Prototypicality threat drives support for nativist politics in U.S. and U.K. elections

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ABSTRACT

Recent research shows that increasing diversity due to immigration can lead members of dominant ethnic groups (e.g., Whites in America) to experience *prototypicality threat* – the concern that their claim to best represent their national identity may be lost. Here we examine the emotional and behavioral responses to prototypicality threat in the domain of politics. Across eight years, five studies, two nations, and four electoral contexts (White Americans' support for Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election; White Britons' support for the 2016 Brexit Referendum; White Americans' support for Congressional candidates in 2018 U.S. Midterm Election; and White Americans' support for a fictitious Congressional candidate in the 2022 U.S. Midterm Election), we show that prototypicality threat explains support for nativist policies and candidates. Furthermore, when those high in prototypicality threat see their favored nativist politics as victorious, they report lower anxiety and threat after the election. By demonstrating the role of prototypicality threat in support for nativist politics specifically, this work helps us understand how people respond to broad societal issues and suggests novel strategies for addressing politics hostile to immigrants.

1. Introduction

1.1. Prototypicality Threat Drives Support for Nativist Politics in U.S. and U.K. Elections

Global migration patterns and accompanying demographic change have raised important questions about the effects of immigration on the host society's national identity. Scholars have long recognized that even in countries characterized by ethnic[1], religious, and/or cultural diversity, the national identity is typically defined by, and most closely associated with, the dominant group (Citrin et al., 2001, Transue, 2007). For example, in the United States, despite its ethnic diversity and long history of immigration, the national identity is defined primarily by White Americans, the ethnic group that is largest in size and which sits at the top of the social hierarchy (Devos and Banaji, 2005, Huynh et al., 2015, Zou and Cheryan, 2017). Recent work suggests that demographic changes, such as large-scale immigration, can induce among members of the dominant group (e.g., White Americans) a sense of *prototypicality threat*—the dominant group's concern that their claim to represent

the broader superordinate identity (e.g., America) may be lost (Bai and Federico, 2021, Craig and Richeson, 2017, Danbold and Huo, 2015, Danbold and Huo, 2022). These studies have found consistent evidence that prototypicality threat is positively associated with greater antagonism toward newcomers and opposition to further diversification. We extend and build upon this work by evaluating the *ecological validity* of dominant group's experiences with prototypicality threat in the context of real-world political events and behaviors, specifically support for nativist policies and political candidates. Furthermore, we situate prototypicality threat in a dynamic model in which the victory of nativist political movements may serve as a source of temporary relief from this specific form of threat.

We present five studies that examine the attitudes, behaviors, and emotions of voters in four critical elections: White Americans' support for Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election; White Britons' support for the 2016 Brexit Referendum; White Americans' support for Congressional candidates in 2018 U.S. Midterm Election; and White Americans' support for a fictitious Congressional candidate in the 2022 U.S. Midterm Election. Across these studies, we examine how prototypicality threat predicts Whites' support for nativist politics during times of dramatic social change, and show how the analgesic effect of victorious nativist politics supports the contention that this specific threat is a key component of contemporary politics.

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[1] Although scholars draw important distinctions between race and ethnicity, we regard these labels as relatively interchangeable for the laypeople whose psychology we are studying. As such, we use ethnicity throughout.

1.2. Prototypicality threat and nativist politics

The concept of prototypicality threat draws insights from the ingroup projection model of social discrimination (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999, Wenzel et al., 2008) which articulates how, when multiple groups are nested within a superordinate category (e.g., ethnic groups within a nation), these groups vary in the extent to which they are perceived to represent what it means to be a member of the broader category. Although, as the ingroup projection literature demonstrates, all groups are motivated to maximize their relative prototypicality, it is typically the case that the dominant group is recognized as the *most* prototypical group within the superordinate category (Waldzus et al., 2004). The dominant group, therefore, plays a key role in setting the standard against which all other groups, especially newcomers, are judged and expected to conform to (Rubin, 2012). For example, within the United States, an ethnically diverse nation, White Americans, more so than other ethnic groups, are considered prototypical of being an American (Devos and Banaji, 2005, Huynh et al., 2015). This pattern, in which the dominant group sets the norm for how one should be, exists not just in the U.S., but across many nations (e.g., Han Chinese are the most prototypical ethnic group in China) as well as institutions and organizations within these nations (e.g., organizations that evolve out of mergers often reflect the values and norms of the more powerful firm).

In the context of ethnic relations in diverse nations, being prototypical rewards members of the dominant ethnic group with psychological benefits. During times of social stability (vs. social change), such individuals enjoy a default sense of belonging wherein their group identity protects them from having to question whether, by virtue of their ethnic group membership, they have a place in their nation. Dominant and prototypical groups are also spared the stigma of a "marked" identity since they see themselves as simply a member of the nation, not as part of a marginalized subgroup (Danbold and Huo, 2022, Knowles and Peng, 2005). In times of societal change, individuals from dominant groups may come to recognize, perhaps for the first time, that these psychological benefits are contingent upon their standing as the prototypical group and importantly, that these privileges may be lost. Concerned about the potential loss of prototypicality and the benefits it confers, members of dominant groups may see the social change causing this worry as a threat that must be addressed. If they identify patterns of immigration as a threat to their claim to represent the superordinate category (e.g., White Americans seeing an influx of non-White immigrants as potentially decoupling the association between being American and being White), then explicitly anti-immigrant nativist politics should be seen as an appealing way to relieve the threat they feel.

Prototypicality threat's focus on members of dominant groups' perceptions of the relationship between their ingroup and the superordinate category differentiates it from other forms of group-based threat examined in the literature. The most prevalent framework for understanding threats between groups is intergroup threat theory (Rios et al., 2018, Stephan et al., 2009, Stephan and Stephan, 2000), which draws a distinction between realistic threats (concerns about competition over material resources) and symbolic threats (concerns about competition over norms and values). Although scholars recognize that prototypicality threat may be considered a subtype of symbolic threat (Danbold and Huo, 2022), there is meaningful differentiation between these threats in terms of who they affect and how they are measured, and empirical evidence that they function as distinct mechanisms (Bai and Federico, 2021, Danbold and Huo, 2015). Symbolic threat has typically focused on general perceived incompatibilities in norms and values between the ingroup and an outgroup (e.g.,Bahns, 2017). As such, symbolic threat can occur between any two groups regardless of their place in the hierarchy. Prototypicality threat, in contrast, focuses on the potential disassociation between the ingroup and the superordinate category. As only members of dominant groups enjoy the privilege of best representing this broader category (Rubin, 2012), prototypicality threat is specific to the dominant group.

Because our focus is on understanding support for nativist politics among members of dominant groups, prototypicality threat is a particularly well-suited mechanism, whose direct relationship to political attitudes, behaviors, and emotions has not yet been fully explored. Given the established causal relationship between changing demographics and prototypicality threat (Craig and Richeson, 2017, Danbold and Huo, 2015, Danbold and Huo, 2022), we predict that members of dominant ethnic groups under this threat will be drawn to political candidates and movements that promise to curtail immigration (i.e., nativist politics). That support for nativism has cognitive and motivational underpinnings is consistent with work emerging out of political psychology. For example, research has shown that prejudice against immigrants and ethnic minorities is a reliable and proximate predictor of nativist attitudes (e.g., (Davis et al., 2019, Iakhnis et al., 2018, Schaffner et al., 2018)). Similarly, ethnic nationalism (the idea that national identity is rooted in ethnicity rather than civic ideals; Brubaker, 1992) is another predictor of nativism. Here, we advance this literature by proposing and testing the idea that prejudices against newcomers and related nativist tendencies may be understood as a response to demographic shifts and associated concerns about the loss of prototypicality.

1.3. Success of nativist politics as a source of prototypicality threat relief

A key goal of the current work is to test the prediction that for members of dominant groups, the experience of prototypicality threat (in response to possible loss of their group's claim to the national identity) predicts support for political candidates who run on a nativist platform (e.g., Donald Trump and other America First candidates) and nativist referenda (e.g., Brexit). Identity threat, of any form, is psychologically discomforting, but it may be of particular distress to dominant group members, who are generally unaccustomed to such feelings (Ford et al., 2022; Knowles et al., 2014). Thus, we also examine whether perceptions of an electoral win for nativism may be associated with emotional relief among those who report experiencing prototypicality threat. Specifically, we predict that members of dominant groups high in prototypicality threat become emotionally invested in nativist candidates and policies and thus experience a sense of decreased anxiety, or a decreased sense of prototypicality threat itself, when they perceive that nativism has triumphed electorally.

1.4. Present Research

Across five studies, we test whether members of dominant ethnic groups' concerns that their claim to represent their national identity may be lost (i.e., prototypicality threat) predicts support for nativist candidates and referenda. To further examine the psychological importance of this particular threat, we also test whether the electoral success of nativist candidates and policies leads to reduced anxiety among those highest in prototypicality threat pre-election. We test these predictions in two distinct national-political contexts, among White Americans in the U.S. (Studies 1, 2, 4, and 5) and White Britons in the U.K. (Study 3). Both of these countries are places in which Whites are clearly the prototypical ethnic group at the national level, where large-scale immigration has raised questions of changing national identity, and where nativist political movements have been put to the vote in recent years (i.e., the election of Trump, the rise of far-right congressional candidates, the Brexit referendum).

We test the conceptual model shown in Figure 1. Because of the varying contexts and study designs, we were unable to test the entirety of the model in any single study. Instead, we build evidence of the predicted pathways across five studies conducted over an eight-year period, examining four electoral contexts, across two nations – the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election; the 2016 U.K. Brexit Referendum; and the 2018 and 2022 U.S. Midterm Elections. First, based on past research (e.g., Craig and Richeson, 2017; Danbold & Huo, 2014) and later confirmed by an experiment (Study 5), we propose that Whites (the domi-
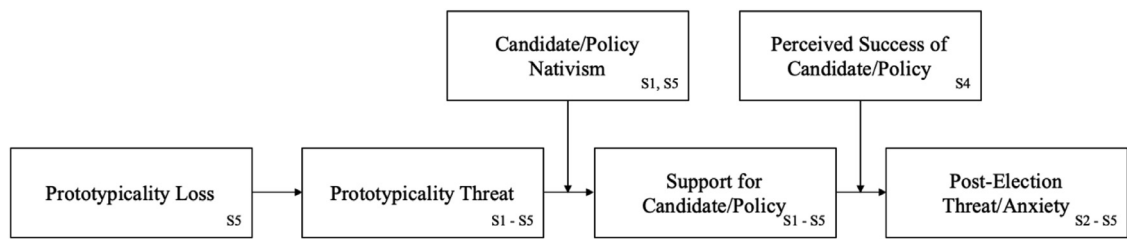
Fig. 1. Conceptual model. S1 through S5 annotations indicate which studies examine which components of the model.

nant ethnic group) in both the U.S. and the U.K. anticipate some degree of prototypicality loss (a disassociation between their ethnic identity and the broader national identity) and in turn, experience some degree of prototypicality threat. We then predict that this prototypicality threat is associated with support for political candidates and policies. However, we expect that this relationship will be moderated by the extent to which the target candidate or policy stands to defend Whites' prototypicality. Because many Whites see immigration as a leading cause of their prototypicality loss, we predict that those experiencing high levels of prototypicality threat will be especially drawn to candidates and policies which are explicitly nativist in character (and will be less motivated to support less explicitly nativist candidates). Finally, and as further evidence of the notion that members of dominant groups support nativist politics in an attempt to ameliorate their prototypicality threat, we examine the extent to which electoral outcomes shape reports of post-election threat and anxiety. Specifically, we predict that those highest in support for nativist politics (i.e., those highest in prototypicality threat) will feel less threat and anxiety when the nativist candidate wins than when that candidate loses. In three of the electoral contexts we examine (Trump and Brexit; Studies 1 through 3 and 5), nativism was unambiguously victorious. However, in the case of the 2018 U.S. Midterm Election (Study 4), the electoral outcome was less clear (both Democrats and Republicans claimed victory). This allowed us to test the prediction that, for those high in prototypicality threat pre-election, the more they believed the election was a win for Republicans, the more their feelings of threat would be attenuated.

In support of the causal pathways in our model, we combine correlational evidence (Studies 1 through 3) with longitudinal (Study 4) and experimental designs (Study 5). As a test of the robustness of our predictions, we systematically control for likely alternative explanations to test whether prototypicality threat offers unique explanatory power. For example, we examine the effects of prototypicality threat controlling for the effects of political orientation, gender, education, and age, all variables consistently associated with negative attitudes around diversity (Teixeira et al., 2013). We also control for realistic threat and symbolic threat to further isolate the specific role that prototypicality threat plays in support for nativist politics over and above economic concerns and perceived conflict over norms and values (e.g., (Porter, 2016)). In all studies, informed consent was obtained prior to study participation.

2. Study 1 – 2016 U.S. presidential election pre-election survey

Study 1 tested whether White Americans high in prototypicality threat show greater support for nativist candidates than for non-nativist candidates. We tested this hypothesis with survey data collected during the 2016 U.S. presidential primaries. Donald Trump was identified as the most nativist candidate in the crowded field of Republican presidential hopefuls given his support for a ban on Muslims entering the country and building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

In 2015, during the presidential primaries, we recruited 106 White Americans participants from Amazon Mechanical Turk. A target sam-

ple size of 100 participants was established based on effect sizes (e.g., Pearson r correlations) seen in prior research on prototypicality threat (Craig and Richeson, 2017, Danbold and Huo, 2015). Participants first completed a brief eligibility survey with several demographic questions. Only those who self-identified as White Americans were recruited into the study, but this eligibility criterion was not known to participants. Because of our focus on nativist politics, and following past research on prototypicality threat (e.g., Danbold and Huo, 2022), it was important to also exclude participants who were immigrants themselves. Two non-US-born participants were excluded, leaving a final sample size of 104 participants. Average age was 37.53 years (SD = 10.72) and 55.77% of the sample were men.

2.1.2. Measures

Prototypicality threat. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with six statements assessing prototypicality threat in the U.S. context: "I worry that in the future, my ethnic group will no longer represent what it means to be American," "I am concerned that in the future, it won't be clear what it means to be American," "It troubles me that in the future, when people think about what it means to be American, they won't think about my ethnic group," "It makes me uneasy that in the future, other groups will represent American more so than my ethnic group," "I am confident that in the future, people will still think about my ethnic group when thinking about what it means to be American.," (reverse-coded) and "I don't like to think that in the future, my ethnic group may represent America less than it does now." (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .90$; $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.49$).

Presidential candidate support. Participants indicated the extent to which they thought each of the 2016 frontrunners would be a good leader for America. Participants were shown a headshot of seven candidates along with their party affiliation (Democratic or Republican) in random order: Hilary Clinton (D), Bernie Sanders (D), Donald Trump (R), Jeb Bush (R), Ben Carson (R), Marco Rubio (R), and Carly Fiorina (R). (1 = a bad leader for America to 7 = a good leader for America).

Controls. Past research has demonstrated that party identification is generally the strongest predictor of voting behavior (Bartels, 2000), making it an important control variable. Participants completed the standard American National Election Survey measure of party identification, ranging from "Strong Democrat" (1) to "Strong Republican" (7) with "close to neither party" at the midpoint (4) ($M = 3.30$ $SD = 1.72$).

We also included age, gender (0 = woman or not listed, 1 = man), and education level (1 = some high school, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = Associates degree, 5 = Bachelor's degree, 6 = Master's degree or higher) in our full models. This decision was based on research showing that being older, working-class, and a man are all associated with lower diversity endorsement among White Americans (Teixeira et al., 2013).

2.2. Results

Prototypicality threat and support for Trump. We examined the relationship between prototypicality threat and support for each candidate in two models, first with prototypicality threat alone, and then with party identification, age, gender, and education as controls. As shown

Table 1
Relationship between Prototypicality Threat and Support for 2016 Candidates

	Donald Trump (R)	Carly Fiorina (R)	Marco Rubio (R)	Ben Carson (R)	Jeb Bush (R)	Hillary Clinton (D)	Bernie Sanders (D)
Model 1							
Prototypicality	0.58**	0.35**	0.31**	0.33**	0.24*	-0.31*	-0.55**
Threat	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Model 2							
Prototypicality	0.44**	0.13	0.12	0.08	0.12	-0.04	-0.22†
Threat	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.13)	(0.12)
Party Identification	0.30**	0.45**	0.36**	0.42**	0.25**	-0.58**	-0.64**
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Age	-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.04*
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Gender	0.30	-0.28	-0.02	-0.34	0.55†	-0.54	-0.58†
	(0.36)	(0.31)	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.28)	(0.35)	(0.33)
Education	-0.16	-0.08	-0.01	-0.15	-0.05	0.25	-0.17
	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.15)

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses below; (R) = Republican, (D) = Democratic;
† $p < .100$,
* $p < .050$,
** $p < .010$.

in Table 1, when modeled as the sole predictor, prototypicality threat significantly predicted support for each of the seven candidates (all *ps* ≤ .021), but the direction and magnitude of the association varied in predictable ways. Prototypicality threat was negatively associated with support for each of the Democratic candidates (Clinton and Sanders) but positively associated with support for each of the Republican candidates (Trump, J. Bush, Carson, Rubio, and Fiorina). Given the empirical association between prototypicality threat and party identification ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), we next ran models for each candidate including party identification along with other controls. In the second model, for five of our seven candidates, when party identification, age, gender, and education were included as controls, the significance of prototypicality threat as a predictor dropped below significance ($p = .240$). However, importantly, prototypicality threat remained a significant predictor of support for the most nativist candidate, Donald Trump ($B = 0.44$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .001$). Prototypicality threat also had a marginally significant negative relationship with support for Bernie Sanders, potentially viewed as the least nativist candidate in the field ($B = -0.22$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .065$).

These findings align with our theory and predictions that prototypicality threat is associated with candidate support depending on the degree to which they embrace nativism as part of their platform.. At the time of this study, Donald Trump stood out from the rest of the Republican frontrunners as the candidate most likely to address Whites' concerns about declining prototypicality, and thus emerged as the candidate for whom support is most closely aligned with self-reported experiences of prototypicality threat.

3. Study 2 – 2016 U.S. presidential election post-election survey

Study 1 provided preliminary support for the prediction that members of dominant groups (e.g., White Americans in the U.S.) turn to nativist politics (e.g., Donald Trump) to address concerns about declining prototypicality. Study 2 aimed to replicate this finding by again testing the link between prototypicality threat and support for Trump. Here, because we collected responses shortly *after* the 2016 election, we can look at the relationship between prototypicality threat and whether those who participated in the election voted for Trump or another candidate. We also sought to test the aspect of our conceptual model in which, among those high in prototypicality threat, Trump's victory predicted less anxiety post-election relative to their pre-election fears. Another advancement in this study was including realistic threat (concerns about jobs and resources) as an additional control.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and Procedures

In December 2016, one month after Donald Trump's unexpected victory, we recruited 256 White Americans (selected using the same eligibility criteria as in Study 1) from Amazon Mechanical Turk. We established a target sample size of 250 participants based on effect sizes (e.g., Pearson r correlations) observed in Study 1. Four participants who were not U.S. born were excluded, leaving a final sample of 252 participants. Average age was 39.69 (SD = 13.36) and 45.63% of the sample were men.

3.1.2. Measures

Prototypicality threat. Participants completed the first five items assessing prototypicality threat used in Study 1 (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .86$; $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.51$).

Support for Trump. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they "supported or opposed Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election." (1 = strongly opposed to 7 = strongly supported; $M = 3.26$, $SD = 2.39$). We also measured support for Hillary Clinton ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 2.27$) to include in our models as a control to ensure that we were measuring support for Trump specifically and not attitudes about Clinton indirectly or about candidates in general.

Vote for Trump. Participants were asked to indicate who they voted for in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and were given the following options: Hilary Clinton (39.68% of the sample), Donald Trump (37.70%), "Other" (9.13%), and "Didn't vote" (13.49%). We created a dichotomous variable coded to represent whether participants voted for Trump (coded 1) or a different candidate (Clinton or other, coded 0). When coding this item to contrast against only those who voted for Clinton or including participants who did not vote, patterns and effect sizes are comparable.

Post-election anxiety. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which, "compared to before the election," they felt more or less of each of eight emotions (1 = much less to 7 = much more). Three emotions were theoretically relevant to our hypothesis: fearful, anxious, and optimistic (reverse-coded) and collapsed onto a single scale of post-election anxiety relative to before the election outcomes were known ($\alpha = .91$; $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.96$). Five additional emotions were included as distractors (e.g., ambivalent, grateful, etc.).

Controls. Participants completed the same measure of party identification used in Study 1 (1 = Strong Democrat; 7 = Strong Republican; $M = 3.77$, $SD = 2.16$). Age, gender, and education were collected and coded identically to Study 1.

Table 2

Study 2 Relationship between Prototypicality Threat and Support and Vote for Trump.

Predictors	Support for Trump		Vote for Trump	
Prototypicality Threat	0.30**	(0.10)	0.66*	(0.32)
Realistic Threat	0.13	(0.08)	0.03	(0.25)
Party Identification	0.45**	(0.07)	1.25**	(0.18)
Age	0.00	(0.01)	-0.03	(0.02)
Gender	-0.07	(0.18)	0.21	(0.53)
Education	0.03	(0.07)	-0.21	(0.21)
Support for Clinton	-0.31**	(0.07)		

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses;

† $p < .100$,

* $p < .050$,

** $p < .010$.

An additional control introduced in Study 2 was concerns about competition for economic resources – realistic threat. Four items were adapted from past research (Stephan et al., 1999). Participants were asked to think about the relationship between their ethnic ingroup (Whites) and other ethnic groups in America, before expressing their level of agreement with the following items: "Other groups will get more from this country than they contribute," "The growth of other groups will increase the tax burden on members of my ethnic group," "Other groups will displace members of my ethnic group from our jobs," and "Social services will become less available to my ethnic group because of the growth of other groups." (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .95$; $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.83$).

3.2. Results

3.2.1. Prototypicality threat and support for Trump

We first ran a regression to replicate Study 1's finding that prototypicality threat significantly predicts support for Donald Trump. In addition to controlling for party identification, age, gender, and education, we controlled for realistic threat and support for Clinton. As Table 2 shows, prototypicality threat was again a significant predictor of support for Trump ($B = 0.30$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .002$) even after controlling for realistic threat ($B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .100$), party identification ($B = 0.45$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$), support for Clinton ($B = -0.31$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .001$), as well as age, gender, and education (all $ps \geq .623$).

3.2.2. Prototypicality threat and voting for Trump

In addition to testing the relationship between prototypicality threat and support for Trump, we also tested whether it predicted whether people actually voted for him in 2016. As shown in Table 2, we ran a binary logistic regression and observed that prototypicality threat significantly predicted voting for Trump ($B = 0.66$, $SE = 0.32$, $p = .039$) over and above the influence of realistic threat ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.25$, $p = .895$), party identification ($B = 1.25$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < .001$), and age, gender, and education (all $ps \geq .136$). Unsurprisingly, party identification was the strongest predictor of both support and voting for Trump. Nonetheless, in line with our predictions, prototypicality threat was a significant predictor, and interestingly, a stronger predictor than realistic threat.

3.2.3. Prototypicality threat, support for Trump, and post-election anxiety

Given that prototypicality threat was a significant predictor both of support for and actual voting for Trump, we predicted that his win would be associated with lower levels of anxiety among his White supporters. We tested a path model (the three lower right boxes in Figure 1) in which prototypicality threat predicted support for Trump, which in turn predicted lower anxiety felt after the election relative to prior, controlling again for realistic threat, party identification, age, gender, and education.

As previously reported, prototypicality threat was a significant predictor of support for Trump with all controls included in the first step in our model. Support for Trump, in turn, significantly predicted lower levels of reported anxiety post-election ($B = -0.45$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$). Together, the indirect effect was significant as the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval did not span zero (indirect effect [IE] = -0.13, $SE = 0.05$, bias-corrected 95% confidence interval = [-0.24, -0.06]).

4. Study 3 – 2016 U.K. Brexit referendum post-election survey

Study 2 replicated Study 1's finding that White Americans' prototypicality threat predicts their support for nativist candidates. Importantly, Study 2 findings showed that the reach of prototypicality threat extended to voting behavior and that White Americans, especially those who felt higher levels of prototypicality threat, reported lower levels of anxiety after Trump's victory. Study 3 aimed to further test the generalizability of our conceptual model by running a replication in the context of the Brexit referendum in the U.K. (to our knowledge, the first study of prototypicality threat outside of the U.S.). Although the Brexit referendum was ostensibly about more than nativism, anti-immigrant rhetoric was featured prominently in the Leave campaign (Iakhnis et al., 2018). Pro-Leave activists repeatedly deployed negative portrayals of immigrants and explicitly argued that leaving the European Union would allow Britain greater ability to impose more restrictive immigration policies (Mackey, 2016). Even conservative commentators at the time noted that the push for Brexit was driven by those who held a "narrow conception of Britain and Britishness" and who were fixated on the threat posed by "liberal internationalism" (Massie, 2016). This suggests that many White Britons at the time may have experienced a similar fear as White Americans – that their claim to the national identity is slipping and that supporting nativist politics may help address these worries.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants

In April of 2017, we recruited 212 White British workers from Prolific Academic (an online participant database of British residents; (Peer et al., 2017)). We established a target sample size of 200 participants based on effect sizes observed in Study 2. Participants were recruited based on ethnicity using pre-established panel demographics, but they did not know that this was the eligibility criterion for the study. One participant was identified as non-U.K.-born and excluded from analyses. We also excluded six additional participants who did not identify as White Briton (contradicting the information they provided to the panel provider), leaving a final sample of 205 participants. Average age was 39.69 (SD = 13.12) and 39.51% of the sample were men.

4.1.2. Measures

Prototypicality threat. Four items were adapted from Studies 1 and 2 to measure prototypicality threat among White British participants. Participants were asked to "Please consider what you see to be the relationship between your ethnic identity and the British identity in the future," and indicate their agreement with statements such as "I worry that in the future, my ethnic group may no longer represent what it means to be British." (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .88$; $M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.38$).

Support for Brexit. Participants were asked to indicate "the extent to which you supported or opposed the U.K. leaving the European Union." (1 = strongly opposed to 7 = strongly supported; $M = 3.47$, $SD = 2.16$).

Vote for Brexit. Participants were asked "Thinking now about the 2016 EU Referendum, commonly referred to as Brexit, how did you vote?" and were given the options: "Leave" (35.12%), "Remain" (57.07%), or "Didn't vote" (7.80%). We coded this item dichotomously (0 = voted "Remain", 1 = voted "Leave"). When we include those participants who didn't vote in with those who voted "Remain," patterns were consistent.

Table 3
Study 3 Relationship between Prototypicality Threat and Support and Vote for Brexit.

Predictors	Support for Brexit		Vote for Brexit	
Prototypicality Threat	0.33*	(0.14)	0.36†	(0.21)
Realistic Threat	0.24*	(0.12)	0.27	(0.17)
Political Ideology	0.54**	(0.11)	0.66**	(0.18)
Age	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)
Gender	0.13	(0.25)	-0.22	(0.39)
Education	-0.16†	(0.09)	-0.27*	(0.14)

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses;

† $p < .100$,

* $p < .050$

** $p < .010$.

Post-election anxiety. As in Study 2, we created an index of post-election anxiety by combining participants' responses to how fearful, anxious, and optimistic (reverse-coded) they felt "compared to before the passage of Brexit" (1 = much less to 7 = much more; $\alpha = .84$; $M = 4.40$; $SD = 1.31$).

Controls. The four items used in Study 2 were adapted to measure realistic threat for White British participants. Two changes were made for the British context. First, to set the context, participants were asked to "Please consider what you see to be the relationship between your ethnic group (White British) and other ethnic groups in the U.K. in the future". Additionally, "social services" was changed to "public services" to be more consistent with British terminology. (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .94$; $M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.68$). To capture political orientation, in the multi-party system of the U.K., a single continuous measure of partisan identification was not accessible so we measured political ideology instead by asking participants, "How would you describe your political views?" (1 = extremely liberal to 7 = extremely conservative; $M = 3.65$; $SD = 1.28$). Finally, the same controls for age, gender, and education were collected and coded as in Studies 1 and 2, although the education measure was updated to be relevant to the British education system.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Prototypicality threat and support for Brexit

Paralleling Study 2, we ran a regression model with prototypicality threat predicting support for Brexit, controlling for realistic threat and ideology. As shown in Table 3, prototypicality threat was a significant predictor ($B = 0.33$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .020$) even after controlling for realistic threat ($B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.12$, $p = .042$) and ideology ($B = 0.54$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .001$). Age and gender were not significant predictors (both $ps \geq .512$), but education was marginally significant ($B = -0.16$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.074$).

4.2.2. Prototypicality threat and voting for Brexit

We next ran a binary logistic regression predicting whether participants voted for Brexit. While the pattern of findings is consistent with our hypothesis, unlike the U.S. case, prototypicality threat was only a marginally significant predictor of whether participants self-reported voting for Brexit ($B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .086$). Realistic threat ($B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .113$) was not a significant predictor in this model, with ideology explaining the greatest proportion of variance ($B = 0.66$, $SE = 0.18$, $p < .001$). Age and gender were not significant predictors (both $ps \geq .561$), but education was ($B = -0.27$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .045$).

4.2.3. Prototypicality threat, support for Brexit, and post-election anxiety

As in the U.S. context, we sought to test if the success of Brexit would be associated with lower levels of anxiety after the election relative to before the election. We tested an unmoderated path model mirroring

Study 2 where prototypicality threat predicted support for Brexit, which in turn predicted post-election anxiety, controlling for ideology, realistic threat, age, gender, and education. As shown in Table 3, prototypicality threat was a significant predictor of Brexit support. Support for Brexit was a significant predictor of lower levels of anxiety post-election ($B = -0.34$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$) over and above prototypicality threat and our full set of controls. The predicted indirect effect was significant (IE = -0.11, $SE = 0.05$, BC 95% CI = [−0.23, -0.01]). Paralleling the prior study, this pattern is consistent with our argument that the success of nativist movements can reduce anxieties for those members of dominant groups most worried about losing their claim to the national identity.

5. Study 4 – 2018 U.S. Midterm Elections Pre- and Post-Election Surveys

Studies 1 through 3 show that prototypicality threat is a mechanism that explains members of dominant groups' support for nativist politics across two national-political contexts. Moreover, Studies 2 and 3 produced findings consistent with our argument that support for nativist politics brings emotional relief to those who experience distress at the prospect of their ethnic group losing it standing as the prototype for the nation. While the patterns of findings are consistent, controlling for alternative explanations, a limitation is that the data from the three studies are cross-sectional. Study 4 aims to address this limitation with a longitudinal study designed carried out before and after the 2018 U.S. Midterm elections.

One important distinction of this context is that, compared to Trump and Brexit, not every Republican candidate up for election was likely to be seen as equally nativist. Nevertheless, this election was regarded by many as a referendum on Donald Trump and nativist politics in general (Remnick, 2018). This was especially the case for the elections in the House of Representatives where all 435 seats were contested, and which many saw as carrying the potential to affirm or refute Trump's politics. As a more direct test of the link between prototypicality threat and support for nativism, in addition to candidate support, we also asked participants about their explicit support for nativist policies.

Using Qualtrics' Panel service, we recruited a nationally representative sample of White American voters to complete a Pre-Election survey between the 11/1/18 and 11/5/18 and a Post-Election survey between 11/8/18 and 11/16/18 (the election took place on 11/6/18). By examining the relationship between pre-election prototypicality threat and post-election reports of voting behaviors, we moved closer to testing the causal relationship in our model.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants

We recruited a nationally representative sample of White American registered voters using pre-established panel demographics. Participants were not aware of the eligibility criterion. One thousand two hundred and fifty-two White Americans participated in our Pre-Election survey. Of these, 431 also participated in our Post-Election survey (32% retention rate), so our analyses focused on those who participated in both waves. We established a target final sample size of 400 participants based on effect sizes (e.g., Pearson r correlations) observed in Studies 2 and 3. Consistent with prior studies, eight participants who were non-U.S.-born were excluded from analyses, leaving a final sample of 423 participants. Average age was 54.93 ($SD = 16.40$) and 45.86% of the sample were men.

5.1.2. Measures

Prototypicality threat. Four items measuring prototypicality threat were adapted from prior studies (e.g., "I worry that in the future, White Americans will no longer represent what it means to be American.") (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; Pre-Election $\alpha = .87$; $M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.65$; Post-Election $\alpha = .90$; $M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.60$).

Pre-election support for Republican candidates. Participants in the pre-election wave of the survey were asked, "In the upcoming Midterm Elections, Americans will vote for Congressional candidates to represent their district in the House of Representatives. All 435 House seats are up for election. Thinking about the candidates running to represent your district in the House of Representatives..." They were then asked to express the extent to which they supported the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate (1 = strongly oppose to 7 = strongly support; Democrats $M = 4.05$, $SD = 2.34$; Republicans $M = 3.97$, $SD = 2.30$).

Vote for Republican candidates. Participants in wave 2 (post-election) were asked "Who did you vote for to serve in the House of Representatives representing your district?" and were given the options: "The Democratic candidate" (50.12%), "The Republican candidate" (44.21%), "Other candidate" (2.36%), "I do not recall who I voted for" (1.42%), or "I did not vote for a House of Representatives candidate" (1.89%). We coded this item dichotomously (0 = voted Democrat, 1 = voted Republican). When we include participants in the remaining categories with those who voted for the Democratic candidate, results are consistent.

Support for nativist policies. In addition to candidate choice, we examined items in the post-election survey that directly assessed support for nativist politics. To do this, we developed five items: "It is best if everyone in the US conforms to existing cultural norms," "It would be better if America were an English-only country," "Undocumented immigrants in the United States should be deported," "The US government should prevent new immigrants from developing nations from coming to the United States," and "What makes the US strong is that we are a mix of different racial cultures." (reverse-coded) (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = .82$; $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.38$).

Perceived party victory. To assess the extent to which participants thought each party (Democratic or Republican) was victorious in the Midterms, in wave 2, we asked participants "To what extent do you think the Midterm Elections were a victory or loss" for the Democratic Party and Republican Party separately (1 = A major loss to 7 = A major victory; Democrats $M = 4.82$ $SD = 1.38$; Republicans $M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.48$).

Controls. Four items measuring realistic threat were adapted from prior studies (e.g., "It makes me uneasy to think that other ethnic groups may displace White Americans from our jobs,") (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; Pre-Election $\alpha = .82$; $M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.56$; Post-Election $\alpha = .86$; $M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.56$). In the pre-election wave of the survey, participants completed the same measure of party identification used in Study 1 and 2 (1 = Strong Democrat; 7 = Strong Republican; Pre-Election $M = 4.05$, $SD = 2.37$). Age, gender, and education were included as control variables and coded as in Studies 1 and 2.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Prototypicality threat, support for nativist policies, and voting for Republican representatives

To test our prediction that prototypicality threat would lead White American voters to support nativist politics, we tested three models examining the predictive value of pre-election prototypicality threat on three measures of nativist support (pre-election support for Republican candidates, post-election vote for Republican candidates, and post-election support for nativist policies). Our first model looked at support for Republican candidates, using the same set of predictors used in our prior studies (prototypicality threat, realistic threat, party identification, age, gender, and education), and with the addition of support for a Democratic candidate to ensure that support for the Republican candidate measure was not merely a stand-in for general attitudes about candidates. As shown in Table 4, prototypicality threat was a significant predictor of support for the Republican candidate ($B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .003$), controlling for realistic threat ($B = 0.06$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .203$), party identification ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$), support for the Democratic candidate ($B = -0.52$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$), and age, gender, and education (all $ps \geq .209$).

In our second model, we examined our post-election measures, first with a binary logistic regression predicting vote for the Republican candidate (vs. a Democratic candidate). Interestingly, contrary to findings from the other studies, prototypicality threat was not a significant predictor ($B = 0.26$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .119$), nor was realistic threat ($B = 0.17$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .332$). In fact, only party identification emerged as a strong and clear predictor of voting Republican ($B = 1.15$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .001$). This is perhaps unsurprising, given the finding that party identification is typically the strongest predictor of voting behavior (Bartels, 2000). It is important to note, however, that consistent with prior studies the simple bivariate relationship between pre-election prototypicality threat and voting for a Republican candidate was significant and positive ($r = .37$, $p < .001$), it was just not as strong a predictor as party identification.

Given the imprecision of using voting for Republican candidates as a measure of support for nativist politics, our final model looked at the relationship between pre-election prototypicality threat and post-election support for nativist politics. As shown in Table 4, prototypicality threat was a marginally significant predictor of nativist policies ($B = 0.07$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .079$), controlling for realistic threat ($B = 0.43$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .001$), party identification ($B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$), and age, gender, and education (the latter two of which were significant). It is worth noting, that in contrast to prior analyses where prototypicality threat was the stronger predictor, here realistic threat is a stronger predictor of support for nativist policies. Nonetheless, in the context of an unfolding, high-stakes partisan election, prototypicality threat continued to explain unique variance above and beyond realistic threat.

Table 4

Study 4 Relationship between Prototypicality Threat and Support for Republican Representatives and Nativist Policies

Pre-Election Predictors	Pre-Election DV		Post-Election DVs			
	Support for Republican Candidate		Vote for Republican Candidate		Support for Nativist Policies	
Prototypicality Threat	0.13**	(0.04)	0.26	(0.17)	0.07†	(0.04)
Realistic Threat	0.06	(0.05)	0.17	(0.18)	0.43**	(0.04)
Party Identification	0.34**	(0.04)	1.15**	(0.11)	0.15**	(0.02)
Age	-0.00	(0.00)	-0.01	(0.01)	-0.00	(0.00)
Gender	-0.04	(0.11)	-0.17	(0.40)	-0.29**	(0.10)
Education	0.03	(0.04)	-0.09	(0.14)	-0.07*	(0.03)
Support for Democratic Candidate	-0.52**	(0.04)				

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses;
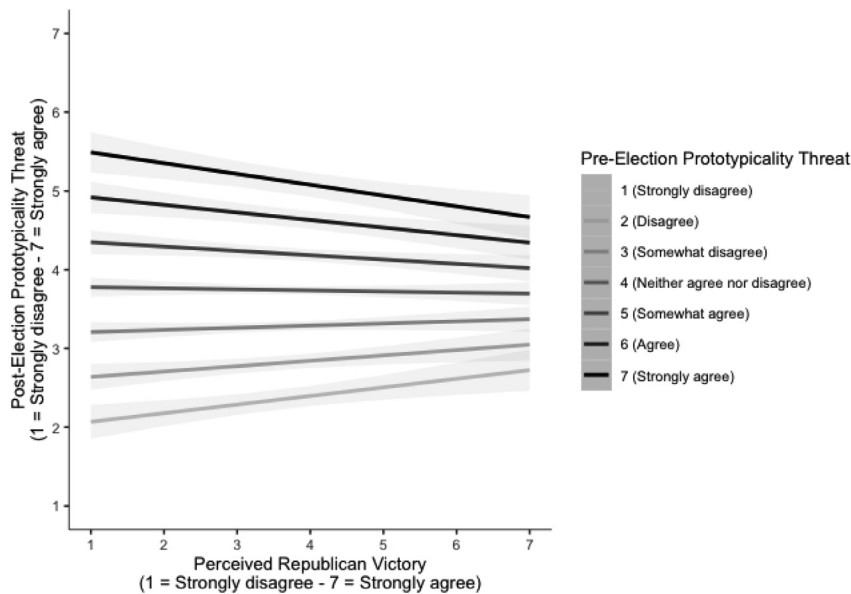
† $p < .100$,

* $p < .050$,

** $p < .010$.

Table 5
Study 4 Interaction Between Pre-Election Prototypicality Threat and Post-Election Perceived Republican Victory on Post-Election Prototypicality Threat.

Predictors	Post-Election Prototypicality Threat	
Pre-Election Prototypicality Threat	0.61**	(0.08)
Post-Election Republican Victory	0.15†	(0.08)
Pre-Election Prototypicality Threat * Post-Election Republican Victory	-0.04*	(0.02)
Post-Election Democrat Victory	-0.04	(0.04)
Pre-Election Realistic Threat	0.36**	(0.05)
Pre-Election Party Identification	-0.01	(0.03)
Age	0.00	(0.00)
Gender	0.19†	(0.11)
Education	-0.04	(0.04)

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses;
† $p < .100$,
* $p < .050$,
** $p < .010$.

Fig. 2. Interaction between pre-election prototypicality threat and perceived Republican victory on post-election prototypicality threat.

5.2.2. Post-election prototypicality threat as moderated by perceived success of nativist politics

We next aimed to test the final component of our conceptual model (Figure 1), that post-election threat is contingent upon the perceived victory of nativist politics. We tested whether or not those who were high in prototypicality threat prior to the election felt a decrease in their prototypicality threat after the election, depending on whether or not they saw the Republicans (the representatives of nativist politics here) as having won. Specifically, we predicted that those experiencing prototypicality threat should find some relief when they perceive that power has shifted toward nativist candidates who support stemming social change. To test this idea, we ran a multiple regression model predicting post-election prototypicality threat from the interaction of pre-election prototypicality threat and perceived Republican victory. We did so controlling for perceived Democratic victory, realistic threat, party identification, age, gender, and education. Results are shown in Table 5. We observed a significant main effect of pre-election prototypicality threat ($B = 0.61$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < .001$), a marginal main effect of perceived Republican victory ($B = 0.15$, $SE = .08$, $p = .073$), and a significant interaction between the two ($B = -0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .032$; see Figure 2). Simple slopes analyses revealed that for those high in prototypicality threat in the pre-election survey (i.e., at a 7 on the 1 to 7 scale), perceptions of Republican victory were associated with lower prototypicality threat post-election ($B = -0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .060$). In contrast, there was no significant relationship between perceptions of Republican vic-

tory and post-election prototypicality threat for those low (i.e., 1) or at the midpoint (i.e., 4) on pre-election prototypicality threat (all $ps \geq$ .106). These results suggest that those who were high in prototypicality threat prior to the election felt less threat post-election if they thought that nativism was successful (i.e., that Republicans were victorious).

6. Study 5 – 2022 U.S. Midterm Elections Experiment

Across Studies 1 through 4, our findings showed a consistent pattern among voters in three real-world elections that are largely in line with our conceptual model. U.S. and U.K. voters who reported more prototypicality threat also expressed more support for nativist candidates and policies. However, the preceding studies rested on an untested assumption that prototypicality threat is driven by dominant group members' awareness that the once close association between their group identity and the national identity is unraveling (i.e., prototypicality loss). Moreover, the preceding studies looked at real-world candidates and policies that may have been associated with a range of issues (i.e., not nativism exclusively) that could have impacted voter support for them.

Study 5 aimed to address these limitations by testing our theoretical model in a large, preregistered (https://osf.io/bpk5q/?view_only=cf48024cf2ff4a019b368fefd6f19999) experiment, manipulating prototypicality loss *and* the nativist platform of an ostensibly real political candidate in the 2022 U.S. midterm election. First, we test whether being told that the association between White Americans and

the broader American identity is in decline (i.e., prototypicality loss) increases White voters' concerns about their group no longer representing what it means to be American (i.e., prototypicality threat). Then, we demonstrate that experiencing prototypicality threat is associated with greater support for a nativist political candidate (compared to support for a candidate who campaigns on traditional conservative issues). By experimentally manipulating the so far untested elements of our model (prototypicality loss and nativist position of candidate), we add further evidence in support for the theoretically derived causal paths in our model.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Participants

We recruited two thousand two hundred and twenty non-Hispanic White Americans from the online panel provider Forthright Access (for examples of peer-reviewed work using this provider see (Dias and Lelkes, 2022, Mernyk et al., 2022, Santos et al., 2022). As preregistered, we requested a sample of 2000 non-Hispanic White Americans nationally representative in terms of age, gender, region, and political orientation. Although we did not have effects for our manipulations on which to base power analyses, we deliberately recruited a large sample in anticipation of enforcing strict preregistered exclusion criteria. Specifically, we enforced two factual manipulation checks (Kane and Barabas, 2019) that asked participants to recall key information from our two manipulations. One thousand five hundred and thirty participants passed both checks. Consistent with prior studies, we excluded 15 participants who indicated on our survey that their ethnicity was something other than White (contradicting what they had told the panel provider). We also excluded 28 participants who were non-U.S. born, leaving us with a final sample of 1487 participants. Average age was 49.40 (SD = 15.65) and 49.09% of the sample was men.

6.1.2. Experimental Manipulations

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions within two manipulations.

Prototypicality loss manipulation. We first manipulated whether or not participants were told that White Americans' prototypicality in the U.S. was declining (prototypicality loss condition) or holding strong (prototypicality retention condition). Updating a manipulation from (Danbold and Huo, 2022), we asked participants to read a purported screenshot of a scientific article describing research that had documented people's association between being White and being American over time, and that this association had either decreased or not (see Figure 3 for verbatim manipulation materials).

Candidate nativism manipulation. In what we told participants was a separate survey, we asked participants to respond to a hypothetical political candidate. This manipulation, inspired by (Reny et al., 2020), asked participants to view campaign materials (a purported screenshot from a campaign website) depicting a Congressional candidate (a middle-aged White American man) and discussing one of their primary stances. In the "nativist" condition, the candidate was featured as being "tough on immigration" and espoused generally nativist views. In the "control" condition, the candidate was featured as being "tough on big government" and espoused generically conservative views about reducing the size of the government (see Figure 4 for verbatim manipulation materials).

6.1.3. Measures

Prototypicality threat. We measured prototypicality threat using the same five item scale from Study 2 ($\alpha = .78$; $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.34$).

Candidate support and voting intentions. We measured candidate support using a single item presented below the screenshot of the candidate's campaign webpage. We asked participants to indicate, "based on the information above, to what extent do you think you would support this candidate?" (1 = Strongly oppose, 7 = strongly support; $M = 4.35$,

$SD = 2.08$). We measured participants their intention to vote for the candidate by asking, "based on the information above, how likely do you think it would be that you would vote for this candidate?" (1 = Not at all likely, 7 = Extremely likely; $M = 3.59$, $SD = 2.22$).

Anticipated post-election anxiety. We also measured anticipated post-election anxiety by asking participants to, "imagine that the candidate above has won his congressional seat," and indicate how that outcome made them "feel about the future of America." Consistent with prior studies, we measured the extent to which participants would feel fearful, anxious, and optimistic (reverse-coded) and collapsed these measures into a single scale of post-election anxiety ($\alpha = .81$; $M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.70$).

Controls. We measured realistic threat with the same four items used in Study 2 ($\alpha = .93$; $M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.80$). In this study, we also measured symbolic threat using a three-item scale asking participants to think about their relationship between their ethnic group and other ethnic groups and indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements, "The values and beliefs of other groups regarding moral and religious issues will not be compatible with the values and beliefs of my ethnic group," "The values and beliefs of other groups regarding family issues and socializing children will not be compatible with the values and beliefs of my ethnic group," and "The values and beliefs of other groups regarding work will be basically quite similar to those of my ethnic group." (reverse coded) ($\alpha = .67$; $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.33$). Participants also completed the same measures of party identification ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 2.19$), age, gender, and education as in Studies 1, 2, and 4.

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Effect of prototypicality loss manipulation on prototypicality threat

We first tested the far left-hand portion of our conceptual model (Figure 1) to see if our prototypicality loss manipulation increased feelings of prototypicality threat among participants. A between-subjects *t*-test revealed that participants in the prototypicality loss condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.38$) reported higher prototypicality threat than participants in the prototypicality retention condition ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.29$; $t(1463) = 2.12$, $p = .034$). Our prototypicality loss manipulation remained a significant predictor ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .046$) even when run in a regression model controlling for the candidate's issue position (nativist vs. control) ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .060$), realistic threat ($B = 0.36$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$), symbolic threat ($B = 0.28$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$), partisan identification ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .002$), age ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.00$, $p < .001$), gender ($B = 0.19$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .690$), and education ($B = -0.05$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .006$) (see Table 6).

6.2.2. Effect of prototypicality threat on candidate support moderated by nativism

We next looked at the next stage in our conceptual model, whether, consistent with our prior findings, prototypicality threat would be positively related to support for nativist candidates, and less so for not explicitly nativist candidates. To test this, we ran a multiple regression model predicting candidate support from prototypicality threat ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .582$), candidate nativism condition ($B = -0.38$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = .049$), and their interaction ($B = 0.14$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .013$), controlling for prototypicality loss condition ($B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .554$), realistic threat ($B = 0.34$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .001$), symbolic threat ($B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .234$), party identification ($B = 0.45$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$), age ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.00$, $p = .101$), gender ($B = 0.13$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .089$), and education ($B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .544$) (see Table 6). The pattern of this interaction is shown in Figure 5. Simple slopes analyses reveal that for those in the candidate nativist platform condition, there was a significant relationship between prototypicality threat and candidate support ($B = 0.17$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .001$), but this was not true for participants evaluating the candidate in the control (anti-big government) condition ($B = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .583$).

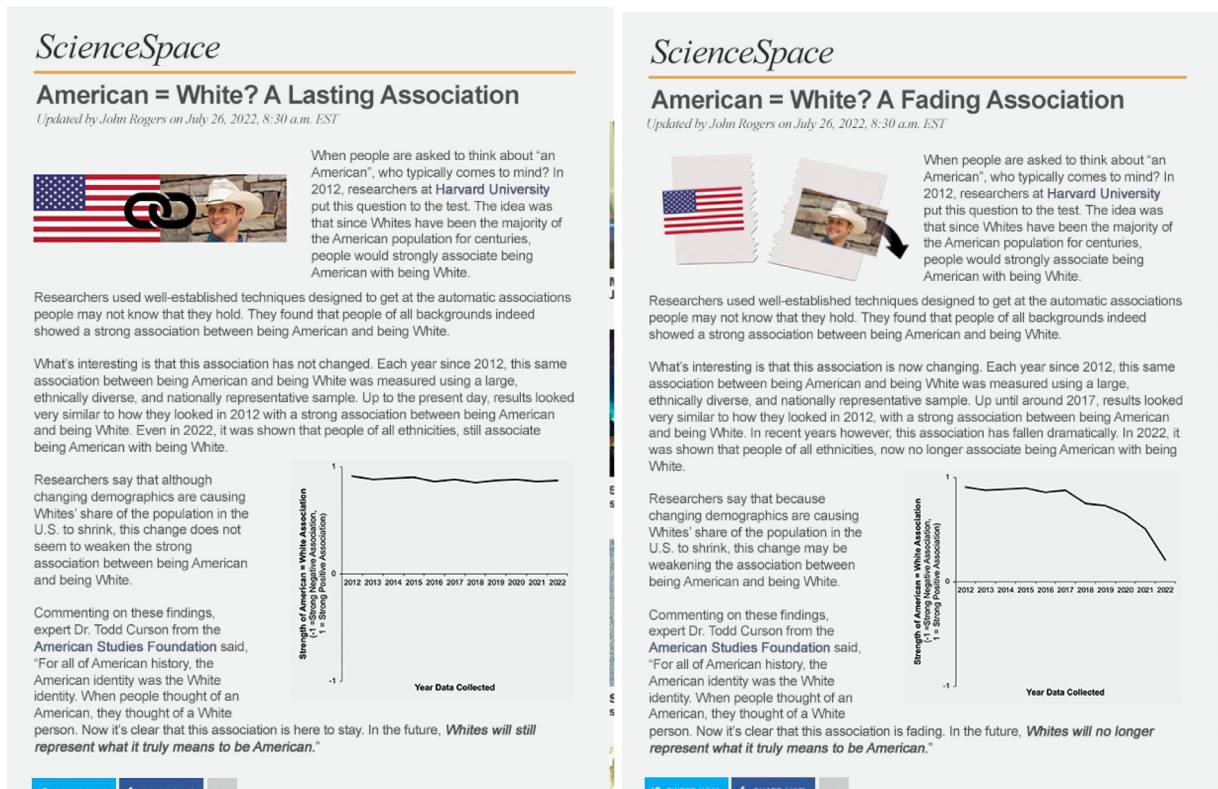Prototypicality Retention Condition   Prototypicality Loss Condition

Fig. 3. Study 5 Prototypicality Loss Manipulation

Table 6

Study 5 Path Model Regressions

Predictor	Prototypicality Threat		Candidate Support		Anticipated Anxiety	
Prototypicality Loss Condition	0.09*	(0.05)	0.04	(0.07)	0.06	(0.05)
Candidate Nativism Condition	0.09†	(0.05)	-0.38*	(0.19)	-0.12	(0.14)
Prototypicality Threat			0.03	(0.05)	0.03	(0.04)
Prototypicality Threat * Candidate Nativism Condition			0.14*	(0.05)	0.06†	(0.04)
Candidate Support					-0.62**	(0.02)
Realistic Threat	0.36**	(0.02)	0.34**	(0.03)	-0.01	(0.03)
Symbolic Threat	0.28**	(0.02)	0.05	(0.04)	-0.02	(0.03)
Party Identification	0.04**	(0.01)	0.45**	(0.02)	-0.07**	(0.02)
Age	0.01**	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	-0.00**	(0.00)
Gender	0.02	(0.05)	0.13†	(0.07)	-0.01	(0.05)
Education	-0.05**	(0.01)	-0.02	(0.03)	-0.01	(0.02)

Notes: Values in columns are unstandardized beta coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses; focal coefficients are underlined;

† $p < .100$,

* $p < .050$,

** $p < .010$.

Patterns of results were consistent when looking at a parallel model, including our full set of controls, focusing on voting intentions as our dependent variable (see Figure 5). The interaction between prototypicality threat and candidate nativism condition remained significant ($B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .049$), and simple slopes analyses revealed a stronger association between prototypicality threat and voting intentions for the nativist candidate ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$) than the control candidate ($B = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .034$).[2]

6.2.3. Full path model and downstream consequences on anticipated post-election anxiety

Finally, we tested the full path model in Figure 1 (excluding the moderation by perceived success of candidate/policy already tested in Study 4). Although our experimental design meant that we only had measures of anticipated anxiety assuming that the candidate in our manipulation won their election, this was another way of measuring whether those

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[2] Although not specified in our conceptual model, we also examined the total effect of our two manipulations on candidate support and voting intentions (omnibus interaction effects, $p = .270$ and $p = .474$). These findings suggest that exposure to information about prototypicality loss alone is not enough to ex-

plain support for nativist candidates, and that we must look to those who are actually threatened by this information. Scholars caution against overemphasizing the significance of such total effects when the focus is on indirect effects (Rucker et al., 2011), but we encourage readers to consider these findings when interpreting our claims.

Control Condition

Nativist Condition

Fig. 4. Study 5 Candidate Manipulation

highest in prototypicality threat were also those most emotionally invested in the success of nativist politics. Tracking our prior findings, candidate support significantly predicted lower levels of anticipated anxiety post-election (B = -0.62, SE = 0.02, p < .001). Running the three regression models in Table 6 in sequence, the indirect effect was significant for the nativist candidate (IE = -0.01, SE = 0.01, bias-corrected 95% Confidence Interval = [−0.02, -0.001]) but not for the control candidate (IE = -0.00, SE = 0.00, bias-corrected 95% Confidence Interval = [−0.01, 0.004]). In summary, telling White Americans about the potential loss of their prototypicality led to an increase in feelings of prototypicality threat. Prototypicality threat, in turn, increased support specifically for a nativist candidate (but for not a control candidate). Candidate support, in turn, led to decreased anticipated anxiety when imagining that the nativist candidate won their election. Together, these findings support our general prediction that perceptions of declining prototypicality evokes a sense of threat for White Americans, who then become emotionally invested in those who offer to protect White prototypicality – nativist politicians.

7. General Discussion

Across five studies, four elections, and two distinct national political contexts, we found evidence consistent with our predictions that prototypicality threat plays a role in members of dominant groups' support for nativist politics. Studies 1 and 2 showed that prototypicality threat was a unique predictor of White Americans' support and voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, over and above realistic threat, party identification, age, gender, and education. These findings were replicated in the context of White Britons' support for Brexit (Study 3) and a longitudinal study looking at White Americans' support for Republicans in the 2018 Midterm Elections (Study 4). An experiment, looking at White Americans' support for a fictitious nativist candidate in the run-up to the 2022 Midterm Elections (Study 5), found additional support for our model, even controlling for symbolic threat. Together, our findings tell the story of how members of dominant groups, aware of declining prototypicality, experience a sense of prototypicality threat, turn to nativist politics in response, and
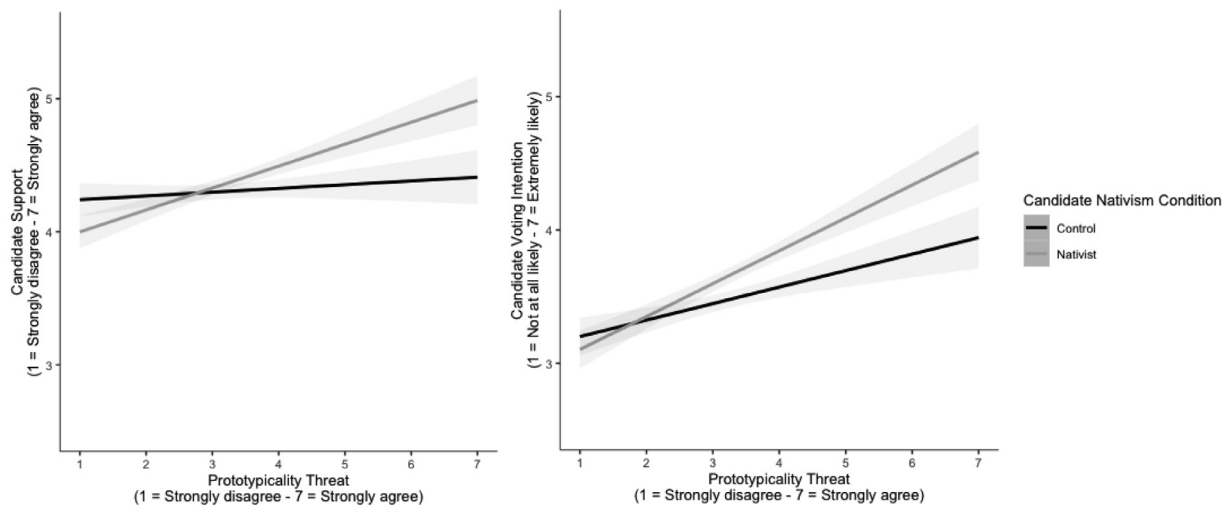
Fig. 5. Interaction between prototypicality threat and candidate nativism on candidate support and candidate voting intentions. Confidence intervals represent ± 1 standard error.

experience relief when those politics are recognized as successful (see Figure 1).

7.1. Theoretical contributions

This work represents a key advancement in our understanding of the consequences of prototypicality threat as experienced by members of dominant groups in society. To date, work on this threat (e.g., (Bai and Federico, 2021, Craig and Richeson, 2017, Danbold and Huo, 2015, Danbold and Huo, 2022) has focused exclusively on social attitudes as the outcome. Here, we show that the consequences of prototypicality threat extend to emotions (anxiety) and behavior (voting). Together, these findings complement and extend earlier work in the ecologically valid context of high stakes national elections. Additionally, this work is the first, to our knowledge, to look at prototypicality threat beyond the context of the United States, demonstrating the reach of this construct beyond the confines of a single social-political context.

This research also enriches our understanding of the roots of nativist politics. Here, we demonstrate that in addition to general conservative ideology or concerns about competition over resources, there is an identity-based explanation for why members of dominant groups pursue nativist politics. This is important, not just for our theoretical understanding, but for those concerned about political hostility toward immigrants. A status or resource-based threat explanation suggests a zero-sum context in which nativist politics will only fall out of favor when the dominant ethnic group feels secure in their place at the top of the hierarchy. Our identity-based approach, however, suggests that anti-immigrant sentiments could be partially ameliorated by creating a more inclusive definition of the national identity (e.g., Alexandre et al., 2016, Danbold and Bendersky, 2020). We encourage future research to test whether or not such an intervention can effectively reduce nativist sentiments.

7.2. Limitations and future directions

Despite the strengths of the current work, there are several limitations. For example, the majority of our studies take a correlational approach to the relationship between prototypicality threat and support for nativist politics. Although the longitudinal data in Study 4 and experimental design of Study 5 support the causal pathways illustrated in our conceptual model (Figure 1), it is likely that recursive processes are also at play. That is, we expect that prototypicality threat may lead people to pay greater attention to nativist politicians, who may in turn exacerbate existing concerns about declining prototypicality. Although this paper set out to document a relatively straightforward psychological process linking prototypicality threat to support for nativist politics, we encourage future researchers to explore the multiple causal pathways that likely exist in the real world. It will also be interesting to examine the longevity of the emotional effects observed here. Although candidates' electoral victories signal a welcomed outcome for supporters, this relief may be short-lived. We encourage future research that systematically examines the countervailing influences that shape how members of dominant groups respond to elections in a time of change and uncertainty.

Additionally, although we were able to differentiate prototypicality threat from realistic threat and symbolic threat, and control for the latter two in our series of studies, there are other threats that scholars have introduced which we do not examine here. For example, some scholars have examined a more broadly defined status threat (e.g., Craig and Richeson, 2014, Major et al., 2016, Mutz, 2018). We see status threat as overlapping with the threats we examined (especially realistic threat; Rios et al., 2018) and believe that we advance understanding of intergroup relations by examining more precisely defined and empirically discriminant versions of threat. Still, there are other specific intergroup threats identified in the literature that do not overlap with prototypicality threat conceptually but warrant further exploration (e.g., existential threat; Bai and Federico, 2020). Future research may also generate novel insights by exploring the relationship between prototypicality threat and recent research on racial nostalgia, which finds that asking White Americans to think about the past (in contrast to our efforts to have them think about the future) also encourages White nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment (Reyna et al., 2022).

Another limitation is the fact that several of our effects were relatively small. Two noteworthy trends in our data suggest that the relationship between prototypicality threat and support for nativism is stronger in some instances than others. First, the predictive ability of prototypicality threat was strongest when the candidate/policy being evaluated was clearly nativist (e.g., Trump [Studies 1 and 2]) and our explicitly nativist candidate [Study 5] versus Brexit [Study 3] and Republican congressional candidates in general [Study 4]. Second, effects were clearer when the dependent variable was about voting intentions rather than actual voting behavior (the latter of which, consistent with past research, is most strongly predicted by party identification or ideology; e.g., Bartels, 2000). This latter point highlights another limitation that our measurement of voting behavior relies upon individuals accurately reporting who they voted for. Given the recency of the elections

and the extensive media coverage before and after, it is unlikely that individuals would mistakenly report on how they voted, but it is possible that individuals may have intentionally misrepresented their vote. We believe, however, that in the current state of political polarization in the U.S. and U.K., where support for both sides remains intense, that such misrepresentation would be rare. We encourage future researchers to explore alternate methods of assessing the link between prototypicality threat and voting behavior and considering further factors that may moderate the overall influence of prototypicality threat on outcomes of interest.

7.3. Implications for understanding the current direction of global politics

By illuminating the role of prototypicality threat in support for nativist politics, this research underscores the fact that economic concerns, widely touted as a key factor behind Trump and Brexit, cannot fully explain their successes. Our findings suggest that even if resources are secured, members of dominant groups (e.g., White Americans and Britons) nervous about growing diversity, will continue to turn to nativist politics to address their anxieties about losing the claim to represent their broader national identities. Looking beyond the contexts we examined here, there are indications that prototypicality threat is driving a global surge in nativist politics. In the latter half of 2022, Sweden elected the explicitly nativist Sweden Democrats who have argued that Sweden belongs to "real Swedes" and that immigration is a threat to traditional Swedish culture (Bulent, 2020). In Italy, Giorgia Meloni was elected prime minister while expressing claims that she would "defend Italian identity" (Kazmin, 2022). As climate change is predicted to drive rates of global migration even higher in the coming decades (Jordan, 2021), we hope this research stimulates new strategies for increasing tolerance for immigrants.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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