The Politics *in* White Identity: Testing a Racialized Partisan Hypothesis

Efrén O. Pérez
UCLA

E. Enya Kuo
Yale University

Joey Russel
UCLA

William Scott-Curtis
UCLA

Jennifer Muñoz
UCLA

Megan Tobias
UCLA

What politicizes White identity? We consider here a racialized partisan hypothesis. Although Whites numerically prevail within each party, the variance around this central tendency varies sharply between them: Republicans are tightly organized around Whites, yet Democrats are structured around Whites who share membership with people of color. This configuration puts White Democrats in a more precarious position and can sometimes motivate them to jockey for intraparty prominence. We support this claim with survey and experimental evidence. First, we show that White identity is more strongly associated with opposition to immigration among White Democrats than White Republicans (n = 6,126). This pattern is absent on a placebo (opposition to federal spending on science). Second, we demonstrate, experimentally, that White identity (but not partisan identity) mediates the impact of racial threat on racially coded policies among White Democrats (n = 400). This pattern does not emerge among White Republicans (n = 400) and is absent on another placebo (support for infrastructure spending).

KEY WORDS: White identity, partisanship, intragroup relations, racial hierarchy

[W]hites' whiteness is…no more noteworthy to them than breathing the air around them. White group consciousness is…not likely to be a major force in whites' political attitudes today.

—Sears & Savalei, 2006

Until rather recently, studies of White identity were nonstarters. All racial groups in the United States—except for Whites—seemed to possess a group identity that profoundly structured their politics (Sears & Savalei, 2006). Yet in the span of nearly 15 years, the empirical record on White identity has shifted. Several scholars now note that many Whites believe their once firm foothold in America's racial order is demographically loosening—and fast (Danbold & Huo, 2015)—prompting a stronger interest in appraising the consequences of White identity. Psychologists have shown that under controlled conditions, White identity matters significantly in intergroup contexts (Knowles & Lowery, 2011). In political science, White identity's political effects have been definitively established in the mass public (Jardina, 2019).

But what actually politicizes White identity? Here, the literature is less clear, since the psychological mechanisms responsible for this phenomenon have been less explored (Pérez et al., 2019; Schildkraut, 2017). We propose one pathway for the politicization of White identity, the *racialized partisan hypothesis*, which stipulates that the wider racial diversity of Democrats (vs. Republicans) can sometimes threaten *White* Democrats' more prominent position within their party, leading their racial identity to have an outsized impact on their opinions about racial issues under this circumstance.

Intergroup relations are often organized hierarchically (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), with dominant groups motivated to preserve their privileged station. In social psychology, research suggests U.S. Whites maintain their dominance by marginalizing people of color based on how *socially inferior* and *foreign* they consider them to be (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). This insight is consistent with the broader notion of legitimizing myths (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)—that is, stereotypes, ideologies, and other discourse—that dominant groups use to justify keeping subordinated groups "in their place." Take Latinos, who are often framed by White elites as unskilled laborers with poor English skills and who thus threaten Americans' labor prospects and culture (Pérez, 2016). Based on this reasoning, many Whites support anti-immigration measures and other policy proposals (e.g., English-only, multiculturalist education) as a way to marginalize Latinos and other racially subordinated groups (Jardina, 2019; Pérez et al., 2019).

We argue that just like these orders affect relations *between* racial groups, hierarchies can sometimes shape their interactions *within* political parties (Ostfeld, 2019). As superordinate categories (Gaertner et al., 1993), political parties encapsulate smaller, heterogeneous groups (Mason, 2018). Numerically, Whites are the prototypical partisan among Republicans and Democrats (Green et al., 2002). Yet both parties differ in the degree of variance around this central tendency. Among Republicans, Whites abound in a shallow pool of non-Whites, which allows the former to take complete "ownership" of Republicans by projecting their image and norms onto this party (Philpot, 2008; Wenzel et al., 2007). In fact, many analysts consider Republicans a White *ethnic* party (Waldman, 2019). In contrast, although Whites numerically prevail within the Democratic party (Ostfeld, 2019), there is greater variance around this mean, with significant numbers of partisans of color, including Latinos (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016) and African Americans (White & Laird, 2020). This places Whites in a more precarious position, as their ability to secure "ownership" of Democrats is complicated by their party's wider racial diversity. Indeed, although some scholarship establishes that liberal candidates and issues are more tightly associated in memory among Democrats than Republicans (e.g., Ahler & Sood, 2018; Valentino & Zhirkov, 2018), we suggest this inclination toward racially liberal politics among White Democrats can sometimes be significantly softened when they feel a strong sense of racial threat.

This occurs, we reason, because political parties are a shared category composed of different groups nested within it. In this intragroup situation, greater conflict between members of a shared category can loosen the cohesiveness of the superordinate group on the basis of subgroup attachments, such as White identity. Research on *ingroup projection* reveals that threats to a group's dominant rank within a larger category are often met with cognitive and affective efforts to reassert one's jeopardized status (Wenzel et al., 2007). The mental coherence of any group—including

political parties—rests on clarity about who predominates within an ingroup, which is complicated when a shared category is highly diverse, as U.S. political parties are (Danbold & Huo, 2015; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001). When the internal heterogeneity of an ingroup is the frame of reference for ingroup members, those who numerically define a category—that is, prototypical ingroup members—can sometimes be motivated to preserve their definition of, and grip over, the ingroup.

This happens because one's personal focus shifts from intergroup dynamics (e.g., Democrats vs. Republicans) to intragroup processes (e.g., Democrats vs. fellow partisans). At baseline, Democrats generally report more positive views about minorities and support for racial diversity and racial equity than Republicans. For example, several scholars (Engelhardt, 2021; Hopkins & Washington, 2020) document significant over-time reductions in racial prejudice, with some of this decline being more pronounced among Democrats relative to Republicans. This pattern conforms with Zaller's (1992) Receive-and-Accept (RAS) model of opinion formation, where politically aware individuals express opinions that reflect systematic differences in political debate between Democratic and Republican elites, with Democrats as the more racially liberal party (Ahler & Sood, 2018; Valentino & Zhirkov, 2018). This aspect of the RAS model gels with an intergroup perspective where two (partisan) ingroups compete to differentiate themselves from each other to place their party in the clearest and most positive light possible (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987).

We expect this general pattern to change in light of a perceived threat to one's own racial position *within* a party, for three reasons. First, threats often suspend one's "normal" routines, as individuals scurry to deal with a stimulus perceived as having negative implications for one's ingroup (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). The presence of a threat allows scholars to better distinguish between the prevalence of a variable (e.g., White identity) and its stronger connection to political outcomes under some circumstances (e.g., threat to White identity) (Malhotra et al., 2013). As Jardina (2019) explains, White racial identity is especially politically potent when White individuals sense their group's position is jeopardized (Schildkraut, 2017). Thus, while White identity is, on average, less prevalent among Democrats than Republicans (see Appendix S.1 in the online supporting information), we argue that it can still have an outsized impact on self-identified Democrats under the "right" conditions. For example, Craig and Richeson (2014) show that, in light of perceiving demographic increases among people of color in the United States, many White adults express more conservative political views.

Second, people vary in their degree of partisanship (Green et al., 2002; Huddy et al., 2015). This means those who more strongly identify with their party are more sensitive to intragroup dynamics, especially in light of perceived threats to one's racial position in the ingroup (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). For example, Ellemers et al. (1997) and Pérez (2015) establish that when a group faces a collective threat to their status, well-being, or image, it is high-identifying members who scramble to cognitively, affectively, and politically bolster their ingroup in the face of danger.

Third, a nontrivial share of White Democrats sometimes express racially conservative attitudes and behavior, despite the generally liberal orientation of their party toward racial issues. For example, Krupnikov and Piston (2015) demonstrate that high-identifying Democrats who possess strong levels of racial prejudice are *less* likely to turnout to vote when a Black Democratic candidate is on the ballot because of a decision conflict between their partisan allegiance and racial prejudice. Moreover, as Jardina (2020) reports, higher levels of White identity actually boosted favorability ratings for Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential primaries, in part because she was a more traditional White candidate than other leading presidential candidates (e.g., Bernie Sanders, Ted Cruz). These counterintuitive results make complete sense if we consider that they emerge under specific circumstances (e.g., presence of Black Democrat on the ballot) and only among some individuals who are motivated to do so (high-identifying, but prejudiced,

Democrats). One of those conditions is when Whites believe their ingroup's higher rank in society is jeopardized (Jardina, 2019).

Braiding these insights, we derive our *racialized partisan hypothesis*: When White Democrats sense a threat to their racial group's prominence within their party, their White racial identity will be triggered, leading them to express *less* enthusiasm for diversity in politics. Thus, relative to Republicans, a heightened sense of racial identity should lead White Democrats to express stronger opposition to political initiatives that benefit people of color. This does not mean White Republicans fail to manifest any opposition to diversity-related measures. Studies show that, at baseline, White Republicans express more opposition to these initiatives (Sides et al., 2018). Instead, we claim that *if and when* racial identity is threatened among White Democrats, it will motivate them to express a more defensive political stance toward race-related policies and issues. This type of reaction aligns with work by Ostfeld (2019), who shows that White Democrats are less supportive of party leaders when they learn of their outreach to people of color. It is also consistent with research by Feldman and Huddy (2005), who find that racial resentment is more predictive of race-conscious policies on the political left.

We provide converging evidence of this racialized partisan hypothesis by focusing on White opinion toward immigration and related racial issues. Jardina (2019) reasons that White identity is more likely to influence opinions on policies that are perceived to protect their racial ingroup. One of these issues is immigration, where the presence of foreigners threatens the economic and cultural dominance of Whites (Craig & Richeson, 2014; Pérez et al., 2019). As Jardina (2019) explains, "in contemporary debates, immigration opponents frame the issue as an economic problem; immigrants, they argue, take jobs from American citizens, depress wages, and are a heavy burden on the social welfare system" (p. 156). Such sentiments are also expressed in cultural form, where opponents construe immigrants as undermining American norms, values, and traditions (Danbold & Huo, 2015). Both forms of threat are often directly traced to Latinos (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016; Pérez, 2016), thereby combining an outgroup target (Latinos) with a justification to lash out at it—that is, a threat to "our" economy or culture. In fact, a clear outgroup that poses a collective threat is necessary for ingroup favoritism to manifest (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

We hypothesize that White Democrats will express more defensive racial attitudes than White Republicans *on the basis of their racial identity* when they feel a strong sense of threat from a racial or ethnic constituency within the Democratic party. Studies 1 and 2 use survey data to show that White identity is more strongly associated with opposition to immigration among Democrats than Republicans, a trend that is absent on opposition to spending on science and technology (placebo). We attribute these patterns to the strong racial coding of immigration as a "Latino" issue (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016). Studies 3 and 4 then reveal how this observed asymmetric influence of White identity is driven by White Democrats' sense of racial threat. Using a pair of experiments with a mediation design, we show that exposure to racial threat (from Latinos) heightens White identity *only* among Democrats, which spurs them to express more opposition to immigration than usual and perceive less commonality with people of color, such as Latinos and African Americans. This pattern fails to manifest on another placebo, support for spending on infrastructure improvements.

STUDY 1

White Partisans in Donald Trump's Wake

Our first test uses the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES), which fielded measures of White identity, partisan identity, and immigration opinions. This survey occurred on the heels of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, which made immigration a centerpiece issue (Sides et al., 2018). We test whether the connection between White identity and political opinions about

immigration varies by partisanship, a key assumption in our argument. We expect White identity will be more strongly associated with opposition to immigration among White Democrats than White Republicans.

Method

Sample

All White respondents were included in our analyses, except those missing data due to incomplete interviews (*n* = 2,565).

Procedure

Respondents were sampled probabilistically and completed surveys either face to face or online, with the combined weighted sample providing a nationally representative cross-section of U.S. adults.

Measures

White Identity

We measured White identity with a single identity centrality item (Leach et al., 2008), which asked "How important is being White to your identity?" completed on a 5-point scale (1 = *Extremely important*, 5 = *Not at all important*). We coded responses so that higher values reflected stronger White identity.

Partisan Identity

We measured partisanship on a traditional 7-point scale (1 = *strong Republican*, 4 = *Independent*, 7 = *strong Democrat*). We count partisan leaners as partisans.

Decrease Immigration Levels

Respondents were asked, "Do you think the number of immigrants from foreign countries who are permitted to come to the U.S. to live should be increased, decreased, or kept the same as it is now?" with answers on a 7-point scale (1 = *increased a lot*, 7 = *decreased a lot*).

Favor a Wall with Mexico

Participants answered, "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose building a wall on the U.S. border with Mexico?" with replies on a 7-point scale (1 = *favor a great deal*, 5 = *oppose a great deal*).

End Birthright Citizenship for Children of Undocumented Immigrants

Participants read, "Some people have proposed that the U.S. Constitution should be changed so that children of unauthorized immigrants do not automatically get citizenship if they are born in this country," and replied on a 7-point scale (1 = *favor a great deal*, 7 = *oppose a great deal*).

Deport Unauthorized Immigrant Youth

Participants answered, "What should happen to immigrants who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and have lived here for at least 10 years and graduated from high school here?" with replies arrayed from 1 (*should send back [favor a great deal]*) to 6 (*should allow to stay [favor a great deal]*).

Opposition to Spending on Science and Technology

This placebo asked whether "federal spending on science and technology should be" 1 (*increased*), 2 (*decreased*), or 3 (*kept about the same*). We coded replies so that higher values indicate opposition to spending in this nonracial domain.

We report summary statistics in Appendix S.2 in online supporting information. We coded our main outcomes so that higher values indicated greater opposition to immigration. Our models include key covariates, including racial resentment, egalitarianism, region, political knowledge, age, and gender. All variables are rescaled to a 0–1 range.

Results

If our racialized partisan hypothesis is correct, then we should observe that relative to White Republicans, White Democrats will be more affected by their racial (White) identity. This assumes a nontrivial share of Democrats actually identify as White. In the 2016 ANES, robust proportions of Democrats (49.06%) and Republicans (57.81%) consider their White identity to be moderately to extremely important. While about 13% of Republicans consider their racial identity to be extremely important, 9% of Democrats also register this view. Thus, any interactive relationship between White identity and partisanship has a meaningful reservoir to draw from (see Appendix S.1 in the online supporting information).[1] In fact, there is a weak and unreliable association between White identity and partisanship in this sample, with one of the stronger correlates of White identity being one's sense of racial resentment (see Appendix S.3). Thus, the expected interactive relationship between partisanship and White identity should be independent of prejudice, which we index with a racial resentment scale (Kinder & Sanders, 1996). We expect to observe a fully interactive relationship between White identity, Democratic partisanship, and their multiplication (Kam & Franzese, 2007).[2]

Table 1's results support this hypothesis. Across all immigration outcomes, the fully interactive relationship between White identity and Democratic partisanship emerges. This is corroborated by *F*-tests that assess whether the impact of White identity, Democratic partisanship, and their interaction is distinguishable from 0 (Kam & Franzese, 2007). All these tests are highly reliable, suggesting the impact of White identity on immigration views is statistically different among White Democrats. We therefore focus our attention on a composite scale of opposition to immigration ($\alpha = .73$), which reduces measurement error and yields our most robust estimate of our predicted pattern (Brown, 2007). Moving across our partisanship scale in a Democratic direction, White identity boosts opposition to immigration by about 7 points ($\beta = .071$, $SE = .032$, $p < .023$). Thus, although Democrats are significantly less opposed to immigration than Republicans (on average), a stronger sense of White identity narrows this gap significantly. This can be seen by inspecting key coefficients in Table 1.[3] Our constant (.381) reveals average oppo-

---

[1]About 55% of pure Independents report their White identity as being moderately to extremely important (see Appendix S.1 in the online supporting information).
[2]Besides being more racially resentful, White-identifying individuals are also older and less educated.
[3]Complete results for all models are in Appendix S.4 in the online supporting information.

Table 1. White Racial Identity Is More Strongly Associated With Opposition to Immigration Among Democratic Partisans (2016 ANES)

	Opposition: Immigration (Scale)	Decrease Immigration	End Birthright Citizenship	Favor Wall With Mexico	Deport Unauthorized Minors
White Identification	.021	.038$^\wedge$	.023	.011	.011
	(.019)	(.023)	(.034)	(.029)	(.031)
Democrat Identification	−.265*	−.156*	−.242*	−.470*	−.142*
	(.018)	(.021)	(.032)	(.029)	(.028)
White × Dem.	.071*	.063$^\wedge$	.081	.103*	.052
	(.032)	(.038)	(.055)	(.048)	(.049)
Racial resentment	.359*	.386*	.289*	.432*	.325*
	(.017)	(.021)	(.029)	(.027)	(.024)
Full Interaction = 0?	$F_{3,2676} = 119.26$, $p < .0001$	$F_{3,1277} = 33.62$, $p < .0001$	$F_{3,2717} = 36.14$, $p < .0001$	$F_{3,2716} = 150.54$, $p < .0001$	$F_{3,2690} = 16.07$, $p < .0001$
Constant	.381*	.449*	.419*	.397*	.269*
	(.026)	(.033)	(.042)	(.041)	(.037)
N	2,689	2,726	2,730	2,729	2,703

Note. Entries are OLS coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. All variables run along a 0 to 1 range. Other covariates (not shown) include egalitarianism, political knowledge, college education, income, economic perceptions, age, gender, and region.
*$p < .05$, $^\wedge p < .10$, two-tailed.

sition to immigration among Republicans when all other covariates are at 0. A unit shift in Democratic partisanship (−.265) undercuts this opposition, putting Democrats' resistance to immigration at (.116). This lower level of opposition is then significantly increased (.071) by a unit increase in White identity, thus narrowing the gap in opposition to immigration between Republicans (.381) and Democrats (.187).

Figure 1 graphs this result. There one sees the impact of White identity on opposition to immigration among a strong Republican versus a strong Democrat. This comparison provides insight into the interactive relationship we uncover. Among strong Republicans, a shift in White identity does not boost their opposition to immigration any further (.021, 95% CI: [−.016, .059]). But among strong Democrats, a unit shift in White identity increases their opposition to immigration by about 9 percentage points (.093, 95% CI: [.051, .134]). Thus, although strong Democrats are generally less opposed to immigration than are strong Republicans, a heightened level of White identity can reliably increase this opposition.[4] This pattern is absent on our placebo, support for spending on science and technology, depicted in Figure 2.

These observational results generally align with our racialized partisan hypothesis, as higher White identity levels are associated with Democratic opposition to immigration. But these patterns might be unique to the dawn of Donald Trump's presidency, who made immigration central to his campaign and government. It is plausible that rank-and-file Republicans adhered to the president's issue stances more closely than usual, yielding a "follow the leader" effect (Lenz, 2012). If true, then this strong party cue will reduce the influence of White identity among Republicans, especially those who weakly identify as White. This would partly explain the outsized impact that White identity seems to have on White Democrats.

[4]Political knowledge does not appear to moderate this pattern (see Appendix S.5 in the online supporting information). Although this null pattern is inconsistent with Zaller's (1992) RAS model, the domain in question here is racial politics, where group-centric considerations play a prominent role (cf. Kinder, 2006).
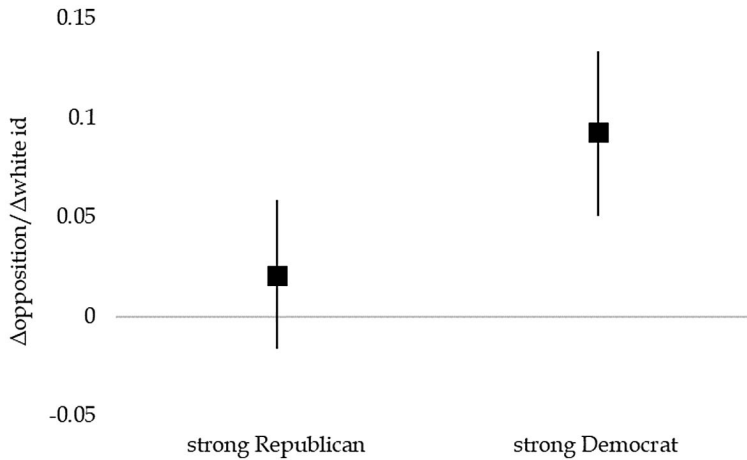
Figure 1. White identity's impact on opposition to immigration by party identification in 2016 ANES. Figure reflects changes in opposition to immigration given a unit shift in White identity among strong partisans. These coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) are from an OLS model that estimates the interactive relationship between White identity and partisanship, net of racial resentment, egalitarianism, political knowledge, college education, income, economic perceptions, age, gender, and region. Full results in Appendix S.4 in the online supporting information.

STUDY 2

Racialized Partisans under a Democratic President and Era

Study 2 casts some doubt on this "follow the leader" counter-explanation, while highlighting the robustness of our observed dynamic. Accordingly, we analyzed the 2012 ANES, which was gathered during a presidential contest between Barack Obama (incumbent Democrat) and Mitt Romney (Republican).

Sample

Our sample consists of all White respondents, except those with missing data due to incomplete interviews (n = 3,037).

Procedure

Respondents interviewed in person or online from September 2012 through January 2013. Both cross-sections are combined and weighted to be nationally representative. Our predictors, again, were White identity, partisan identity, and their interaction (plus covariates). Our outcomes were opposition to immigration and spending on science and technology (placebo).

Measures

Our measures here resemble Study 1's, with minor changes in available items and wording (see Appendix S.6 in the online supporting information). Summary statistics for all variables under analysis are in Appendix S.7 in the online supporting information. We count partisan leaners as partisans. Our models also include key demographic and political covariates, including
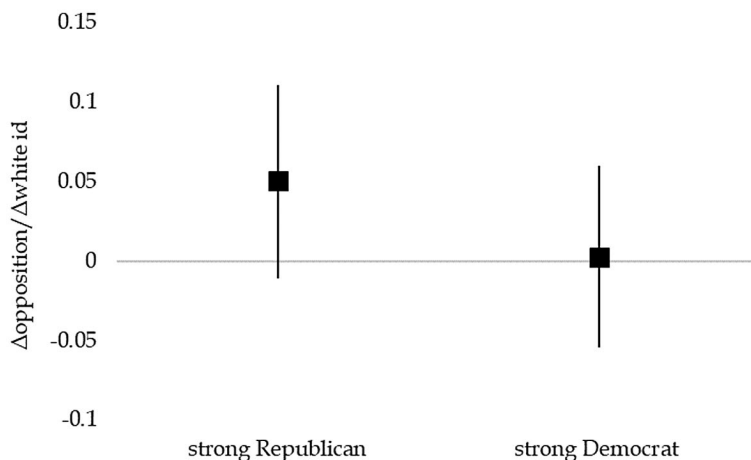
Figure 2. White identity's impact on opposition to spending on science and technology by party identification in 2016 ANES. Figure reflects changes in opposition to spending on science and technology given a unit shift in White identity among strong partisans. These coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) are from an OLS model that estimates the interactive relationship between White identity and partisanship, net of racial resentment, egalitarianism, political knowledge, college education, income, economic perceptions, age, gender, and region. Full results, including those with ordered logit instead of OLS, are reported in Appendix S.4 in the online supporting information.

racial resentment, egalitarianism, region, age, and political knowledge. All variables are rescaled to a 0–1 range.

Results

Insofar as our racialized partisan hypothesis is correct, we should again observe that relative to White Republicans, the impact of racial identity is stronger among White Democrats. Comparable to the 2016 ANES, we find that in this 2012 sample, a substantial proportion of Democrats (57.86%) and Republicans (58.25%) view their White identity as moderately to extremely important to themselves. Furthermore, while about 13% of Republicans consider their racial identity to be extremely important, about 9% of Democrats also consider their sense of being White as highly important (see Appendix S.1 in the online supporting information). We also find, again, that White identity has a weak and unreliable association with one's party identification, with White-identifying individuals generally being more racially resentful, older, and less educated (see Appendix S.3).[5]

We visually depict Study 2's main insight, with full results in (see Appendix S.8). The outcome in Figure 3 is a composite scale of opposition to immigration ($\alpha = .69$), which we use to dampen down random measurement error in our estimates.[6] Figure 3 reveals that among strong Republicans, a shift in White identity does not boost their already robust opposition to immigration any further (.007, 95% CI: [−029, .042]). But among strong Democrats, a unit shift in White identity increases their opposition to immigration by about 10 percentage points (.095, 95% CI: [.052, .139]). This

---

[5]In this sample, about 55% of pure Independents consider their White identity as moderately to extremely important (see Appendix S.1 in the online supporting information).

[6]Our analyses (see Appendix S.8 in the online supporting information) of each immigration outcome uncovers the expected positive interaction between White identity and Democratic partisanship, but with varied precision due to measurement error. We confidently reject the null hypothesis that the fully interactive relationship is statistically 0 in each case (corroborated by F-tests), but we find the crispest support for our claim when we employ our scale of opposition to immigration.
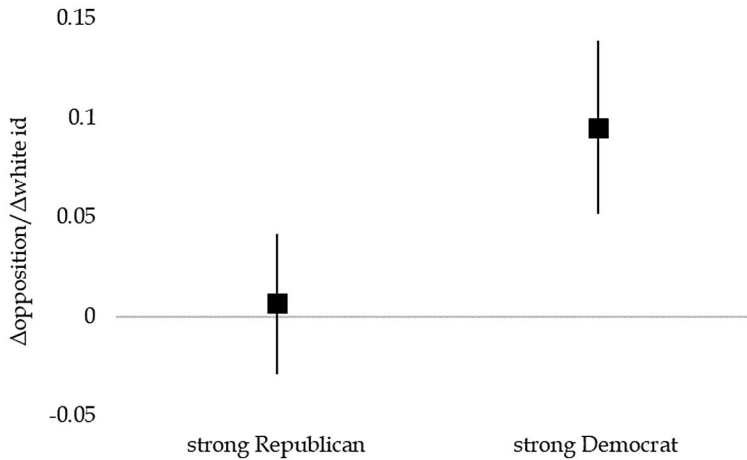
Figure 3. White identity's impact on opposition to immigration by party identification in 2012 ANES. Figure reflects changes in opposition to immigration given a unit shift in White identity among strong partisans. These coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) are from an OLS model that estimates the interactive relationship between White identity and partisanship, net of racial resentment, egalitarianism, political knowledge, college education, income, economic perceptions, age, gender, and region. Full results in Appendix S.8 in the online supporting information.

suggests that White identity narrows the gap in opposition to immigration between Republicans and Democrats, as indicated by our key coefficients in Appendix S.8 in the online supporting information.

Our constant (.431) indicates the average level of opposition to immigration among Republicans when all other covariates are at 0. A unit shift in Democratic partisanship (−.178) undercuts this opposition, putting Democrats' resistance to immigration at .253. This lower level of opposition is then significantly increased (.089) by a unit increase in White identity, thus cutting in half the gap in opposition to immigration between Republicans (.431) and Democrats (.342). This pattern fails to appear on support for spending on science and technology (placebo), which we display in Figure 4 and fully report in Appendix S.8 in the online supporting information. Although White identity increases support for spending in this nonracial domain, this influence is statistically indistinguishable from 0 (.061, 95% CI: [−.001, .124]). These results imply our hypothesized interplay between White identity and Democratic partisanship is a racialized phenomenon that is robust to presidential era and unlikely to be fully explained by President Trump's racial politics.[7]

STUDIES 3 AND 4

Parallel Experiments with White Partisans

If, as Studies 1–2 indicate, White identity impacts support for policies that protect their racial in-group, the dynamic we have uncovered on immigration should emerge in other domains that meet this standard. One of these domains is English-only policies, which preserve the language of America's dominant racial group (i.e., Whites) (Pérez et al., 2019; Sears & Citrin, 2014). Another domain is legacy college admissions, where "more [W]hites stand to gain" relative to people of color (Jardina, 2019, pp.

---

[7]As in Study 1, political knowledge does not appear to moderate this pattern (see Appendix S.5 in the online supporting information).
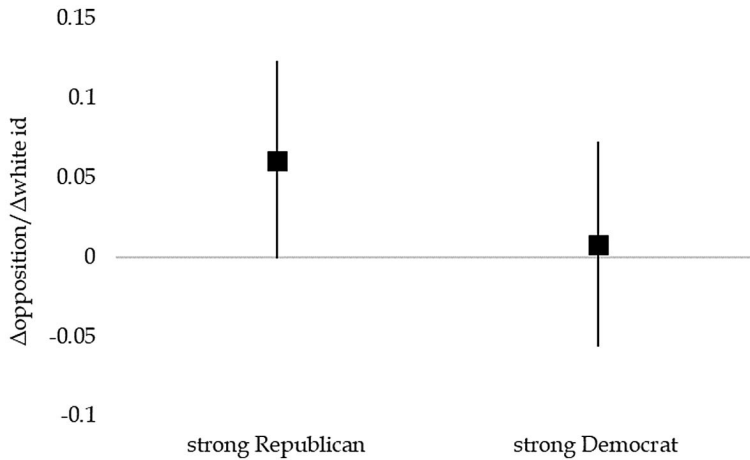
Figure 4. White identity's impact on opposition to spending on science and technology by party identification in 2012 ANES. Figure reflects changes in opposition to spending on science and technology given a unit shift in White identity among strong partisans. These coefficients (and 95% confidence intervals) are from an OLS model that estimates the interactive relationship between White identity and partisanship, net of racial resentment, egalitarianism, political knowledge, college education, income, economic perceptions, age, gender, and region. Full results, including those with ordered logit instead of OLS, are reported in Appendix S.8 in the online supporting information.

205–207). However, beyond this question of breadth, our results so far also still leave us in the dark about the mechanisms driving these broad patterns. Specifically, it is plausible that White identity is heightened by psychological cues that are difficult to fully capture with survey data. Thus, we designed two parallel experiments with White Democrats and Republicans to clarify these points.

Many ways exist to experimentally assess our racialized partisan hypothesis. One possibility is to directly manipulate individual perceptions about one's party. Yet party images are hard to change. Indeed, Philpot (2008) shows that casting the Republican party as displaying greater racial diversity trivially shifts the views of only those Republicans who *least* care about racial issues (i.e., those less threatened by racial diversity). Furthermore, recall that our hypothesis centers on the role that threatened White identity plays in steering partisan opinions. What we require, then, is a manipulation that places White identity in jeopardy.

Accordingly, we used racially coded discourse around immigration to elicit a sense of racial threat among White adults (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016; Jardina, 2019). This lets us employ a manipulation with a relatively high degree of *mundane realism*, since our treatments reflect the kind of immigration discourse that is rife in politics (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). We then appraise whether our manipulation is also *psychologically realistic*, insofar as it threatens White racial identity and spurs a defensive reaction (Aronson et al., 1998).

Drawing on prior work (Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016; Craig & Richeson, 2018), we designed manipulations that raised the alleged cultural and economic consequences of Latino immigration to the United States. At 18% of the U.S. population, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority, a sizable segment of the Democratic party, and a prominent scapegoat for White grievances (Jardina, 2019). We hypothesized that raising these cultural and economic threats would heighten the salience of White identity which, downstream, would weaken intraparty unity between racial groups, increase opposition to immigration, boost endorsement of English-only policy, and heighten support for legacy college admissions. We expected these effects to be stronger among White Democrats than White Republicans. We were agnostic about whether one or both of our treatments (compared to control) would spark White identity.

Method

Participants

Large online samples of self-identified White, U.S.-born Democrats (Study 3) or Republicans (Study 4) were recruited through Prolific to take a 5-minute survey in April 2020 and compensated $1.50 for participation. Both studies occurred simultaneously and were approved by our Institutional Review Board.

Study 3 had a sample of 400 participants (234 women, M_{age} = 34.30, SD_{age} = 10.57). Study 4 also had a sample of 400 participants (185 women, M_{age} = 38.80, SD_{age} = 13.96). We powered these studies to detect medium treatment effects (d = .40, p < .05, two-tailed).

Procedure

Studies 3 and 4 had the same design. We undertook these experiments independently to ensure adequate sample sizes of self-identified members of each party. In absence of this approach, experimental samples will yield imbalanced numbers of Democrats and Republicans, which can limit inferences about the links between White identity and partisanship.

Participants were randomly allocated to one of four conditions (*control*, *relaxation*, *cultural threat*, *economic threat*). They then completed measures of White and partisan identity in randomized order. Next, they replied to items measuring a sense of commonality with specific racial groups, which we use to determine whether heightened White identity stems from a perceived racial threat to one's group. Participants also expressed support for policy proposals related to immigration, English-only, legacy college admissions, and support for infrastructure improvements (placebo).

Manipulations

Participants were randomly assigned to read about Latino participation in labor markets (*economic threat*), Latinos' Spanish use (*cultural threat*), meditation practices (*relaxation*), or geographic mobility (*control*). Our focal treatments were *cultural* and *economic* threat, which highlight Latinos' encroachment on two domains that Whites view apprehensively (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). These manipulations and our control were adapted from previous work (Craig & Richeson, 2018). Full wording and visuals for our manipulations are in Appendix S.9 in the online supporting information.

The *economic threat* condition reported U.S. Census data on Latino demographics and their labor-force participation, emphasizing that a "growing Latino presence in communities throughout the country is increasing job competition in the economy" and that "the growing presence of Latinos in the U.S. workforce suggests there will be fewer jobs for people from other groups." This message was accompanied by the images in Figure 5.

The *cultural threat* condition reported U.S. Census information on Latino demographics and their levels of English fluency, explaining that a "growing Latino presence in communities throughout the country is changing the face of America" and that "Latinos disproportionately live in Spanish speaking communities." The images in Figure 6 were embedded in this condition.

The *relaxation* condition reported national trends in relaxation practices. We included this condition to address whether, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were already feeling a generalized sense of threat.

The *control* condition reported national trends in geographic mobility.
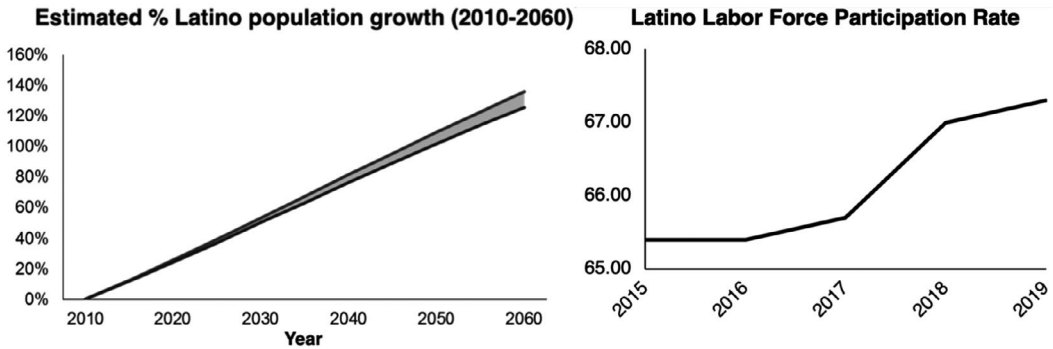
Figure 5. Visuals for economic-threat condition.

Measures

White Identity

Following Leach et al. (2008) and Jardina (2019), we measured White identity with two items (α_{Dems} = .73, α_{Reps} = .79; "Being White is important to how I see myself" and "Whites should work together to improve their position") on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Partisan Identity

We measured partisan identity with two items (α_{Dems} = .74, α_{Reps} = .82; "Being a [Democrat/Republican] is important to how I see myself" and "[Democrats/Republicans] should work together to improve their position") on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).[8]

Perceived Similarity to Racial Groups and Partisans

We assessed perceived similarity to Whites, African Americans, and Latinos with three items ("I have a lot in common with the average [White/African American/Latino] person) answered on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). We also gauged perceived similarity to partisans ("I have a lot in common with the average [Democrat/Republican]).

Opposition to Immigration

We measured opposition to immigration with three items (α_{Dems} = .73, α_{Reps} = .69): "Increase the time required for immigrants to become eligible for U.S. citizenship"; "Provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants (DREAM Act)"; and "Renew temporary relief from deportation for undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children (DACA)" on 7-point scales

---

[8]We used the traditional 7-point partisanship scale to screen participants into our Democratic and Republican samples. Our partisan identity items here assess a more expressive form of partisanship, which captures the same construct as the traditional 7-point scale, but with greater variation in intensity of identification (cf. Huddy et al., 2015; also Leach et al., 2008). These items will provide an incremental degree of external validity *if* we find our predicted pattern with this alternate operationalization of a key variable (Aronson et al., 1998). Appendix S.10. in the online supporting information shows these items tap a common partisanship variable across Democrats and Republicans.
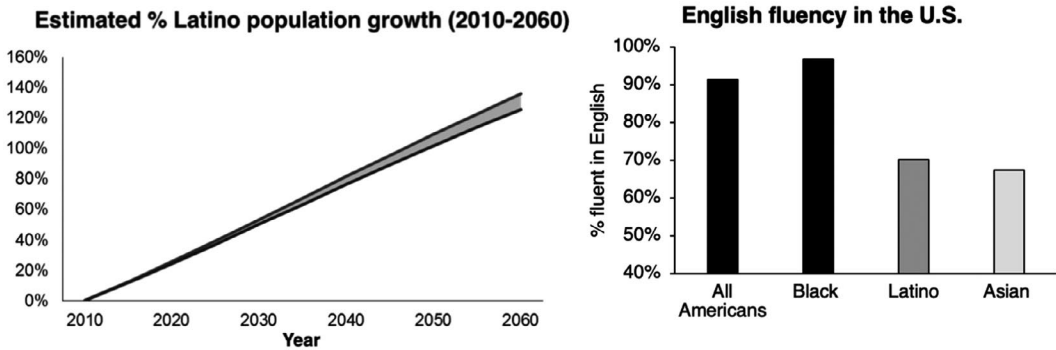
Figure 6. Visuals for cultural-threat condition.

(1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). We code these items so that higher values equal greater opposition to immigration.

Support for English-Only Policy

We measured support for English-only policy with three items (α_{Dems} = .93, α_{Reps} = .92): "Establish English as the official language of the United States"; "Make English the official language for local government affairs"; and "Require English to be the common language of the United States" on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Support for Legacy College Admissions

We tapped this domain with three items on legacy admissions, which Jardina (2019) shows are supported by high-identifying Whites, who view them as beneficial to their ingroup (α_{Dems} = .84, α_{Reps} = .86): "Require universities to have 'legacy admissions,' which admit some students based on whether their parents or grandparents attended a school"; "Allow colleges to give special consideration to the children or grandchildren of people who graduated from their campus"; and "Provide legacy preferences to some university applicants to ensure that special circumstances are considered when universities admit new students" on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Support for National Infrastructure

This placebo consists of three items (α_{Dems} = .77, α_{Reps} = .85): "Increase government funding for infrastructure maintenance and expansion"; "Increase incentives for companies to maintain and expand infrastructure"; and "Increase building of infrastructure" on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

Summary statistics for Democratic and Republican samples are in Appendix S.11 in the online supporting information and Appendix S.12, respectively.

Results

In both samples, we measured White and partisan identity with items gauging one's recognition and importance of identifying with one's racial and partisan groups (Jardina, 2019; Leach et al., 2008). Despite this nuance in measurement, robust proportions of Republicans (33.25%) and

Democrats (16.25%) identify as White from a moderate to strong degree. Indeed, while Republicans again seem to place a higher premium on their White identity, a nontrivial share of Democrats do so as well.[9]

Given our experiment's multiple items, we analyze our data via structural equation modeling (SEM), which tests for multiple mediation paths (i.e., White and partisan identity) and dis-attenuates our estimates for random measurement error. We intentionally appraised *two* possible mediators to guard against omitted variable bias in the downstream path, which is a methodological pitfall in designs like ours, where identities are observed rather than manipulated.

We hypothesized that economic and/or cultural threat would spark White racial identity, with downstream impacts on perceived similarity with racial groups and political opinions about racial diversity. Based on Studies 1–2, we expected that any mediation here would be sharper among White Democrats than White Republicans, which we evaluated by comparing our parallel samples of White partisans. Crucial here is a measurable causal effect from a focal treatment(s) to White identity.

Table 2 reports the SEM segment that assessed our treatment effects on *White* and *partisan* identity by sample (see Appendices S.13 and S.14 in the online supporting information for full results). Among Republicans, none of the treatments reliably boost White identity. In contrast, we find that relative to the control, exposing Democrats to *economic threat* marginally heightens their White identity ($d = .29$, $p < .097$) but not their Democratic identity ($d = .14$, $p < .452$).[10]

Based on this observed pattern, we then estimated a simpler model that assessed the effect of *economic threat* on White identity compared to a condition that pools our *control* with the other nonsignificant conditions we observed (i.e., *relaxation* condition, and *cultural threat* condition) (see Appendix S.15 in the online supporting information). This model's enhanced statistical power yields a causal effect of comparable size, but with more precision, such that *economic threat* increases the salience of White identity among Democrats ($d = .28$, $p < .045$) at a more conventional threshold. We obtain a similar effect for *economic threat* ($d = .31$, $p < .043$) if we only collapse our *control* and *relaxation* conditions and compare them to our *cultural threat* and *economic threat* conditions. Here, the impact of *cultural threat* among Democrats remains small and statistically unreliable ($d = .06$, $p < .67$), while *economic threat* remains substantively and statistically significant ($d = .31$, $p < .043$). We therefore report the results of the more parsimonious model, where we compare our *economic threat* condition to an omnibus control that pools our nonsignificant conditions (i.e., *control* condition, *relaxation* condition, and *cultural threat* condition). This allows us to use all our observations (see Appendix S.15 in the online supporting information).

We find that exposure to *economic threat* raises the salience of White identity among Democrats ($d = .28$, $p < .045$), but not Republicans (see Appendix S.16 in the online supporting information). This causal nudge is then reliably associated with shifts in personal views about racial groups within one's party. Specifically, heightened levels of White identity among Democrats are reliably associated with increases in perceived commonality with Whites ($d = .33$, $p < .001$), yet decreases in perceived commonality with Latinos ($d = −.20$, $p < .003$) and African Americans ($d = −.22$, $p < .001$). Thus, in light of perceived economic threat from Latinos, Whites sense more commonality with other Whites, but reliably less commonality with Latinos and Blacks. These patterns support our claim

[9]Recall that these parallel samples focus on self-professed partisans (including leaners), which means that pure Independents are excluded by design.

[10]This pattern is not driven by differences in the meaning of our identity items among Democrats and Republicans. In Appendix S.10 in the online supporting information, we demonstrate that all of our items tap into their respective construct— and only their intended construct (i.e., configural invariance). We also establish these items hold similar meaning for both Democrats and Republicans (i.e., metric invariance).

Table 2. Treatment Effects on Identity Mediators (Study 2)

	Democrats		Republicans	
	White Identification	Party Identification	White Identification	Party Identification
Economic Threat	.29^(.17)	.14(.18)	.21(.15)	.07(.17)
Cultural Threat	.05(.17)	−.06(.18)	.14(.17)	.14(.17)
Relaxation	−.04(.17)	.09(.18)	−.03(.16)	−.11(.17)
CFI/TLI	.984/.975		.978/.965	
RMSEA	.061		.067	
[90% CI]	[.054, .069]		[.059, .074]	

Note. N = 400 for each model. Entries are WLSMV coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Factor variances fixed to 1.0 to identify each model.
*$p < .05$, ^$p < .10$, two-tailed.

that White Democrats are motivated to bolster their racial position within a highly diverse party comprised by people of color.

Reaffirming this inference, we also find that higher White identity levels in our Democrat sample are associated with greater *opposition to immigration* ($d = 1.07$, $p < .002$), more support for *English-only policy* ($d = .79$, $p < .001$), and more support for *legacy college admissions*, which benefit Whites ($d = .32$, $p < .001$). However, White identity is substantively and statistically unrelated to Democrats' support for *infrastructure improvements*, our placebo ($d = .11$, $p < .396$), further suggesting that White Democrats' reactions are motivated by racial concerns in this circumstance. Each of these downstream associations is substantively similar to those we uncover in our initial model, where *economic threat* is marginally significant, thus lending further credence to these results (see Appendix S.17 in the online supporting information). In contrast, *economic threat* had no impact on racial or partisan identity among Republicans in this model (see Appendix S.16).[11]

Figure 7 displays our results, with Democrats on the left and Republicans on the right. Among Republicans, no indirect effects through White or partisan identity are produced, given unreliable treatment effects. For Democrats, however, all indirect effects are correctly signed, with five of six of them being statistically significant at the 5% level (see Appendix S.18 in the online supporting information). This implies that threatening White identity generally yields racialized replies among Democrats.[12]

Since we observed White identity, instead of manipulating it, these mediated patterns are susceptible to confounding in the downstream path. This challenge is mitigated here by two considerations. First, the downstream impact of White identity on political outcomes is *independent* of partisan identity, a potential alternative mediator and key feature of our design. By ruling out this alternative pathway, we can have more confidence that racial identity is motivating White Democrats' defensive posture. Second, the methodological threat posed by an omitted variable in the observed relationship between racial identity and our outcomes can be gauged, in part, by considering whether any residual correlations exist in this downstream path. These residual correlations are a tip-off to a possible omitted variable. Formal inspection of our model's modification indices reveals no residual correlations that can improve model fit (Brown, 2007), which raises confidence in our observed mediated effects.

---

[11]If we pool these independent samples and formally constrain to 0 the path from *economic threat* to White identity among Republicans, the omnibus model retains all signs of excellent fit, which further affirms that it is among Democrats that *economic threat* significantly catalyzes White identity (see Appendix S.19 in the online supporting information).
[12]It is also plausible that economic threat catalyzes White identity, which then impacts partisan identity, with downstream impacts. Appendix S.20 in the online supporting information shows this more involved mediation process yields a poor-fitting model.
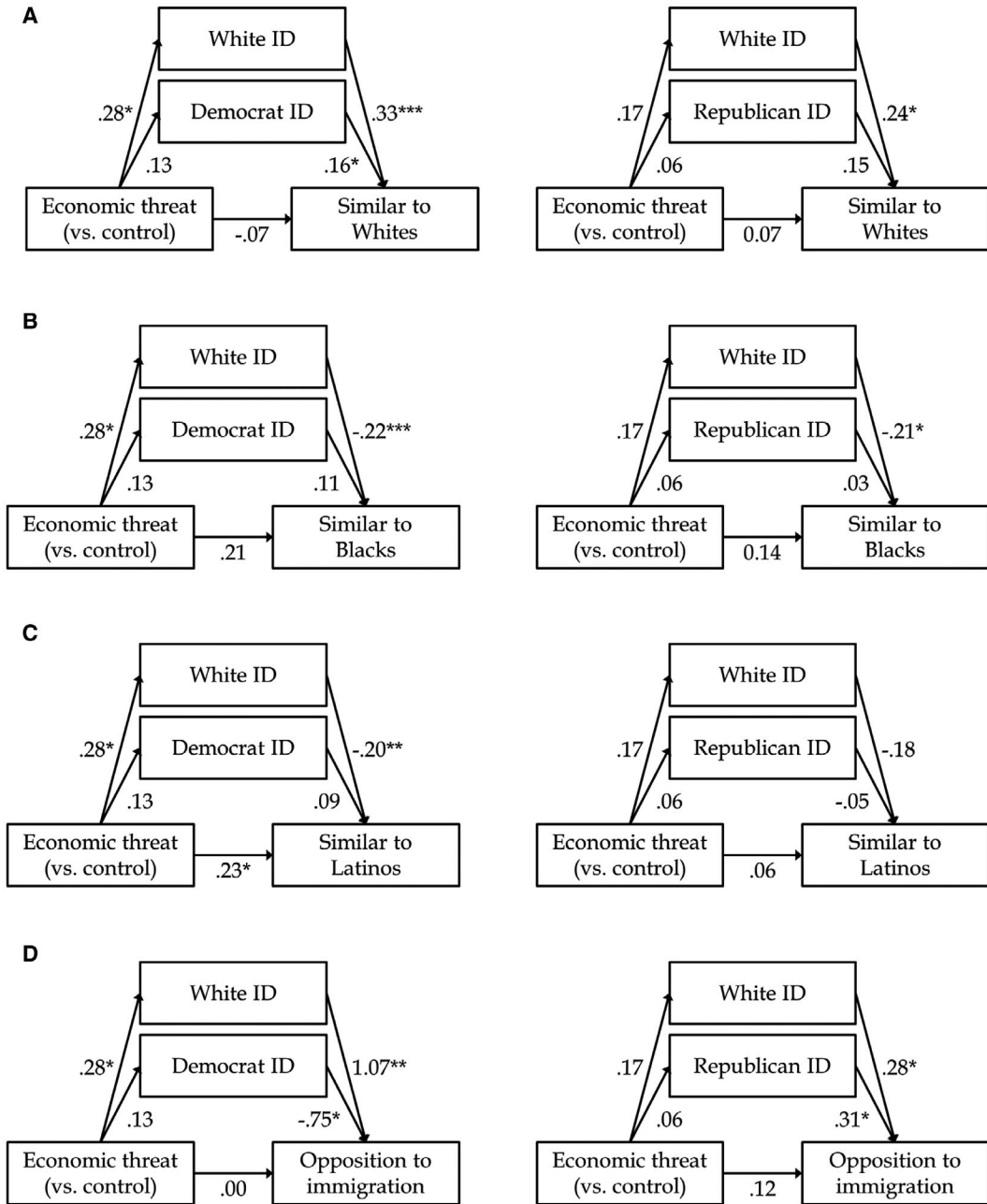
Figure 7. Racial identity mediates economic threat's impact on White Democrats' political attitudes toward diversity (parallel experiments with Democrats and Republicans). Entries are WLSMV coefficients from SEMs estimated in Mplus for Democrats (CFI: .974; RMSEA: .069) and Republicans (CFI: .977; RMSEA: .072) Coefficient units reflect standardized mean differences (*d*). **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, two-tailed.
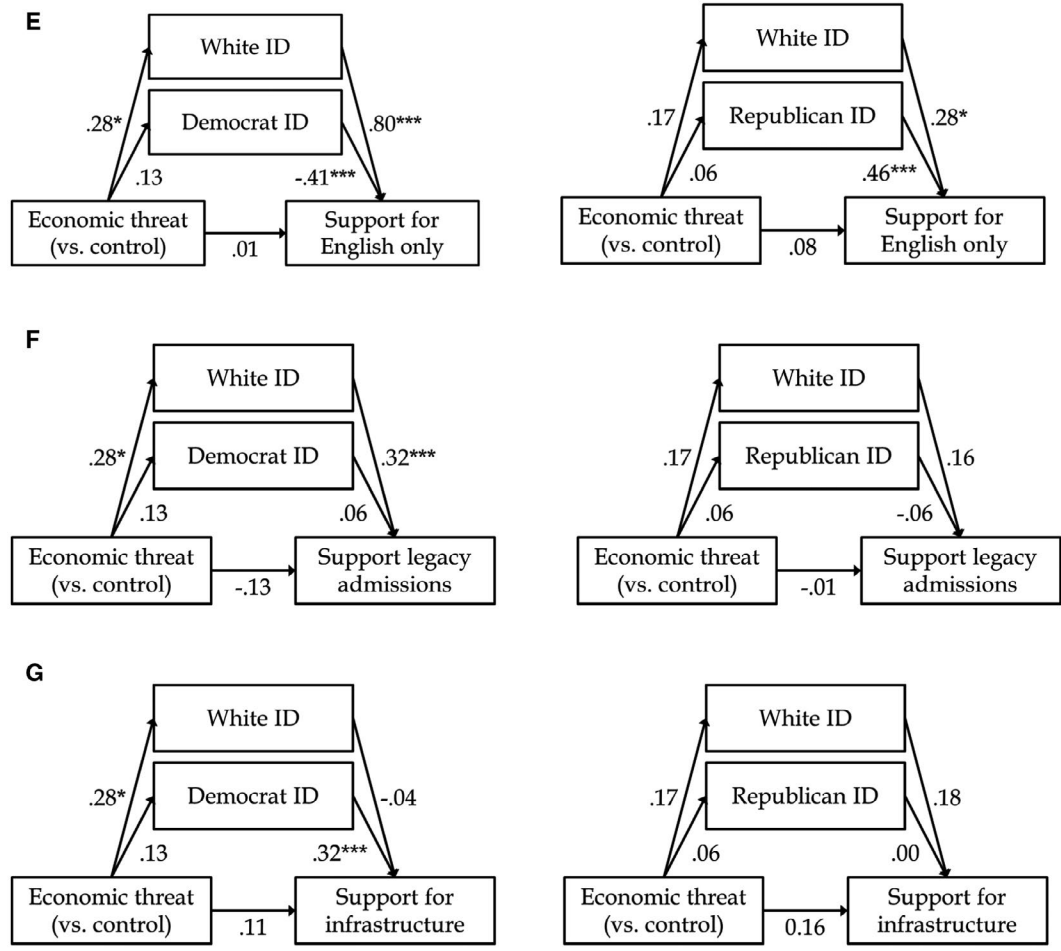
Figure 7. (Continued)

Discussion

Four studies yielded support for our racialized partisan hypothesis: the idea that White Democrats—who inhabit a more racially diverse party—express more defensive racial attitudes than White Republicans when they feel a strong sense of racial threat. Although these results lend a high degree of internal and external validity to this claim, we believe our findings should be weighed against three considerations.

First, while our studies produced evidence aligning with our proposed mechanism, we were unable to exercise complete causal leverage. Although our mediation design controlled for an alternate mediation path and included a placebo, the downstream effects of a politicized White identity should be further appraised using more stringent designs. Second, despite the consistency of our results, it remains unclear whether they emerge only in settings like the United States, where partisan polarization looms large. Third, given the soft touch of our treatment effects on White identity among Democrats, we welcome more investigation into the varied strength of threat(s) to White Democrats' numerical prominence within their party.

Nonetheless, we believe our findings yield several implications for research on racialized politics and partisan polarization. One of these involves the triggers to the dynamic we uncovered here between White identity and partisanship. Under the greater control our experiments provided, we find that economic concerns—not cultural ones—spark a stronger sense of White identity among Democrats. The framing of opposition to immigration in economic terms is a popular approach among partisan elites (e.g., Abrajano & Hajnal, 2016). But what also stands out from this finding is that the cultural framing of immigration did not work at all—even among Republicans. This suggests that among Republicans, such framing already reflects their perspective on immigration, leaving little room for this construal of immigrants to have additional impact. But among Democrats, the galvanizing effect of economic threat (over its cultural form) raises a tantalizing possibility—that framing immigration in cultural terms seems "too racist" for a Democrat to react to, while an economic frame sparks a sense of threat without as much racialized connotations. This possibility fits with our result that economic threat motivates White Democratic opposition to immigration, but not proposals to enhance national infrastructure. Still, more work is needed to delicately sort out this possibility.

Our findings also produce keener insight into how White identity can motivate defensive political attitudes (Schildkraut, 2017). Many Whites sense their dominant position in society is crumbling due to growing racial and ethnic diversity in society (Pérez, 2021). Our results show that White Democrats sometimes sense their station within their *party* is also changing due to demographic trends. But whether Whites react defensively depends on a sense of threat being deeply felt among those who strongly identify as White. Future work can speak more precisely to this point by examining why these individuals feel so threatened. One lead, suggested by Yadon and Ostfeld (2020), is that perhaps many of these high-identifying Whites are also those individuals who, phenotypically, resemble some people of color, such as Latinos. By this account, these White individuals react defensively as a way to protect the edges of their ingroup, where the meaning of Whiteness is blurrier.

Another implication from our results is that, among White Democrats, the pool of raw material for exclusionary sentiments toward people of color is deeper than previously suspected. We read this as a difference between the prevalence of these sentiments versus their conditional impact. Democrats are generally the more liberal party, fed in large part by the number of people of color who make up their membership. White Democrats recognize this and contribute to the liberal outlook of their party (Hopkins & Washington, 2020; Valentino & Zhirkov, 2018). But our findings also suggest that some White Democrats can be coaxed to mimic the type of stance their White Republican counterparts generally display. When will this occur in the "real" world of politics? The host of circumstances under which this might happen in U.S. politics are beyond our article's scope, yet we spy two broad possibilities. One of them involves intraparty dynamics during primary electoral races, where the focus is on what kind of party "we" want to be. As Trump's nomination and election reminded us, all it takes is for a political entrepreneur to tap into this reservoir of White grievance. Another possibility is that these reactions can be sparked by political elites to chip away at enthusiasm for racially liberal policies (i.e., Democrats' "natural" stance). Indeed, our findings suggest that Democrats don't become racially conservative, so much as weakly racially liberal in the domains we examined. Ultimately, this dynamic implies that the party now deemed the "home" of racial minorities contains some individuals who, at times, can still oppose this diversity if they are made to feel that their intraparty position is imperiled.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

Abrajano, M., & Hajnal, Z. L. (2016). *White backlash: Immigration, race, and American politics*. Princeton University Press.

Ahler, D. J., & Sood, G. (2018). The parties in our heads: Misperceptions about party composition and their consequences. *Journal of Politics, 80*(3), 964–981.

Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Brewer, M. B. (1998). Experimentation in social psychology. *The Handbook of Social Psychology, 1,* 99–142.

Brown, T. A. (2007). *Confirmatory factor analysis in applied research*. Guilford Press.

Craig, M. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2014). On the precipice of a "majority-minority" America: Perceived status threat from the racial demographic shift affects White Americans' political ideology. *Psychological Science, 25*(6), 1189–1197.

Craig, M. A., & Richeson, J. A. (2018). Hispanic population growth engenders conservative shift among non-Hispanic racial minorities. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 9*(4), 383–392.

Danbold, F., & Huo, Y. J. (2015). No longer "all-American"? Whites' defensive reactions to their numerical decline. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 6*(2), 210–218.

Ellemers, N., & Jetten, J. (2013). The many ways to be marginal in a group. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 17*(1), 3–21.

Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (1997). Sticking together or falling apart: Ingroup identification as a psychological determinant of group commitment versus individual mobility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*(3), 617–626.

Engelhardt, A. M. (2021). Observational equivalence in explaining attitude change: Have white attitudes genuinely changed? *American Journal of Political Science*. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12665

Feldman, S., & Huddy, L. (2005). Racial resentment and White opposition to race-conscious programs: Principles or prejudice? *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(1), 168–183.

Gaertner, S. L., Dovidio, J. F., Anastasio, P. A., Bachman, B. A., & Rust, M. C. (1993). The common ingroup identity model: Recategorization and the reduction of intergroup bias. *European Review of Social Psychology, 4*(1), 1–26.

Green, D. P., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2002). *Partisan hearts and minds: Political parties and the social identities of voters*. Yale University Press.

Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2014). Public attitudes toward immigration. *Annual Review of Political Science, 17*(1), 225–249.

Hopkins, D. J., & Washington, S. (2020). The rise of Trump, The fall of prejudice? Tracking White Americans' racial attitudes via a panel survey, 2008–2018. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 84*(1), 119–140.

Huddy, L., Mason, L., & Aarøe, L. (2015). Expressive partisanship: Campaign involvement, political emotion, and partisan identity. *American Political Science Review, 109*(1), 1–17.

Jardina, A. (2019). *White identity politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Jardina, A. (2020). In-group love and out-group hate: White racial attitudes in contemporary U.S. elections. *Political Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09600-x

Kam, C. K., & Franzese, R. J. (2007). *Modeling and interpreting interactive hypotheses in regression analysis*. University of Michigan press.

Kinder, D. R. (2006). Belief systems today. *Critical Review, 18,* 197–216.

Kinder, D. R., & Sanders, L. M. (1996). *Divided by color: Racial politics and Democratic ideals*. University of Chicago Press.

Knowles, E. D., & Lowery, B. S. (2011). Meritocracy, self-concerns, and Whites' denial of racial inequity. *Self & Identity, 11*(2), 202–222.

Krupnikov, Y., & Piston, S. (2015). Racial prejudice, partisanship, and white turnout in elections with Black candidates. *Political Behavior, 37,* 397–418.

Leach, C. W., van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L. W., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment: A hierarchical (multicomponent) model of ingroup identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(1), 144–165.

Lenz, G. (2012). *Follow the leader? How voters respond to politicians' policies and performance*. University of Chicago Press.

Malhotra, N., Margalit, Y., & Mo, C. (2013). Economic explanations for opposition to immigration: Distinguishing between prevalence and conditional impact. *American Journal of Political Science, 57*(2), 391–410.

Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press.

Ostfeld, M. C. (2019). The new White flight?: The effects of political appeals to Latinos on White Democrats. *Political Behavior, 41*(3), 561–582.

Pérez, E. O. (2015). Ricochet: How elite discourse politicizes racial and ethnic identities. *Political Behavior, 37*(1), 155–180.

Pérez, E. O. (2016). *Unspoken politics: Implicit attitudes and political thinking*. Cambridge University Press.

Pérez, E. O. (2021). *Diversity's child: People of color and the politics of identity*. University of Chicago Press.

Pérez, E. O., Deichert, M., & Engelhardt, A. M. (2019). E Pluribus Unum? How ethnic and national identity motivate individual reactions to a political ideal. *Journal of Politics, 81*(4), 1420–1433.

Philpot, T. (2008). *Race, Republicans, and the return of the party of Lincoln*. University of Michigan Press.

Schildkraut, D. (2017). White attitudes about descriptive representation in the USA: The roles of identity, discrimination, and linked fate. *Politics, Groups, and Identities, 5*(1), 84–106.

Schmitt, M. T., & Branscombe, N. R. (2001). The good, the bad, and the manly: Threats to one's prototypicality and evaluations of fellow ingroup members. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37*(6), 510–517.

Sears, D. O., & Citrin, J. (2014). *American identity and the politics of multiculturalism*. Cambridge University Press.

Sears, D. O., & Savalei, V. (2006). The political color line in America: Many "peoples of color" or Black exceptionalism? *Political Psychology, 27*(6), 895–924.

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. Cambridge University Press.

Sides, J., Tesler, M., & Vavreck, L. (2018). *Identity crisis: The 2016 presidential campaign and the battle for the meaning of America*. Princeton University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., & Reicher, S. D. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.

Valentino, N., & Zhirkov, K. (2018). *The images in our heads: Race, partisanship, and affective polarization*. Working Paper.

Waldman, P. (2019). The Republican party is getting even whiter. *The American Prospect*.

Wenzel, M., Mummendey, A., & Waldzus, S. (2007). Superordinate identities and intergroup conflict: The ingroup projection model. *European Review of Social Psychology, 18*(1), 331–372.

White, I. K., & Laird, C. N. (2020). *Steadfast Democrats: How social forces shape Black political behavior*. Princeton University Press.

Yadon, N., & Ostfeld, M. C. (2020). Shades of privilege: The relationship between skin color and political attitudes among White Americans. *Political Behavior, 42,* 1369–1392.

Zaller, J. R. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

Zou, L. X., & Cheryan, S. (2017). Two axes of subordination: A new model of racial position. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 112*(5), 696–717.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's web site:

Appendix S.1. Strength of White Identity Among Democrats and Republicans (Studies 1–4)
Appendix S.2. Summary Statistics for Study 1 (2016 ANES)
Appendix S.3. Correlates of White Identity in Study 1 (2016 ANES) and Study 2 (2012 ANES)
Appendix S.4. Full Models of Opposition to Immigration and Placebo, Study 1 (2016 ANES)
Appendix S.5. Testing the Moderating Role of Political Knowledge, Study 1 (2016 ANES) and Study 2 (2012 ANES)

Appendix S.6. Item Wordings for Study 2 (2012 ANES)
Appendix S.7. Summary Statistics for Study 2 (2012 ANES)
Appendix S.8. Full Models of Opposition to Immigration and Placebo, Study 2 (2012 ANES)
Appendix S.9. Item Wording and Visuals for Studies 3-4 (Experiments)
Appendix S.10. Confirmatory Factor Analyses of White and Partisan Identity Items in Studies 3–4
Appendix S.11. Summary Statistics for Study 3 (Experiment with Democrats)
Appendix S.12. Summary Statistics for Study 4 (Experiment with Republicans)
Appendix S.13. Measurement and Structural Results for SEM (Study 3, Democrats)
Appendix S.14. Measurement and Structural Results for SEM (Study 4, Republicans)
Appendix S.15. Structural Results from Simpler SEM (Study 3, Democrats)
Appendix S.16. Structural Results from Simpler SEM (Study 4, Republicans)
Appendix S.17. Downstream Associations from Initial and Revised SEM (Democrats)
Appendix S.18. Bootstrap Tests of Indirect Effects (Democrats)
Appendix S.19. Formally Testing Model Differences Between Studies 3 and 4
Appendix S.20. Evaluation of an Alternate Mediation Model (Study 3, Democrats)