were formally legitimized by the Polish Language Council which officially recommended that the word no longer be used in Polish society, with one member describing it as "backwards" and "insulting."[73] While the activists interviewed portrayed the win as a somewhat superficial victory that focused more on the word than the issue of racism in Poland, the impact of the campaign was recalled by DGPs as a historic moment in Polish society.

"Watching that video was like, okay, a Black person speaking perfect Polish is new to me. Like it's not something that I have come across often," one DGP remarked, explaining that they could not recall ever seeing Black Poles discussing racism on social and news media in Poland prior to BLM. The unfamiliar sight of Black Poles speaking in Polish (which is viewed as an identifier that they are not migrants, but rather grew up in Poland) was repeatedly recounted in both the discussion group and interviews. This utilization of the BLM frames by domestic norm entrepreneurs continued into August 2020 when Polish police began targeting and mass arresting LGBT activists,[74] with one LGBT activist describing BLM as laying a groundwork and legitimacy for Polish resistance to police overreach that they would not have otherwise had. "It provided language and the tools for us to—for us to even have the language to be able to contest that power dynamic so heavily."

Activists in Poland expressed similar tactics to discussing race and racism as those mentioned in Hungary, including that they do not explicitly refer to race, but rather ethnicity or other difference-based discriminations. "The first thing I actually do is provide shared

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[73] Wiktor Ferfecki, "Polish Word 'Murzyn' Describing Black People Is Officially Discouraged by the Polish Language Council," Remix News, March 5, 2021, https://rmx.news/article/polish-word-murzyn-describing-black-people-is-officially-discouraged-by-the-polish-language-council/.
[74] Human Rights Watch, "Poland: Crackdown On LGBT Activists."

language for people so we can define basic concepts that do not really exist—that never existed before in the Polish language," said one KI, underscoring again the importance of vernacularization in transnational activism. Another remarked that pushback against discussing race has to be met with strategic repositioning of the conversation to one that is more regionally focused on Central and Eastern Europe, saying "It's a much easier sell if we frame it like that, that we will still have this conversation, but we will spotlight Poland and Polish perspectives in it." This KI also noted that it is less difficult to introduce conversations about race by grafting them onto broader topics like psychological safety through which a conversation about minority stress can emerge without explicitly turning to race. While he is not entirely comfortable with this method, he conceded, "I guess I just made my peace with the fact that this is how these things go here."

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

In tracing BLM through the Polish context, similar themes to those found in Hungary related to national identity construction and resistance to norm diffusion from the LIO can again be interpreted through an understanding of the country's unique geopolitical history and associated traumas. Again, a lack of congruence or cultural match due to unique emanations of national identity construction appeared, but these issues were more effectively contested by norm entrepreneurs who were able to reconstruct BLM frames into new domestic understandings with more applicable local resonances. While Polish norm entrepreneurs were more successful in utilizing BLM to create and contribute to localized movements with specific domestic inferences and more consistently employed the tools of vernacularization and grafting to BLM frames, they also ran up against a very explicit understanding of Polish national identity that considers Whiteness an integral element of its construction. As in Hungary, nontraditional sites for norm diffusion and contestation,

including sporting events, YouTube, and social media, were identified as critical contributors to this conversation. While traditional media sources played a larger role in Poland, most likely due to their stronger connection to Western influences, specific remarks by government officials were less prevalent which may have given norm entrepreneurs and localized, grassroots movements like "Don't Call Me Murzyn" freer discursive space in which to operate.

CONCLUSION

Early in the research for this thesis I noticed an interesting trend—one I have never experienced before with other projects. Everyone I spoke to expressed some variation of: "Thank you for doing this." At first, I thought they were just being supportive or generous in humoring a graduate student with very little background in the complexities of racialization and sociopolitical norms in Central Europe. Over time I began to notice something else. "I enjoyed our conversation a lot! It reassured me that what I would like to research is very much needed indeed," one Hungarian KI wrote after our interview. "It was so refreshing to have some of those discussions again," wrote a Polish DGP, "Protest and politics fatigue made me avoid them for quite a while." Hungarians after the discussion group in Budapest expressed gratitude for the experience and said they felt "proud" of how critically they engaged with such complex subject matter. "I so appreciate that you are doing this," said one Polish KI at the end of our conversation, "Really, I am so grateful."

In my interpretation, these expressions of appreciation were for an unintended byproduct of this project. Seeking to understand how the transnational impacts of BLM were received, localized, and contested in Hungary and Poland created new generative sites for social impact, reflection, and introspection. Too often the nuanced perspectives of those placed at the periphery of international relations are not included in global discussions. It is my sincere hope that the insights generated in this thesis make their way into the global discourse about BLM and that more spaces are opened up to include these voices in transnational conversations. I believe the empirical chapters demonstrate the importance of taking these narratives into account.

While it may be easy to dismiss the historical traumas experienced by Hungary and Poland as exploitative angles for illiberal policies and populist rhetoric, the views expressed by those kind enough to share their opinions and time with me reveal multifaceted and

compelling understandings of how movements for racial equality are perceived and synthesized in relation to national identity. Despite very visible contestation to normative liberal frameworks about race and structural discrimination, local norm entrepreneurs in Hungary and Poland continue to take global understandings of racial equality and reconstruct them to fit within their own domestic contexts. If BLM is to be a truly global movement, its future success depends on meeting them halfway. This requires a deliberate broadening of understanding that translates core BLM tenets into new frames—ones that consider the myriad of views and associations existing outside of Western perspectives. As noted throughout this work, the emancipatory capacities of BLM extend far past structural racism in the US to many other contexts, countries, types of minority discrimination, and inequalities.

The conversation is just beginning, and it is worth expanding.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Key Informant Interview Guide

The following is the semi-structured interview guide used to conduct conversations with key informants.

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your work?

2. Can you describe your initial perceptions of Black Lives Matter (BLM)?

3. What did/does BLM look like in your country?

4. How relevant do the issues of race and racism and the BLM movement feel to your country?

    a. Follow-up questions on colonialism, Western-generated discourse

5. How do you think the concepts of race and Whiteness are constructed in your country?

Appendix B: Key Informant Demographics

Hungary

ID	Nationality/Ethnicity	Title/Organization
Interview 1	Romani-Hungarian	Activist, Volunteer Coordinator
Interview 2	Hungarian	Academic
Interview 3	Hungarian	Artist, Academic, Activist
Interview 4	American-Hungarian	Activist
Interview 5	Romani-Hungarian	Activist

Poland

ID	Nationality/Ethnicity	Title/Organization
Interview 1	Nigerian-Polish	Activist, Diversity and Inclusion Trainer
Interview 2	Polish	Activist, Associate Director at a multinational corporation
Interview 3	Polish	Activist/Founder, "Don't Call Me Murzyn"
Interview 4	British	Academic, Professor
Interview 5	Kenyan	Author, Human Rights Activist, United Nations
Interview 6	Polish	Academic, Professor

Appendix C: Discussion Group Interview Guide

The following is the semi-structured interview guide used to conduct the discussion groups in Budapest, Hungary and Warsaw, Poland.

Discussion Group Interview Guide

1. Can you describe your initial perceptions of Black Lives Matter (BLM)?

2. How did Hungarian/Polish media portray BLM?

    a. Follow-up questions on police brutality, LGBT, Roma

3. What does activism look like in Hungary/Poland?

4. How relevant do the issues of race and racism and the BLM movement feel to you as Hungarians/Poles?

5. Do you see issue linkages to migration/Roma/other marginalized groups?

6. How do you perceive Whiteness and ethnicity?

Guiding themes:

1. How are race and ethnicity perceived and navigated in Hungary/Poland?

2. How has BLM translated into the social, political, and cultural climate of your country?

3. Are there specific ways in which people in your country perceive this conversation and its relevance to national politics and foreign policy?

Appendix D: Demographic Data of Discussion Group Participants

Hungary

Age	What is your nationality?	How would you define your racial or ethnic background?	What is your highest level of education completed?	What is your current role or job? (e.g.: student, researcher, program coordinator)
24	Hungarian/Romanian	White	Bachelor's Degree	Student
25	Hungarian	White, European	Bachelor's Degree	Researcher
28	Hungarian	White	Master's Degree	Researcher
24	Hungarian	White	Bachelor's Degree	Finance worker
22	Hungarian	White	Bachelor's Degree	Student, Part-time Policy Analyst
26	Hungarian	White	Master's Degree	Consultant
28	Hungarian	Hungarian, White	High School	Student

Poland

Age	What is your nationality?	How would you define your racial or ethnic background?	What is your highest level of education completed?	What is your current role or job? (e.g.: student, researcher, program coordinator)
30	Polish	White	Master's Degree	Sustainability specialist
30	Polish	White	Master's Degree	Associate Director
26	Polish	Jewish	Master's Degree	Research Assistant
24	Polish	White	Bachelor's Degree	Student, Project Coordinator