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Borrowed Culture, Built Nationalism: How Benefit Finding of
Cultural Appropriation Shapes Nationalistic Sentiment Among White Americans

By

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

How do dominant group members engage in meaning making of cultural appropriation, the act of taking from an outgroup culture, including intellectual property, cultural expressions, artifacts, history, and ways of being and knowledge? Benefit finding—identifying positive implications of an aversive event—has typically been studied as a coping process of meaning making for victimized groups. The current work investigates whether it can also function as a meaning-making process for perpetrator groups. Across 3 experiments, we examined whether engaging in benefit finding about cultural appropriation increases nationalistic sentiment among White Americans. In Studies 1 and 2 ($N = 202$; Study 2 preregistered), White Americans who considered the implications or benefits of a White chef's use of soul food endorsed higher nationalism than controls. Mediation analyses suggested that this effect was partly accounted for by increased White racial identification. Study 3 ($N = 265$; preregistered) tested whether an abstract (vs. concrete) construal level moderated this effect. As predicted, benefit finding interacted with construal level to influence nationalistic beliefs, such that benefit finding tended to be associated with relatively higher endorsement under abstract construal and relatively lower endorsement under concrete construal. Exploratory analyses further implied that the nationalistic sentiment measure may reflect distinguishable aspects of nationalism regarding beliefs about American superiority and U.S. militarism. Across studies, findings converged to reveal that benefit finding increased nationalistic sentiment, though Study 3 suggests that this relationship varies based on construal level. Findings suggest that benefit finding operates as a group-based meaning-making process through which dominant interpretations of appropriation may function as a route to national attachment.

Keywords: Cultural Appropriation, Benefit Finding, Nationalism, Racial Identification

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Globalization has led to increased exposure to multicultural influences and cross-cultural exchange, leading to cultural diversity in contemporary societies (Crisp & Meleady, 2012; Kashima, 2007). However, with the rising interconnectivity of cultures also comes a growing prevalence of cultural appropriation, the act of taking from an outgroup culture, including intellectual property, cultural expressions, artifacts, history, and ways of being and knowledge (Ziff & Rao, 1997). Cultural appropriation becomes especially problematic when dominant group members extract and profit from minoritized cultural symbols, products, and expressions, contributing to systemic exploitation and cultural erasure (Rogers, 2006). On an intergroup level, these practices replicate the dynamics of racial capitalism and settler colonialism, in which dominant groups (e.g., White Americans) benefit materially, socially, or psychologically from the cultural labor of subordinated communities (Riley & Carpenter, 2016). When such acts become mainstreamed, they contribute not only to the erasure of source communities, but also to the reinforcement of a dominant national identity (Ledgerwood et al., 2011; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2017).

Cultural appropriation can thus be a vehicle for nationalism, a form of collective identification that emphasizes pride, unity, and superiority of a national group (Ho et al., 2012). When appropriated cultural elements are rebranded as national symbols, they can reinforce the notion that dominant culture, often synonymous with Whiteness in the U.S., is the rightful inheritor and interpreter of all cultural expressions (Devos & Banaji, 2005). For example, soul food and hip-hop music, both products rooted in Black cultural expression, are frequently positioned as quintessentially “All-American,” obscuring their origin and labor while bolstering mainstream national pride (Inness, 2006; Rodriguez, 2006).

This study investigates the *nationalism hypothesis (H1)*: that framing cultural appropriation in terms of its benefits (e.g., enhancing creativity, cultural awareness, or national identity) will fuel nationalistic sentiment among White Americans. We suggest that benefit finding framing enables dominant group members to reimagine appropriation as a benevolent or progressive act, reinforcing narratives of cultural entitlement, moral leadership, and national superiority, central tenets of modern nationalism.

Additionally, we propose the White racial identification hypothesis (H2), such that those who strongly identify with their racial group will be more likely to endorse nationalistic sentiment when confronted with cultural appropriation. In response, they may be more likely to engage in benefit finding, a psychological process where individuals attribute positive meaning to controversial or harmful events (Branscombe et al., 2015; Mosley & Branscombe, 2021). This reframing not only downplays the harm to minoritized communities, but also serves to reinforce White identity, and by extension, American national identity (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Reyna et al., 2022). Because of the prevalence of culturally appropriative actions in society (Rogers, 2006), it is important to understand what leads individuals to justify and moralize such actions. Investigating nationalism as it relates to cultural appropriation allows researchers to better understand the cultural processes that lead individuals and group members to form and maintain national identities.

The Harmful Nature of Cultural Appropriation

Minoritized communities are often exposed to a variety of culturally appropriative actions that exploit their cultural products, expressions, and symbols (Keene et al., 2024). The intergroup oppression that results from such acts can threaten their psychological health and collective well-being (Keene et al., 2024; Davis-Delano et al., 2023; Fryberg et al., 2008).

Cultural appropriation is structurally and psychologically connected to colonialism (Mosley, 2025a), as it mirrors processes of chattel slavery, land theft, and racial capitalism (Coombe, 1993; Davis-Delano et al., 2024; Keene et al., 2024; Riley & Carpenter, 2016; Tarlow, 2025). Racial capitalism is defined as the accumulation and production of wealth for dominant group members through exploitation, dispossession, and displacement of Black and racially subordinated groups, making racism material and rewarding for White people (Robinson, 2000). Within this racialized economy, white epistemologies and ways of understanding are prioritized (Bryant-Davis & Moore-Lobban, 2020; Feagin, 2020), and profit is associated with racialized trauma for source communities (Liu et al., 2023). Racism, specifically anti-Black racism, was monetized via chattel slavery, and helped to legitimize and stabilize the development and operation of white capitalism in America today.

Many individuals view such acts as harmful and immoral (Mosley & Solomon, 2026), particularly when dominant group members are taking from minoritized cultures (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). However, as such acts can be viewed as a wrongdoing with ingroup moral culpability, many individuals attempt to reframe these intergroup acts through a process known as benefit finding, in which they highlight perceived positive outcomes. Cultural appropriation can manifest as a racialized form of objectification that contributes to the dehumanization and fetishization of minoritized source community members by reducing them to their externality, aesthetics, and stereotyped tropes (Mosley, 2025b). Moreover, cultural appropriation can serve as a microaggression by creating a hostile and stigmatizing climate for minoritized group members (Keene et al., 2024; Kraus et al., 2019; Mosley, 2024). Cultural appropriation is associated with increased levels of prejudice and stereotyping (Burkley et al., 2017; Kraus et al., 2019) and reduced support for minoritized source community rights (Davis-Delano et al., 2020,

2023). Experimental work also shows that cultural appropriation threatens source community members' distinctiveness and collective meaning systems (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). Exposure to cultural appropriation also reduces how much possibility they see for themselves in the future and how much faith they have in their collective communities (Fryberg et al., 2008).

Indeed, evaluations of harm are a key mechanism underlying people's perceptions of cultural appropriation (Mosley et al., 2024), as well as how immoral they judge appropriators to be (Mosley & Solomon, 2026). Nevertheless, dominant and minoritized groups disagree about the extent that they see such acts as causing harm where dominant group members often downplay negative implications (Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley et al., 2023). Many dominant group members often defend cultural appropriation, ignore minoritized concerns about it, and continue to engage in culturally appropriative actions (Davis-Delano, 2007; Riley & Carpenter, 2016). In fact, what minoritized groups often label as "appropriative", dominant groups often label as "celebratory" (Mosley & Biernat, 2025). Given the harmful nature of cultural appropriation, and the negative effects that it can have for intergroup relations (Mosley & Biernat, 2021), it is imperative to determine the mechanisms underlying how people think about the implications of such actions.

One reason for intergroup disagreement about the nature of cultural appropriation is differential attributions of actor intent, where White perceivers attribute more positive intent in the actions of appropriators compared to Black perceivers—particularly in ambiguous cases that allow them to explain away malicious intent (Mosley, 2024). Another way White Americans justify cultural appropriation is by asserting their right to collective freedom to engage with outgroup cultural products as they wish, evaluating such acts as even more ethical when their freedom has been threatened (Mosley, 2025a). Moreover, to the extent perceivers endorse

colorblind racism (beliefs about not seeing race), they are more likely to deny inequality associated with cultural appropriation (Mosley et al., 2023). While experimental psychology has identified a series of important mechanisms underlying intergroup differences in perceptions of cultural appropriation, there remains a gap in the literature that details whether dominant group members derive positive implications from culturally appropriative actions, and how such conceptualizations influence nationalistic sentiment. Extending this line of work, we sought to investigate how benefit finding facilitates nationalism among White perceivers when prompted to think about the consequences of cultural appropriation.

Benefit Finding, Meaning Making, and Nationalistic Sentiment

Some dominant group members may justify culturally appropriative behaviors and appraise such acts as positive by engaging in psychological meaning making. The process of benefit finding allows individuals to make meaning of events by focusing on the future-oriented implications of a negative event (Mosley & Branscombe, 2021). This cognitive reframing allows individuals to derive meaning from morally ambiguous or unjust acts, particularly when they stand to benefit. While cultural appropriation is associated with harm by minoritized source community members, dominant group members may be more likely to consider how the broader nationalist group can gain advantages from such actions (Mosley, 2025a). Indeed, focusing on how the appropriator benefits reduces judgments of harm by allowing perceivers to engage in a “cost-benefit” analysis (Mosley et al., 2024). As dominant group members (i.e., White Americans) occupy a privileged sociopolitical position that allows them to possess greater resources, power, and dominance relative to subordinated outgroups (Blumer, 1958; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996), historically and structurally, they have the most to gain from cultural appropriation (Tarlow, 2025).

Recent research by Duker and colleagues (2023) provides important context for understanding the emotional and cognitive strategies people use when confronting discrimination related events. While self-distanced reappraisal has been shown to help individuals regulate emotions following negative interpersonal experiences, Duker et al. (2022) found that engaging in positive appraisal, reflecting on the experience to focus on potential growth or positive meaning, was more effective in reducing negative affect. Drawing from this insight, we propose that dominant group members may similarly engage in positive reappraisal when encountering cultural appropriation, particularly when they are asked to consider the consequences or implications of such acts. Instead of reckoning with the harm, they may focus on the “good” that emerges (e.g., national enrichment). This may serve not only to protect the ingroup’s moral image, but also to bolster a sense of national pride, especially when cultural appropriation is viewed as strengthening national identity. In this way, benefit finding may operate as a psychological mechanism of meaning making and moral rationalization, particularly for White Americans whose racial identity is historically and structurally intertwined with national narratives of dominance and entitlement (Devos & Banaji, 2005).

Engaging in benefit finding can restore beliefs in justice and allow observers to engage in meaning making regarding stressful events (Branscombe et al., 2015; Lerner, 1980). For example, when reading about the tragedy of others, observers who engage in benefit finding on behalf of targets expect them to be better people because of overcoming past injustice (Warner & Branscombe, 2011). Other work shows that observers who are primed with a justice threat (versus control) are more likely to believe that the victim of misfortune has gained a more meaningful life (Anderson et al., 2010; Warner & Branscombe, 2012). Moreover, people are more likely to believe that a victim of abuse is more ethical and kind than someone who was not

a victim (Warner et al., 2011). Such findings are in line with just world theory that proposes that observers make meaning of injustice by perceiving that something bad will later be redeemed with something positive (Lerner, 1980). Thus, dominant group members may construe acts of cultural appropriation as being a “net positive” to downplay potential harms while deriving benefits as a mechanism of intergroup redemption (McAdams, 2004; McAdams et al., 2001).

While benefit finding is typically seen as a coping mechanism for adversity, in this context, it may serve to justify behaviors of cultural appropriation and help to bolster collective self-image. From this perspective, benefit finding serves not only to justify intergroup harm, but also to reinforce nationalistic sentiment. Nationalism, defined as strong identification with one’s own country—emphasizing superiority, pride, and unity—can sometimes involve the exclusion or devaluation of minoritized or immigrant groups (Ho et al., 2012). Nationalism can lead to a focus on national culture, which can result in the marginalization or erasure of subordinated groups and their culture (Woods, 2016). Cultural appropriation, when framed positively, can become a tool for nationalism, allowing dominant group members to claim ownership over diverse cultural elements, thereby enhancing the perceived richness, power, and distinctiveness of their national identity (Coombe, 1998; Deloria, 1998; Rios & Mackey, 2022).

Outgroup cultural use can be framed as beneficial in multiple ways, including increased cultural awareness (West et al., 2024), higher creativity (Leung et al., 2008), and greater aesthetic appreciation (Finkelstein & Rios, 2022). It can make the actor feel hip, cool, or confident, gaining proximity to novelty by appropriating from Blackness (Rodriguez, 2006). Other benefits associated with cultural appropriation for dominant group members include gained financial profit (e.g., Root, 1996; Tarlow, 2025), enhanced spirituality and increased association with nature (Deloria, 1998; Koffman, 2018), increased masculine toughness

(Barbour, 2016; Davis, 1993), increased celebration of U.S. colonial history (Davis, 1993; Green, 1988), and an increased sense of Whiteness (Bruyneel, 2021).

Moreover, scholars have argued that cultural appropriation can be instrumental in the constitution of national identities (Coombe, 1998; Deloria, 1998). Through the consumption of minoritized cultural products, expressions, and symbols, dominant group members can reconstruct American culture as broader, more powerful, and superior (Woodard, 2014). Historical and modern examples illustrate this point. Soul food, rooted in Black culture, is often relabeled as “southern” and celebrated as American heritage, obscuring its origins. Similarly, hip-hop music, born from Black resistance and creativity, has been commodified by record company owners and White consumers and embraced as a national symbol. These acts of rebranding can erase the source community’s contributions while simultaneously reinforcing national pride (Rodriquez, 2006).

Empirical work also links nationalism and cultural appropriation. In a study investigating White Americans’ support for cultural appropriation, Davis-Delano et al. (2024) found that endorsement of nationalism was associated with greater support for cultural appropriation (i.e., Native American mascots), an association mediated by glorification of U.S. colonialism. These findings suggest that nationalism, colonial glorification, and support for cultural appropriation are empirically linked, with broader implications for understanding how meaning making can be shaped by racial identity.

The Moderating Role of White Racial Identification

For White Americans, nationalism is often constructed in tandem with their racial identity. Hegemonic patriotism (e.g., White male dominance and superiority; Liu, 2017) is associated with meritocracy, conservatism, masculinity, and racism. Indeed, White Americans

are more likely to endorse nationalistic sentiment than Black Americans (Harlow & Dundes, 2004; Sidanius et al., 1997). In many contexts, national identity has been historically constructed with racialized narratives that link Whiteness to a dominant cultural and national status (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Whiteness is viewed as the prototypical representation of American identity to which all other racialized groups must assimilate (Feagin, 2020; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus et al., 2003; Wenzel et al., 2007). Moreover, white supremacy involves the emergence of a socially constructed and institutionally embedded racial hierarchy that preserves white physical, cultural, intellectual, and moral superiority (Liu et al., 2021) and is tied to nationalism, as well as feelings of ambivalence towards a changing and increasingly diverse America (Reyna et al., 2022). On this note, narratives of national greatness contribute to feelings of superiority and entitlement for White Americans who see American identity as synonymous with White identity (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Indeed, one rationale for White nationalism is that the United States is inherently a White nation (Hage, 2012; Harris, 1993; 2015), thereby facilitating beliefs that White people have rights of ownership over the United States (National Alliance, 2020; Smeekes et al., 2015).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that when White individuals identify strongly with their racial group, they will be more likely to see national cultural practices and symbols as tied to their racial group's power and identity. This can enhance their sense of ingroup pride and promote nationalism, as the dominance of their racial group is viewed as central to the national identity (Reyna et al., 2022). Cultural appropriation, when framed as benefiting the nation, may be particularly salient for White individuals because it can be seen as a way of asserting the nation's cultural superiority, allowing for greater personal pride (Tajfel, 1982). The positive implications of appropriation (e.g., the enrichment of national identity,

showcasing the power of the nation in global cultural exchanges) may reinforce nationalistic tendencies for White people, particularly when they perceive it as aligned with their identity.

For individuals with strong White racial identification, focusing on the benefits of cultural appropriation may reinforce beliefs of national ingroup glorification, or beliefs that the group is superior to others and that valorize the symbols and customs of the group (Roccas et al., 2006). For example, Kurtiş et al. (2010) found that White American participants high in nationalism (versus low) were more likely to prefer framings of Thanksgiving that were positive and celebratory versus more critical and authentic narratives that highlighted historical injustice (e.g., genocide). Similarly, Salter & Adams (2016) found that White American students high in White racial identification were more likely to prefer celebration of Black history month that were positive (e.g., individual achievements) rather than representations that discussed oppression (e.g., slavery). These findings suggest that preference for engaging in minoritized cultural products can be aligned with identity relevant beliefs related to race and nationality, and goals of maintaining a positive identity.

The Current Research

We propose the following hypothesis to explain the connection between benefit finding and cultural appropriation among dominant group members:

The Nationalism Hypothesis (H1): Focusing on the benefits or positive implications of cultural appropriation (e.g., seeing it as a form of cultural exchange or as contributing to national identity) may lead individuals to feel a stronger sense of pride in their nation's cultural superiority (Studies 1 & 2).

The Racial Identification Hypothesis (H2): Focusing on cultural appropriation's benefits on nationalism will be mediated by White racial identification (Study 2).

In three experiments (two pre-registered), White participants were asked to focus on the implications (or not) when considering an act of cultural appropriation. We assessed nationalistic sentiment as our focal dependent measure, and White racial identification as a mediating variable. Study 3 builds on this by examining whether priming an abstract versus concrete construal level moderates this effect.

Chapter 2: Study 1

Study 1 investigates whether priming White American perceivers to focus on the implications of acts of cultural appropriation (vs. control) increases endorsement of nationalism (*H1*).

Method

This study adopted a 2 (Benefit Finding vs. Control) condition between subjects design. The primary dependent variable assessed was nationalistic sentiment. In this study, and in all following studies, we report how we determined the sample size, as well as all data exclusions, manipulations, and measures. All studies follow the journal article reporting standards for quantitative research in psychology (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Data analysis, code, and research materials will be available at the following Open Science Framework repository upon acceptance of the manuscript [https://osf.io/8wykg/?view_only=90cf5653823843c9970028a4339c9707]. This study's design and hypotheses were preregistered (<https://aspredicted.org/txyx-c2py.pdf>).

Participants

We determined our power analysis a priori using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) based on prior research investigating benefit finding (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). For a two-condition *t*-test, with an effect size of $d = .43$, with 80% power and .05 error probability, G*Power recommended a sample size of 172 participants.

We recruited 145 participants who identified as White American via SONA at a large undergraduate university on the West Coast. We removed 2 participants for reporting a different racial identity in the demographics section, 14 participants for not completing the study, 11 participants for not following instructions, four participants for duplicate IP addresses (first response maintained), 10 participants for reporting being distracted during the experiment, 3

participants for failing the attention check, leaving a total of 101 participants. A sensitivity analysis in G*Power demonstrated that this sample size provided adequate power to detect a main effect of benefit finding on nationalism.

The remaining 101 participants who were included in analyses ranged from 18 to 41 years old ($M = 20.30$ years, $SD = 2.62$ years). Participants self-identified gender as female (84.3%), male (14.7%), and 1% reported a different gender. All materials and procedures described below and in subsequent studies were approved by the authors' affiliated university IRB.

Design and Procedures

In both conditions, we instructed participants to read a brief passage of cultural appropriation adapted from Mosley & Biernat (2021; Study 5) about a White target engaged in outgroup cultural use. The passage described an article about an up-and-coming chef's new restaurant "Nick's Soul Food Renaissance" that specialized in "home style cooking." Participants also read a menu that featured dishes that are associated with Black culture¹.

Benefit Finding Manipulation. To induce the benefit finding manipulation, we adapted previous research manipulating benefit finding by having participants focus on the implications (versus control) of a past event (Mosley & Biernat, 2021).

Half of participants in the benefit finding condition read the following instructions: "Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts about this chef (Nick Miller) and his use of soul food (e.g., fried chicken and waffles, oxtail, black-eyed peas, crawfish jambalaya) in his restaurant. We are specifically interested in the implications that you see in retrospect for this event that you

¹ See Appendix A for exact stimuli.

just read. Write a few sentences about the potential significance, implications, or outcomes that you see as a result of this event.”

Some example responses participants noted included:

“I think he must be a good chef and owner to have articles written about him. I think this will increase his business since he was a unique spin on a classic style of food.”

“Nick Miller’s incorporation of soul food into his restaurant highlights a deep cultural resonance and an opportunity for fostering community connections through cuisine. His use of dishes like fried chicken and waffles, oxtail, and black-eyed peas reflects an appreciation for traditions rooted in African American culinary heritage,”

“This could be seen as a positive step towards promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity in the culinary world. It also has the ability to create an increased awareness and appreciation for soul food cuisine...”

The other half of participants in the control condition read the following: “Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts about this chef (Nick Miller) and his use of soul food (e.g., fried chicken and waffles, oxtail, black-eyed peas, crawfish jambalaya) in his restaurant. We are interested in your opinions about the event that you just read. Write a few sentences about this event.”

Some example responses participants noted included:

“A white chef serves soul food at his restaurant. Soul food, culturally, is primarily made by African Americans. I read that Nick has received a Michelin star for his ‘recipes’ however I hope that an African American chef with the same cuisine got some recognition as well.”

“I don’t think a white man can truly make soul food because of the historical significance of soul food and its relation to slavery. Additionally, selling soul food at prices like that is absurd and feels like it is being catered towards upper class white people, which seems more like appropriation than appreciation,”

“Most of the food options on his menu are foods I typically associate with African American cultures. It feels a bit wrong for the white chef to have such monetary gains and success when using recipes and spices from a different culture.”

Dependent Measures

We assessed *nationalistic sentiment* (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) with three items (Pratto et al., 1994): “This country must continue to lead the ‘Free World’,” “We should do anything necessary to increase the power of our country, even if it means war,” “Sometimes, it is necessary for our country to make war on other countries for their own good” ($\alpha = .72$, 95% CI [.59, .79])². Participants completed demographics and were debriefed.

Results

Scores on nationalistic sentiment were submitted to a 2 (Benefit Finding vs. Control) condition between-subjects independent *t*-test. A significant main effect revealed that participants that wrote about the implications of cultural appropriation reported greater nationalistic sentiment ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.24$) than those in the control condition ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(99) = 2.04$, $p = .044$, $d = .41$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.80].

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 demonstrates that when individuals are encouraged to focus on the positive implications of cultural appropriation, such as its perceived benefits to national culture, they experience an increase in nationalistic sentiment. Specifically, White participants who viewed cultural appropriation as contributing positively to the nation’s identity exhibited stronger identification with their country. In Study 2, we examine the psychological mechanisms underlying this relationship.

² We also assessed additional exploratory variables; see Appendix C for details.

Chapter 3: Study 2

Study 2 directly replicates and expands upon Study 1. All stimuli and procedures were identical to the first experiment. However, we shifted the experiment from an online setting to a controlled laboratory environment, thereby reducing external distractors and standardizing participant experience. We also examined White racial identification as a potential mediator.

Method

Participants

We recruited 192 participants who identified as White American via SONA to participate in a laboratory study at a large undergraduate university on the West Coast. We removed 32 participants who did not complete the study, 17 participants who reported confusion during the study, 14 participants who failed attention checks, 12 participants who reported difficulty understanding the study materials, 9 participants who did not follow instructions, four participants who identified as non-White, and three participants for other methodological issues, leaving a total of 101 participants.

The remaining 101 participants ranged from 18 to 27 years old ($M = 19.80$, $SD = 1.43$). Participants self-identified gender as female (79.2%) and male (20.8%).

Design and Procedures

All stimuli and procedures were identical to those in Study 1.

Dependent Measures

We assessed nationalistic sentiment using the same three-item scale as in Study 1. We also assessed White racial identification (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) with three items adapted from prior ingroup identification measures (Schmitt et al., 2002): “I like being White,” “I am proud of being White,” and “I value being White” ($\alpha = .83$, 95% CI [.76, .88]).

Results

We again submitted nationalistic sentiment scores to an independent samples *t*-test comparing the benefit finding and control conditions. Participants who were randomly assigned to write about the implications of cultural appropriation (i.e., the benefit finding condition) reported significantly higher levels of nationalistic sentiment ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.16$) compared to those in the control condition ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(99) = 2.13$, $p = .036$, $d = 0.42$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.82].

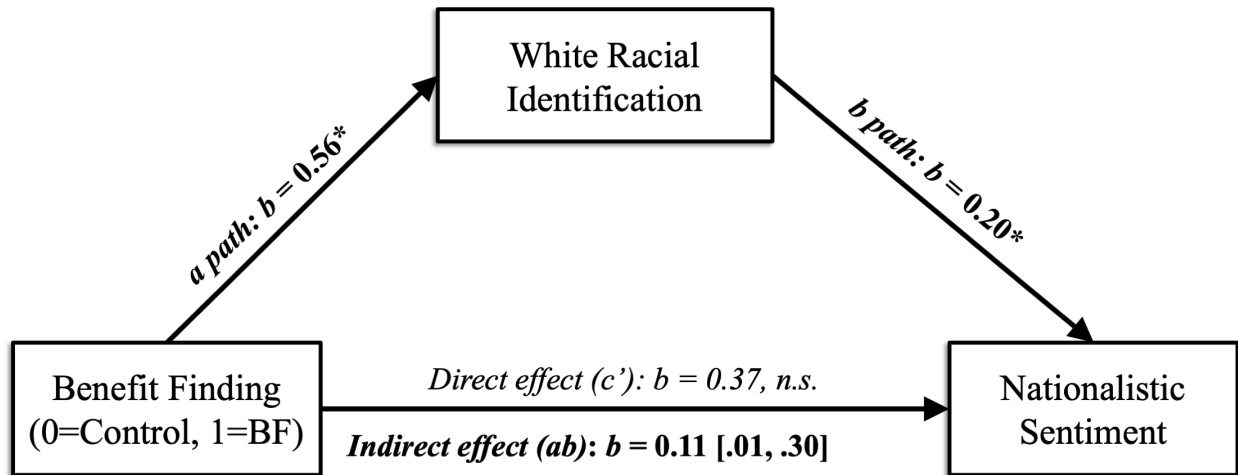
Mediation through White Racial Identification

We next tested the mediation model depicted in Figure 1 to examine whether the effect of benefit finding on nationalistic sentiment was mediated by White racial identification. We conducted a mediation analysis using the *lavaan* package for R (Rosseel, 2012), with 10,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples. We regressed nationalist sentiment on benefit finding (coded 0 = control, 1 = benefit finding), with White Racial Identification as the mediator. Results are summarized in Figure 1.

A significant indirect effect emerged, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.30], indicating that White racial identification mediated the relationship between experimental condition and nationalism. The path from benefit finding condition to White racial identification was significant (a path: $b = 0.56$, $SE = 0.25$, $p = .027$, 95% CI [0.07, 1.05]), as was the path from White racial identification to nationalistic sentiment (b path: $b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .021$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.36]). Although the total effect of experimental condition on nationalism was significant (c path: $b = 0.48$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .031$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.92]), the direct effect became non-significant when accounting for the mediator (c' path: $b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .104$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.82]).

Figure 1

Mediation Model: White Racial Identification Mediates the Effects of Benefit Finding on Nationalism



Note. Mediation model testing whether the effect of Benefit Finding condition (0 = *control*, 1 = *benefit finding*) on nationalistic sentiment operates indirectly through White racial identification. Values reflect unstandardized coefficients with bootstrap standard errors and bias-corrected 95% CIs. Bootstrap estimates were based on 10,000 resamples. Bolded paths denote statistical significance. Asterisks indicate $p < .05$.

Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 replicates the findings from Study 1, such that White perceivers who focused on the benefits of cultural appropriation (versus the control group) reported more nationalistic thinking, providing additional evidence for the *nationalism hypothesis (H1)*. Study 2 also highlights a key psychological mechanism underlying the relationship between benefit finding and nationalism, such that White racial identification significantly mediates this effect, providing evidence for the *racial identification hypothesis (H2)*. Specifically, reflecting on the implications of culturally appropriative acts enhanced perceivers' White racial identification, which

subsequently led to greater endorsement of nationalistic views, suggesting that cultural appropriation can serve to reinforce ingroup favoritism among White individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Chapter 4: Integrating Evidence Across Studies 1 and 2

Studies 1 and 2 used the same core paradigm to test whether benefit finding about cultural appropriation increases nationalistic sentiment among White Americans. In both studies, participants read about a White chef's use of soul food and were randomly assigned either to reflect on the implications of the event or to write about the event more generally. Study 1 provided initial evidence that benefit finding increased nationalistic sentiment, and Study 2 replicated this effect while also testing White racial identification as a mediator. Because the same paradigm was used in both studies, we can integrate evidence across them: an internal meta-analysis estimates the consistency of the total effect, and a study-adjusted pooled mediation model evaluates whether the mediation pattern observed in Study 2 receives converging support when estimated across the combined sample.

Internal Meta-Analysis

To assess the consistency and overall magnitude of the benefit finding effect across Studies 1 and 2, we conducted an internal meta-analysis of the condition effect on nationalistic sentiment. Internal meta-analysis is recommended as a way to synthesize evidence across studies within the same research program rather than relying only on whether individual studies do or do not reach conventional significance thresholds (Goh et al., 2016). Because Studies 1 and 2 used the same manipulation, identical materials, and the same focal outcome, this analysis provides a direct test of whether the nationalism effect was consistent across the two early studies.

The internal meta-analysis indicated a significant overall effect of benefit finding condition on nationalistic sentiment, $d = 0.42$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.70], $SE = 0.14$, $z = 2.91$, $p = .004$, $I^2 = 0\%$, with positive values indicating higher nationalistic sentiment in the benefit finding condition than in the control condition. Across Studies 1 and 2, benefit finding reliably increased nationalistic sentiment, and the effect was consistent in magnitude and direction across the online and in-lab samples. These meta-analytic findings provide converging support for the nationalism hypothesis (*H1*). Across the online and in-lab samples, White American participants who were encouraged to focus on the implications of a culturally appropriative scenario reported greater nationalistic sentiment than those in the control condition. The consistency of this effect across two same-paradigm studies strengthens the evidence that the benefit finding effect may not have been isolated to a single study context.

Study-Adjusted Pooled Mediation

Because the same White racial identification measure was collected on an exploratory basis in Study 1,³ we next asked whether the mediation pattern observed in Study 2 received converging support when estimated across the combined Study 1 and Study 2 sample. With respect to the focal model, Studies 1 and 2 were parallel implementations of the same paradigm: Both used the same two-condition benefit finding manipulation, identical soul food materials, and the same focal nationalism outcome, with the main procedural difference being administration context (online vs. in-lab). Study 3 was not included because participants completed a construal-level manipulation before the benefit finding manipulation, changing the cognitive context in which they responded to the benefit finding or control prompts.

³ White racial identification was collected on an exploratory basis in Study 1 but was not part of the primary Study 1 test, which focused on the direct effect of benefit finding on nationalistic sentiment. We therefore report the measure here as part of the pooled mediation analysis across Studies 1 and 2.

This pooled, participant-level specification parallels the logic of a one-stage individual-participant-data synthesis, in which participant-level data from related studies are analyzed simultaneously while accounting for study membership (Burke et al., 2017; Riley et al., 2010). Here, this approach yielded a more precise estimate of the indirect effect across the two samples.

Mirroring the mediation analysis reported in Study 2, we used *lavaan* (Rosseel, 2012) to fit a model in which benefit finding condition predicted nationalistic sentiment directly and indirectly through White racial identification (see Figure 2). Study membership was entered as a fixed-effect covariate in both the mediator and outcome equations, allowing us to adjust for any systematic differences between the online and in-lab samples while estimating the pooled mediation paths across the combined dataset ($N = 202$). Consistent with recommendations for testing indirect effects, we evaluated the indirect effect using 10,000 bias-corrected bootstrap resamples and 95% confidence intervals (MacKinnon et al., 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Benefit finding predicted greater White racial identification (a path: $b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.19$, $p = .050^4$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.74]). White racial identification, in turn, predicted greater nationalistic sentiment (b path: $b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.32]). A significant indirect effect again emerged (ab path: $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.19]), consistent with an indirect pathway in which benefit finding predicted greater nationalistic sentiment through increased White racial identification. In this model, the indirect effect was derived as the product of the a and b paths, and the total effect was derived as the sum of the direct and indirect effects. The total effect of experimental condition on nationalistic sentiment was significant (c path: $b = 0.48$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [0.16, 0.80]). The direct effect remained significant after accounting for the mediator (c' path: $b = 0.40$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .012$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.72]),

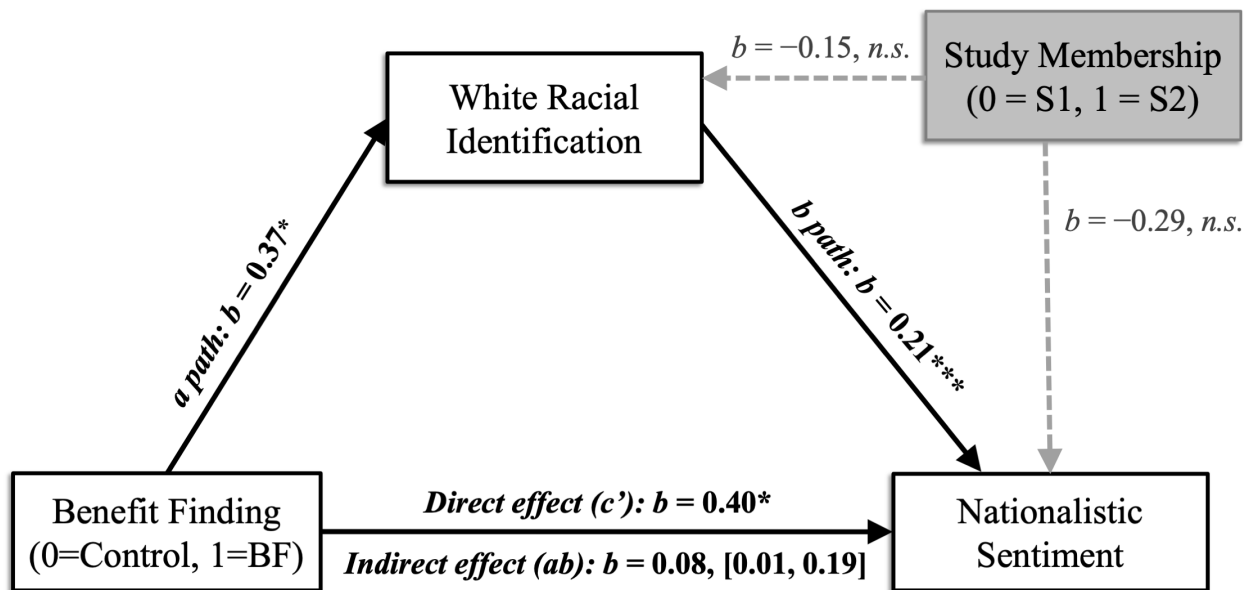
⁴ The unrounded p value was less than .050 but rounds to .050 at three decimal places.

suggesting that White racial identification partially accounted for the association between benefit finding and nationalistic sentiment.

Study membership did not significantly predict White racial identification ($b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .407$, 95% CI $[-0.52, 0.20]$) or nationalistic sentiment ($b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .071$, 95% CI $[-0.59, 0.03]$). Because this pooled analysis was not specified in our initial preregistered analysis plan, it should be interpreted as exploratory integrative follow-up analysis rather than a confirmatory test. We next examine whether the mediation *paths* themselves varied across studies.

Figure 2

Study-Adjusted Pooled Mediation Model for Studies 1 and 2



Note. Study-adjusted pooled mediation model testing whether the effect of Benefit Finding condition (0 = control, 1 = benefit finding) on nationalistic sentiment operates indirectly through White racial identification across Studies 1 and 2. Study membership was included as a fixed-effect covariate predicting both White racial identification and nationalistic sentiment (0 = Study

1, 1 = *Study 2*). Path values reflect unstandardized coefficients. The indirect effect is reported with a bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval. Bootstrap estimates were based on 10,000 resamples. Dashed gray arrows indicate study-membership covariate paths. Bolded paths denote statistical significance. Asterisks indicate $*p < .05$, $***p < .001$. *n.s.* = not significant.

Path Invariance Across Studies

To evaluate whether the pooled model obscured meaningful differences between Studies 1 and 2, we also fit a multi-group structural equation model (SEM) comparing two nested models: a free model in which the regression paths were estimated separately by study, and a constrained model in which corresponding regression paths were equality-constrained across studies. We compared the two models using a likelihood-ratio test, which is the standard approach for evaluating whether equality constraints significantly worsen model fit in nested SEMs (Kline, 2023).

Constraining the mediation regression paths to be equal across Studies 1 and 2 did *not* significantly worsen model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 1.20, p = .754$. In other words, there was no evidence that the pathway from benefit finding to White racial identification to nationalistic sentiment differed across the two studies. This strengthens our rationale for treating the study-adjusted pooled mediation model as an integrative analysis of Studies 1 and 2.

Summary

Together, Studies 1 and 2 provide converging support for our hypothesis that benefit finding about cultural appropriation increases nationalistic sentiment among White Americans. The internal meta-analysis showed a reliable total effect across the two studies. The study-adjusted pooled mediation model further indicated that benefit finding predicted greater White racial identification, which in turn predicted greater nationalistic sentiment. Finally, the multi-

group SEM found no evidence that the mediation regression paths differed across Studies 1 and 2. Overall, these findings suggest that the Study 2 mediation pattern was not isolated to a single study context, while Study 2 remains the primary study-level test of White racial identification as a mediator. Study 3 builds on this foundation by introducing construal level as an additional cognitive frame and by examining whether benefit finding affects different dimensions of nationalistic sentiment in distinct ways.

Chapter 5: Study 3

While the first two studies demonstrate consistent evidence for the nationalism hypothesis, the cognitive underpinning of this process remains to be fully explored. Construal level theory distinguishes between abstract, high-level representations that emphasize broader meanings and goals, and concrete, low-level representations that emphasize the specific details of an event (Trope & Liberman, 2010). In the context of cultural appropriation, abstract construal may create psychological distance from the concrete harms of appropriation, such as exclusion, erasure, or unequal recognition, instead directing attention toward broader symbolic ideas about American identity and national culture. In contrast, concrete construal may keep attention anchored to the specific act, the groups involved, and the immediate interpersonal or intergroup consequences of appropriation.

These effects are unlikely to be uniform. Abstract construal can lead people to rely more heavily on broad values, whereas concrete construal can make contextual details more salient. Prior work indicates that abstraction can produce both political polarization and attenuation of ideological differences depending on which values, identities, and target judgments are readily available (Alper, 2020; Chan, 2016; Luguri et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2013; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In the present context, abstract construal may facilitate connections between cultural appropriation and broad narratives about American identity and cultural exchange. In contrast, concrete construal may focus attention on the individual chef, food, and scenario-specific information. Thus, thinking under abstract construal may better enable individuals to make meaning via benefit finding, focusing on the “*why*” rather than the “*how*.”

Study 3 tests whether construal level moderates the relationship between benefit finding and nationalistic sentiment. Specifically, we examine whether abstract, relative to concrete,

construal may allow dominant-group members to distance themselves from the harms of appropriation and more readily reinterpret an appropriative act in terms of positive national meanings, such as openness and cultural exchange.

Method

Participants

We recruited 325 participants via SONA who identified as White American to participate in a laboratory study at a large undergraduate university on the West Coast. We removed six participants who reported confusion during the study, two participants who reported being under the influence, 51 participants who were coded as non-White, and one participant with a missing experimental condition value, leaving a total of 265 participants.

The remaining 265 participants ranged from 18 to 27 years old ($M = 19.80$, $SD = 1.43$). Participants self-identified their gender as female (73.3%), male (25.6%), or a different gender (0.3%). This study, design, and hypotheses were preregistered (<https://aspredicted.org/xp92wa.pdf>).⁵

Design and Procedures

All stimuli and procedures were identical to those in Studies 1 and 2, except that participants were first randomly assigned to an abstract construal or concrete construal condition. For the construal level manipulation, we adapted the widely used manipulation from Fujita et al. (2006). Participants in the abstract condition responded to a *why-focused prompt*, listing three ways that improving and maintaining social relationships could help them meet important life goals. Participants in the concrete condition responded to a *how-focused prompt*, writing three means by which they could improve and maintain social relationships.

⁵ See Appendix B for details on the preregistered six-item primary outcome and the rationale for the subscale analyses reported in the main text.

Once again, to induce the benefit finding manipulation, participants were asked to focus on the implications of a past event or to complete the control writing task (Mosley & Biernat, 2021). Participants completed demographic measures, including political orientation, and were fully debriefed.

Measures

Nationalistic Sentiment. Participants completed the six-item Nationalism scale reported by Pratto et al. (1994), which Pratto et al. described as based on Kosterman and Feshbach's (1989) measure (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .85$, 95% CI [.82, .88]). As in Studies 1 and 2, the focal cross-study outcome was nationalistic sentiment (3-item; $\alpha = .73$, 95% CI [.66, .78]). Because Study 3 had a larger sample, we also examined the structure of the full six-item nationalism scale in the Results section.

White Racial Identification. We assessed White racial identification with four items: "*I like being White*," "*I am proud of being White*," "*I value being White*," and "*Being White is a positive experience*" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .84$, 95% CI [.79, .87]).

Political Orientation. We measured political orientation with a single item ("What is your political orientation?") on a 9-point scale (1 = *strongly liberal*, 9 = *strongly conservative*). Political orientation was included as a covariate in the political-orientation-adjusted models reported below.

Benefit Finding Manipulation Check Coding. As a manipulation check of benefit finding, we assessed the qualitative content of participants' responses to the manipulation by analyzing whether benefits were discussed or not. Specifically, for this measure of benefits derived, we searched whether any of the words, phrases, or themes were present or absent within each participant's responses (0 = *absent*; 1 = *present*): "*Trying new things*," "*people of color*

becoming a more prominent group,” “creates an emotional connection to food,” “elevating foods beyond stereotypes,” “introducing them to a more refined taste,” “good for the soul,” “could provide more appreciation for groups,” “new cultural experiences,” “more restaurants serving similar food.”

Construal Level Linguistic Manipulation Check. The construal manipulation was designed to lead participants to think more abstractly or more concretely while completing a writing task. As an exploratory manipulation check, we tested whether responses to the construal task reflected this shift using two text-analysis measures: Syntax-LCM grammatical abstractness scores (Johnson-Grey et al., 2020) and LIWC-22 Linguistic Category Model verb categories, which distinguish concrete from interpretive action language (Boyd et al., 2022; Seih et al., 2017; Semin & Fiedler, 1988). We repeated both checks on the later appropriation-response text to examine whether the construal shift carried over to participants’ descriptions of the appropriation event.

Results

Analysis Strategy

Scores on the three-item cross-study nationalism outcome were submitted to a planned 2 (Construal Level: Abstract vs. Concrete) $\times$ 2 (Benefit Finding Condition: Benefit Finding vs. Control) between-subjects ANOVA. Because political orientation was meaningfully associated with nationalism outcomes, we also report the same model with political orientation included as a covariate. Table 1 displays unadjusted means and standard deviations for nationalistic sentiment, and Table 2 displays the corresponding values for the nationalism subscales. Adjusted means from the political-orientation-adjusted model are reported in the text. Confidence intervals for η^2_p are reported as 90% intervals (Lakens, 2013; Steiger, 2004).

Benefit Finding Manipulation Check

We assessed the qualitative content of participants' responses to the manipulation by analyzing a dichotomous indicator of whether participants mentioned benefits or not. A chi-square test of independence showed a significant association between benefit finding condition and qualitative benefits reported, $\chi^2(1, N = 264) = 60.50, p < .001$. More participants reported benefits in the benefit finding condition (79.1%) than in the control condition (31.5%).

Construal Level Exploratory Manipulation Check

Syntax-LCM scores indicated that participants in the abstract condition ($M = 2.18, SD = 0.41$) used more grammatically abstract language than those in the concrete condition ($M = 2.05, SD = 0.45$), $t(261.80) = 2.47, p = .014, d = 0.30, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.06, 0.55]$. LIWC-LCM classifications showed a parallel word-use pattern: concrete-condition participants used more descriptive action language, whereas abstract-condition participants used more interpretive action language, $|t|s \geq 6.78, ps < .001$. Taken together, the Syntax- and LIWC-LCM results suggest that the construal manipulation may have shaped how abstractly participants wrote during the priming task.

We next examined whether this linguistic shift carried over into participants' later responses regarding the cultural appropriation scenario. Neither the Syntax-LCM scores nor the focal LIWC-LCM classifications of the appropriation-response text differed by construal condition, $ps \geq .366$. This pattern suggests that the construal manipulation shifted how participants wrote during the priming task but did not appear to generalize to how abstractly they later wrote about the appropriation scenario. Nevertheless, construal level may have altered how participants represented or interpreted the appropriation scenario rather than changing how abstractly they wrote about it.

Nationalism (3-item): Planned 2×2 ANOVA

The planned 2×2 ANOVA showed a significant main effect of benefit finding condition on nationalism, $F(1, 261) = 5.84, p = .016, \eta^2_p = .022, 90\% \text{ CI } [.002, .060]$. Participants in the control condition ($M = 2.96, SE = .11$) endorsed significantly greater nationalistic sentiment than participants in the benefit finding condition ($M = 2.58, SE = .11$), $t(261) = 2.42, p = .016, d = 0.30, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.05, 0.54]$. Neither the main effect of construal level, $F(1, 261) = 1.38, p = .241, \eta^2_p = .005, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .030]$, nor the Construal Level $\times$ Benefit Finding Condition interaction, $F(1, 261) = 0.00, p = .962, \eta^2_p < .001, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .000]$, was significant.

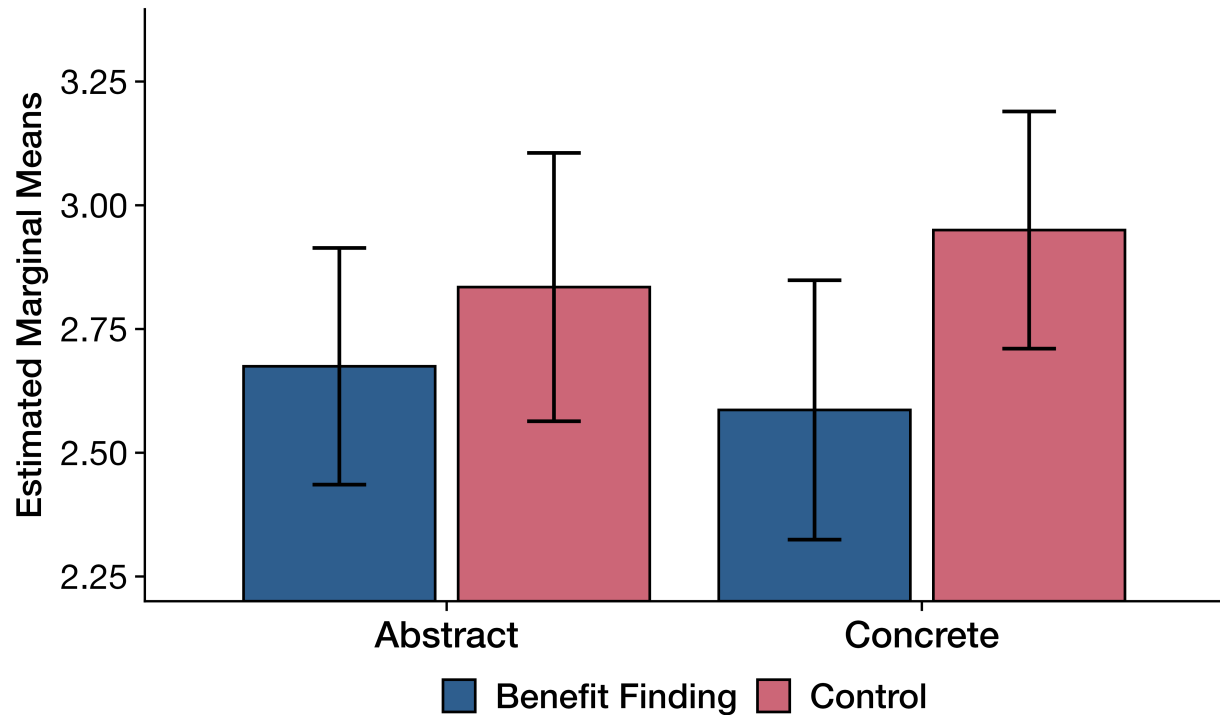
Nationalism (3-item): Political-Orientation-Adjusted ANCOVA

Political orientation was meaningfully associated with nationalistic sentiment, $F(1, 260) = 119.10, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .314, 90\% \text{ CI } [.24, .38]$. In the political-orientation-adjusted ANCOVA, benefit finding condition remained significantly associated with nationalism, $F(1, 260) = 4.15, p = .043, \eta^2_p = .016, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .050]$. Control participants ($M_{\text{adj}} = 2.89, SE = .09$) endorsed significantly greater nationalistic sentiment than did benefit finding participants ($M_{\text{adj}} = 2.63, SE = .09$), $t(260) = 2.04, p = .043, d = 0.25, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.01, 0.50]$ (see Figure 3).

Neither the main effect of construal level on nationalism, $F(1, 260) = 0.01, p = .917, \eta^2_p < .001, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .004]$, nor the Construal Level $\times$ Benefit Finding Condition interaction, $F(1, 260) = 0.63, p = .430, \eta^2_p < .001, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .020]$, was significant.

Figure 3

Estimated Marginal Means of Nationalistic Sentiment by Construal Level and Benefit Finding Condition



Note. Estimated marginal means are from the political-orientation-adjusted ANCOVA and are evaluated at the sample mean of standardized political orientation. The model yielded a significant main effect of benefit finding condition on nationalistic sentiment, $F(1, 260) = 4.15, p = .043, \eta^2_p = .016, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .050]$. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Next, to evaluate whether the relationship between construal level and nationalism varied depending on political orientation, we added a Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level term to the political-orientation-adjusted ANCOVA as an exploratory analysis. This interaction was significant, $F(1, 259) = 9.32, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .035, 90\% \text{ CI } [.008, .080]$, indicating that the

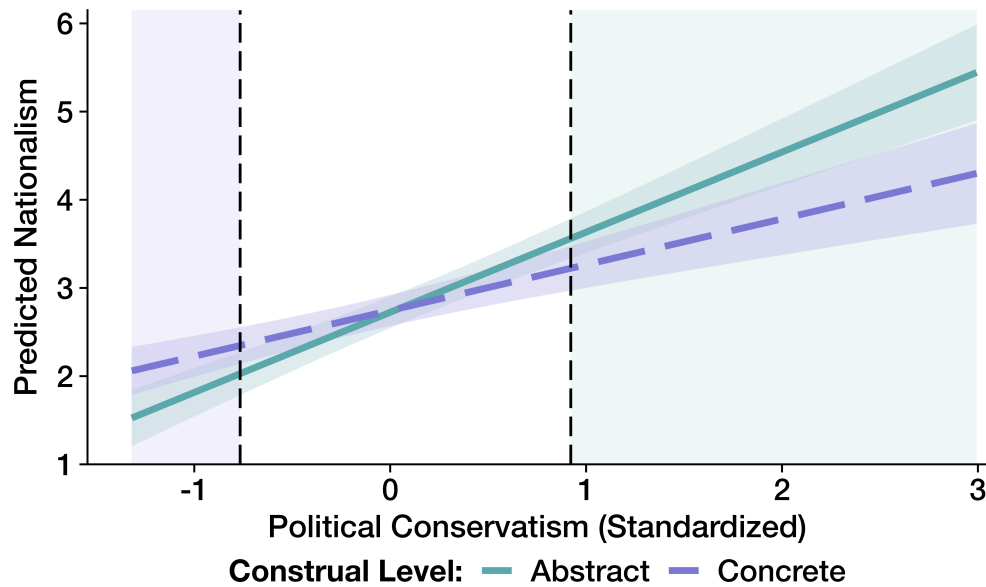
association between construal level and nationalism differed based on participants' political orientation.

To interpret this interaction, we estimated the conditional effect of construal level at low, average, and high levels of political conservatism. At low levels of political conservatism (-1 SD), participants reported lower nationalism under abstract than concrete construal, $b = -0.41$, $SE = 0.18$, $t(259) = -2.25$, $p = .025$, 95% CI $[-0.77, -0.05]$. At average levels of political conservatism, nationalism did not differ by construal level, $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.13$, $t(259) = -0.16$, $p = .871$, 95% CI $[-0.27, 0.23]$. At high levels of political conservatism ($+1$ SD), participants reported higher nationalism under abstract than concrete construal, $b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.18$, $t(259) = 2.06$, $p = .040$, 95% CI $[0.02, 0.72]$. Thus, the association between construal level and nationalism reversed depending on political orientation: more liberal participants reported higher nationalism under concrete construal, whereas more conservative participants reported higher nationalism under abstract construal.

An exploratory Johnson-Neyman probe showed the same crossover pattern across the observed political-orientation distribution, with significant construal-level differences at relatively low and relatively high levels of political conservatism but not near the center of the distribution (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Political Orientation Moderates the Association Between Construal Level and Nationalism



Note. Lines represent predicted nationalism by construal condition across standardized political conservatism. Shaded regions indicate Johnson-Neyman regions in which nationalism differed significantly between construal levels. The region on the left shows that more liberal participants endorsed greater nationalism under concrete construal; the region on the right demonstrates that more conservative participants endorsed greater nationalism under abstract construal.

Table 1

Unadjusted Means and Standard Deviations for Nationalism (3-item) by Condition in Study 3

Construal Level	Benefit Finding Condition	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Concrete	Control	73	2.86	1.16
Concrete	Benefit Finding	61	2.50	1.23
Abstract	Control	58	3.05	1.49
Abstract	Benefit Finding	73	2.67	1.14

Note. Unadjusted (raw) cell means and standard deviations are presented for Nationalism (3-item). Nationalism (3-item) = items 2, 3, and 4 from the six-item Nationalism scale reported by Pratto et al. (1994).

Factor Structure and Model Specification

The nationalism items demonstrated good internal consistency; however, internal consistency does not establish dimensionality, as a high α value can co-occur with items reflecting multiple latent constructs (McNeish, 2018; Schmitt, 1996). We therefore examined the structure of the six nationalism items using exploratory factor analysis, with maximum likelihood extraction and oblique (oblimin) rotation (Fabrigar et al., 1999; Goretzko et al., 2021; Watkins, 2018). Parallel analysis suggested a two-factor solution (Horn, 1965; Watkins, 2018). The two-factor model fit the data reasonably well, $\chi^2(4) = 8.53$, $p = .074$, RMSEA = .065, 90% CI [.000, .127], TLI = .97, BIC = -13.81, and substantially better than a one-factor model, $\chi^2(9) = 56.95$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .14, 90% CI [.11, .18], TLI = .87, BIC = 6.70, with the lower BIC (Δ BIC = 20.51) strongly favoring the two-factor solution (Kass & Raftery, 1995). The two factors were moderately correlated, $\Phi = .60$, consistent with related but distinct constructs.

These results suggest that the six-item scale may reflect two latent factors, with a loading pattern that separates items concerning American superiority and global leadership (Factor 1) from items concerning the use of war and military force to aggressively increase U.S. power and impose American interests abroad (Factor 2). The first two items loaded on Factor 1 (loadings = .93 and .65), which we interpret as *American Superiority Nationalism*. Two items loaded on Factor 2 (loadings = .54 and .88), which we interpret as *Militaristic Nationalism*. The remaining two items, concerning foreign aid for global political leverage and American global influence as inherently beneficial, showed meaningful cross-loadings on both factors and were therefore

excluded from either subscale. Because these follow-up subscales each contained only two items, they should be interpreted cautiously and as exploratory evidence of dimensional structure rather than as definitive scale-development evidence (Eisinga et al., 2013).

We next explored whether the association between political orientation and nationalistic sentiment was consistent across construal levels. Standard ANCOVA assumes homogeneity of regression slopes; that is, the covariate should relate to the outcome similarly across experimental conditions (Maxwell et al., 2018; Miller & Chapman, 2001). In this case, the homogeneity assumption was violated. In a general linear model predicting nationalistic sentiment (3-item composite), the Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level term was significant, $F(1, 257) = 8.69, p = .003, \eta^2_p = .033, 90\% \text{ CI } [.006, .080]$. We therefore specified general linear models for each subscale that allowed the political orientation slope to vary by construal level, thereby relaxing the homogeneity assumption.

Formal model comparisons indicated that adding political orientation improved fit over the planned ANOVA for every nationalism outcome, $\chi^2s \geq 77.34, ps < .001$. Adding the Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level term further improved fit over the political-orientation-adjusted ANCOVA for nationalistic sentiment, $\chi^2(1) = 9.37, p = .002$; American Superiority Nationalism, $\chi^2(1) = 4.76, p = .029$; and Militaristic Nationalism, $\chi^2(1) = 6.08, p = .014$. However, further extending the model by including the Political Orientation $\times$ Benefit Finding Condition term and the three-way interaction did not improve fit over the slope-varying models, $\chi^2s \leq 2.27, ps \geq .321$. The reduced slope-varying specification thus balances improved fit with parsimony for the exploratory analyses below (Burnham & Anderson, 2004).

Nationalism Subscale Analyses (Exploratory)

American Superiority Nationalism. A significant Construal Level $\times$ Benefit Finding Condition interaction emerged for American Superiority Nationalism, $F(1, 259) = 6.00, p = .015, \eta^2_p = .023, 90\% \text{ CI } [.002, .060]$. As shown in Figure 5, the interaction was disordinal. Specifically, under concrete construal, control participants reported numerically higher American Superiority Nationalism ($M_{\text{adj}} = 3.51, SE = 0.16$) than did benefit finding participants ($M_{\text{adj}} = 3.11, SE = 0.17$), $t(259) = 1.75, p = .081, d = 0.22, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.03, 0.46]$. Conversely, under abstract construal, the pattern reversed: benefit finding participants reported numerically higher American Superiority Nationalism ($M_{\text{adj}} = 3.44, SE = 0.16$) than did control participants ($M_{\text{adj}} = 3.04, SE = 0.18$), $t(259) = 1.71, p = .088, d = 0.21, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.03, 0.46]$. Although both contrasts were directionally consistent with the disordinal interaction pattern, neither simple contrast was significant within either construal condition.

Neither the main effect of benefit finding condition, $F(1, 259) = 0.00, p = .996, \eta^2_p < .001, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .000]$, nor the main effect of construal level, $F(1, 259) = 0.19, p = .667, \eta^2_p < .001, 90\% \text{ CI } [.000, .020]$, was significant.

Political orientation was meaningfully associated with American Superiority Nationalism, $F(1, 259) = 104.62, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .288, 90\% \text{ CI } [.21, .36]$, and the Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level term was also significant, $F(1, 259) = 4.69, p = .031, \eta^2_p = .018, 90\% \text{ CI } [.001, .050]$. Simple slopes analyses indicated that higher political conservatism was positively associated with American Superiority Nationalism under both construal conditions, but the slope was steeper under abstract construal, $b = 1.03, SE = 0.12, t(259) = 8.60, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.79, 1.27]$, than under concrete construal, $b = 0.67, SE = 0.12, t(259) = 5.81, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.44, 0.90]$. This slope contrast was significant, $b = 0.36, SE = 0.17, t(259) = 2.17, p =$

.031, 95% CI [0.03, 0.69]. In other words, political orientation more strongly predicted American Superiority Nationalism under abstract construal than under concrete construal.

Militaristic Nationalism. The slope-varying model yielded a significant main effect of benefit finding condition on Militaristic Nationalism, $F(1, 259) = 7.19, p = .008, \eta^2_p = .027$, 90% CI [.004, .070], such that control participants ($M_{adj} = 2.43, SE = 0.10$) endorsed greater Militaristic Nationalism than did benefit finding participants ($M_{adj} = 2.07, SE = 0.10$), $t(259) = 2.68, p = .008, d = 0.33$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.58]. Under concrete construal, control participants reported numerically higher Militaristic Nationalism ($M_{adj} = 2.40, SE = 0.13$) than did benefit finding participants ($M_{adj} = 2.04, SE = 0.14$), $t(259) = 1.90, p = .058, d = 0.24$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.48]. Under abstract construal, the pattern was nearly identical: control participants reported numerically higher Militaristic Nationalism ($M_{adj} = 2.47, SE = 0.15$) than did benefit finding participants ($M_{adj} = 2.11, SE = 0.13$), $t(259) = 1.89, p = .060, d = 0.24$, 95% CI [-0.01, 0.48]. Although both simple contrasts were directionally consistent with the main effect, neither was significant within either construal condition.

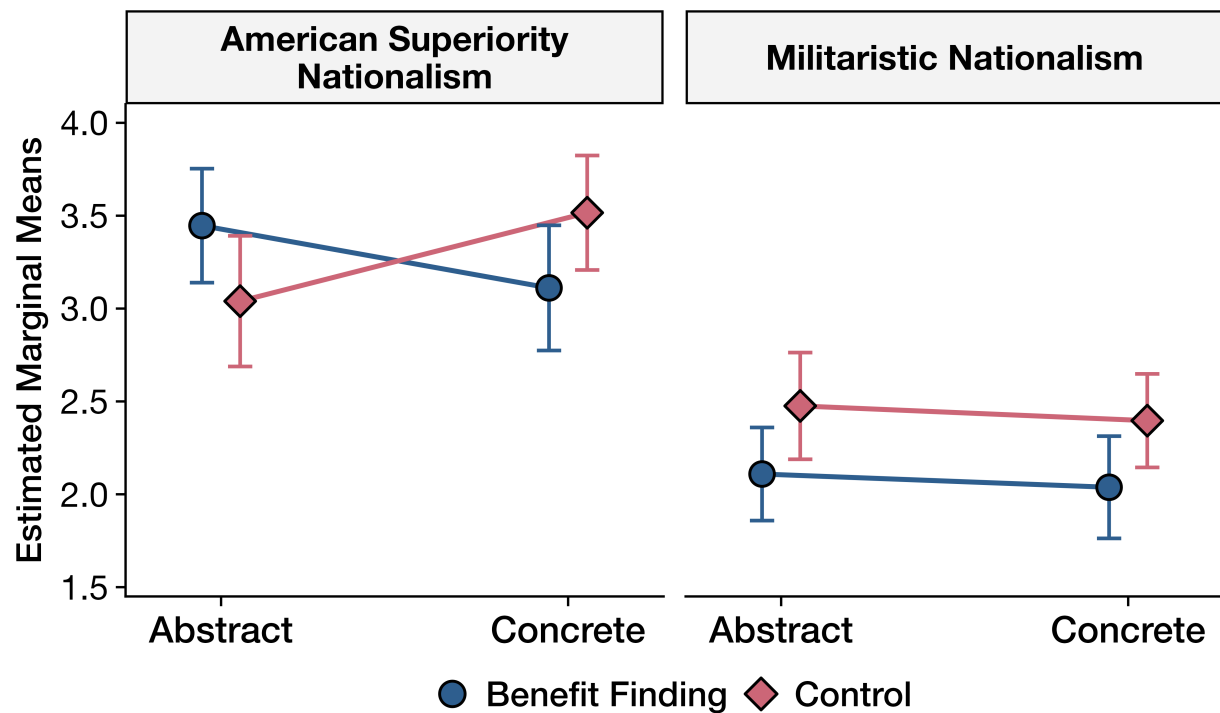
Neither the main effect of construal level, $F(1, 259) = 0.30, p = .584, \eta^2_p < .001$, 90% CI [.000, .020], nor the Construal Level $\times$ Benefit Finding Condition interaction, $F(1, 259) = 0.00, p = .976, \eta^2_p < .001$, 90% CI [.000, .000], was significant.

Political orientation was meaningfully associated with Militaristic Nationalism, $F(1, 259) = 91.47, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .261$, 90% CI [.19, .33], as was the Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level interaction, $F(1, 259) = 6.02, p = .015, \eta^2_p = .023$, 90% CI [.002, .060]. Simple slopes analyses indicated that higher political conservatism was positively associated with Militaristic Nationalism under both construal conditions, but the slope was steeper under abstract construal, $b = 0.82, SE = 0.10, t(259) = 8.34, p < .001$, 95% CI [0.62, 1.01], than under concrete construal,

$b = 0.48$, $SE = 0.09$, $t(259) = 5.13$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.30, 0.67]. This slope contrast was significant, $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(259) = 2.45$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.60]. In other words, political orientation more strongly predicted Militaristic Nationalism under abstract construal than under concrete construal.

Figure 5

Estimated Marginal Means of American Superiority and Militaristic Nationalism by Construal Level and Benefit Finding Condition



Note. Estimated marginal means for each subscale were derived from slope-varying general linear models and evaluated at the sample mean of standardized political orientation. A significant disordinal interaction emerged for American Superiority Nationalism. Under concrete construal, scores were lower in the benefit finding versus control condition, but higher in the benefit finding condition versus the control condition under abstract construal. There was a significant main effect of benefit finding condition on Militaristic Nationalism, whereby

estimated means were lower in the benefit finding condition than in the control condition across construal levels. Error bars denote 95% confidence intervals.

Table 2

Unadjusted Means and Standard Deviations for Nationalism Subscales by Condition in Study 3

Construal Level	Benefit Finding Condition	<i>n</i>	American Superiority Nationalism		Militaristic Nationalism	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Concrete	Control	73	3.43	1.48	2.34	1.19
Concrete	Benefit Finding	61	3.02	1.49	1.98	1.20
Abstract	Control	58	3.35	1.67	2.72	1.61
Abstract	Benefit Finding	73	3.44	1.67	2.10	1.07

Note. Unadjusted (raw) cell means and standard deviations are presented for each nationalism

subscale. *American Superiority Nationalism* = items 1 and 2 from the Pratto et al. (1994)

Nationalism item set; *Militaristic Nationalism* = items 3 and 4. Subscale labels are based on the Study 3 factor-analytic findings.

Study 3 Discussion

Study 3 tested whether construal level shapes the relationship between benefit finding and nationalistic sentiment and clarified the structure of the nationalism outcome variable. In this sample, the six-item Nationalism scale reported by Pratto et al. (1994)—which Pratto et al. described as based on a measure developed by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989)—separated into two factor-analytically distinct dimensions: American Superiority Nationalism, which centers identity-affirming claims about the United States’ global standing and leadership, and Militaristic Nationalism, which centers the use of military force and aggressive assertions of U.S. power. Because internal consistency does not establish dimensionality (McNeish, 2018; Schmitt, 1996), and because parallel analysis and formal model comparisons favored a two-factor solution, we first report the three-item composite as the focal nationalism outcome, consistent with Studies 1

and 2. We then turn to the factor-derived subscales to clarify the dimensionality of the nationalistic sentiment measure in Study 3.

The three-item nationalistic sentiment composite remains useful because it was measured identically across all three studies, but should not be treated as equivalent to either factor-derived subscale. The three-item composite drew on one item concerning American global leadership and two items concerning American militarism. In Studies 1 and 2, benefit finding increased composite nationalism relative to control, and this effect held across both online and in-lab samples (internal meta-analytic $d = 0.42$). In Study 3, however, control participants endorsed higher composite nationalism than did benefit-finding participants. The factor structure of the nationalism measure in Study 3 may help clarify this cross-study divergence: the three-item composite included items that appeared to map onto separable nationalism dimensions.

On American Superiority Nationalism, construal level qualified the benefit-finding effect in a disordinal crossover. That is, under concrete construal, benefit-finding participants reported numerically lower American Superiority Nationalism than did control participants. Under abstract construal, however, the pattern reversed, with benefit-finding participants reporting numerically higher American Superiority Nationalism than did control participants. Although the omnibus Construal Level $\times$ Benefit Finding interaction was reliable, neither within-construal simple comparison was statistically significant on its own. Substantively, the interaction suggests that abstract construal may have helped participants connect benefit finding about the appropriation event to broader ideas about American cultural influence and national standing, whereas concrete construal may have kept attention on the specific chef, food, and act. Thus, individuals may be better able to make meaning via benefit finding when prompted to think from an abstract cognitive style that focuses on the “why” rather than the “how.”

On Militaristic Nationalism, benefit-finding participants endorsed lower nationalism than did control participants across construal conditions. Because Studies 1 and 2 did not isolate the militaristic items as a separate subscale, we do not describe this as a cross-study reversal. Within Study 3, benefit finding about a culinary appropriation scenario did not translate into greater endorsement of war or coercive U.S. power. This pattern is theoretically interpretable: benefit-finding responses to this scenario tend to emphasize appreciation, exchange, creativity, or cultural openness—meanings that overlap more naturally with identity-affirming national superiority than with militaristic force. The war/coercion items may therefore be capturing a more specific form of national dominance than the one most directly activated by thinking about the implications and outcomes of cultural appropriation.

Study 3 therefore refines the interpretation of the earlier findings. Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that benefit finding can raise nationalistic sentiment on a broad three-item composite, and Study 2 indicated that White racial identification explained part of this effect. Study 3 suggests that these pathways may depend on which form of nationalism the measure captures and on how participants construe the appropriative act. Specifying these conditional pathways remains a priority for future work.

Study 3 also showed that construal level did not operate uniformly across the ideological spectrum. More liberal participants reported higher nationalism under concrete than abstract construal; more conservative participants showed the opposite pattern. Construal level, in other words, appears to have shaped meaning making about the appropriation scenario differently depending on political orientation. This pattern is consistent with prior construal-level research showing that abstraction can increase reliance on broad political values, but can also reduce ideological differences when fairness, multicultural inclusion, or superordinate identity is made

salient (Alper, 2020; Chan, 2016; Luguri et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2013; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In the present context, abstract construal may have made broad claims about American culture and national standing more accessible, making nationalism appear more closely tied to political worldview rather than influencing all participants in the same direction.

Two methodological points warrant comment. First, the linguistic manipulation checks showed that the construal induction shifted participants' language during the priming task itself but did not carry over into the later appropriation-response text. The Study 3 nationalism effects therefore do not reduce to a sustained shift in how abstractly participants wrote about the appropriation event. If construal level shaped the downstream responses, it most likely did so by altering how participants represented and interpreted the scenario, not by producing a generalized writing-style shift. Second, the preregistered primary analysis was a 2×2 ANOVA on the six-item nationalism outcome without a covariate. We did not preregister the political-orientation-adjusted model or the slope-varying general linear model reported in the main text. We adopted the slope-varying specification because the homogeneity-of-regression-slopes assumption underlying ANCOVA was violated in this sample, with political orientation predicting nationalism more strongly under abstract than concrete construal.

Chapter 6: General Discussion

This dissertation investigated how benefit finding—a process through which people reframe negative events by focusing on potential positive outcomes—shapes dominant group members’ perceptions of cultural appropriation and nationalistic sentiment. Across the first two experiments, the results supported the *nationalism hypothesis (H1)*: White participants who considered the implications of a White chef’s use of soul food reported higher nationalistic sentiment than did control participants. Study 2 further indicated that White racial identification mediated this effect, providing support for the *racial identification hypothesis (H2)*. Chapter 4 integrated Studies 1 and 2, showing that the benefit-finding effect held across the online and laboratory samples and that the Study 2 mediation pathway received converging support in the combined same-paradigm sample.

Study 3 extended this account by testing construal level as a boundary condition and by clarifying the dimensional structure of the nationalistic sentiment measure. To preserve comparability with Studies 1 and 2, Chapter 5 first reported the three-item nationalistic sentiment outcome and then examined the full six-item measure to assess whether the broader outcome reflected distinct dimensions. These analyses suggested that the benefit finding–nationalism link may depend on which form of nationalism is assessed. For American Superiority Nationalism, benefit finding showed a disordinal pattern across construal conditions, with lower scores under concrete construal but higher scores under abstract construal. This pattern is consistent with the possibility that abstract construal may help participants connect benefit finding about appropriation to broader ideas about American openness, cultural exchange, and distinctiveness. In contrast, benefit finding was associated with lower scores on the Militaristic Nationalism subscale regardless of construal condition. Thus, Study 3 refines the interpretation of the earlier

findings by suggesting that benefit finding may be most relevant to forms of nationalism centered on symbolic national meaning, rather than more explicitly militaristic beliefs about coercive national power.

Taken together, the findings clarify the dissertation's account of the relationship between benefit finding and nationalistic sentiment. Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that benefit finding can increase nationalistic sentiment among White Americans, and Study 2 indicated that White racial identification partially explained this effect. Study 3 helps specify this pattern by showing that benefit finding's consequences may depend on both which form of nationalism was being assessed and the cognitive frame through which participants interpret the appropriative act. In the culinary appropriation context used throughout this dissertation, benefit finding appeared most closely tied to identity-affirming narratives about American culture, openness, creativity, and distinctiveness, rather than to endorsement of militaristic force.

An important consideration for interpreting this body of work is that it focused exclusively on dominant-group members (White Americans). The prompt asking participants to consider the implications of a cultural appropriation event may operate differently depending on group membership. For White participants, considering the implications may encourage the construction of positive benefits—framings in which appropriation reflects appreciation, cross-cultural exchange, or shared creativity. For minoritized participants, who are directly affected by the appropriation, the same prompt may instead activate implications centered on harm, erasure, or exploitation. Consistent with this possibility, prior work shows that White Americans are more likely than Black Americans to attribute positive intentions to White perpetrators appropriating Black culture (Mosley, 2024). Future work should therefore examine how dominant and minoritized groups differently consider the implications of outgroup cultural use,

including when and how benefit finding may function as a meaningful psychological process for those on the receiving end of cultural appropriation.

Our work builds upon and extends benefit finding theory (Mosley & Biernat, 2021; Mosley & Branscombe, 2021) in important ways. Prior research has demonstrated that benefit finding may help people cope with adversity (Mosley & Branscombe, 2021) or make sense of others' suffering (Warner et al., 2011). However, our findings indicate that benefit finding can also serve system-justifying functions, providing collective justification for intergroup exploitation (Jost & Banaji, 1994). These system-justifying cognitive processes may confer psychological "profits" for dominant group members (e.g., greater national pride) at the expense of source communities. Extending the findings of Duker et al. (2022), our research examines how perpetrators or beneficiaries of structural harm use positive appraisal and benefit finding to manage the cognitive dissonance of intergroup harm. In this context, benefit finding may not serve restorative or reparative functions, but rather reinforce existing hierarchies by framing harm as ultimately beneficial or necessary for cultural or national advancement.

The mediating role of White racial identification provides insight into when cultural appropriation may bolster nationalism among dominant group members. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people are motivated to maintain positive group distinctiveness. Our findings suggest that benefit finding about appropriation provides one route to achieving this goal by allowing White Americans to frame cultural appropriation as appreciation or enrichment while also reinforcing racial and national identity. This aligns with work showing that Whiteness and Americanness are psychologically intertwined (Devos & Banaji, 2005), and with evidence that individuals high in nationalism prefer celebratory framings

of cultural history that align with positive group identity (Kurtiş et al., 2010; Salter & Adams, 2016).

Racial capitalism theory (Robinson, 2000) further illuminates how this meaning-making process operates within larger systems of exploitation. Robinson (2000) argued that capitalism's development was fundamentally shaped by racism, creating systems in which White wealth accumulation depends on the exploitation of racialized others. While scholars have documented the material profits from cultural appropriation (Ziff & Rao, 1997), the present findings point to simultaneous processes of psychological value extraction. By contemplating a White chef's use of Black culinary traditions, participants could derive an enhanced sense of identity and pride. Rather than simply maintaining just-world beliefs (Lerner, 1980), benefit finding may transform cultural extraction into a source of collective pride and national identity.

Taken together, these results have important implications for anti-appropriation interventions, advocacy, and education. If dominant group members can transform awareness of appropriation into sources of racial and national pride, simply increasing the visibility or salience of appropriation may be insufficient. Challenging cultural appropriation may require not only identifying harmful practices but also disrupting the psychological mechanisms that allow dominant groups to derive identity benefits from cultural extraction.

Importantly, these findings suggest that cultural appropriation is not merely a contested aesthetic or moral issue (Young, 2008), but one that is psychologically implicated in the maintenance of dominant group identity. By highlighting perceived benefits such as creativity, aesthetic value, and cultural enrichment, dominant group members may engage in a form of symbolic ingroup enhancement that contributes to broader ideological frameworks such as white nationalism and hegemonic patriotism (Reyna et al., 2022). This process may deny or minimize

harm experienced by minoritized communities while reinforcing systems of inequality rooted in colonial histories and racial capitalism (Tarlow, 2025).

The findings also contribute to theoretical discussions of intergroup meaning making. Although benefit finding has often been explored as a coping mechanism for trauma or injustice (Branscombe et al., 2015; Mosley & Branscombe, 2021), the present work shows how it may also be used to morally justify ongoing dominance and maintain positive self and group images. This challenges assumptions that benefit finding is always psychologically adaptive. Engaging in benefit finding may offer a psychologically palatable route for dominant group members to endorse nationalistic attitudes while using inclusive-sounding rhetoric about cultural exchange or diversity. In this way, benefit finding may operate alongside modern forms of colorblind racism that deny inequality while maintaining the systems that perpetuate it (Mosley et al., 2023).

Finally, the Study 3 findings speak to construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010) as it applies to cultural appropriation. Construal level theory suggests that psychological distance changes how people represent events, with concrete construal emphasizing specific details and contextual features and abstract construal emphasizing broader meaning, values, and implications. In Study 3's exploratory analyses, construal level did not uniformly moderate the effect of benefit finding on nationalism; rather, its role was dimension specific. The benefit-finding effect was qualified by construal level only for American Superiority Nationalism, the identity-affirming subscale concerning the United States' influence and global leadership. In contrast, benefit finding was associated with lower Militaristic Nationalism across construal conditions. Construal level may therefore be especially consequential when benefit finding intersects with identity-affirming forms of nationalism.

The influence of political orientation in Study 3 further supports this meaning-making account. Construal level did not shift nationalism uniformly upward or downward; instead, abstract construal appeared to make nationalism more tied to political worldview. This pattern fits prior research demonstrating that abstraction can strengthen reliance on broad political values, even as other studies show that abstraction can reduce ideological differences when fairness, multicultural inclusion, or superordinate identity is most salient (Alper, 2020; Chan, 2016; Luguri et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2013; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In this dissertation, the target judgment concerned American cultural identity and national standing after appropriation. That context may have made American superiority claims more politically meaningful rather than producing a simple main effect of abstraction.

The linguistic manipulation checks further indicated that the construal manipulation did not carry over into the language participants used to describe the appropriation event. This supports the interpretation that construal level did not operate by simply making participants write more abstractly or concretely about appropriation. Rather, if construal level shaped downstream nationalism outcomes, it likely did so by altering how participants represented the appropriative act: whether they kept attention close to the concrete act of taking from Black culinary culture, or connected the event to broader claims about cultural exchange, American identity, and national standing.

These interpretations should remain cautious. The subscale analyses were exploratory, each factor-derived subscale contained only two items, and the Political Orientation $\times$ Construal Level analyses were not preregistered. Political orientation was also measured with a single item in an undergraduate sample. Future work should test whether these patterns replicate in larger

and more politically heterogeneous samples using fuller measures of ideology, nationalism, patriotism, social dominance orientation, and perceived threat.

Limitations and Future Directions

While the present work offers novel insights into the role of benefit finding in shaping dominant group members' perceptions of cultural appropriation and nationalism, several important limitations must be acknowledged. First, all three studies relied primarily on self-report measures, which can be influenced by social desirability bias and participants' desire to present themselves in a favorable light on sensitive topics such as cultural appropriation. While anonymity was maintained, the potential for participants to underreport nationalistic attitudes remains a concern. Moreover, although our manipulation was taken from previously validated research on cultural appropriation (Mosley & Biernat, 2021), our manipulations involved hypothetical framings of cultural appropriation, rather than real world stimuli, which may limit ecological validity. Future research should incorporate behavioral measures, implicit assessments, or more natural settings (e.g., such as reactions to actual cultural appropriation events depicted in the media).

Furthermore, our studies focused exclusively on White American participants, which was appropriate given our emphasis on dominant group perspectives. However, this limits the generalizability of our findings. Future research should examine whether similar benefit finding processes are observed among minoritized groups, and how they interpret dominant group justifications. Additionally, while we focused on White racial identification generally, other intersecting identities (e.g., gender) may moderate how benefit finding relates to nationalism and cultural appropriation. On this note, while White racial identification was a key mediator in our model, we did not examine subcategories of identity (Sellers et al., 1998), such as racial

centrality, public regard, or private regard. Future work would benefit from a multi-dimensional model of identity to better understand how identity saliences interact to influence perceptions and reactions to cultural appropriation.

Second, we propose that system-justifying motivations may influence how people make meaning of appropriative acts (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Those who believe that the world is fair may face an ideological threat when presented with evidence of dominant groups profiting from outgroup cultural use while diminishing their contributions and erasing their labor. Benefit finding may therefore serve a protective function, allowing people to maintain both their privileged status and ideological commitment to societal fairness. Thus, individuals higher in system justification and belief in a just world may engage in more benefit finding to reduce cognitive dissonance and maintain a positive self-image.

Additionally, future research should address how to effectively disrupt benefit-finding processes in the context of cultural appropriation. Future work should examine how these mechanisms work together, through cognitive, motivational, and social identity processes. For instance, does exposure to narratives emphasizing harm and injustice reduce the tendency to derive national pride from cultural appropriation? Are individuals with lower levels of racial identification less susceptible to benefit finding framing? Does affirming just-world beliefs lead to reduced nationalism in a cultural appropriation context? Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective interventions that may effectively disrupt the appropriation to nationalism pathway.

Conclusion

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms by which dominant group members interpret cultural appropriation. By demonstrating that benefit

finding can bolster nationalistic sentiment at least partly through White racial identification, we highlight a pathway through which cultural domination may be maintained and legitimized. Challenging these narratives is essential for advancing intergroup equity and dismantling structures of cultural exploitation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Study 1 and 2 Stimuli

Nick's Soul Food Renaissance

The following passage and menu were presented to all participants in Studies 1 and 2. Participants in the benefit finding condition were subsequently asked to write about the implications of the event; participants in the control condition were asked to write their general thoughts about the event.

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July 25, 2019. A trendy new restaurant, Nick's Soul Food Renaissance is already being acclaimed for its popular and unique spin on cuisine such as deep-fried chicken, hushpuppies, collard greens, chitlins, and black-eyed peas. San Francisco chef Nick Miller renowned chef to celebrities, who also earned a Michelin star for his second restaurant Octaviand, just opened up a new American soul food restaurant in downtown LA that boasts of all locally sourced ingredients.



"Nick Miller is considered one of America's premier experts on modern food, and has grabbed quite a bit of media attention for his distinctive dishes," Food Critic Magazine

Foodies are flocking to get a reservation at this popular restaurant, named the neighborhoods new "Up and Coming Place to Eat in LA." The restaurant covers 4,200 square feet with an open kitchen, live-fire cooking, and room for outdoor dining. There is a full bar, lunch, brunch, and dinner menus, with occasional live music. Come check out this popular restaurant! Make sure to make reservations today!



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Nick's Soul Food Renaissance

"Specializing in Home Style Cooking"

Nick's Deep-Fried Chicken and Waffles Special
Served with brown gravy and Nick's famous spices..... 34

Country-Style Ribs with mac and cheese
Served with Rice, fried okra,
cornbread..... 32

Famous Fried Chitlins and Black-Eyed Peas

Pig Intestines and black-eyed peas served
with coleslaw..... 29

Crawfish Jambalaya

Andouille smoked sausage, seasonal vegetables,
and fresh seafood. 25

Beef Oxtail

Served with fried green tomatoes, rice, gravy..... 22



Appendix B: Study 3 Preregistration Deviation

Study 3 preregistered the six-item nationalism composite as the primary outcome. In the main text, however, we report the three-item nationalism composite used in Studies 1 and 2 as the cross-study comparison outcome and focus primarily on the factor-analytically derived nationalism subscales. This deviation was made because the six-item nationalism scale showed evidence of multidimensionality in Study 3, separating into two related but distinct dimensions: American Superiority Nationalism and Militaristic Nationalism. The subscale analyses are therefore reported as theoretically and psychometrically motivated follow-up analyses rather than as the preregistered primary model.

Appendix C: Additional Exploratory Variables from Studies 1 and 2

Appendix C reports additional exploratory variables collected in Studies 1 and 2. These measures were not part of the preregistered primary analyses and are not central to the main-text argument.

Profit From Cultural Exchange

To what extent does America as a nation profit from cultural exchange?

To what extent does America as a nation gain financially from cultural exchange?

To what extent does America as a nation increase in material wealth from cultural exchange?

Benefit Finding for Chef

This chef has learned something important from their engagement with soul food.

Because of their engagement with soul food, this chef has learned to appreciate life more.

This chef has become a more principled person as a result of their engagement with soul food.

I feel that this chef has stronger moral values because of their engagement with soul food.

Because of their engagement with soul food, I feel this chef is kinder to others.

Because of their engagement with soul food, I feel this chef is more motivated to succeed.

Because of their engagement with soul food, I feel this chef is more hardworking.

This chef has become a more creative person as a result of this experience.

This experience has made the chef more artistic.

I feel this chef is a more innovative person now because of their experience with soul food.

Benefit Finding for Society

In general, I feel that society at large can gain something important because of outgroup cultural use.

Because of outgroup cultural use, society at large will become better.

People in society can become more principled as a result of outgroup cultural use.

I feel that people in society can have stronger moral values because of outgroup cultural use.

Because of outgroup cultural use, society at large can improve.

I feel society is more innovative because of outgroup cultural use.

I feel society is more advanced because of outgroup cultural use.

I feel society is more progressive because of outgroup cultural use.

I feel intergroup relations are more positive because of outgroup cultural use.

I feel intergroup relations are more harmonious because of outgroup cultural use.

Benefit Finding for Source Community

In general, I feel that the Black community can gain something important because of this chef's engagement with soul food.

Because of this chef's engagement with soul food, the Black community will benefit.

This chef's engagement with soul food will bring honor to the Black community.

The Black community will be stronger because of this experience.

Soul food will become more popular as a result of this chef's engagement.

Zero-Sum Beliefs

More good jobs for Black people means fewer good jobs for members of other groups.

The more influence Black people have in local politics the less influence members of other groups have in local politics.

The more good housing and neighborhoods go to Black people, the fewer good houses and neighborhoods there will be for members of other groups.

Many Black people have been trying to get ahead economically at the expense of members of other groups.

Perceived Harm

This chef's actions exploit Black culture.

This chef's actions could potentially oppress other Black chefs.

This chef's actions could cause Black chefs to miss out on important opportunities.

This chef's actions of getting ahead economically occurs at the expense of other Black chefs.

This chef's actions misrepresents Black culture.

Collective Action Motivation

I am motivated to confront future anti-Black discrimination.

I feel obligated to engage in collective action to fight anti-Black discrimination.

I would do something together with other women to call attention to anti-Blackness in society.

I would participate in a protest with other people to stop anti-Black discrimination.

I would support changes in policies that advocate for Black people.

Perceived Discrimination Against Black Americans

Black people as a group have been unjustly victimized by society.

Black people as a group have been unfairly victimized because of their racial identity.

It is unfair that Black people experience racial discrimination.

Black people often miss out on important opportunities because of their racial identity.