The rise of populism in the USA: Nationalism, race, and American party politics

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The rise of populism in the USA:

Nationalism, race, and American party politics

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ABSTRACT

Many populist parties promote nationalistic country-first policy platforms. In the United States, the Republican Party has increasingly adopted nationalistic policies such as opposition to immigration and multilateralism, culminating in the election of Donald Trump in 2016. The increasing salience of nationalism in American politics raises three important questions. First, has nationalism increased over time? Second, has the rhetoric of leaders within the Republican Party increased the political relevance of nationalism? Third, are White and Black Americans equally susceptible to the Republican Party's nationalistic appeals or is its appeal limited to Whites? We examine the prevalence and political effects of nationalism in the General Social Survey national identity modules (1996, 2004, 2014). Analyses yield several clear findings: (1) Nationalism and patriotism are positively correlated in the US, equally prevalent among Blacks and Whites, and have not increased over time; (2) nationalism boosts and pride undermines support for anti-immigrant and protectionist nationalist policies; (3) the link between nationalism and Republican identification has increased over time among Whites but remains nonexistent among Blacks. In sum, our findings suggest that nationalism is stable whereas its political relevance has increased over time but only among White Americans.

The Nationalistic Turn in American Partisan Politics

Populist parties have expanded their electoral support and increased their presence in national parliaments across western democracies in recent years, generating considerable public and scholarly attention (Mudde 2013; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2018). Populism's broad reach is evident in the successful Brexit vote, the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump, and the entry of populist parties into government in various democratic countries including Austria, Brazil, Hungary, India, Italy, and Poland. There is some contention surrounding the meaning of populism but the emphasis in recent right-wing populist rhetoric on nativism and opposition to immigration underscores the central role played by nationalist ideology in shaping its policy agenda. Both populism and nationalism uphold the primacy of "the people", be it over the establishment (populism), foreigners (nationalism), or both (Brubaker 2020). In this article, we focus on nationalism as a central feature of contemporary right-wing populism and consider its increased connection to support for the Republican Party in the United States (Bonikowski 2017).

The 2016 US presidential election campaign and Trump presidency underscored the centrality of nationalism and populism to contemporary American party politics (Bartels 2018). As Bartels (2018) notes, by 2017 Republicans were largely united around nationalistic issues such as support for building a wall on the southern border, respecting the flag, and opposing amnesty for illegal immigrants. The link between nationalism and Republican partisanship is not entirely new, however. Republicans supported these issues well in advance of Trump's presidential candidacy (Feldman et al. 2020; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019). Looking back in time, the nationalistic turn in Republican Party politics was evident in the Bush administration's support of the 2003 Iraq War. It was also on display in Congressional Republican opposition to immigration reform in 2005 (Feldman et al. 2015; Wroe 2008). Trump attracted additional

support from Americans holding anti-immigration and nationalistic views in the 2016 presidential election (Reny et al. 2019; Mutz 2018) but this was a continuation of a decade-long trend.

Nonetheless, the influence of public nationalism on Republican identification and partisan polarization has received less scholarly attention than various other social and political factors. Partisanship grounded in nationalism extends partisan conflict beyond domestic policy to include the use of military power overseas, international trade and economic relations, immigration policy, and domestic multiculturalism and deserves greater research scrutiny than it has received.

The growing partisan divide over nationalism in the US raises several questions: First, have Americans become more nationalistic over time fueling support for the Republican Party and nationalistic candidates? Second, has nationalism become more politically relevant, mobilizing nationalists to support the Republican Party? Third, is the link between nationalism and support for the Republican Party confined to the White majority? A nation is often equated with its ethnic or racial majority leading to lower levels of national attachment among members of non-majority groups, potentially undermining the success of nationalistic appeals among them (Devos and Banaji 2005; Sidanius et al 1997; Theiss-Morse 2009). Even if levels of nationalism are similar among members of majority and minority groups., it may be especially appealing to White Americans because it elevates their majority status over that of ethnic and racial minorities. In support of this hypothesis, Hajnal and Rivera (2014) find that anti-immigrant sentiment has fueled White support for the Republican Party over time. Carter and Perez (2016) also demonstrate that national pride increases anti-immigration attitudes among White Americans but has the opposite effect among Blacks. In sum, nationalism may have attracted a

growing number of strongly nationalistic Whites to the Republican Party because they are more nationalistic than Blacks or nationalistic appeals have greater resonance for them.

To better understand the role of nationalism within contemporary American partisan politics, we delve briefly into the psychology of national attachments. Nationalism is only one of several different subjective attachments to a nation but it features prominently in the rhetoric right-wing populist political parties such as the AfD in Germany, the National Rally in France, or the Swedish Democrats. In the following section we review the crucial difference between nationalism and patriotism to explain their distinct psychological origins, correlates, and political consequences.

The Psychology of National Attachments

There is a clear distinction between patriotism and nationalism in research on national attachments (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). *Nationalism* is typically defined as a sense of "national superiority and dominance" whereas *patriotism* is defined as positive feelings and a sense of pride in one's country (De Figueiredo and Elkins 2003, p. 175; Osborne et al 2017). It is helpful to think of this as the difference between an in-group attachment (patriotism) and outgroup derogation (nationalism). The distinction is grounded in *The Authoritarian Personality* in which the authors differentiated simple love of country, labeled as patriotism, from "blind attachment to certain national cultural values, uncritical conformity with the prevailing group ways, and rejection of other nations as outgroups", termed *pseudopatriotism* (Adorno et al. 1950; p. 107). Nationalism is the intellectual heir of pseudopatriotism. In this study, we focus primarily on the link between nationalism and partisanship but it is important to additionally consider the

link between partisanship and patriotism because the two forms of national attachments are strongly related yet have differing political effects.

Nationalism reflects a sense of national superiority and is linked to heightened xenophobia, negative views of immigrants, anti-Semitism, the derogation of foreigners, classic racism, and a stronger social dominance orientation (Ariely 2012; Blank and Schmidt 2003). It is typically assessed by asking respondents to agree or disagree with statements such as "the world would be a better place if other countries were more like ours" (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). In contrast, patriotism influences attitudes towards one's country and co-nationals. It fosters adherence to national norms, can fuel positive attitudes toward immigrants, and generates trust in a country's institutions (Gross et al. 2009; Huddy and Del Ponte 2019; Satherley et al. 2019). Patriotism is typically measured by assessing a sense of pride and positive feelings for the nation and unlike nationalism, it does not generate outgroup derogation (de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003).

The difference between nationalism and patriotism parallels another widely studied distinction between ethnonational and civic conceptions of the nation. This distinction is typically assessed in surveys by asking respondents a series of questions about the desired attitudes and behaviors of "true" or "good" citizens. In the U.S., Citrin and colleagues distinguish between a civic view of a true American as someone who supports the fundamental values of equality and individualism and an ethnonational view that Americans need to believe in God or have been born in the U.S. (Citrin and Wright, 2009). Lindstam et al. (2019) develop a similar distinction between ethno-national and civic understandings of what it means to be a true German. Individuals who endorse an ethnonational view of national identity share a nationalistic opposition to immigration (Citrin et al., 1990; Schildkraut, 2011; Sengupta et al. 2019). There is

a similar parallel between patriotism and civic conceptions of the nation (Sibley 2013). Those who rank highly the civic aspects of American identity are more supportive of immigration, and more inclined to think that volunteering, donating money to charity, and serving in the military is an obligation they owe to other Americans (Citrin and Wright 2009; Lindstam et al 2019; Schildkraut 2011). Bonikowski and di Maggio (2016) estimated a latent class model on the 2003/2004 ISSP–GSS American national identity data and found that nationalism and ethnonational conceptions of the nation converge. In sum, ethnonational conceptions have much in common empirically with nationalism and civic conceptions have parallel effects to those of patriotism. In this study, we combine these scales to create new scales of nationalism and patriotism in which ethnonational conceptions of the nation are included in a measure of nationalism and civic conceptions are included in a measure of patriotism.

Nationalism and Partisanship

There is no inherent ideological reason why someone who identifies strongly with the United States, feels pride in the nation or expresses strong nationalistic sentiments should favor one or another side of politics. Indeed, in the past Americans with a strong national identity have been found equally on the political left and right (Huddy and Khatib 2007). There is also little evidence that patriotism or nationalism exhibit ideological bias. In our past research analyzing the 1996 GSS national identity data, neither liberal-conservative ideology nor partisanship was significantly associated with national pride or nationalism (Huddy and Khatib 2007). Symbolic patriotism (pride in being American, the flag, and anthem) is stronger on the political right than left (Hurwitz and Peffley 1999; Karasawa 2002). But this may have more to do with the flag than pride per se. Opposition to the Vietnam war was ultimately more common on the political left and flag burning became synonymous with left-leaning, anti-war sentiment. There is no evidence

that a more general sense of national pride or nationalism exhibit ideological bias.

There are conditions, however, in which national attachments become politicized as seen in the example of the flag and symbolic patriotism. In research on multi-party western European democracies, we find that nationalistic opposition to the EU is more common in countries with a right-wing nationalist party (Huddy et al. 2020). In countries that lack a neo-nationalist party, however, the link between nationalism and EU opposition is far weaker. Moreover, the best-educated nationalists are most opposed to the EU in western European countries with a neo-nationalist political party and vote for such parties when present. The best educated citizens are more fully exposed to political rhetoric than others and can best assimilate its content, supporting the notion that partisan rhetoric politicizes nationalism (Zaller 1992). If we extrapolate these findings to the US, they suggest that the Republican Party may have increased the link between nationalism and partisanship over time through intensified nationalistic rhetoric and policy.

Research Hypotheses and Data

We draw on data in the 1996, 2004, and 2014 GSS national identity modules to test our central hypothesis. First, we examine whether nationalism has increased in the US over time (H1), increased over time among White Americans (H1a), and is higher among White than Black Americans (H1b). Second, we examine whether the link between nationalism and Republican partisanship and Republican presidential candidate vote choice has increased over time (H2) or has increased over time among White but not Black Americans (H2a). To test these hypotheses, we first verify the empirical validity and distinctiveness of nationalism and patriotism.

Sample. The 1996, 2004, and 2014 General Social Surveys (GSS) include a national identity module developed by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Roughly half of all

respondents interviewed in each year answered questions related to patriotism, nationalism, and national identity (N = 1,367 in 1996; N = 1,216 in 2004; N = 1,274 in 2014). All data are weighted in subsequent analyses (using the variable wtss).

Differentiating Nationalism and Patriotism

Measurement Model. We ran confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on 23 items in the ISSP national identity module that measure nationalism and patriotism, including traditional scale items and related measures of national conceptions (ethnonational and civic). The best fit was a two-factor (nationalism and patriotism) solution, which included a methods factor for items that were asked in agree-disagree format (V17-V22) and correlated errors between items assessed on the same response scale (e.g., proud, important; see Table A1 in the Online Appendix for item wording and model fit; LINK). Nationalism and patriotism are highly correlated in the measurement model ($r = .90$) but remain distinct. Nationalism is best defined by items such as believing that to be a good American it is important to have been born in the US, be Christian, lived most of one's life in the country, or agree that it is better to be a citizen of the US than any other country. Patriotism is anchored by feeling proud of the armed forces, the country's political history, and the country's international sports performance plus seeing it as important to feel American in order to be a good American.

We also examined whether the measurement model worked equally well for Black and White Americans by running a set of increasingly restrictive CFAs and found that the model was invariant to race. As seen in Table A2, it passed tests of configural, metric, and scalar invariance. We created additive scales for nationalism and patriotism. The two additive scales are more modestly correlated ($r = .50$) than in the measurement model. Each scale contains a mix of

traditional and national conception items. Both scales and all analytic variables are coded 0-1 unless otherwise noted.

Determinants. Nationalism and patriotism are empirically distinct and have somewhat different determinants as seen in Table 1. In these analyses, we control for patriotism when analyzing the determinants of nationalism, and vice versa, to identity their unique determinants. Nationalism is uniquely associated with being religious, not having a recent immigrant background, being female, less well educated, lower income, more conservative, and authoritarian. Patriotism is uniquely associated with being male, better educated, and less authoritarian. Survey year and race also shape nationalism and patriotism, a point to which we will return. For current purposes, Table 1 makes clear that nationalism and patriotism attract differing kinds of adherents and, thus, constitute distinct forms of national attachment. Strong nationalists are less well-educated, less affluent, more religious, conservative, and authoritarian whereas strong patriots are better educated and less authoritarian.

Levels of Nationalism Over Time, By Race

Our first hypothesis concerns whether nationalism has increased among Americans, or at least among White Americans, over time. In contrast to expectations that nationalism has strengthened over time, regression coefficients in Table 1 suggests that it has declined. The positive coefficient for 2004 and the negative coefficient for 2014 indicate that nationalism was stronger in 2004 than 1996, and weaker in 2014. There is also some suggestion that nationalism is higher among Black than White Americans (after controlling for education and income), an unexpected finding. In contrast, patriotism was stronger in 2004 (possibly linked to the ongoing Iraq War) but no stronger in 2014 than in 1996. These trends are visible in Figure 1 which depicts weighted means for nationalism and patriotism by year and race.

Table 1: Determinants of Nationalism and Patriotism

	Nationalism		Patriotism	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nationalism			0.52 (.02)***	0.50 (.02)***
Patriotism	0.46 (.02)***	0.42 (.02)***		
2004	0.02 (.01)***		0.02 (.01)***	
2014	-0.02 (.00)***	-0.02 (.00)***	0.00 (.02)	0.00 (.01)
White	-0.01 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)
Black	0.03 (.01)***	0.03 (.01)**	-0.05 (.01)***	-0.05 (.01)***
Issue Spending	-0.05 (.01)***	-0.01 (.01)	0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.02)
Ideology (conservative)		0.01 (.00)***		0.00 (.00)
Authoritarianism		0.05 (.01)***		-0.02 (.01)**
Religious attendance	0.05 (.01)***	0.03 (.01)***	0.01 (.01)	-0.00 (.01)
Parent Immigrant	-0.02 (.01)***	-0.01 (.01)	0.01 (.01)	-0.00 (.01)
Female	0.01 (.00)*	0.01 (.00)**	-0.02 (.00)***	-0.02 (.01)***
Age (decades)	0.01 (.00)***	0.01 (.00)***	0.01 (.00)***	0.01 (.00)***
Education (Years)	-0.26 (.02)***	-0.23 (.02)***	0.11 (.02)***	0.11 (.03)***
Real Income (log)	-0.01 (.00)***	-0.01 (.00)***	0.01 (.00)***	0.00 (.00)
Constant	0.60 (.03)***	0.50 (.03)***	0.15 (.03)***	0.25 (.04)***
Observations	3,421	2,224	3,421	2,224
R-squared	0.40	0.41	0.33	0.29

Note. Entries are OLS regression coefficient with standard errors in parentheses. All variables are coded 0-1 except age, education, and income. Data are weighted. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

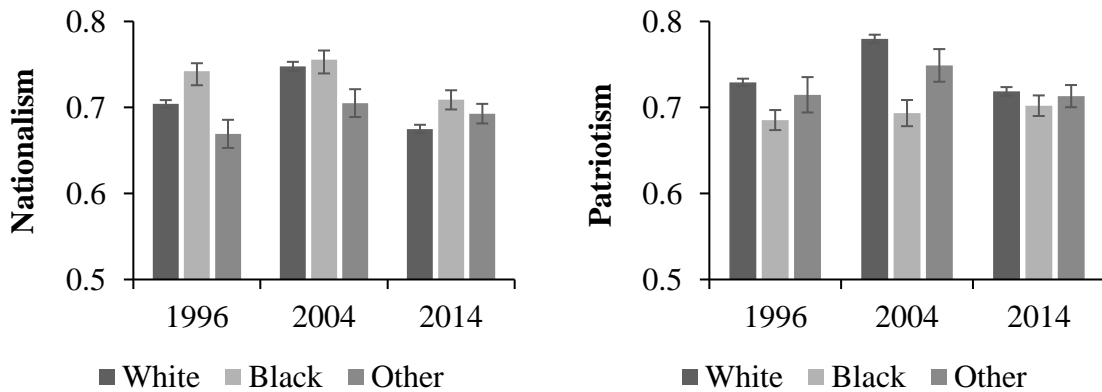**Figure 1: Nationalism and Patriotism by Year and Race (weighted means)**

Figure 1 indicates that nationalism was uniformly stronger in 2004 than in 1996 for White and "other" Americans and weaker in 2014 for Whites and Blacks, suggesting a recent decrease not increase in nationalism. Black Americans are also slightly more nationalistic than Whites or other racial/ethnic groups at all three time points in defiance of the notion that nationalism is higher among White Americans. Patriotism exhibits a similar trend over time among Whites for whom patriotism increased in 2004 and then reverted to prior levels in 2014. In contrast, patriotism is lower among Blacks than Whites and remained constant among Blacks over time. In contrast to nationalism, Blacks are also less patriotic in 1996 and 2004. These findings dispel the notion that nationalism has increased in the US in recent years or that it is stronger among White than Black Americans.

Nationalism and Support for Nationalistic Policies

Before we test key hypotheses concerning a link between nationalism and support for the Republican Party we take one last step to verify that nationalism and patriotism perform as expected. In our past research conducted in western Europe, nationalism boosted opposition to immigration while promoting support for protectionist trade and cultural policies whereas patriotism had the opposite effect, decreasing opposition to both nationalistic policies (Huddy et al 2020). We expect nationalism to boost support for policies that reduce the influence or presence of foreigners within a country. Patriotism is likely to have the opposite effect and drive support for such policies in countries with established norms of support for free trade and immigration. During the roughly 20 years of this study, the US qualified as a pro-immigration, free-trade nation and thus we expect patriotism to drive support for immigration and opposition to protectionist policies.

In the GSS data, anti-immigration views are assessed by four items combined to form a reliable scale (α = .96): viewing immigrants as responsible for increasing crime rates, being good for the American economy, taking away jobs, and increasing or decreasing the number of immigrants. Protectionist policies are assessed with a moderately reliable scale (α = .64) made up of four items: America should limit the import of foreign products, America should follow its own interests, foreigners should not be allowed to buy land in America, and TV should give preference to American films.

We regressed anti-immigration and protectionist views on nationalism, patriotism, and various control variables. Findings are presented in Table 2. There is a large, statistically significant link between nationalism and both anti-immigration and protectionist policies as expected. Patriotism also has the expected opposite effect, promoting support for immigration. Patriotism does not, however, increase opposition to protectionist policies, suggesting weak or nonexistent norms in support of free trade.

Table 2 also includes an interaction between race and both nationalism and patriotism to test whether these relationships differ between Blacks and Whites. For immigration, the answer is no. Nationalism boosts and pride undermines an anti-immigration stance to the same degree for Blacks and Whites, indicating that nationalism is associated with opposition to immigration regardless of race. At low levels of nationalism both Blacks and Whites are staunchly pro-immigration. At greater levels of nationalism they are strongly anti-immigration. In contrast, Blacks are slightly less likely than Whites to support protectionist policies based on nationalism, but the effect of nationalism is sizeable in both racial groups. These effects vary only slightly with year. Nationalism has slightly stronger effects on support for anti-immigration policies in

2004 than in 1996 and 2014, and slightly weaker effects on protectionism in 2014 than in 1996 (see Table A3).

Table 2: Nationalism, Patriotism and Support for Anti-Immigration & Protectionist Policies

|	Anti-Immigration/Immigrants		Protectionism	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nationalism	0.59 (.03)***	0.60 (.03)***	0.58 (.03)***	0.60 (.03)***
Patriotism	-0.25 (.03)***	-0.24 (.03)***	-0.04 (.03)	-0.04 (.03)
Black	0.03 (.02)**	0.10 (.06)	0.03 (.02)*	0.15 (.06)**
Black * Nationalism		-0.08 (.08)		-0.21 (.09)**
Black * Patriotism		-0.01 (.06)		0.04 (.08)
2004	-0.04 (.01)***	-0.05 (.01)***	-0.03 (.01)***	-0.04 (.01)***
2014	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.02 (.01)**	-0.02 (.01)**
White	0.06 (.01)***	0.06 (.01)***	0.03 (.01)**	0.03 (.01)**
Religious attendance	-0.03 (.01)***	-0.03 (.01)***	0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.01)
Parent Immigrant	-0.14 (.01)***	-0.14 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***
Female	0.00 (.01)	0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)
Age (Categorical)	-0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)**	-0.00 (.00)*
Education (Years)	-0.16 (.03)***	-0.16 (.03)***	-0.18 (.02)***	-0.17 (.03)***
Real Income (log)	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)**	-0.01 (.00)**
Constant	0.41 (.05)***	0.40 (.05)***	0.37 (.04)***	0.36 (.04)***
Observations	3,366	3,366	3,392	3,392
R-squared	0.28	0.28	0.25	0.26

Note. Entries are OLS regression coefficient with standard errors in parentheses. All variables are coded 0-1 except age, education, and income. All data are weighted. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

In sum, nationalism performs as expected in driving support for nationalistic policies such as opposition to increased immigration, negative views of immigrants, free trade, and restricting foreign cultural influence. The effects of nationalism do not differ dramatically between Black and White Americans suggesting that it captures antipathy to the presence and influence of foreigners regardless of race.

Nationalism, Partisanship, and Vote Choice

Partisanship. Our central question concerns the link between nationalism and Republican partisanship. Has this association increased over time in tandem with nationalistic Republican policies such as a visible anti-immigration stance? Or has it increased over time among White Americans? The answer to the latter question is yes. In an ordered probit analysis, we regressed the 7-point standard partisanship measure which ranges from strong Democrat to strong Republican on nationalism, patriotism, year, race, and their interactions along with the same demographic controls included in earlier analyses (see Table A4). The three-way interactions make coefficients difficult to interpret. We thus plotted the predicted effects of nationalism on the probability of being a strong Republican by year and race in Figure 2 (based on the ordered probit analysis in Table A4).

Figure 2: Nationalism and the Probability of Strong Republican Identification by Race & Year

Panel A. White Americans   Panel B. Black Americans
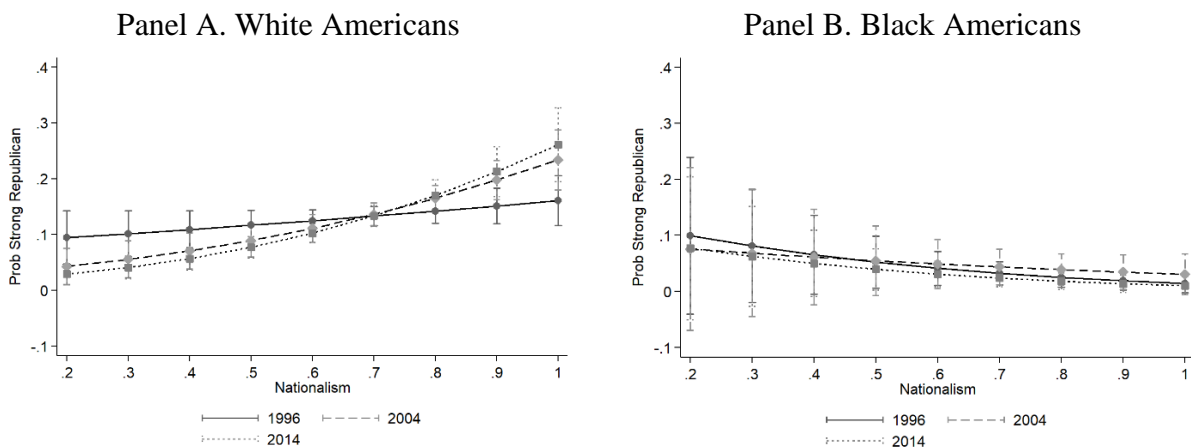
Several trends are apparent in Figure 2. First, nationalism is increasingly linked to a strong Republican identification over time but only among White Americans. In 1996 there was

no link between nationalism and partisanship among Whites but there was a substantial link in 2004 and 2014 (Panel A). This provides evidence that nationalism and partisanship have become associated over time among White Americans. Moreover, the probability of being a strong Republican is sizeable among the strongest nationalists. In the 2014 GSS sample, the probability of being a strong Republicans was roughly .03 among the weakest and .25 among the strongest nationalists. In additional analyses (not shown here), in which the dependent variable was simply being a Republican (regardless of strength), nationalism was linked to Republicanism among Whites in all three years although its effects were substantially larger in 2014 than in 1996 or 2004. This suggests that the association between nationalism and Republicanism has increased over time as has the link with strong Republican partisanship.

There is no evidence, however, that nationalism drives support for the Republican Party among Black Americans. As seen in Panel B, the probability of being a strong Republican is unrelated to nationalism among Blacks in all years. Moreover, the probability of someone being a strong Republican is lower among Blacks than Whites regardless of level of nationalism. Indeed, the probability of being a strong Republican is close to 0 among those scoring higher than .5 on the nationalism measure. Similar findings are observed for analyses that predict being Republican, Independent, or Democratic. In 2014, the probability of being a Republican was .06 among highly nationalistic African Americans compared to .66 among comparable nationalistic Whites.

Vote Choice. In the GSS, Americans were asked who they had voted for in the previous presidential election. In 1996, the question referred to the 1992 election (George H. Bush vs Bill Clinton); in 2004, it referred to 2000 (George W. Bush vs. Al Gore); and in 2014, it referred to 2012 (Mitt Romney vs. Barack Obama). The Republican won in 2000 and the Democrat in 1992

and 2012. The percent who reported voting in the past election was 66% (1996), 64% (2004) and 65% (2014) and analyses of vote choice are based on this reduced sample (N=2,418). Voting for the Republican candidate was regressed on nationalism, patriotism, race, year, their interactions and demographic controls (Table A5). In these analyses, nationalism boosted support for the Republican candidates in all three elections and had substantially stronger effects in 2004 (the 2000 election) and 2014 (the 2012 election) than in 1996 (1992 election). Once again, these effects are largely confined to White Americans (Table A5).

Figure 3: Nationalism & Probability of Republican Vote Among Whites by Year
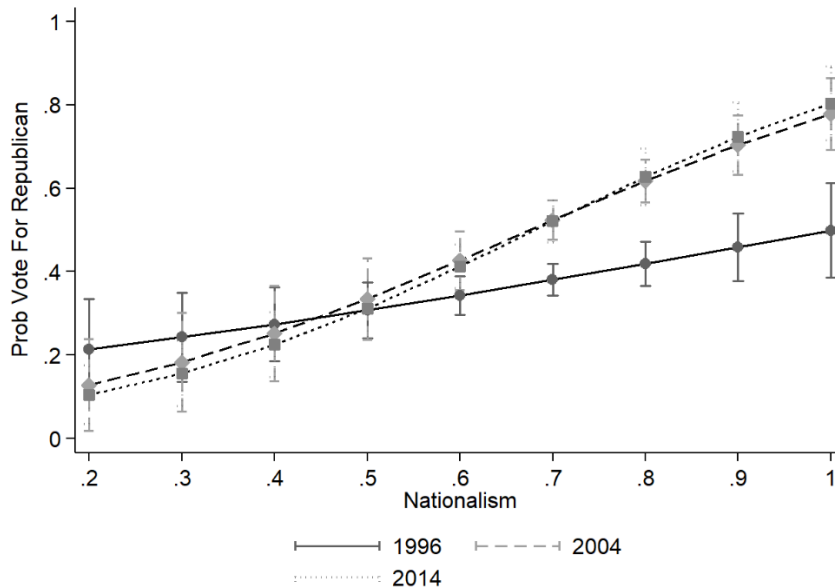
To more clearly depict the effects of nationalism on vote choice among Whites across the three elections, the predicted values of voting for the Republican candidate are plotted in Figure 3 across the range of nationalism by year for Whites (based on analyses in Table A5). As seen in this figure, nationalism increases support for the Republican candidate in all years although its effects are far more pronounced in 2004 and 2014 than in 1996. At the highest levels of nationalism, the probability that White Americans voted for the Republican candidate was

roughly .8 in the most recent two presidential elections. In contrast, Whites low in nationalism were relatively unlikely to vote for the Republican presidential candidate.

The reduced sample of African American voters made it difficult to accurately depict the same relationship for Blacks. We can, however, plot the predicted probability of the Black and White Republican vote in all three elections combined. Those trends are depicted in Figure 4 (based on Table A5). Figure 4 makes clear that support for the Republican presidential candidate increases dramatically across the range of nationalism for Whites whereas it has little effect among Black voters. Once again, confidence intervals are large and estimates imprecise at the lowest levels of nationalism among Blacks but the probability that no Black voter supported the Republican candidate is a possible outcome. The starkest contrast in Republican voting exists between Black and White voters at the highest levels of nationalism. The probability of a highly nationalistic White voter supporting the Republican candidate is roughly.68 compared to .03 among a highly nationalistic Black voter.

The Political Effects of Patriotism

So far, we have largely focused on the political effects of nationalism. We included patriotism in all analyses and it is important to contrast its political effects with those of nationalism. Despite being highly correlated, the two forms of national attachment have differing effects as noted earlier in the discussion of anti-immigration policies.

Figure 4: Nationalism & Probability of Republican Vote by Race (all Three Years)
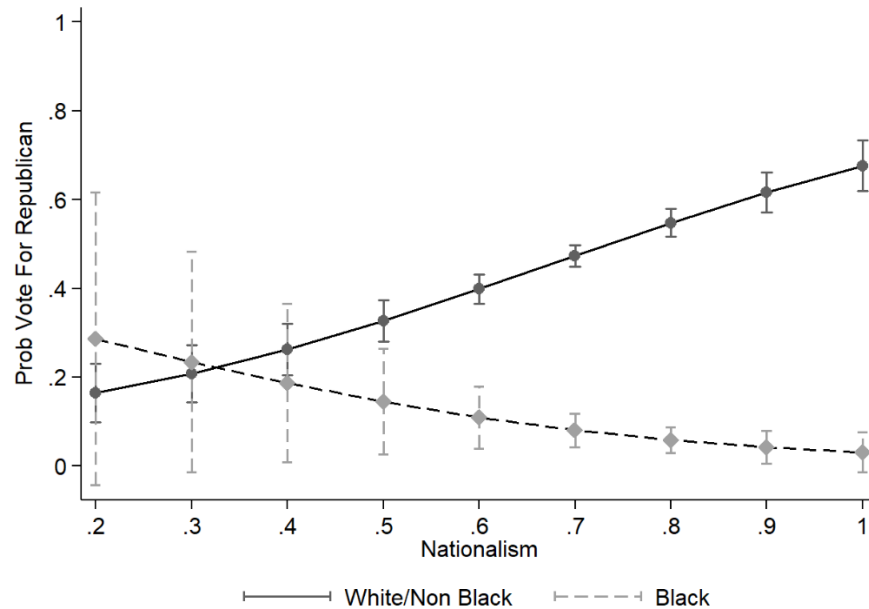
We did not begin with strong hypotheses concerning the effects of patriotism on partisanship and vote choice. Some past studies have reported a link between symbolic patriotism and political conservatism but in other studies in which patriotism is measured independently of questions about the flag and anthem there is no political bias. In the GSS data, patriotism is largely non-partisan as seen in regression analyses included in the appendix (Table A4). In these tables, patriotism has a significant positive relationship with Republican partisanship in 2004 but not in other years. Moreover, this does not differ significantly by race. The heightened effects of patriotism on Republican support in 2004 can be seen in panel A of Figure 5 which plots the probability of being a strong Republican across the range of patriotism among Blacks and Whites combined. The same trend is observed in analysis of Republican vote choice. Patriotism is not significantly linked to vote choice except in 2004, and this does not

differ by race. Panel B of Figure 5 demonstrates the greater effect of patriotism on Republican

vote choice in 2004 than in other years.

Figure 5: Patriotism, Republican ID, and Republican Vote

By Year (Blacks and Whites Combined)

Panel A. Republican Partisanship   Panel B. Republican Vote Choice
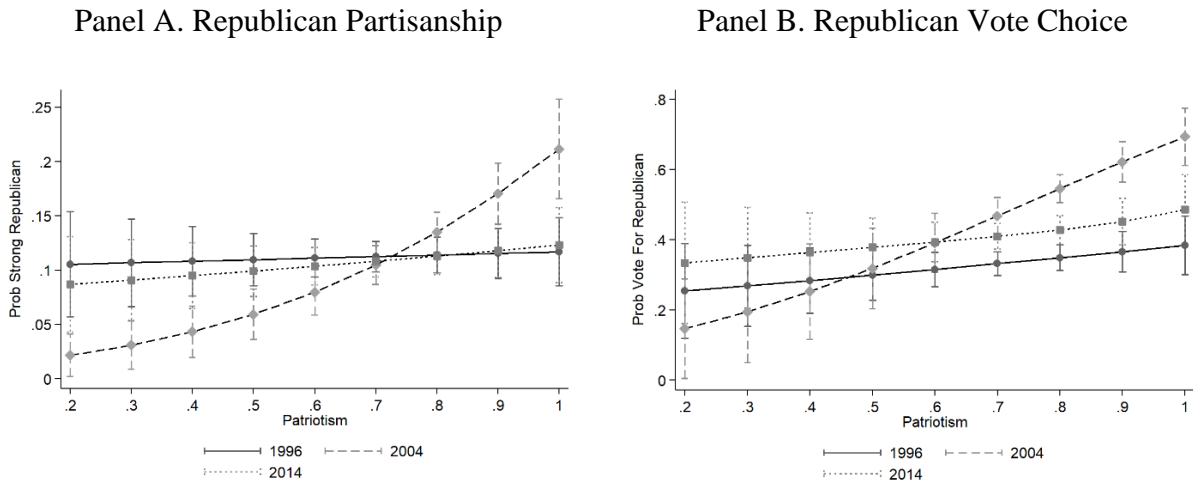
We did not expect patriotism to boost Republican identification and vote choice in 2004

and have no way to determine what enhanced its effects in that year. One possibility is that the

ongoing Iraq War, initiated by a Republican administration, inspired patriotic support for

Republicans in 2004. The 2004 GSS survey occurred just a few years after the 9/11 terror attacks

and the Bush Administration had argued that a war in Iraq was necessary to reduce the chances

of future terrorism and the threat posed to the US by Saddam Hussein. Obviously, this could not

explain patriots' support for Bush in the 2000 election (Figure 5B) but retrospective

measurement of past vote is notoriously inaccurate and often colored by subsequent events.

Importantly, the trends depicted in Figure 5 make clear that nationalism and patriotism

have differing effects on partisanship and support for Republican presidential candidates.

Nationalism appears increasingly linked over time to Republican partisanship among White Americans, a trend that likely strengthened in 2016. But it has no effect on partisanship among Black Americans. In contrast, the link between patriotism and partisanship is more episodic and similar across racial groups. When the country is threatened, an administration that responds with force will attract patriotic support. This implies that patriotism could lend support equally to the Democratic or Republican party depending on the political circumstances.

Conclusion

The recent growth of right-wing populist political parties in Western democracies has drawn attention to nationalism, a common feature of the populist political agenda in which the national ethnic majority (equated with "the people") is pitted against elite forces that promote diversity, globalization, and multiculturalism (Brubaker 2020). This raises a pertinent question about whether the success of populism is due to rising levels of nationalism. Our research and that of others suggests this is not the case (Bonikowski 2017; Huddy et al 2020). The GSS data analyzed in the current study demonstrates that, if anything, nationalism was lower in the US in 2014 than in 2004. Levels of nationalism have also remained relatively constant in western European countries in recent years. Instead of rising nationalism, the success of populist parties can be traced to their support for nationalistic policies such as opposition to immigration or the imposition of trade tariffs to undercut free trade. Our findings are consistent with other research showing that political rhetoric is needed to translate societal trends, such as an increase in the immigrant population, into policy attitudes (Bruter 2003; Hopkins 2010). In the case of populism, economic and cultural threats to the majority ethnic group may further heighten the political resonance of nationalistic rhetoric (Bonikowski 2017).

The clear caveat to our findings, however, is the limited appeal of the Republican Party for strongly nationalistic Black Americans. There is no question that nationalism measures the same thing for White and Black Americans. Regardless of race, nationalistic Whites and Blacks oppose increased immigration, hold negative views of immigrants, and support protectionist policies. The key difference is that nationalistic Whites but not Blacks have moved to support the Republican Party over time. What explains Black indifference to the Republican Party's appeal to nationalism? One very likely explanation, but one we could not test in the current study, is that the Democratic Party is associated with support whereas the Republican Party is viewed as hostile to Black interests, generating strong group norms of Black Democratic identification (Grossman and Hopkins 2016; White, Laird, and Allen 2014). This is a potential downside of nationalistic rhetoric which elevates the majority ethnic group over racial and ethnic minorities. The same process may occur in other western democracies that contain sizeable minority groups. There, too, minority status may conflict with personal nationalistic tendencies limiting the political appeal of nationalism and populist parties. .

Finally, we need to underscore the differing political effects of distinct forms of national attachments in the US and elsewhere. Despite their positive association, nationalism and patriotism have opposing political effects. In the US, nationalism promotes opposition to immigration, increases support for trade protectionism, and boosts White support for the Republican Party over time whereas patriotism promotes support for immigration and increases opposition to trade protectionism across racial lines. We find similar trends in Western Europe where strong nationalism fuels opposition to immigration, free trade policies, the EU, and promotes electoral support for populist parties whereas patriotism strengthens support for the same policies and the EU (Huddy et al 2020).

In conclusion, our findings call into question the future success of nationalist populist partisan appeals within mainstream American politics and other western nations. To date, nationalism has had limited appeal in Western democracies and the success of anti-establishment parties has been limited (Mudde 2013; Norris 2005). As Mudde (2013) points out: "Despite some striking high and recent results, the alleged populist right 'wave' is clearly not lapping (equally) at the shores of all West European countries. In fact, PRRPs [populist radical right parties] are represented in the national parliaments of just half of the 17 West European countries" (2013:3). Mudde argues that anti-establishment parties remain excluded from "…the more than 200 national governments that have been formed in Western Europe since 1980" (Mudde 2013:4). That assessment has changed slightly in recent years with anti-establishment parties entering government in Italy (2018) and Austria (2017) and making inroads into the European parliament.

Nationalistic appeals have had greater success in the US. Donald Trump won the 2016 election with a strongly nationalistic platform and slogan: Make America Great Again. But findings in the current study make clear that nationalistic appeals are only successful among White Americans. As the US population diversifies in coming years the success of a nationalistic appeal is likely to decline. Of course, time will tell. But the need for national unity has become glaringly obvious amidst the coronavirus pandemic, tilting the playing field towards unifying patriotic rather than divisive nationalistic political appeals.

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Appendix for

Race, Nationalism, and American Party Politics

Leonie Huddy and Alessandro Del Ponte

Table A1: Nationalism and Patriotism Measurement Model

Item Code	Item Wording	Nationalism		Patriotism	
V9	How important is it to have been born in [COUNTRY]?	1.00	(0.48)		
V10	How important is it to have [COUNTRY NATIONALITY] citizenship?	0.66	(0.50)		
V11	How important is it to have lived in [COUNTRY] for most of one's life?	0.97	(0.51)		
V12	How important is it to speak [COUNTRY LANGUAGE]?	0.54	(0.42)		
V13	How important is it to be a [religion]?	1.22	(0.48)		
V14	How important is it to respect [COUNTRY]'s political institutions?			1.00	(0.42)
V15	How important is it to feel [COUNTRY NATIONALITY]?			1.69	(0.60)
V17	I would rather be a citizen of [COUNTRY] than of any other country in the world.	1.04	(0.63)		
V18_01*	There are some things about [COUNTRY] that make me feel ashamed of [COUNTRY].*	0.49	(0.28)		
V19	The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like the [COUNTRY NATIONALITY].	0.82	(0.49)		
V20	Generally speaking, [COUNTRY] is a better country than most other countries.	0.77	(0.54)		
V21	People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong.	0.79	(0.44)		
V22	When my country does well in international sports, it makes me proud to be [COUNTRY NATIONALITY].			1.32	(0.54)
V25	How proud are you of [COUNTRY] in the way democracy works?			0.92	(0.35)
V26	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s political influence in the world?			1.14	(0.42)
V27	How proud are you of [COUNTRY's] economic achievements?			0.92	(0.33)
V28	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s social security system?			0.89	(0.28)
V29	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s scientific and technological achievements?			0.50	(0.22)

V30	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s achievements in sports?	1.15	(0.44)
V31	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s achievements in the arts and literature?	0.63	(0.26)
V32	How proud are you of [COUNTRY's] armed forces?	1.32	(0.53)
V33	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s history?	1.43	(0.53)
V34	How proud are you of [COUNTRY]'s fair and equal treatment of all groups in society?	1.48	(0.46)

Correlation between factors

Nationalism		0.90

Note: N = 3,857. One item-loading for each factor is constrained to 1.00 for identification. Cells contain unstandardized factor loadings with standardized estimates in parentheses and standardized factor correlations. All factor loadings and correlations are significant at the 1% level.

* Indicates a reversed item.

For items V9 through V15, there were 4 response options ranging from "Not important at all" to "Very important". For items V17 through V22, there were 5 response options ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". For items V25 trhough V34, there were 4 response options ranging from "Not proud at all" to "Very proud". All items were recoded to range from 0 to 1.

Model specification. The model includes a methods factor for "agree-disagree" response set. Correlation between the substantive factors and the "agree-disagree" methods factor has been set to zero. The model includes correlated errors between items that load on the same factor or that have the same response set. Model showed the best fit compared to similar models with 3 or 4 factors.

Fit Statistics: CFI = 0.953; TLI = 0.923; RMSEA = 0.043; SRMR = 0.037

Table A2: Measurement Invariance Model Test

Model	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	χ^2 **Diff. from Fully invariant model**
Configural invariance	0.971	0.958	0.044	0.044	$p < .001$
Measurement (or metric) invariance	0.959	0.948	0.049	0.049	$p = .053$
Scalar invariance	0.960	0.949	0.048	0.049	$p < .001$
Strict factor invariance	0.953	0.940	0.053	0.050	$p < .001$
Fully invariant	0.949	0.939	0.053	0.052	

Note. The Chi-square difference statistic is sensitive to the sample size. $N_{Blacks} = 349$; $N_{white/Other} = 2362$.

Methodological note.

In the analyses in the main text and in the appendix, issue spending is a scale made up of support for increased spending in 12 areas pertaining to domestic spending, including the environment, health, cities, crime, drug addiction, education, Blacks, welfare, roads, social security, transportation, and parks (natenvir, natheal, natcity, natcrime, natdrug, nateduc, natrace, natfare, natroad, natsoc, natmass, natpark). Two-thirds of respondents received questions about the first 8 items and all respondents received questions about the last 4. Ideology is a single question with 7 options ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative, asked of 2/3 of respondents. Analyses including ideology thus have a reduced N. Authoritarianism is made up of two items (obey, spanking) in 1996 and 2014 but is missing in 2004. Immigrant status had three points (both parents, one, or none are immigrants).

Table A3: Support for Anti-Immigration and Protectionism, Interactions with Year

	Anti-Immigration	Protectionism
	(1)	(2)
Nationalism	0.58 (.04)***	0.65 (.05) ***
Patriotism	-0.23 (.04)***	-0.08 (.04)*
2004	-0.09 (.05)*	-0.02 (.05)
2014	0.01 (.05)	0.03 (.05)
2004*Nationalism	0.12 (.05)*	-0.03 (.07)
2014*Nationalism	-0.09 (.06)	-0.17 (.06)***
2004*Patriotism	-0.06 (.05)	0.01 (.07)
2014*Patriotism	-0.01 (.07)	0.10 (.06)
White	0.06 (.01)***	0.03 (.01)**
Black	0.03 (.02)**	0.03 (.02)*
Religious attendance	-0.03 (.01)***	0.00 (.01)
Parent Immigrant	-0.14 (.01)***	-0.05 (.01)***
Female	0.00 (.01)	-0.01 (.01)
Age (Categorical)	-0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)*
Education (Years)	-0.16 (.03)***	-0.18 (.02)***
Real Income (log)	0.00 (.00)	-0.01 (.00)**
Constant	0.40 (.05)***	0.35 (.05)***
Observations	3,366	3,392
R-squared	0.29	0.26

Note. Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Table A4: Nationalism, Patriotism, and Partisanship

	Partisanship (7-point scale: Strong Democrat – Strong Republican)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Nationalism	0.89 (.17)***	0.21 (.26)	0.35 (.28)	0.36 (.29)	-0.33 (.31)
Patriotism	0.52 (.16)***	0.03 (.25)	0.08 (.27)	0.02 (.28)	0.10 (.30)
2004	-0.03 (.05)	-1.86 (.28)***	-1.95 (.30)***	-1.89 (.31)***	
2014	0.03 (.04)	-0.83 (.26)***	-0.86 (.28)***	-0.71 (.28)**	-0.74(.30)**
Black	-0.82 (.09)***	-0.81 (.09)***	0.58 (.53)	0.55 (.53)	-0.47 (.62)
2004 * Nationalism		1.09 (.39)***	1.04 (.42)**	0.84 (.42)**	
2014 * Nationalism		0.97 (.36)***	1.14 (.38)***	0.88 (.38)**	0.87(.40)**
2004 * Patriotism		1.40 (.40)***	1.55 (.44)***	1.67 (.45)***	
2014 * Patriotism		0.25 (.36)	0.17 (.40)	0.19 (.40)	0.19 (.43)
Black * Nationalism			-1.78 (.79)**	-1.77 (.80)**	-0.21 (.95)
Black * Patriotism			-0.09 (.65)	0.07 (.66)	-0.21 (.76)
Black * 2004			0.82 (.83)	0.67 (.81)	
Black * 2014			0.12 (.75)	0.17 (.75)	1.21 (.88)
Black*2004* Nationalism			-0.42 (1.27)	-0.19 (1.25)	
Black*2014* Nationalism			-1.26 (1.17)	-1.23 (1.19)	-2.99(1.44)**
Black*2004* Patriotism			-0.54 (1.04)	-0.55 (1.03)	
Black*2014* Patriotism			0.76 (1.06)	0.69 (1.08)	1.23 (1.20)
Issue Spending				-1.38(.12)***	-0.85(.15)***
Ideology					0.36 (.02)***
White	0.26 (.07)***	0.26 (.07)***	0.25 (.07)***	0.27 (.08)***	0.27 (.10)***
Religious attendance	0.42 (.06)***	0.41 (.06)***	0.40 (.06)***	0.38 (.06)***	0.14 (.07)*
Parent Immigrant	-0.21 (.06)***	-0.22 (.06)***	-0.23 (.06)***	-0.23 (.06)***	-0.23(.08)***
Female	-0.16 (.04)***	-0.16(.04)***	-0.16(.04)***	-0.14(.04)***	-0.10(.05)**
Age (Categorical)	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.06 (.01)***	-0.07(.02)***
Education (Years)	0.02 (.15)	0.00 (.15)	0.02 (.15)	0.08 (.15)	-0.04 (.20)
Real Income (log)	0.07 (.02)***	0.07 (.02)***	0.06(.02)***	0.06 (.02)***	0.06 (.02)**
τ_1	0.55 (.23)**	-0.39 (.27)	-0.27 (.28)	-1.24 (.29)***	-0.18 (.35)
τ_2	1.19 (.23)***	0.26 (.27)	0.38 (.27)	-0.57 (.29)**	0.56 (.35)
τ_3	1.53 (.23)***	0.60 (.27)**	0.72 (.27)***	-0.22 (.29)	0.99 (.35)***
τ_4	2.03 (.23)***	1.11 (.27)***	1.24 (.27)***	0.30 (.29)	1.56 (.35)***
τ_5	2.35 (.23)***	1.43 (.27)***	1.56 (.28)***	0.63 (.29)**	1.93 (.35)***
τ_6	2.93 (.23)***	2.01 (.27)***	2.14 (.28)***	1.23 (.29)***	2.63 (.36)***
Observations	3,415	3,415	3,415	3,411	2,230

Note. Ordered probit regression. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1

Table A5: Nationalism, Patriotism, and Republican Vote Choice

	Voted for a Republican			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Nationalism	3.25 (.49)***	1.41 (.73)*	1.43 (.74)*	1.71 (.74)**
Patriotism	1.59 (.49)***	0.79 (.72)	0.91 (.74)	0.93 (.76)
2004	0.64 (.13)***	-3.74 (.92)***	-3.92 (.95)***	-4.16 (.99)***
2014	0.59 (.13)***	-1.45 (.80)*	-1.35 (.82)*	-1.45 (.84)*
Black	-1.58 (.42)***	-1.58 (.43)***	1.86 (3.74)	
2004*Nationalism		3.01 (1.12)***	3.14(1.14)***	2.82 (1.16)**
2014*Nationalism		2.62 (1.00)***	2.92(1.03)***	3.01(1.07)***
2004*Patriotism		2.84 (1.22)**	2.90 (1.27)**	3.46(1.29)***
2014*Patriotism		0.26 (1.12)	-0.08 (1.17)	0.01 (1.22)
Black*Nationalism			-2.27 (5.41)	
Black*Patriotism			-2.24 (1.51)	
Black*2004			3.56 (4.40)	
Black*2014			-5.67 (6.13)	
Black*2004* Nationalism			-7.11 (6.41)	
Black*2014* Nationalism			-7.81 (7.08)	
Black*2004* Patriotism			3.61 (2.89)	
Black*2014* Patriotism			12.87(3.14)***	
White	1.33 (.34)***	1.35 (.35)***	1.37 (.35)***	
Religious attendance	1.19 (.16)***	1.19 (.17)***	1.19 (.17)***	1.29 (.17)***
Parent Immigrant	-0.33 (.21)	-0.32 (.21)	-0.33 (.22)	-0.32 (.24)
Female	-0.21 (.11)*	-0.21 (.11)*	-0.20 (.11)*	-0.24 (.11)**
Age (Categorical)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.04)	-0.03 (.04)
Education (Years)	0.17 (.44)	0.05 (.44)	0.07 (.44)	0.35 (.47)
Real Income (log)	0.23 (.06)***	0.23 (.06)***	0.23 (.06)***	0.22 (.06)***
Constant	-8.09 (.86)***	-6.13 (.92)***	-6.25 (.92)***	-5.23 (.89)***
Observations	2,174	2,174	2,174	2,607

Note. Logistic regression. Standard errors in parentheses. *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1