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E Pluribus Whom? The Limitations of American Identity in Reducing Racial Conflict

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Abstract

When diversification becomes salient, a sizable share of white Americans experiences status threat and reacts with backlash. In this paper, we argue that status threat arises because white Americans tend to perceive racial minorities as competing outgroups, not as fellow Americans. Building on recent research suggesting that shared American identity primes can reduce partisan conflict, we test whether reminders of a shared American identity may reduce status threat and thus mitigate subsequent backlash. Across four experiments (total N = 4,062), we replicate status threat as the key mechanism between diversification salience and backlash. Despite various American identity primes and accounting for confounding variables, however, we find little indication that a shared American identity could reduce racial (and, in exploratory analyses, partisan) conflict in America. We discuss the implications for future research and the practical use of a shared American identity when little remains that is shared.

Keywords: Status threat; American identity; Backlash, Affective Polarization; Experiments

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Statements and Declarations

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Supplementary Material: Throughout the manuscript, we refer to the Supplementary Information (SI) for details on our materials and analyses. This document was submitted with the manuscript.

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An influential explanation for the resurgence of exclusionary politics is *status threat*: Sizable shares of historically dominant groups worry that diversification and liberalization undermine their group's position in society (Versteegen 2024). In turn, status-threatened individuals seek to defend their group's position through radical right politics (e.g., Mutz 2018), exclusionary attitudes (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014b), and political violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Such reactions against diversification and liberalization are documented across various countries, groups, and operationalizations of so-called *backlash* (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Yet, only a few studies examine how status threat, the driver of backlash, may be overcome.

We address this gap in the present paper, testing one approach to reducing status threat among white Americans. We focus on this group because the status threat mechanism has been most stringently traced in this case, showing that status threat explains why white Americans often show backlash against racial minorities once racial diversification becomes salient (see Craig, Rucker, and Richeson 2018 for a review). Moreover, backlash against racial minorities is such a central feature in US history and contemporary politics that it may potentially threaten US democracy as such (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2023). As white Americans will be a minority in the US by 2042 (Roberts 2008), it seems vital to identify conditions that reduce status threat and subsequent backlash.

The condition we test in this paper is a salient *common American identity*. People get threatened for various reasons (Stephan and Stephan 2000), but often, societal *diversification* raises the salience of the groups present and thus signifies the potential for competition between groups. We argue that status threat arises because white Americans perceive racial minorities (e.g., Black Americans) as a competing *outgroup*, that is, a group they do not belong to. Thus, what happens if white Americans perceive racial minorities not as a competing outgroup but as fellow Americans? The Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000) suggests that conflict may be reconciled if individuals recognize

that they share, despite all differences, a common identity. Political scientists mainly prime such shared identities to bridge partisan divides, finding that Democrats and Republicans become less affectively polarized when recognizing their shared Americanness (e.g., Levendusky 2018). On a different conflict, Transue (2007) shows that white Americans become more supportive of inclusive taxation if their American identity is salient. Given these promising interventions, we posit that priming a shared American identity may reduce status threat among white Americans because they no longer perceive racial minorities as an outgroup.

Our core empirical question asks whether reminders of a shared American group attenuate status threat and subsequent backlash. We conduct four experiments (three pre-registered, total $N = 4{,}062$). We first replicate status threat as the key mechanism between diversification salience and backlash. That is, respondents tend to find diversification threatening, and these threat experiences correlate with less warmth and inclusiveness toward racial minorities, more racist attitudes, less support for equality-promoting policies, as well as less warmth toward Democrats and more warmth toward Republicans.

The replication of this mechanism serves as a precondition for testing whether a shared American identity reduces status threat, thus attenuating subsequent backlash. Despite various primes, however, American identity does not reduce status threat and, therefore, does not disband the mechanism. We present our main tests as mediations because mediations best reflect the mechanism argument. However, given the limitations of causal interpretability in mediation analysis (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010), it is reassuring that the experimental American identity prime does not have *direct* effects (i.e., without the indirect effects through status threat) either. Furthermore, we find no support for alternative explanations to our results (see Kane 2024). These tests and the established theories informing our well-powered, largely pre-registered studies increase confidence in our conclusions.

The paper's empirical takeaway is that even though status threat drives white Americans' backlash, prompts to recognize a shared American identity does not disband this mechanism. Moreover, exploratory analyses provide no support for the widely discussed (Levendusky 2018; Voelkel et al. 2023) but empirically shaky (Brandt and Turner-Zwinkels 2020; Dawkins and Hanson 2022) argument that a shared American identity would reduce affective polarization. Together, our evidence suggests that American identity cannot bridge the prevailing racial and partisan conflicts that scholars hoped it would appease (Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2018).

Our theoretical contribution connects previous work discussing different contents of American national identity and differentiating it from adjacent concepts (Huddy and Khatib 2007; Schildkraut 2014) to research on status threat and backlash. The latter two feature centrally in the literature on radical right support (e.g., Mutz 2018) and democratic backsliding (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2023). However, this literature benefits from considering how national identity shapes citizens' perceptions of who belongs to the nation (e.g., Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2018), whom a nation is meant to serve (Koenig-Archibugi 2022), and which policies should implement those views (Transue 2007). As these questions concern work in political theory, public opinion, and political behavior, we hope they contribute to all these lines of research.

The results imply that scholars need to find alternative conditions to overcome status threat as the mechanism between diversification and backlash. If Americans currently share too little to make a shared identity useful, what helps instead? We raise some alternatives in the discussion. A more practical implication is that scholars, politicians, and pundits must be careful when promoting American identity to reconcile conflict. Our results show that identity primes tend to evoke exclusionary conceptions of nationhood, and these prompts can backfire into even stronger backlash.

Status Threat and Backlash

Blumer (1958) argues that primarily group identification and status concerns, not ideological conviction, drive majority members' perceptions of racial minorities. In principle, *status threat*—the experience that one's "group's status, influence, and position in the hierarchy is under threat" (Major, Blodorn, and Major Blascovich 2018, 932)—may thus be experienced *across* the ideological spectrum (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014a). Nowadays, however, the primary representative of white Americans' status concerns is the Republican party (e.g., Mason 2016).

By now, status threat is an established explanation for globally rising radical right support (e.g., Norris and Inglehart 2019), exclusionary attitudes and policy preferences (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014b), and polarization (e.g., Parker and Lavine 2024). Previous research provides historical analyses of status concerns (e.g., Kalmoe and Mason 2022), qualitative descriptions of status loss (e.g., Hochschild 2016; Versteegen 2023), and quantitative analyses of its effects on vote choice (e.g., Mutz 2018). Often, the various consequences of status threat can be subsumed into *backlash*, that is, a dominant group's averse reaction to diversification and liberalization (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

Most research on the immediate triggers of status threat comes from psychology. Craig and Richeson (2014b), for example, demonstrate that substantial shares of white Americans feel threatened when hearing that diversification will make them the largest of many minority groups by 2042 (Roberts 2008). This paradigm was replicated many times (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014a; 2014b; Major, Blodorn, and Major Blascovich 2018; Outten et al. 2012, but see Stewart and Willer 2021). However, only a few studies examine how status threat may be overcome (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014b). We draw from insights on national identity and adjacent concepts in recent political science research to address this gap.

Does a Shared American Identity Reduce Status Threat?

If white Americans' reaction to diversification occurs because they feel threatened by groups they perceive as outgroups, recognizing their shared American identity with minorities may reduce status threat. Self-Categorization Theory (Turner et al. 1987) premises that individuals identify with various groups (e.g., their race or nation) and that the subjective relevance of each identity varies across time. As identities drive individuals' thoughts and behaviors, people will think and behave differently depending on what identity is salient in a given moment. Based on this reasoning, the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000) predicts that conflict between two groups can be reconciled if people recognize their shared membership in a larger group. Applications of this model show that competing ethnic, religious, or sports groups become less hostile when fusing into groups with a shared identity (see Van Bavel and Packer 2021 for a review).

In political science, Transue (2007) suggests that an American identity prime facilitates race-inclusive taxation, and Siegel and Badaan (2020) find that a shared religious identity reduces hate speech in Lebanon. The most common application, however, seeks to reduce partisan conflict. In a seminal paper, Levendusky (2018) conducts online and natural experiments to prime a shared American identity, finding that it reduces affective polarization between Democrats and Republicans. Amid successful replications (Levendusky 2023; Voelkel et al. 2023) of some of Levendusky's (2018) studies, theorists renew their calls to unite behind a shared American identity (e.g., Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2018).

But these calls may be premature. Some replications of Levendusky (2018) find no support (e.g., Brandt and Turner-Zwinkels 2020; Dawkins and Hanson 2022). One reason may be diverging understandings of the shared group, such that Republicans have a more ethnic conception of nationhood than Democrats (Dawkins and Hanson 2022). Experimental evidence by Klar (2018) backs this reasoning, showing that diverging gender conceptions

between female Democrats and Republicans yield *stronger* partisan conflict when reminded of their shared gender identity. And as the Common Ingroup Identity Model requires a shared understanding of the common group (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000), American identity may be an unlikely bond.

An informative review by Schildkraut (2014) explains the complexities of the American identity concept. Previous research differentiates, for example, the *importance* of American identity from its *contents*. Within the latter, scholars distinguish *civic* from *ethnic* conceptions of nationhood, which, crucially, have diverging effects on political attitudes. And while Americans had a shared understanding of American identity in 2004 (Schildkraut 2007), this may now be politically confounded (Dawkins and Hanson 2022).

This is even though Huddy and Khatib (2007) define *American identity* as "a sense of being or feeling American" (65) that is free from ideological leaning. They differentiate it from alternative conceptions of nationhood, such as *symbolic patriotism* (taking pride in national symbols), *constructive patriotism* (a critical loyalty), *national pride* (pride in specific aspects of the nation), and *nationalism* (superiority beliefs over other nations). Huddy and Khatib (2007) show that these can be empirically differentiated and predict outcomes in opposite directions. However, the concepts are correlated, implying that experiments must isolate American identity from these adjacent concepts to test its effects. Moreover, *white identity* differs from national attachment, but, due to the strong correlation between national and white identity (Jardina 2019), poses another confounder.

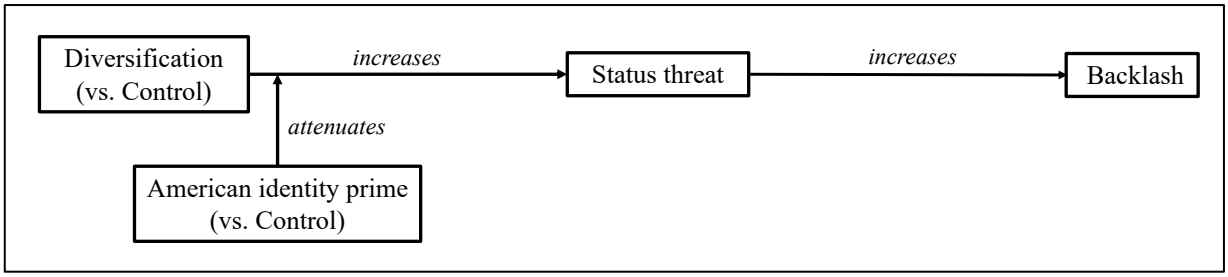
Given this knowledge, can we expect a shared American identity to weaken status threat? On the one hand, it should: If backlash is due to white Americans feeling threatened by a racial outgroup, recognizing other races not as outgroups but as a part of one's national group should weaken status threat and subsequent backlash. Some evidence supports this intuition (Levendusky 2018; Siegel and Badaan 2020). On the other hand, the proximity of American

identity to ethnic, exclusionary conceptions of nationhood may explain why some studies question whether American identity can reconcile conflict (e.g., Brandt and Turner-Zwinkels 2020; Dawkins and Hanson 2022). Thus, we test American identity's capacity to weaken status threat, but, as detailed in the empirical section, gradually account for its confounders.

We state two hypotheses. First, we expect that the effect of diversification on backlash is mediated by status threat. We replicate this mechanism[1] to establish a precondition for our second hypothesis, which states that an American identity prime attenuates status threat. If status threat mediates between diversification and backlash, the shared American identity prime would weaken this mechanism. Figure 1[2] summarizes this reasoning.

- Hypothesis 1: Status threat mediates the effect of diversification on backlash.
- Hypothesis 2: American identity reduces status threat, thus attenuating the mediation of diversification on backlash through status threat.

FIGURE 1. Theoretical Model.



[1] We consider status threat a key mechanism between diversification and backlash but do not suggest it is the only one (but see Parker and Lavine 2024). Study 1 shows full mediation through status threat but few direct effects, implying that status threat is a crucial mediator.

[2] Note that we do not test Hypothesis 2 by modeling *interaction terms* but by *design* (i.e., respondents get exposed to an American identity prime or not).

Overview of the Present Research

We test whether status threat mediates the effect of diversification on backlash and whether American identity attenuates status threat as the mechanism. Previous work examines various forms of *backlash* (e.g., Norris and Inglehart 2019; Mutz 2018; Ostfeld 2019), such as changes in attitudes, values, policy preferences, or vote choice. Thus, we examine several concepts across our four studies. These are sympathy for and inclusiveness toward outgroups (all studies), perceptions of outgroup members as American (Studies 2 and 3), opposition to affirmative action (Study 1) and various racial policies (Study 4), symbolic racism (Study 4), and sympathy for Democrats and Republicans (all studies). We pre-registered specific hypotheses for each measure but subsume them into the two hypotheses above for parsimony.

While testing these different forms of backlash enables more externally valid conclusions about the phenomenon, they are different and complex constructs as such. For example, white Americans may hold diverging views on different racial outgroups (Ostfeld 2019), and reasons other than racial animosity may motivate their opposition to a specific affirmative action policy (Banks and Valentino 2012). Relatedly, sympathy for either party cannot be equated with backlash. Even if only the Republican party currently undermines racial minorities' democratic participation (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2023), voters in two-party systems have factually only two options. Moreover, Republicans recently gained support from racial minorities (Bender et al. 2024), suggesting that the Republican party represents not just white Americans. Thus, we report party sympathy as an element of backlash as pre-registered[3] but stress that sympathy for either option does not necessarily reflect racial animosity per se.

[3] Deviating from the pre-registration, we do not to test effects on vote choice. It adds little beyond our measures of party sympathy and is unlikely affected by our treatments. As its logistic form requires specific types of modeling and reporting, we dropped it for parsimony.

We preview all studies to give an overview of our empirical contribution. Study 1 replicates status threat as a key mediator between diversification and backlash and shows that a novel American identity prime does not mitigate status threat. In Study 2, Levendusky's (2018) validated American identity prime reduces status threat, although a manipulation check indicates that American identity was not significantly raised. Study 3 shows that this prime induces various conceptions of nationhood that have diverging associations with status threat. When experimentally isolating American identity from these adjacent concepts in Study 4, the cleaned prime does *not* reduce status threat. Moreover, exploratory analyses show no effects of any American identity prime on affective polarization. Table 1 in the general discussion gives an overview of all designs, treatment effects, and (null) results. Studies 2 to 4 were pre-registered. Pre-registrations, study materials, data, and code are available at the project's site at the Political Behavior Dataverse.

Samples and Ethical Considerations

All respondents are white Americans recruited via CloudResearch (Litman, Robinson, and Abberbock 2017) between March 2023 and January 2024. The opt-in samples are not representative, which limits generalizability. However, as the paper's primary aim is to test the mechanisms, this limitation seems justifiable. We determined the required sample sizes for the respective designs with a priori power analyses (power of = .80, alpha = .05, and small to medium-sized effects), accounting for dropouts. In all studies, we excluded inattentive respondents based on two attention checks as pre-registered. We complied with APSA's *Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research*. All studies were approved by one of the authors' Institutional Review Boards. None of the studies used deception, and the emotional burden did not exceed what respondents may experience in everyday life.

Analyses

We rescale all continuous variables from 0 to 1. As differences in status threat and American identity are essential to our research questions, we begin all analyses by exploratorily comparing mean differences across experimental conditions with OLS regressions.

Given our interest in the status threat mechanism and whether an American identity prime attenuates it, our analyses test mediations. Using the R-package *lavaan* (Rosseel 2012), we conduct mediation analyses to model the indirect effects of diversification on backlash through status threat (running separate models for each outcome, bootstrapping 5,000 samples). Hypothesis 1 is supported amid a significant indirect effect of diversification (vs. control) on backlash when mediated through status threat. Hypothesis 2 is supported if the American identity prime (vs. control) reduces status threat, thus attenuating the status threat mechanism. These mediation models reflect our mechanism-centered arguments best.

However, the mediator and the dependent variables are only measured, which may violate sequential ignorability assumptions (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010). Additional complexity arises as analyses indicate that the treatment also affects related conceptions of nationhood (e.g., nationalism) in some studies. This confounding may blur the priming. To statistically isolate the effect of American identity, we run additional serial mediations controlling for any covariate significantly predicted by the treatment. These controls may evoke posttreatment bias (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018) and further constrain causal interpretations.

Together, mediation models with measured mediators and controlled covariates are best for examining our research questions, but they have limitations. That said, we find no *direct* effects of the American identity primes on backlash in any study either. Direct effects do not test the mechanism but circumvent problems of sequential ignorability and posttreatment bias. Thus, the shared American identity primes have no causal effects on backlash; not through status threat, American identity, or any unobserved alternative mechanism.

Study 1: Replicating the Status Threat Mechanism

Study 1 has two aims. First, we aim to replicate the status threat mechanism between diversification salience and backlash. Second, we aim to test whether a novel American identity prime would reduce status threat and subsequent backlash.

Experimental Design and Measures

N = 1,046 white Americans (63.10% female, M_{Age} = 43.28 (SD_{Age} = 13.44), 44.84% liberal) were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. The first two conditions used Craig and Richeson's (2014b) design to test the effect of diversification salience. Respondents in the control condition read a text about geographic mobility in the US. In the diversification condition, participants read a text stating that white Americans would become the largest minority group by 2042. Higher status threat and subsequently more backlash in this condition (vs. the control condition) would replicate Craig and Richeson (2014b). We added a common identity condition, in which respondents read the same text as in the diversification condition but were additionally asked to reflect on American values and write which ones they cared most about (SI1.1. in the Supplementary Information (SI) shows the experimental materials). After the manipulation, all respondents answered questions on status threat, American identity, backlash, and demographics.

We assessed status threat as the mechanism between diversification and backlash. We created an index of five items (α = .72) adapted from Outten and colleagues (2012). An example item read, "White Americans should be threatened by the growing ethnic diversity in the US." (1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree)). Importantly, the phrasing allows us to capture several potential reasons *why* someone may feel threatened (i.e., for realistic or symbolic reasons; Stephan and Stephan 2000) and ensures that they feel threatened as group members rather than individuals (see Blumer 1958).

We measured backlash as the dependent variable, operationalizing four different forms. First, we assessed *outgroup warmth* with feeling thermometers, in which respondents indicated their sympathy toward five outgroups (α = .84): Black Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, illegal migrants, and legal migrants (0 (Unfavorable/cold) to 100 (Favorable/warm)).[4] Second, we administered one item asking how similar respondents thought People of Color were to them (Aron, Aron, and Smollan 1992). Respondents saw seven sets of circles varying in overlap (i.e., "themselves" and "People of Color") and were asked to indicate which circles would present their relationship best. As perceived dissimilarity provides a socially acceptable reason to differentiate oneself from the other, this item provides an unbiased measure of intergroup distance. Hence, higher values indicated more *inclusiveness* of racial outgroups. Third, we measured respondents' sympathy toward Democrats and Republicans, using feeling thermometers. While preferences for the parties are correlated with attitudes toward racial minorities (Mason 2016), we used these measures primarily to test whether elicited status threat would immediately relate to more or less sympathy for one of the options. Fourth, we assessed *policy preferences* with one item, asking, "To what extent do you support the preferential hiring and promotion of ethnic minorities?" (1 (Strongly oppose) to 7 (Strongly support)). Lower values indicated less support for inclusive practices toward racial minorities.

[4] While migrants are not necessarily racial minorities, most white Americans perceive them as non-white (Flores and Azar 2023). Thus, migrants may be a primary goal of racial backlash. Consistently, an exploratory factor analysis shows that the five groups load on a single factor (this and all following EFAs use promax rotation and maximum likelihood factor extraction).

Consistent with previous work (e.g., Levendusky 2018), we measured American identity to evaluate whether the American identity prime was successful. We adapted the four-item index (α = .87) by Huddy and Khatib (2007). The items stated a.) "Being American is important to me.", b.) "I see myself as a typical American.", c.) "The term 'American' describes me well.", and d.) "When talking about Americans, I say 'we' instead of 'they'." This widely used operationalization primarily assesses the *importance* of the American group to the individual and thus Huddy and Khatib's (2007) definition of identity as an *affective* membership to the group. Thus, it should be non-ideological.

Finally**,** we assessed white identity in case the treatment affected this adjacent concept (Jardina 2019). We used five items (α = .86) adapted from Verkuyten (2005), such as "I feel connected to other white Americans." (All items 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree)).

Results and Discussion

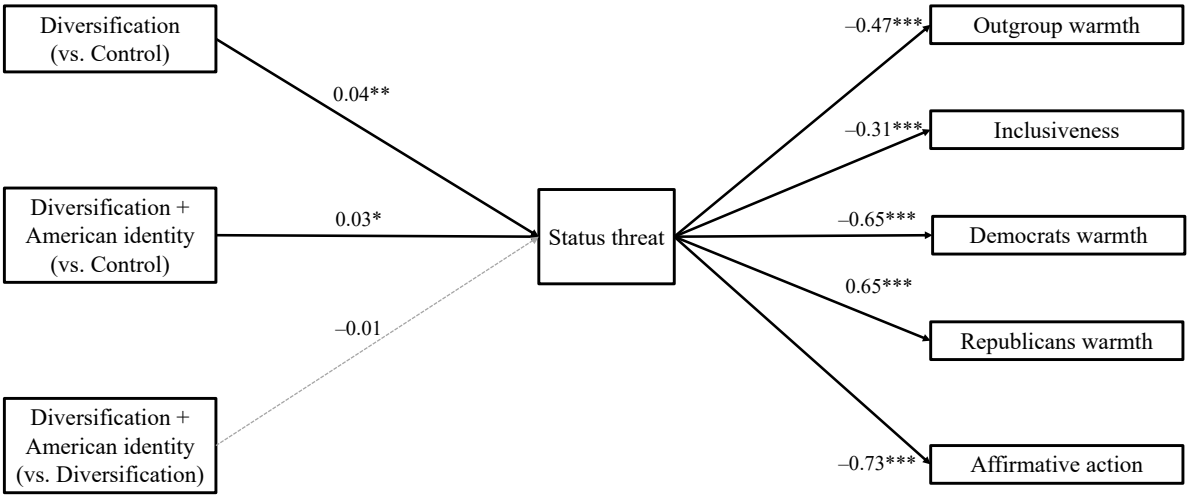
Does diversification evoke status threat and backlash? An inspection of simple mean differences across the conditions suggests it does (see SI1.2.). Compared to the control condition, status threat is significantly higher in the diversification (p = .003) and the common identity condition (p = .024). Both effects are small (Cohen's d = .20). Corroborating the argument that status threat is a crucial mechanism, diversification has little direct effects on backlash, except that the diversification condition reports less inclusiveness compared to the control condition. Moreover, an exploratory moderation analysis by ideology does not suggest any heterogeneous effects. This implies that diversification predicts status threat across the ideological spectrum.[5]

[5] This is fairly consistent across all four studies: Ideology does not moderate the effect of any treatment on status threat or American identity, except for Study 4, where the value prime increases American identity among liberals but decreases it among conservatives (p = .007).

Does American identity reduce status threat? American identity is significantly higher in the common identity compared to the control (p = .008) and the diversification (p = .031) condition (ds = .18). This suggests that respondents in this group experience, on average, greater importance of their American identity. However, this does not reduce status threat (p = .628).[6]

Does status threat drive backlash, and does American identity attenuate this mediation? We run two sets of mediation models. The first is a simple mediation of the treatments on the outcomes through status threat. Status threat fully mediates all effects (see Figure 2). That is, respondents in the diversification *and* the common identity condition report more status threat (vs. control), which, in turn, is associated with less warmth toward outgroups, inclusiveness, and support for affirmative action. Status threat also correlates with less warmth for

FIGURE 2. Path Coefficients Study 1.



***Note*:** Dashed-gray paths nonsignificant. ACME of both conditions through status threat *ps* ≤ .040 for all outcomes. See SI1.4. for all effect coefficients. * p < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001.

[6] SI1.3. lists the most common words of the open-text responses in the common identity condition.

Democrats and more warmth for Republicans. To facilitate an efficient overview in this and the following studies, we do not report the total effects and the single indirect effects for all conditions and outcomes but refer to the supplements. All Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME) are statistically significant for all outcomes and both conditions (all *ps* ≤ .040, SI1.4). The conditions explain about 1% of the variance in status threat; status threat explains between 5% (inclusiveness) and 21% (affirmative action) of outcome variance. However, as the American identity prime does not reduce status threat, there are no differences in indirect effects between the common identity and the diversification condition (i.e., all ACME *ps* ≥ .635). This means that we replicate the mediation through status threat but find no evidence that an American identity prime would weaken this mechanism.

However, descriptive analyses indicate that the American identity prime also increased white identity ($p = .016$). This reflects that white Americans often associate American values with "white values" (Jardina 2019). Hence, we explore whether American identity would reduce status threat once white identity is accounted for, modeling serial indirect effects of American identity *and* status threat when controlling for white identity. The results show that American identity does not reduce status threat even when isolating it from white identity. Put differently, even though the treatment successfully primes American identity, the latter is not significantly related to status threat and thus irrelevant for the backlash measures (all ACME through American identity and status threat *ps* ≥ . 200). In contrast, white identity is significantly associated with *higher* status threat, which increases the effects on backlash *beyond* the diversification effect (all ACME *ps* ≤ .030, see SI1.4.). This implies that the American identity prime even *increases* backlash because it evokes a stronger white identity.

In summary, the results replicate previous findings (Craig and Richeson 2014b; Major, Blodorn, and Major Blascovich 2018; Outten et al. 2012) that the prospect of diversification evokes backlash due to increases in status threat. However, they do not support the

hypothesis that American identity would reduce status threat.[7] One explanation is that once people think of American values they care *most* about, they may start thinking about divisions. Relatedly, our prime may have evoked ethnic conceptions of nationhood (Schildkraut 2007; 2014) that motivate white Americans to defend their status even more. The increase in white identity—which exacerbates the status threat effect—supports this assumption. Therefore, we conduct a second study with a previously validated American identity prime.

Study 2: Priming American Identity With A July 4th Newspaper Article

Study 1 showed that status threat mediates the effect of diversification on backlash and that reminders of a shared American identity do not necessarily reduce experiences of status threat. However, as our prime also increased white identity, it may have evoked ethnic conceptions of nationhood that undermined the prime's effectiveness (Schildkraut 2007; 2014). Hence, we try a second prime, hoping to circumvent such ethnic content. As Levendusky's (2018, 2023) prime proved successful before, we use it in the pre-registered Study 2.

Experimental Design and Measures

We analyzed data from $N = 825$ individuals (54.42% female, $M_{Age} = 42.60$ ($SD_{Age} = 12.84$), 48.96% liberal). As we successfully replicated the effects of diversification in Study 1, we now focused on understanding whether an American identity prime would reduce status

[7] While the effect of American identity on affective polarization is not central to our theory, we exploratorily test it as it is of interest in current debates (e.g., Levendusky 2018, 2023; Voelkel et al. 2023). The prime has no effect on affective polarization compared to the control ($p = .468$) and the diversification condition ($p = .415$). We continue reporting this effect in footnotes for the remaining studies.

threat. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Both conditions read the text on diversification. Afterward, respondents in the control condition directly proceeded to the outcome measures. Respondents in the common identity condition additionally read a July 4th newspaper article about the strengths of American culture, politics, economy, and its people (see SI3.1.). Levendusky (2018) validated this text to prime American identity.[8]

We measured backlash as outgroup warmth (α = .86), inclusiveness, and warmth toward Democrats and Republicans, as in Study 1. Moreover, we created an index of three items (α = .95) asking respondents to indicate to what degree they perceived racial outgroups as American: Black Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans (1 (Not at all) to 5 (Extremely)).[9] This index directly reflected our argument: if backlash occurs because white Americans feel threatened by a perceived *outgroup*, this outgroup should be perceived as less American. However, if the American identity prime makes salient a shared American identity, these outgroups should be seen as more American. We assessed status threat (α = .75), American identity (α = .87), and white identity (α = .87) as above.

Results and Discussion

Does American identity reduce status threat? An inspection of the means suggests that American identity reduces status threat (see SI2.2.). Those who had read the July 4th newspaper article score, on average, significantly lower in status threat ($p = .007$, $d = .18$). Surprisingly, however, this is even though there are no significant differences in American

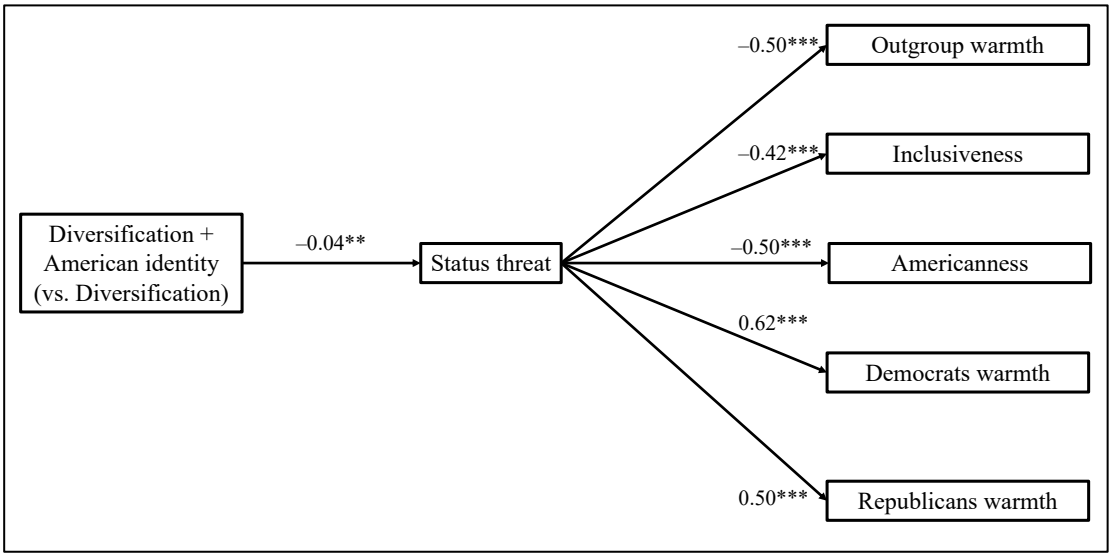
[8] Unlike Levendusky (2018, Study 1), we did not ask respondents to additionally write about why they were proud to be Americans. This was to avoid confounding with patriotism and national pride (see Huddy and Khatib 2007).

[9] An exploratory factor analysis indicated single-factorial loading.

identity (p = .225).[10] Thus, we attain the predicted effect despite a statistically unsuccessful treatment. We still proceed with the mediation analyses as pre-registered.

Simple mediations of the American identity prime on the outcomes through status threat support the hypothesis that a shared American identity reduces status threat and subsequent backlash (see Figure 3).[11] Compared to respondents who only had read about diversification, those who had additionally read the July 4th newspaper article feel less threatened. As status threat is associated with less warmth toward outgroups, inclusiveness, and Americanness, the shared identity mitigates the backlash effect. Besides, status threat is again correlated with less warmth toward Democrats but more sympathy toward Republicans (all ACME $ps \leq .012$,

FIGURE 3. Path Coefficients Study 2.



***Note*:** ACME through status threat $ps \leq .012$ for all outcomes. See SI2.3. for all effect coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** < .01, *** < .001.

[10] The American identity prime has again no effect on affective polarization (p = .309).

[11] Other than in Study 1, the prime does not significantly raise white identity (p = .443). Therefore, there is no statistical justification for exploratory serial mediations controlling for white identity.

see SI2.3.). Status threat explains about 9% (inclusiveness, Republican warmth) to 21% (outgroup warmth) of outcome variance. However, the prime only explains about 1% of the variance in status threat, suggesting that its effect is small.

This study corroborates the doubt that a common American identity would reduce status threat: Even though respondents feel less status threat after the American identity prime, they do not report a stronger American identity. This leaves the common identity model essentially unsupported. There are at least two explanations for this result. The first is methodological: our manipulation check may have missed differences in American identity. We had positioned this measure in random order between the outcomes, and a short-lived effect of the American identity prime may have disappeared once respondents took the scale. The second is theoretical: While the newspaper article's broad strokes may evoke an attachment to the nation (i.e., a shared identity), it additionally compares the US to other countries and bursts with July 4th pride.[12] Thus, the treatment may additionally prime adjacent conceptions of nationhood (e.g., patriotism, national pride) that may have reduced status threat. We conduct a replication of the present study, accounting for both explanations.

Study 3: Disentangling American Identity From Other Conceptions of Nationhood

Study 2 suggests that an American identity prime reduces status threat and subsequent backlash against diversification, even if the American identity is not raised statistically. What, then, explains the reduction in status threat? In the pre-registered Study 3, we move the position of the American identity measure in the survey to rule out that we missed any short-

[12] Levendusky (2018) reports only a 0.1 increase in American identity on a 1–5 scale ($p <$ .01) in his experiment (63), suggesting the effect is small. Moreover, he acknowledges that the newspaper article may prime various concepts (65).

lived priming effects. Moreover, we add symbolic patriotism, nationalism, and national pride as additional conceptions of nationhood to capture alternative explanations.

Experimental Design and Measures

$N = 797$ individuals (63.49% female, $M_{Age} = 42.13$ ($SD_{Age} = 12.62$), 46.92% liberal) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. As in Study 2, all respondents read the text about diversification, and the common identity condition additionally read the July 4th newspaper article. Unlike Study 2, we now positioned the American identity measure directly after the status threat measure. American identity (α = .90), status threat (α = .75), and white identity (α = .87) were measured as before. Drawing from Huddy and Khatib (2007), we additionally assessed symbolic patriotism (two items, α = .97, e.g., "It makes me feel good when I see the American flag flying."), nationalism (two items, α = .87, e.g., "America is a better country than most others."), and national pride (seven items, α = .85, e.g., "I am proud of the country's…democracy", all 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree)).[13] We assessed outgroup warmth (α = .86), inclusiveness, perceived Americanness (α = .85), and warmth toward Democrats and Republicans as in Study 2.

Results and Discussion

Does American identity reduce status threat? Simple mean differences suggest no reduction (see SI3.1.). Compared to those who had only read about diversification, those who had additionally read the July 4th newspaper article do not feel less threatened ($p = .803$). This is even though they report a stronger American identity ($p = .047$, $d = .14$).[14] In short, Study 2 indicated an effect of the American identity prime on status threat *without* a significant American identity treatment; Study 3 shows significant increases in American identity but no

[13] An exploratory factor analysis indicated appropriate single-factorial loading for pride.

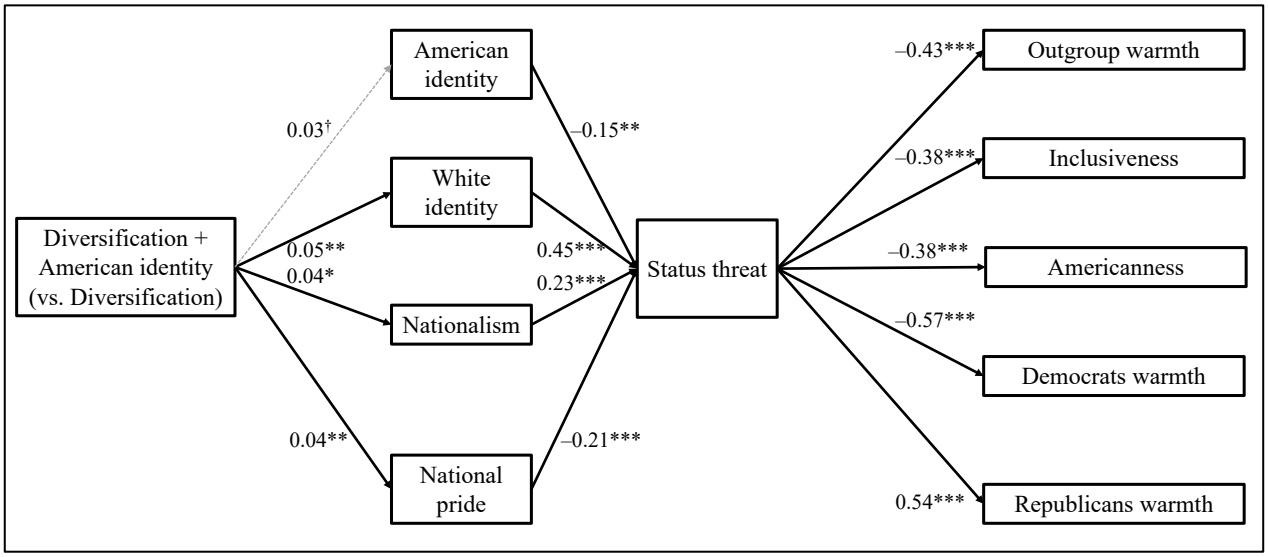
[14] The American identity prime has again no effect on affective polarization ($p = .690$).

effect of this treatment on status threat. Together, this questions that a shared American identity reduces status threat. Accordingly, the pre-registered simple mediations of the prime on the outcomes through status threat show no significant indirect effects (all ACME *ps* ≥ .795, see SI3.2.).

What conceptions of nationhood reduce status threat? If the American identity prime reduced status threat in Study 2 without elevating American identity, there must be alternative mechanisms. With white identity, symbolic patriotism, nationalism, and national pride, the current study measured four of them. Results indicate that the newspaper article indeed increases white identity ($p = .001$, $d = .24$), nationalism ($p = .028$, $d = .16$), and national pride ($p = .003$, $d = .22$) but does not affect symbolic patriotism ($p = .166$). These effects are vital as they suggest that the American identity prime is confounded with alternative conceptions of nationhood. While all relate to an individual's attachment to the US, it may matter if this attachment is due to the affective importance of the group (i.e., American identity), ethnic conceptions of the group (i.e., white identity), superiority beliefs (i.e., nationalism), or positive appraisals of the group (i.e., national pride). If the prime evokes various sentiments with diverging relationships to status threat, they may cancel out each other (see Huddy and Khatib 2007).

To disentangle this confounding in our mediation models, we run exploratory serial mediation analyses controlling for different conceptions of nationhood. As in the first study, we model an effect of the prime on the outcomes through the altered conceptions of nationhood (i.e., American identity, white identity, nationalism, and national pride) *and* status threat. Figure 4 displays the results (SI3.2. shows path coefficients, including total and indirect effects). It shows that even though the prime evokes various forms of national attachment, these are differently related to status threat: nationalism and white identity are positively related to status threat; American identity and national pride are negatively

FIGURE 4. Path Coefficients Study 3.



***Note*:** ACME through American identity and status threat *ps* ≥ .124 for all outcomes. See SI3.2. for all effect coefficients. † < .10, * *p* < .05, ** < .01, *** < .001.

associated with it. Moreover, the effect of the prime on American identity is only marginally significant. Therefore, there are no indirect effects through American identity on any outcome (all ACME through American identity and status threat *ps* ≥ .124). However, we find (marginally) significant indirect effects for the other three, such that the prime is associated with *less* outgroup warmth, inclusiveness, perceived Americanness, Democrat warmth, and *more* Republican warmth when mediated through white identity (all ACME *ps* ≤ .004) and nationalism (*ps* ≤ .051). National pride instead mediates the reverse effects (*ps* ≤ .024).

In sum, Study 3 corroborates that an American identity prime is a risky approach to reducing status threat: A previously validated prime sparks various conceptions of nationhood, and depending on what is most prominent, it either increases (white identity, nationalism) or decreases (national pride, possibly American identity) status threat and subsequent backlash. And even though American identity is associated with less status threat, it is only marginally significantly affected by the prime. Moreover, posttreatment controls (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018)—and serial mediation in particular (Imai, Keele, and

Tingley 2010)—limit causal interpretability. Besides, we consider it premature to conceive of national pride as a better approach to bridging racial divides: Even though it significantly links to less backlash across all measures, it is strongly associated with the other mechanisms, thus making it similarly difficult to isolate.[15] To adequately test the effect of American identity (or any adjacent concept) on status threat and backlash, a design must treat this specific concept only. We pursue this challenge in the final study.

Study 4: Isolating American Identity By Design

The pre-registered Study 4 aims to produce a *distinct* American identity prime to test if a shared American identity reduces status threat if isolated from any alternative conceptions of nationhood. While these conceptions are highly related, theories (e.g., Huddy and Khatib 2007; Schildkraut 2014) suggest that each has a distinct focus. The intuitive appeal of a shared identity, we theorized, is that it may let white Americans perceive racial minorities as part of a common group. This is a crucial recategorization, given that status threat arises because racial minorities are perceived as competing outgroups (Blumer 1958). As such, American identity is different from the contents of what this group is about (e.g., national pride, white identity) or how this group relates to other nations (i.e., nationalism). The diverging relationships to status threat in Study 3 support this idea, but the posttreatment

[15] A confirmatory factor analysis indicates that a factorial structure differentiating the five constructs is appropriate (*CFI* = .936, *TLI* = .923, *RMSEA* = .08, 95%-CI [.07; .08]). Nevertheless, all concepts correlate *rs* ≥ .53, suggesting high interrelatedness (see SI3.3.). An exploratory factor analysis suggests that the American identity, white identity, symbolic patriotism, and nationalism items load on distinct factors. However, the national pride items load on the nationalism and a fifth (i.e., pride) factor.

controls limit causal interpretability. Therefore, we now employ a novel treatment to increase American identity while holding alternative conceptions constant *by design*.

To further simplify our design, we deviate from the first three studies and do not prime diversification. The previous studies made diversification salient and measured immediate status threat. Now, we directly expose respondents to the American identity prime for two reasons. First, we aim to rule out that the diversification treatment itself elicits conservative conceptions of nationhood, thus diluting the American identity prime. Second, we aim to probe the external validity of the American identity prime. In everyday life, people are rarely confronted with explicit diversification statistics. Thus, we can be more confident in the effectiveness of an American identity prime if it mitigates status concerns that are not just momentarily salient but latent (Blumer 1958). As these are harder to change than immediate status threat, this is a conservative test.

Experimental Design and Measures

We analyzed data from $N = 1{,}394$[16] individuals (64.20% female, $M_{\text{Age}} = 40.80$ ($SD_{\text{Age}} = 11.78$), 47.34% liberal). Without any information about diversification, respondents were directly assigned to one of three conditions. In the control condition, respondents were asked to list what they had for their three latest meals. The other two conditions were designed to prime American identity. From seven pilot studies testing six different primes (total $N = 841$), we learned that there was no American value, hobby, or feeling among white Americans—at least from our samples recruited through CloudResearch—that was shared across ideologies

[16] Due to a technical error, our raw data included $N = 1{,}733$ instead of the pre-registered $N = 1{,}500$ cases. We used all available data. The results did not differ when only using the first $N = 1{,}500$.

and would not evoke alternative conceptions of nationhood.[17] This is not to mention whether any such prime would be unique to the American identity and not, in fact, also be endorsed by citizens of other countries (i.e., a condition suggested crucial to make a common identity work; Brewer 1991; Schildkraut 2014). Therefore, we asked respondents to mention what they *thought* was shared among most Americans. That is, rather than priming a shared identity by telling them what Americans shared, we primed them through what each individual *thought* they shared. Motivated by the pilot study results, one condition asked to list three shared values (*value treatment*),[18] and the other asked for three shared hardships (*hardship treatment*). SI4.1. shows the exact prompt and the most common responses.

We measured American identity (α = .86), status threat (α = .67), white identity (α = .86), symbolic patriotism (α = .96), nationalism (α = .85), and national pride (α = .84) as before. We additionally measured constructive patriotism (4 items, α = .69, e.g., "People should work hard to move this country in a positive direction.", 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree)) to capture a final conception of nationhood proposed by Huddy and Khatib (2007).

As outcomes, we again measured outgroup warmth (α = .85), inclusiveness, and warmth toward Democrats and Republicans. Next, we measured symbolic racism with a four-item

[17] With these pilots, we intended to identify contents of American identity that were widely shared but apolitical. We hoped that priming these "harmless" contents could increase American identity without evoking other conceptions of nationhood. However, our (convenience) samples did not reveal any such shared content, and none was associated with American identity but not with the other conceptions of nationhood.

[18] This prompt is different from Study 1, which asked respondents which American values they cared most about. Now, we asked them to list what values they thought most Americans shared. Thus, the present prime targets the *sharedness* of Americans more specifically.

index (α = .89) based on Banks and Valentino (2012) (e.g., "Over the past few years, racial minorities have gotten less than they deserve." (reverse-coded), 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree)). Finally, we operationalized a four-item index (α = .78) assessing opposition to racial policies based on Banks and Valentino (2012) (e.g., support for affirmative action or busing, reverse-coded, 1 (Strongly oppose) to 5 (Strongly support)).

Results and Discussion

Do the treatments isolate American identity from alternative conceptions of nationhood? The best evidence for American identity's effect on status threat requires a.) that at least one of the treatments successfully increases American identity and b.) that this treatment does *not* simultaneously affect *any* adjacent concept. The results suggest that the value treatment satisfies this first requirement, such that respondents report higher American identity after reporting three values ($p = .006$, $d = .14$) compared to the control condition. Other than indicated in the pilots, the hardship condition does not satisfy this requirement, such that American identity is not significantly higher among respondents who listed three hardships ($p = .120$). Thus, we focus our discussion on the value treatment but report mean differences for all three conditions in SI4.2.

Crucially, the value treatment also satisfies the other prerequisite, such that it does not predict higher white identity ($p = .063$), symbolic patriotism ($p = .097$), constructive patriotism ($p = .833$), nationalism ($p = .155$), or national pride ($p = .533$). This suggests that any effect on status threat can be attributed to a shared American identity. While the effect on American identity is small, it is the only concept significantly raised by the treatment.

Two additional analyses corroborate that the value treatment can isolate American identity from the covariates. First, an exploratory factor analysis replicates and extends Huddy and Khatib's (2007) factorial structure. SI4.3. shows that the items measuring American identity, white identity, symbolic patriotism, constructive patriotism, and nationalism load on five

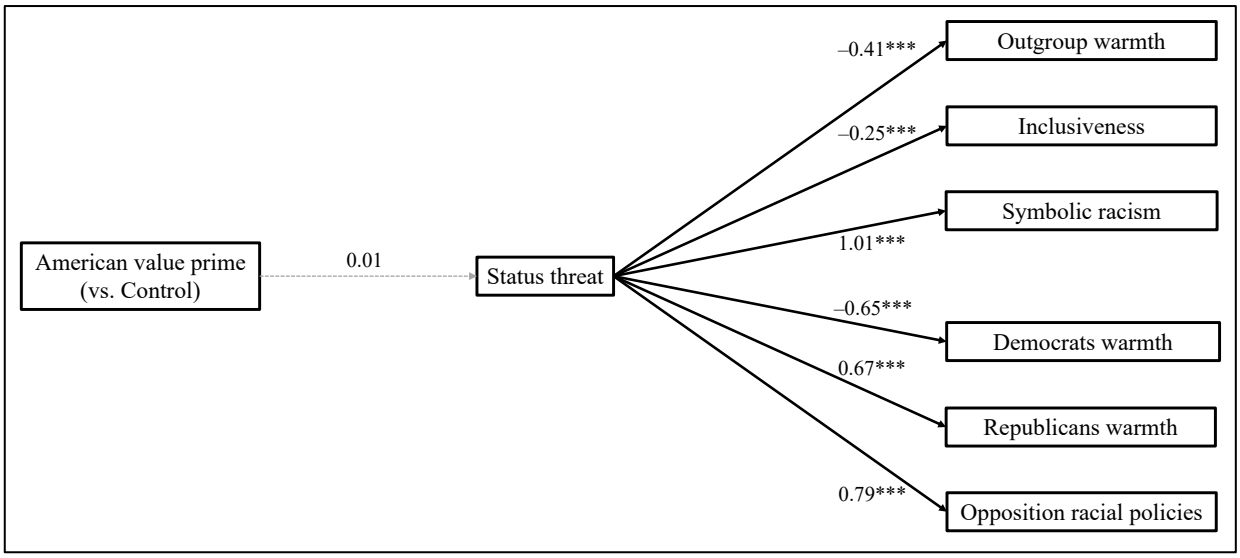
distinct factors. The only deviations are that one national pride item (for the nation's history) is better explained by the nationalism factor, and another (for fair and equal treatment of societal subgroups) loads on the pride *and* the nationalism factor.[19] Second, an exploratory question at the end of the survey—asking what groups respondents thought of during the treatment—indicates that the American group was by far the most salient in the value condition (see SI4.4.). That is, 65% of the respondents in the value condition report to have thought of Americans (vs. 4% in the control condition). Arguably, demand effects will increase this share, given that the prime had specifically asked respondents to think of *American* values. However, it is reassuring that respondents in the value condition thought similarly often of white people (22%) and People of Color (16%), conservatives (19%) and liberals (17%), respectively. That is, even though respondents thought of many groups during their response, there is no indication that thinking about shared American values led them to think more often of white or conservative people than other American subgroups.

Does American identity reduce status threat? Despite the clean manipulation, the prime has no effect on status threat ($p = .243$). That is, when holding alternative conceptions of nationhood constant, as the causal and isolated manipulation of American identity does, status threat is not reduced. Status threat is again associated with colder feelings toward racial outgroups and Democrats, less inclusiveness, and more symbolically racist attitudes, warmth toward Republicans, and opposition to policies promoting racial equality. But as American

[19] A confirmatory factor analysis indicates adequate fit for the six-factorial model (*CFI* = .919, *TLI* = .904, *RMSEA* = .07, 95%-CI [.07; .07]).

identity does not reduce status threat, this shared national identity does not reduce backlash (all ACME *ps* ≥ .232, SI4.5. shows all path coefficients).[20] Figure 5 summarizes all results.[21]

FIGURE 5. Path Coefficients Study 4.



***Note*:** ACME through status threat *ps* ≥ .232 for all outcomes. See SI4.5. for all effect coefficients. Hardship prime not displayed as the treatment was unsuccessful.
* $p < .05$, ** < .01, *** < .001.

Discussion

This paper studied whether shared American identity primes would reduce feelings of status threat—a key mechanism for why diversification often evokes backlash—among white Americans. As racial tensions remain decisive in US politics in general (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2023) and current partisan divides in particular (Mason 2016), our paper connects to current discussions about the US as a polarized nation more broadly.

[20] Neither the value ($p = .937$) nor the hardship prime ($p = .572$) affect affective polarization.

[21] As there are no significant differences for any of the covariates, there is no statistical justification for exploratory serial mediations controlling for any covariate.

Our evidence provides four takeaways. First, Study 1 replicated earlier studies (e.g., Craig and Richeson 2014b), showing that white Americans tend to perceive diversification as threatening. Second, all four studies showed that status threat evokes backlash, such that it was associated with less warmth and inclusiveness toward racial outgroups, views of racial minorities as less American, less support for racial policies, and more racist views. It correlated with colder feelings toward Democrats and warmer feelings toward Republicans. Third, no study supported our argument that a shared American identity prime would attenuate status threat. This is despite various primes and accounting for American identity's relationship with alternative conceptions of nationhood (Huddy and Khatib 2007) statistically (Studies 1–3) and by design (Study 4). Arguably, serial mediations in Study 3 indicated that American identity *may* reduce status threat when controlling for adjacent concepts, but these models may introduce posttreatment bias (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018) and amplify the causal limitations inherent to mediation (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010). While we consider the simple mediations through status threat closest to our argument, we emphasize that we did not find any direct effect of any shared identity treatment either. This, along with a discussion ruling out alternative explanations (Kane 2024) in SI5.1., makes us confident of the null results in our well-powered and pre-registered studies. Fourth, our exploratory analyses showed no effect of any American identity prime on affective polarization. This finding is not central to our theory but is relevant in current debates (e.g., Levendusky 2018, 2023; Voelkel et al. 2023). Our null results for affective polarization do not necessarily question earlier studies finding positive effects. Instead, this inconsistency may merely reflect how American identity and its capacity to bridge conflict may have changed in the last decade. Table 1 summarizes all empirical learnings from this paper.

Together, our results contribute to various discussions in the current literature. First, they deepen the literature on status threat (e.g., Mutz 2018) by zooming into *racial* status threat

TABLE 1.
Summary of the evidence.

Study	Status threat linked to backlash?	American identity prime?	American identity prime successful?	Prime creates confounding?	Reduction in status threat?	Prime reduces AP?
1	*Yes*	American values	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*
2	*Yes*	Levendusky 2018	*No*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
3	*Yes*	Levendusky 2018	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*No*
4	*Yes*	Shared values	*Yes*	*No*	*No*	*No*

Note. AP = Affective polarization.

and subsequent backlash. They broaden psychological work on the consequences of racial status threat (Hodson, Earle, and Craig 2022) with additional outcomes relevant to political science (e.g., racial policies). Second, they replicate the different conceptions of nationhood about 20 years after Huddy and Khatib (2007) differentiated them for political scientists. Our studies with convenience samples of white Americans show that their factorial structure and diverging effects still replicate. Future research should reconsider this work when predicting the diverging effects of various national attachments. Third, our results contribute to theories (Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2018; see Schildkraut 2014) and evidence (e.g., Brandt and Turner-Zwinkels 2020; Levendusky 2018; 2023; Siegel and Badaan 2020) of a shared identity's capacity to bridge partisan, racial, and religious divides. The validated and novel primes, as well as careful consideration of adjacent concepts, can inform this work.

A practical implication is that alluring calls to unite behind what Americans share are more complex than they sound. For a shared identity to work, the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000) requires a shared understanding of this group. Moreover, Brewer (1991) emphasizes that the value of a shared identity lies in *differentiating* it from other identities, meaning that American identity needs to unite Americans *and* differentiate them from others. Differentiation may be unsatisfied if political theorists continue to define American identity with values like *freedom*, *equality*, and *care for loved ones* (e.g., Fukuyama 2018; Lilla 2018)—very broad ideas that the qualitative responses in Study 4

reproduce (see SI4.1.). Put differently, Americans may be unable to differentiate as Americans if Australians, Belgians, and Canadians define themselves with similar values.

A second implication concerns *national* identity's capacity to bridge divides *anywhere*. *Nations* must include citizens and exclude non-citizens to grant citizen rights (Koenig-Archibugi 2020). In line with this concept, our results imply that people may start to include some and exclude others once they become aware of their nation. This may be a particularly discriminatory task among historically powerful groups who tend to see themselves as prototypes of their nation (Jardina 2019). Our difficulties in empirically isolating American identity from conservative forms of nationhood support this reasoning. They also indicate that vague primes may backfire. As such, we hope that this paper inspires more work on the potentials and pitfalls of shared national identities.

We highlight two limitations. First, our evidence is limited to the American case and racial identities from white Americans' perspective. Backlash is prevalent across Western democracies and identity issues (see Norris and Inglehart 2019). Future work should replicate the individual-level process of diversification on majority members' attitudes through status threat, as well as shared identities' role therein. Second, we repeat that the study of causal mediation is inherently limited (Imai, Keele, and Tingley 2010). However, as previous research treats status threat as a key mechanism (Hodson, Earle, and Craig 2022), this analysis seems justified. Moreover, the direct effects of the American identity primes on the outcomes—circumventing omitted variable bias and potential reverse causality—are nonsignificant, too, which corroborates our findings.

We close by warning against two premature conclusions. First, our results do not suggest that American identity does not matter. Politically confounded or diverging understandings of American identity (at least in our convenience samples of white Americans) do not imply that Americans do not identify with their national group. In fact, our respondents firmly identified

with this group across all four studies. Second, the sobering findings on American identity's capacity to reduce status threat (and affective polarization) do not question the potential of shared identities as such. Current divisions may leave little of a shared *American* identity, but Americans continue to share many attitudes and experiences (Syropoulos and Leidner 2023). Hence, reminding them of other shared identities (e.g., parental, Zeng 2021) may help. Ultimately, identifying the *unum* in the US and elsewhere may be the key to reducing status threat and subsequent backlash.

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E Pluribus Whom? The Limitations of American Identity in Reducing Racial Conflict

Supplementary Information (SI) (For online publication only)

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SI1.1. Study 1: Experimental Materials

Control Condition:
U.S. Census Bureau Reports Residents Now Move at a Higher Rate
New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that the rate of geographical mobility, or the number of individuals who have moved within the past year, is increasing. The national mover rate increased from 11.9 percent in 2008 (the lowest rate since the U.S. Census Bureau began tracking the data) to 12.5 percent in 2009. According to the new data, 37.1 million people changed residences in the U.S. within the past year. 84.5 percent of all movers stayed within the same state. Renters were more than five times more likely to move than homeowners. The estimates also reveal that many of the nation's fastest-growing cities are suburbs. Specifically, principal cities within metropolitan areas experienced a net loss of 2.1 million movers, while the suburbs had a net gain of 2.4 million movers. For those who moved to a different county or state, the reasons for moving varied considerably by the length of their move. The latest figures are predicated on current and historical trends, which can be thrown awry by several variables, including prospective overhauls of public policy.

Diversification Condition:
In a Generation, Racial Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority
New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that America will become a "majority-minority" nation much faster than once predicted. The nation's racial minority population is steadily rising, advancing an unmistakable trend that could make minorities the new American majority by midcentury. The data show a declining number of white adults and growing under-18 populations of Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities. Demographers calculate that by 2042, Americans who identify themselves as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander will together outnumber non-Hispanic whites. The main reasons for the accelerating change are rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities. As white baby boomers age past their childbearing years, younger Hispanic parents are having children – and driving U.S. population growth. For example, there are now roughly 9 births for every 1 death among Hispanics, compared to a roughly one-to-one ratio for whites. The latest figures are predicated on current and historical trends, which can be thrown awry by several variables, including prospective overhauls of public policy.

Common Identity Condition:
In a Generation, Racial Minorities May Be the U.S. Majority
New U.S. Census Bureau data suggest that America will become a "majority-minority" nation much faster than once predicted. The nation's racial minority population is steadily rising, advancing an unmistakable trend that could make minorities the new American majority by midcentury. The data show a declining number of white adults and growing under-18 populations of Hispanics, Asians, and other minorities. Demographers calculate that by 2042, Americans who identify themselves as Hispanic, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander will together outnumber non-Hispanic whites. The main reasons for the accelerating change are rapid immigration growth and significantly higher birthrates among racial and ethnic minorities. As white baby boomers age past their childbearing years, younger Hispanic parents are having children – and driving U.S. population growth. For example, there are now roughly 9 births for every 1 death among Hispanics, compared to a roughly one-to-one ratio for whites. The latest figures are predicated on current and historical trends, which can be thrown awry by several variables, including prospective overhauls of public policy.

As a country, America has its own unique cultural values, making it unlike any other country in the world. For example, Americans value individual freedom, equality, democracy, innovation, work ethic, privacy and patriotism. These values have existed since the start of this nation and will continue to be deeply rooted in American culture for years to come, and those who practice them will continue to be respected and valued in American society. Which of these (or other) values do you care about the most, and why?

Please write a short paragraph expressing your opinion.

[Open Text Box]

SI1.2. Study 1: Mean Differences

TABLE SI1.2.1.
Mean Differences, Study 1

	Control ***M(SD)***	**Diversification** ***M(SD)***	**American Identity** ***M(SD)***	**Treatments vs. Control**
Status threat	0.40 (0.18)	0.44 (0.19)	0.43 (0.20)	$F(2,1043) = 4.76$, $p = .009$
American identity	0.64 (0.22)	0.64 (0.22)	0.68 (0.20)	$F(2,1042) = 3.89$, $p = .021$
White identity	0.54 (0.22)	0.56 (0.23)	0.58 (0.22)	$F(2,1043) = 3.05$, $p = .048$
Outgroup warmth	0.65 (0.22)	0.63 (0.22)	0.66 (0.22)	$F(2, 1043) = 1.35$, $p = .260$
Inclusiveness	0.54 (0.31)	0.49 (0.29)	0.50 (0.29)	$F(2,1043) = 3.01$, $p = .050$
Democrats warmth	0.52 (0.31)	0.49 (0.32)	0.53 (0.31)	$F(2,1043) = 1.38$, $p = .251$
Republicans warmth	0.44 (0.34)	0.44 (0.34)	0.46 (0.33)	$F(2,1043) = 0.49$, $p = .615$
Affirmative action	0.55 (0.31)	0.52 (0.31)	0.51 (0.32)	$F(2,1043) = 1.48$, $p = .229$
Blacks warmth	0.68 (0.27)	0.66 (0.27)	0.69 (0.27)	$F(2,1043) = 1.05$, $p = .351$
Asians warmth	0.69 (0.26)	0.68 (0.25)	0.70 (0.27)	$F(2,1043) = 0.38$, $p = .687$
Hispanics warmth	0.70 (0.26)	0.66 (0.27)	0.70 (0.26)	$F(2,1043) = 2.86$, $p = .058$
Illegal migrants warmth	0.45 (0.32)	0.45 (0.33)	0.46 (0.32)	$F(2,1043) = 0.22$, $p = .805$
Legal migrants warmth	0.74 (0.24)	0.71 (0.27)	0.73 (0.26)	$F(2,1043) = 1.73$, $p = .178$

Note. $N = 1{,}046$.

SI1.3. Study 1: Word Count Open Responses in Common Identity Condition

TABLE SI1.3.1.
Word Counts, Study 1 (counts with > 49 counts, stop words excluded)

Word	Count
freedom/s	316
value/s	276
America/n	169
individual	145
equality	136
country	125
care	124
important	107
work	90
people	89
democracy	88
privacy	54
everyone	53
without	52

Note. Data from $N = 300$ in the common identity condition.

We exploratorily test how responses mentioning specific terms like "freedom," "equality," or "democracy" are associated with American identity and status threat. We thank the Reviewers for this suggestion. In Study 1, the term "freedom" is positively correlated with status threat ($p < .001$) and American identity ($p = .03$). "Equality" is negatively associated with both ($ps < .001$). "Democracy" is negatively associated with status threat ($p < .001$) but not associated with American identity ($p = .489$). We emphasize that these correlations are not causal, implying, for example, that thinking of "democracy" does not necessarily reduce status threat.

SI1.4.: Study 1: Mediation Path Coefficients

TABLE SI1.4.1.

Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 1

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediator	Effect Mediator on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing Diversification to Control					
Outgroup warmth	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .986$	0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .229$
Inclusiveness	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .080$	0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .007$	–0.05 (0.02), $p = .022$
Democrats warmth	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .916$	0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.03 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .206$
Republicans warmth	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .160$	0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.03 (0.01), $p = .005$	–0.01 (0.03), $p = .797$
Affirmative action	0.01 (0.02), $p = .793$	0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.03 (0.01), $p = .003$	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .263$
Comparing American Identity to Control Condition					
Outgroup warmth	0.02 (0.02), $p = .147$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .026$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.1), $p = .029$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .718$
Inclusiveness	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .163$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .026$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .040$	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .068$
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .164$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .026$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.01), $p = .030$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .721$
Republicans warmth	–0.03 (0.03), $p = .898$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .027$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.02 (0.01), $p = .029$	0.02 (0.03), $p = .485$
Affirmative action	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .465$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .027$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.03 (0.01), $p = .029$	–0.04 (0.03), $p = .097$
Comparing American Identity to Diversification					
Outgroup warmth	0.02 (0.02), $p = .143$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .634$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .001$	0.00 (0.01), $p = .635$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .128$
Inclusiveness	0.01 (0.02), $p = .772$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .636$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.00 (0.01), $p = .640$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .70$
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .132$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .637$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .638$	0.04 (0.02), $p = .120$
Republicans warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .212$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .640$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .644$	0.03 (0.03), $p = .795$
Affirmative action	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .304$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .637$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .639$	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .498$

Note. $N = 1{,}046$. Standard errors in parentheses. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

TABLE SI1.4.2.

Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 1 (Controlling for white identity)

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediators 1	Effect Mediators 1 on Mediator 2	Effect Mediator 2 on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing Diversification to Control Condition						
Outgroup warmth	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .981$	AI: 0.01 (0.02), $p = .579$ WI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .105$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .112$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .660$ WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .114$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .689$
Inclusiveness	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .087$	AI: 0.01 (0.02), $p = .586$ WI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .104$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .112$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .667$ WI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .129$	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .061$
Democrats warmth	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .925$	AI: 0.01 (0.02), $p = .580$ WI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .103$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .109$ WI: 0.42 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .656$ WI: –0.01 (0.01), $p = .114$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .648$
Republicans warmth	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .153$	AI: 0.01 (0.02), $p = .579$ WI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .109$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .103$ WI: 0.42 (0.03), $p < .001$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .641$ WI: 0.01 (0.01), $p = .119$	–0.03 (0.03), $p = .334$
Affirmative action	0.01 (0.02), $p = .801$	AI: 0.01 (0.02), $p = .576$ WI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .101$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .117$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .646$ WI: –0.01 (0.01), $p = .112$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .858$
Comparing American Identity to Control Condition						
Outgroup warmth	0.02 (0.02), $p = .145$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .007$ WI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .015$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .112$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .192$ WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .021$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .625$
Inclusiveness	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .171$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .006$ WI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .014$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .112$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .200$ WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .030$	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .076$
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .174$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .007$ WI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .017$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .109$ WI: 0.42 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .189$ WI: –0.01 (0.01), $p = .024$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .637$
Republicans warmth	–0.00 (0.03), $p = .873$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .007$ WI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .015$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .103$ WI: 0.42 (0.03), $p < .001$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: –0.00 (0.01), $p = .161$ WI: 0.01 (0.01), $p = .021$	0.02 (0.03), $p = .584$
Affirmative action	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .454$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .006$ WI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .015$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .117$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .184$ WI: –0.01 (0.01), $p = .020$	–0.04 (0.02), $p = .099$
Comparing American Identity to Diversification Condition						
Outgroup warmth	0.02 (0.02), $p = .147$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .024$ WI: 0.02 (0.02), $p = .386$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .117$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.47 (0.03), $p < .01$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .225$ WI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .390$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .380$
Inclusiveness	0.01 (0.02), $p = .773$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .024$ WI: 0.02 (0.02), $p = .378$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .110$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.31 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .241$ WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .044$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .977$
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .138$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .026$ WI: 0.02 (0.02), $p = .383$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .114$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .224$ WI: –0.00 (0.01), $p = .386$	0.02 (0.02), $p = .354$
Republicans warmth	0.03 (0.03), $p = .225$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .025$ WI: 0.02 (0.02), $p = .384$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .105$ WI: 0.42 (0.04), $p < .001$	0.65 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .200$ WI: 0.00 (0.01), $p = .388$	0.04 (0.03), $p = .135$
Affirmative action	–0.02 (0.02), $p = .311$	AI: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .025$ WI: 0.02 (0.02), $p = .386$	AI: –0.06 (0.04), $p = .106$ WI: 0.42 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.73 (0.04), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .205$ WI: –0.01 (0.01), $p = .387$	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .131$

Note. $N = 1{,}045$. Standard errors in parentheses. Mediator 1: American identity (AI), white identity (WI). Mediator 2: Status threat. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

SI2.1.: Study 2: Experimental Materials

(Taken from Novarro 2014; adapted from Levendusky 2018).

America: What Makes It Great
The Declaration of Independence, whose signing we celebrate every July 4th, established America as one of the first representative democracies in the world. As we begin America's 239th year, we wanted to reflect on some of the factors that continue to make America a great nation. Here are some of the top reasons we love America.
INNOVATION — Edison, Gates, Jobs: they and we are known for thinking outside the box. As a people, we create and innovate; we don't wait for others, then appropriate their creations. From search engines to social networks — Google, Yahoo, Twitter and Facebook — it all started here.
TECHNOLOGY — From cotton gin to light bulb, records to movies, rockets to Internet, the gadgets and discoveries originating from the U.S. have changed the world, and continue to do so today.
DIVERSITY — "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free…" So says the inscription on the Statue of Liberty in the middle of New York Harbor. We are a nation of immigrants whose spirit of hard work and desire for a better life have been a hallmark since the first settlers arrived here more than 400 years ago.
ECONOMY — Despite the spotlight on China and other Asian countries, the United States still possesses the world's richest economy and consumer base — larger than Japan, Germany, China and Great Britain combined. The economy of a single U.S. state-- California--would be among the top 10 economies in the world if it were a country.
INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT VS. CLASS SYSTEM — Unlike other countries such as India, China or much of Europe, where one's station in life is determined by a caste system, government monolith or an outdated monarchy, in America you are free to carve out your own destiny. Wealth carries huge influence, but unlike most countries, where one's fate is determined by others, in the U.S. you are free to chart your own course.
TOLERANCE — While other cultures in Syria, Iraq and Africa are slaughtering each other in the name of religion, in America Jews, Catholics, Sikhs, Protestants, Hindus, Muslims — and Atheists — live and work together in peace.
ENTREPRENEURSHIP — The U.S., by far, has more self-made millionaires and billionaires proportionally than anywhere in the world. Much has been said of late about the rapid rise of a millionaire class in China and Vietnam. But that's still — pardon the cliche — a drop in the ocean.
INSTITUTIONS AND LAW — We are a nation of laws and equality under the law; those laws provide stability, continuity, structure and protect against intellectual theft.
EDUCATION — Students from everywhere in the world come here for their education, not the opposite.
ENTERTAINMENT — OK, we didn't invent classical music, but we created Dixieland, ragtime, jazz, swing, big band, bluegrass, Hawaiian, pop, rock 'n' roll, hip-hop, rap and even disco; then there's radio, television, movies, video games, hula hoops, Hollywood and Disneyland.
NATURAL BEAUTY — From the California coast, through the Rocky Mountains to the forests of Maine and Vermont, and including our national parks, we are a nation of contrasts, with two oceans, numerous lakes and rivers, gargantuan mountains, vast plains and spacious deserts, all with their individual charm.
GENEROSITY — Americans are the most generous nation in terms of donating to charities, both in total dollars given and total hours. No other nation has America's generosity of spirit and willingness to help their fellow man.
ENDURANCE — After 238 years, we are still here in, basically, the same form. No nation in modern times has come close when it comes to longevity. And that goes for our human life span — longer than anywhere else but Okinawa.
STANDARD OF LIVING – The highest in the world; nothing more to be said.

SI2.2.: Study 2: Mean Differences

TABLE SI2.2.1.
Mean Differences, Study 2

	Control ***M*(*SD*)**	**American Identity** ***M*(*SD*)**	**American Identity vs. Control**
Status threat	0.44 (0.20)	0.40 (0.19)	$F(1,823) = 7.39$, $p = .007$
American identity	0.67 (0.20)	0.65 (0.22)	$F(1,823) = 1.48$, $p = .225$
White identity	0.56 (0.22)	0.55 (0.24)	$F(1,823) = 0.59$, $p = .443$
Outgroup warmth	0.66 (0.21)	0.67 (0.20)	$F(1,821) = 0.34$, $p = .561$
Inclusiveness	0.46 (0.28)	0.50 (0.28)	$F(1,823) = 3.10$, $p = .079$
Americanness: Outgroups	0.77 (0.23)	0.78 (0.22)	$F(1,823) = 1.23$, $p = .289$
Democrats warmth	0.57 (0.30)	0.56 (0.30)	$F(1,823) = 0.18$, $p = .671$
Republicans warmth	0.44 (0.33)	0.44 (0.32)	$F(1,823) = 0.08$, $p = .779$
Blacks warmth	0.71 (0.25)	0.71 (0.24)	$F(1,822) = 0.07$, $p = .795$
Asians warmth	0.73 (0.23)	0.73 (0.23)	$F(1,822) = 0.14$, $p = .713$
Hispanics warmth	0.72 (0.24)	0.73 (0.22)	$F(1,822) = 0.41$, $p = .522$
Illegal migrants warmth	0.46 (0.33)	0.47 (0.32)	$F(1,823) = 0.21$, $p = .651$
Legal migrants warmth	0.74 (0.22)	0.75 (0.22)	$F(1,821) = 0.41$, $p = .524$
Americanness: Blacks	0.80 (0.22)	0.80 (0.20)	$F(1,823) = 0.09$, $p = .767$
Americanness: Asians	0.75 (0.25)	0.77 (0.24)	$F(1,823) = 1.34$, $p = .237$
Americanness: Hispanics	0.75 (0.25)	0.77 (0.23)	$F(1,823) = 2.15$, $p = .143$
Americanness: Whites	0.84 (0.19)	0.84 (0.18)	$F(1,823) = 0.15$, $p = .698$

Note. $N = 825$.

SI2.3.: Study 2: Mediation Path Coefficients

TABLE SI2.3.1.

Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 2

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediator	Effect Mediator on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing American Identity to Control Condition					
Outgroup warmth	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .462$	–0.04 (0.01), $p = .006$	–0.50 (0.04), $p < .001$	0.02 (0.01), $p = .009$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .561$
Inclusiveness	0.02 (0.02), $p = .305$	–0.04 (0.01), $p = .007$	–0.42 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.02 (0.01), $p = .010$	0.04 (0.02), $p = .073$
Americanness	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .884$	–0.04 (0.01), $p = .005$	–0.50 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.01), $p = .008$	0.02 (0.02), $p = .287$
Democrats warmth	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .109$	–0.04 (0.01), $p = .008$	–0.62 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.01), $p = .011$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .673$
Republicans warmth	0.01 (0.02), $p = .600$	–0.04 (0.01), $p = .007$	0.50 (0.06), $p < .001$	–0.02 (0.01), $p = .012$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .778$

Note. $N = 824$. Standard errors in parentheses. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

SI3.1.: Study 3: Mean Differences

TABLE SI3.1.1.
Mean Differences, Study 3

	Control *M*(*SD*)	American Identity *M*(*SD*)	American Identity vs. Control
Status threat	0.39 (0.21)	0.40 (0.21)	$F(1,795) = 0.06$, $p = .803$
American identity	0.63 (0.22)	0.66 (0.22)	$F(1,795) = 3.96$, $p = .047$
White identity	0.53 (0.23)	0.59 (0.23)	$F(1,784) = 10.9$, $p = .001$
Symbolic patriotism	0.61 (0.29)	0.63 (0.29)	$F(1,795) = 1.92$, $p = .166$
Nationalism	0.51 (0.27)	0.55 (0.28)	$F(1,795) = 4.88$, $p = .028$
National pride	0.59 (0.18)	0.63 (0.19)	$F(1,795) = 8.87$, $p = .003$
Outgroup warmth	0.68 (0.20)	0.69 (0.20)	$F(1,793) = 0.28$, $p = .598$
Inclusiveness	0.53 (0.30)	0.50 (0.31)	$F(1,795) = 2.07$, $p = .151$
Americanness: Outgroups	0.77 (0.22)	0.78 (0.21)	$F(1,795) = 0.14$, $p = .707$
Democrats warmth	0.55 (0.31)	0.57 (0.30)	$F(1,793) = 1.42$, $p = .234$
Republicans warmth	0.46 (0.34)	0.45 (0.33)	$F(1,794) = 0.14$, $p = .703$
Blacks warmth	0.73 (0.24)	0.73 (0.25)	$F(1,794) = 0.02$, $p = .902$
Asians warmth	0.74 (0.23)	0.76 (0.22)	$F(1,794) = 1.76$, $p = .185$
Hispanics warmth	0.74 (0.22)	0.74 (0.23)	$F(1,795) = 0.02$, $p = .895$
Illegal migrants warmth	0.46 (0.32)	0.45 (0.33)	$F(1,795) = 0.07$, $p = .797$
Legal migrants warmth	0.75 (0.23)	0.77 (0.22)	$F(1,794) = 1.80$, $p = .180$
Americanness: Blacks	0.79 (0.22)	0.81 (0.20)	$F(1,795) = 0.88$, $p = .347$
Americanness: Asians	0.76 (0.24)	0.77 (0.23)	$F(1,795) = 0.09$, $p = .759$
Americanness: Hispanics	0.76 (0.24)	0.76 (0.24)	$F(1,795) = 0.01$, $p = .914$
Americanness: Whites	0.83 (0.18)	0.83 (0.19)	$F(1,795) = 0.02$, $p = .898$

Note. $N = 797$.

SI3.2.: Study 3: Mediation Path Coefficients

TABLE SI3.2.1.
Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 3

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediator	Effect Mediator on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing American Identity to Control Condition					
Outgroup warmth	0.01 (0.01), $p = .474$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .794$	–0.43 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .795$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .606$
Inclusiveness	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .153$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .804$	–0.38 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .805$	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .150$
Americanness	0.01 (0.01), $p = .610$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .803$	–0.38 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .804$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .703$
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .155$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .798$	–0.57 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .799$	0.03 (0.02), $p = .230$
Republicans warmth	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .616$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .801$	0.54 (0.05), $p < .001$	0.00 (0.01), $p = .801$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .702$

Note. $N = 796$. Standard errors in parentheses. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

TABLE SI3.2.2.
Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 3 (Controlling for white identity, nationalism, and national pride)

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediators 1	Effect Mediators 1 on Mediator 2	Effect Mediator 2 on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing American Identity to Control Condition						
Outgroup warmth	0.01 (0.01), $p = .430$	AI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .065$	AI: –0.15 (0.05), $p = .005$	–0.43 (0.03), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .151$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .405$
		WI: 0.05 (0.02), $p = .002$	WI: 0.46 (0.04), $p < .001$		WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .003$	
		NA: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .035$	NA: 0.24 (0.04), $p < .001$		NA: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .048$	
		NP: 0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	NP: –0.22 (0.05), $p < .001$		NP: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .016$	
Inclusiveness	–0.03 (0.02), $p = .156$	AI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .051$	AI: –0.15 (0.05), $p = .004$	–0.38 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .140$	–0.05 (0.02), $p = .021$
		WI: 0.05 (0.02), $p = .001$	WI: 0.45 (0.04), $p < .001$		WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .004$	
		NA: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .031$	NA: 0.23 (0.03), $p < .001$		NA: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .051$	
		NP: 0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	NP: –0.21 (0.05), $p < .001$		NP: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .024$	
Americanness	0.01 (0.01), $p = .656$	AI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .050$	AI: –0.15 (0.05), $p = .004$	–0.38 (0.04), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .128$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .374$
		WI: 0.05 (0.02), $p = .001$	WI: 0.45 (0.04), $p < .001$		WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .003$	
		NA: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .032$	NA: 0.23 (0.03), $p < .001$		NA: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .050$	
		NP: 0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	NP: –0.21 (0.05), $p < .001$		NP: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .021$	
Democrats warmth	0.03 (0.02), $p = .171$	AI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .059$	AI: –0.15 (0.05), $p = .006$	–0.57 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: 0.00 (0.00), $p = .143$	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .856$
		WI: 0.05 (0.02), $p = .001$	WI: 0.46 (0.04), $p < .001$		WI: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .002$	
		NA: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .031$	NA: 0.24 (0.04), $p < .001$		NA: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .014$	
		NP: 0.04 (0.01), $p = .002$	NP: –0.22 (0.05), $p < .001$		NP: 0.01 (0.00), $p = .014$	
Republicans warmth	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .619$	AI: 0.03 (0.02), $p = .058$	AI: –0.15 (0.05), $p = .006$	0.54 (0.05), $p < .001$	AI: –0.00 (0.00), $p = .124$	0.02 (0.03), $p = .545$
		WI: 0.05 (0.02), $p = .001$	WI: 0.46 (0.04), $p < .001$		WI: 0.01 (0.00), $p = .002$	
		NA: 0.04 (0.02), $p = .036$	NA: 0.24 (0.04), $p < .001$		NA: 0.01 (0.00), $p = .046$	
		NP: 0.04 (0.01), $p = .003$	NP: –0.22 (0.05), $p < .001$		NP: –0.01 (0.00), $p = .015$	

Note. $N = 795$. Standard errors in parentheses. Mediator 1: American identity (AI), white identity (WI), nationalism (NA), national pride (NP). Mediator 2: Status threat. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

SI3.3.: Study 3: Correlations Conceptions of Nationhood

TABLE SI3.3.1.
Correlations Conceptions of Nationhood

Variable	***M***	***SD***	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. American identity	0.64	0.22					
2. White identity	0.56	0.23	.68**				
3. Symbolic patriotism	0.62	0.29	.74**	.60**			
4. Nationalism	0.53	0.28	.62**	.57**	.65**		
5. National pride	0.61	0.19	.62**	.53**	.62**	.65**	
6. Status threat	0.40	0.21	.25**	.46**	.35**	.37**	.17**

Note. $N = 797$. $p < .05$, ** < .01

SI4.1.: Study 4: Experimental Materials

Control Condition:
Please list what you had for your three latest meals.
Meal 1:
Meal 2:
Meal 3:

American Value Condition:
Americans have many values in common. Of course, they currently also disagree about many things, and there are many different groups in the US. But in general, research shows that Americans share quite a lot of values. In your view, what are **the three most prominent values that Americans share, regardless of background?** Please don't list differences between Americans but mention **what you think all Americans agree on**.
Value 1:
Value 2:
Value 3:

American Hardship Condition:
Americans have many hardships in common. Of course, people face various challenges, and there are many different groups in the US. But in general, research shows that all Americans often experience the same problems, challenges, or ailments in their lives. In your view, what are **the three most prominent hardships that Americans share, regardless of background?** Please don't list differences between Americans but mention **what hardships you think most Americans experience at some point.**
Hardship 1:
Hardship 2:
Hardship 3:

TABLE SI4.1.1.
Word Counts, value prime (counts with > 20 counts, stop words excluded)

Word	Count
freedom/s/free	234
family	117
equality	57
speech	40
honesty	38
work	28
justice	26
safety	26
liberty	24
democracy	24
right	23
life	22
loyalty	22
independence	21
hard	21

Note. Data from $N = 460$ in the American value condition.

We exploratorily test how responses mentioning specific terms like “freedom,” “equality,” or “democracy” are associated with American identity and status threat. We thank the Reviewers for this suggestion. In Study 4, none of the terms tested is associated with either variable.

TABLE SI4.1.2.
Word Counts, hardship prime (counts with > 20 counts, stop words excluded)

Word	Count
health/healthcare	181
financial/finances	157
money	88
housing	56
loss	55
job	52
issues	51
cost	43
family	42
loved	41
food	41
problems	35
death	34
lack	34
mental	30
medical	30
one	29
poverty	29
inflation	28
illness	25
stress	24
debt	24
relationships	22

Note. Data from $N = 457$ in the American value condition.

SI4.2.: Study 4: Mean Differences

TABLE SI4.2.1.
Mean Differences, Study 4

	American Value *M*(*SD*)	American Hardship *M*(*SD*)	Control *M*(*SD*)	Treatments vs. Control
Status threat	0.41 (0.18)	0.41 (0.18)	0.39 (0.19)	$F(2,1391) = 0.79$, $p = .457$
American identity	0.71 (0.21)	0.69 (0.23)	0.67 (0.23)	$F(1,1391) = 3.75$, $p = .023$
White identity	0.53 (0.22)	0.52 (0.23)	0.51 (0.24)	$F(1,1391) = 1.75$, $p = .174$
Symbolic patriotism	0.66 (0.27)	0.64 (0.29)	0.63 (0.28)	$F(1,1391) = 1.49$, $p = .227$
Constructive patriotism	0.71 (0.18)	0.70 (0.18)	0.71 (0.19)	$F(1,1391) = 0.41$, $p = .665$
Nationalism	0.54 (0.27)	0.51 (0.28)	0.51 (0.27)	$F(1,1391) = 1.28$, $p = .277$
National pride	0.59 (0.18)	0.58 (0.19)	0.59 (0.19)	$F(1,1391) = 1.13$, $p = .325$
Outgroup warmth	0.69 (0.21)	0.69 (0.20)	0.68 (0.19)	$F(1,1387) = 0.46$, $p = .630$
Inclusiveness	0.56 (0.28)	0.55 (0.29)	0.55 (0.29)	$F(1,1391) = 0.14$, $p = .866$
Symbolic racism	0.39 (0.27)	0.39 (0.28)	0.38 (0.27)	$F(1,1391) = 0.29$, $p = .746$
Democrats warmth	0.56 (0.30)	0.55 (0.29)	0.55 (0.29)	$F(1,1388) = 0.88$, $p = .922$
Republicans warmth	0.47 (0.32)	0.46 (0.32)	0.45 (0.31)	$F(1,1391) = 0.55$, $p = .576$
Opposition racial policies	0.48 (0.21)	0.49 (0.21)	0.48 (0.21)	$F(1,1369) = 0.33$, $p = .719$
Blacks warmth	0.74 (0.25)	0.72 (0.24)	0.70 (0.24)	$F(1,1389) = 2.44$, $p = .088$
Asians warmth	0.74 (0.23)	0.74 (0.22)	0.74 (0.22)	$F(1,1391) = 0.07$, $p = .929$
Hispanics warmth	0.74 (0.24)	0.73 (0.22)	0.72 (0.23)	$F(1,1390) = 0.49$, $p = .613$
Illegal migrants warmth	0.49 (0.32)	0.49 (0.31)	0.49 (0.31)	$F(1,1390) = 0.04$, $p = .957$
Legal migrants warmth	0.77 (0.22)	0.75 (0.22)	0.76 (0.22)	$F(1,1391) = 0.74$, $p = .477$

Note. $N = 1{,}394$.

SI4.3.: Study 4: Factorial Structure Conceptions of Nationhood

TABLE SI4.3.1.
Correlations Conceptions of Nationhood

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. American identity	0.69	0.23						
2. White identity	0.52	0.23	.65**					
3. Symbolic patriotism	0.65	0.28	.72**	.57**				
4. Constructive patriotism	0.71	0.19	.40**	.25**	.32**			
5. Nationalism	0.52	0.28	.62**	.58**	.65**	.22**		
6. National pride	0.58	0.19	.55**	.49**	.57**	.30**	.62**	
7. Status Threat	0.40	0.18	.30**	.45**	.39**	.01	.45**	.20**

Note. N = 1,394. $p < .05$, ** < .01

TABLE SI4.3.2.
Exploratory Factor Analysis Conceptions of Nationhood

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
American identity 1	0.463					
American identity 2	0.742					
American identity 3	0.817					
American identity 4	0.729					
White identity 1		0.671				
White identity 2		0.632				
White identity 3		0.898				
White identity 4		0.719				
White identity 5		0.711				
Symbolic patriotism 1			0.921			
Symbolic patriotism 2			0.955			
Constructive patriotism 1				0.609		
Constructive patriotism 2				0.470		
Constructive patriotism 3				0.721		
Constructive patriotism 4				0.577		
Nationalism 1					0.794	
Nationalism 2					0.883	
National pride 1						0.743
National pride 2						0.828
National pride 3						0.683
National pride 4					0.325	
National pride 5					0.346	0.408
National pride 6						0.579
National pride 7						0.712
Proportional variance	0.088	0.115	0.082	0.066	0.079	0.119

Note. N = 1,394. Results from promax rotation. Only loadings ≥ 0.30 displayed.

SI4.4.: Study 4: Exploratory Analysis of Groups Considered

TABLE SI4.4.1.
Exploratory Analysis of Groups Considered.
Question: **"**Asked differently, what of the groups below were you thinking about when listing the three items? Please read the options carefully and tick all that apply."

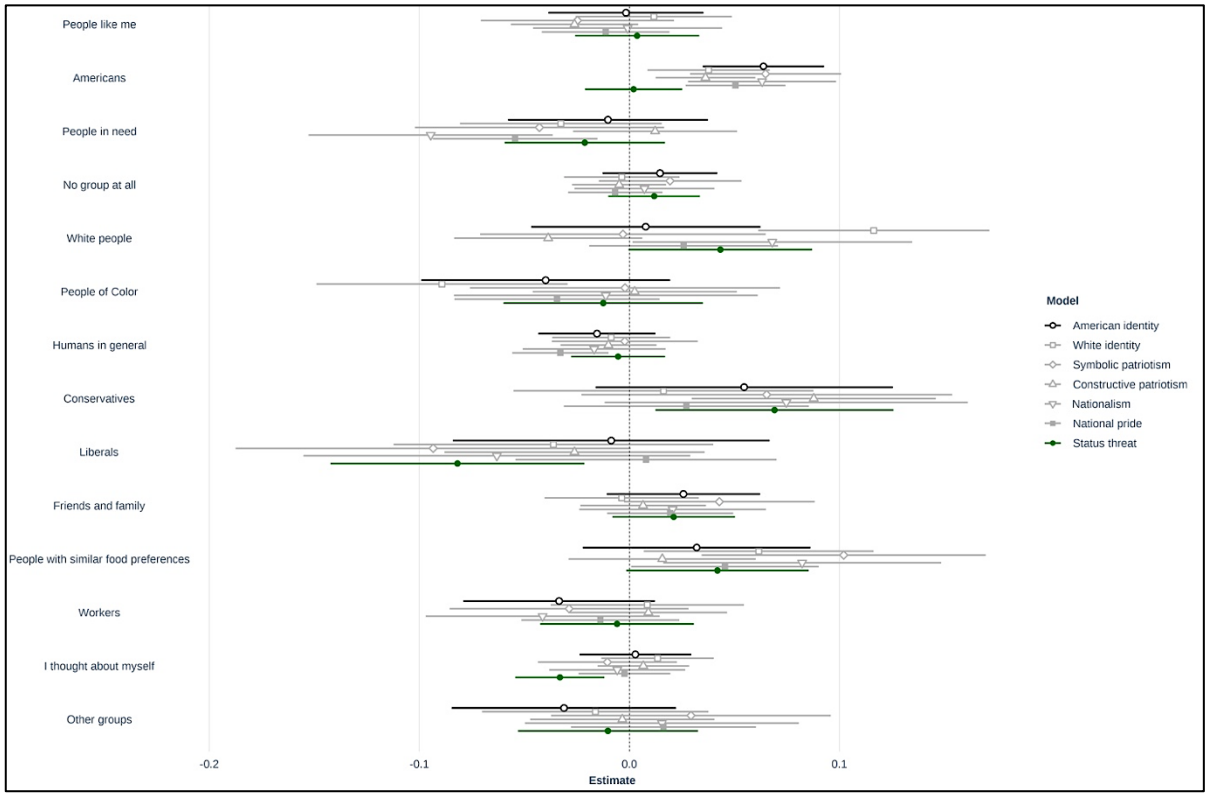
Group	Value (N = 460)	Hardship (N = 457)	Control (N = 477)	Sum
People like me	135 (29.35)	175 (38.29)	24 (5.03)	334
Americans	297 (64.57)	280 (61.27)	20 (4.19)	597
People in need	66 (14.35)	152 (33.26)	7 (1.47)	225
No group at all	121 (26.30)	123 (26.91)	268 (56.18)	521
White people	100 (21.74)	92 (20.13)	14 (2.94)	206
People of color	74 (16.09)	103 (22.54)	13 (2.73)	190
Humans in general	241 (52.39)	293 (64.11)	34 (7.13)	568
Conservatives	88 (19.13)	61 (13.35)	6 (1.26)	155
Liberals	77 (16.74)	61 (13.35)	8 (1.68)	146
Friends and family	131 (28.48)	171 (37.42)	48 (10.06)	350
People with similar food preferences	27 (5.87)	30 (6.56)	34 (7.13)	91
Workers	100 (21.74)	138 (30.20)	8 (1.68)	246
Myself	158 (34.35)	190 (41.58)	275 (57.65)	623
Others	55 (11.96)	64 (14.00)	10 (2.10)	129
Sum	**1942**	**1670**	**769**	**4381**

Note. N = 1,394.

Respondents in the value and hardship conditions mention "no group at all" and "myself" significantly *less* often than respondents in the control condition (all $ps < .001$). They mention all other groups significantly *more* often than the control condition (all $ps < .001$), except for "people with similar food preferences" (both treatments, $ps \geq .436$).
The value condition compares to the hardship condition as follows: they think *less* often of "people like me" ($p < .001$), "people in need" ($p < .001$), "people of color" ($p = .003$), "humans in general" ($p < .001$), "friends and family" ($p = .001$), "workers" ($p < .001$), and "myself" ($p = .025$). They think *more* often of "Conservatives" ($p = .004$). There are no differences in "Americans" ($p = .223$), "no group at all" ($p = .841$), "white people" ($p = .480$), "Liberals" ($p = .087$), "people with similar food preferences" ($p = .670$), and "others" ($p = .277$).

In Figure 4.4.1., we exploratorily test how the different groups respondents in the value condition thought of are associated with status threat and the conceptions of nationhood. We thank the Reviewers for this suggestion. The figure shows that thinking of Americans (while controlling for the other groups salient) is associated with stronger American identity and all other conceptions of nationhood. There is no group that, if salient, is associated with stronger American identity but not with the other conceptions of nationhood. Furthermore, we emphasize that these results are correlational only, meaning that any significant associations do not necessarily suggest that thinking of these groups causally reduces status threat or strengthens any conception of nationhood, respectively.

FIGURE 4.4.1. Effects of Salient Groups.



***Note*:** Coefficient estimates with 95% confidence intervals. * $p < .05$, ** < .01, *** < .001.

SI4.5.: Study 4: Mediation Path Coefficients

TABLE SI4.5.1.

Mediation Path Coefficients, Study 4

Dependent variable	Direct effect	Effect Condition on Mediator	Effect Mediator on DV	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Comparing Value Prime to Control Condition					
Outgroup warmth	0.02 (0.01), $p = .128$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .231$	–0.41 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .235$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .351$
Inclusiveness	0.01 (0.02), $p = .672$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .249$	–0.25 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.00), $p = .267$	0.00 (0.02), $p = .812$
Symbolic racism	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .888$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .243$	1.01 (0.03), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .244$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .499$
Democrats warmth	0.02 (0.02), $p = .369$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .231$	–0.65 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .232$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .731$
Republicans warmth	0.01 (0.02), $p = .513$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .243$	0.67 (0.04), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .245$	0.02 (0.02), $p = .292$
Opposition to racial policies	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .380$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .258$	0.79 (0.02), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .260$	0.00 (0.01), $p = .928$
Comparing Hardship Prime to Control Condition					
Outgroup warmth	0.01 (0.01), $p = .500$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .320$	–0.41 (0.03), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.1), $p = .321$	0.00 (0.01), $p = .810$
Inclusiveness	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .879$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .335$	–0.25 (0.05), $p < .001$	–0.00 (0.00), $p = .360$	–0.01 (0.02), $p = .766$
Symbolic racism	–0.00 (0.01), $p = .989$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .339$	1.01 (0.03), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .340$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .526$
Democrats warmth	0.01 (0.02), $p = .672$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .334$	–0.65 (0.04), $p < .001$	–0.01 (0.01), $p = .334$	–0.00 (0.02), $p = .993$
Republicans warmth	0.00 (0.02), $p = .866$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .336$	0.67 (0.04), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .341$	0.01 (0.02), $p = .603$
Opposition to racial policies	0.00 (0.01), $p = .933$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .300$	0.79 (0.02), $p < .001$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .301$	0.01 (0.01), $p = .453$

Note. $N = 1{,}394$. Standard errors in parentheses. Indirect effects show Average Causal Mediation Effects (ACME).

SI5.1.: Evaluating Alternative Explanations for Null Results

In an instructive recent overview, Kane (2024) discusses seven alternative explanations (AEs) for null results in experiments: respondent inattentiveness, insufficient variation in the independent variable, pre-treated respondents, insufficient statistical power, poor measurement of the dependent variable, ceiling and floor effects, and countervailing treatment effects. We discuss each of these explanations to further evaluate the robustness of our results. Unless noted otherwise, all analyses and preliminary steps (e.g., power analyses, exclusion of inattentive respondents) were pre-registered for Studies 2 to 4.

First, we can rule out respondent inattentiveness as we excluded respondents who did not pass the two attention checks. One attention check asked for a specific response on a Likert scale, the other for a specific open-text response. Unfortunately, we had placed these attention checks post-treatment in all studies, which may induce posttreatment bias (Montgomery, Nyhan, and Torres 2018). However, exploratory chi-square independence tests showed that responses on both attention checks were independent of condition, suggesting that attention did not differ between conditions.

Second, regarding variation in the treated variables, we remind that our studies treated a.) diversification salience and b.) American identity. We find the expected effects of diversification salience on status threat, suggesting that alternative explanations are irrelevant here. For American identity, our manipulation checks confirm statistically successful treatments in Studies 1, 3, and 4. The challenge of manipulating American identity is to not additionally induce alternative conceptions of nationhood, and Study 4 succeeded in this exercise. As we still do not find an effect, we confidently rule out this alternative explanation.

Third, we acknowledge that respondents may be pre-treated with a.) diversification and b.) American identity, such that they may be aware of demographic change and may firmly identify as Americans regardless of the treatment. That said, the manipulation checks confirm statistically a.) significant effects of diversification and b.) variation in the treated American identity variable, suggesting that the treatment was successful beyond any pre-treatment.

Fourth, we conducted a priori power analyses for all four studies and ensured that our final sample size (i.e., after excluding inattentive respondents) exceeded the required one to detect small to medium-sized effects. Furthermore, we note that the four studies in combination (total $N = 4{,}062$) contribute to the conclusion of a null effect of the American identity prime.

Fifth, poor measurement of the dependent variable is an unlikely alternative explanation for two reasons. First, each study used several measures, often indices of several items, to operationalize backlash. The single studies sometimes operationalized different outcomes but came to the same conclusion, increasing confidence. Second, many of the measures, including status threat (Outten et al. 2012) and American identity (Huddy and Khatib 2007) as the mechanisms of interest, were previously validated and widely used measures.

Sixth, we consider ceiling and floor effects an unlikely alternative explanation for our results. The descriptive statistics for the single studies indicate no means at the upper or lower range, including the dependent variables and status threat and American identity as the two mechanisms. American identity is a comparably strong national identity (Huddy and Khatib 2007), and, as mentioned in response to alternative explanation 3, thus more difficult to increase. However, our significant manipulation checks indicate that ceiling effects were not an issue.

Seventh, we test for conditional effects by ideology (as pre-registered in Studies 2–4). As reported in footnote 5, we find little indication of moderation, suggesting that countervailing treatment effects cannot explain the null results.

Together, our discussion of the alternative explanations proposed by Kane (2024) increases the confidence in the robustness of the null results for the American identity primes.

Supplement References

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