The "Un-American" Citizen: Reimagining American Identity in a Polarized Nation

Julie Wronski
Associate Professor of Political Science
University of Mississippi

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Abstract: Consensus surrounding America's national identity is withering, generating in its stead perceptions that certain groups of citizens are un-American. While not a new phenomenon in U.S. history, un-American labels in current public opinion have assumed a more troubling form as they reflect a polarized and sorted two-party system. To understand how Americans psychologically make sense of the socially diverse and politically rancorous nation in which they live, I propose a theory of exclusionary partisan national identity wherein the landscape of 21st century American citizenry is too racially, ethnically, religiously, and ideologically dissimilar for its members to differentiate between the American "us" and the un-American "them." This diverse social landscape, on its own, is insufficient to make people view their fellow citizens as un-American. Political leaders must alert citizens that their country contains others who do not look, feel, or think like them. These conditions are satisfied in current American politics, where the two-party system and media narratives exacerbate partisan conflict and turn elections into competitions for the heart and soul of American identity. As a result, mass perceptions of who is American or un-American reflect two mutually exclusive visions of national identity, because, paradoxically, as the United States moves towards full citizenship rights and privileges, un-American labels emerge in political rhetoric and public opinion. Thus, the path to full multi-ethnic democracy is also the path to conflicting beliefs regarding who does (and does not) count as an American, including who is deserving of receiving democratic representation. More troublingly, these two conflicting paths by which citizens perceive one another as un-American are particularly dangerous to American democracy because they are aligned with the current Democratic and Republican party coalitions and values, respectively.

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Chapter 1: The Line Between American and Un-American Citizens

The Fourth of July holiday epitomizes American national community. Across the country, citizens fly the American flag, attend local parades and concerts, set off fireworks, don outfits of red, white, and blue, and embrace the nation's ideals of liberty and freedom. Politicians make speeches romanticizing America's independence. Journalists wax poetic about the machinations of young, scrappy idealists who courageously declared separation from Britain to experiment with democracy. For one day, United States citizens are not White, or African American, or Muslim American, or Christian, or LGBT, or Conservative, or Democratic, or Republican, or any other sub-national identity. They are simply Americans.

In 2022, however, the *New Yorker* magazine celebrated the 246th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with a featured cover drawing entitled "House Divided." It depicted two rowhouses adjacent to one another, each flying the American flag. The house on the left is adorned with "Black Lives Matter" and "In This House We Believe In Science" yard signs, a free little library stand, and overgrown foliage serving as a pollinator garden for bees. Its owner is lounging in a hammock facing left, wearing sandals with a bottle of wine. In contrast, the house on the right boasts "If You Enjoy Freedom Thank A Veteran" and "Back The Blue" yard signs on a well-manicured lawn, and a high-tech camera security system on the front door. Its owner is sitting on a porch swing facing right, wearing a red MAGA hat, and drinking a domestic lite beer. As the cover's artist Chris Ware explains, "Sometimes it seems the only thing that the left and right can agree on is that compromise is laughably naïve . . . Our red and blue teams can't play ball if they can't agree on whether the ball is legitimate, or whether it's legal for the players to own assault weapons."[1] This poignant image portrayed the day-to-day life of America's internal conflict, the chasm between Republican team red and Democratic team blue, and its contested definitions of who and what is American.

While Americans have always disagreed over political and cultural issues, the *New Yorker* cover portrait puts into sharp relief two *mutually exclusive* visions of America. For instance, "Back the Blue" is a countermovement to "Black Lives Matter," wherein support for "Blue Lives Matter" (i.e. police and other law enforcement officers) reflects Whites' racial prejudice in direct response to "Black Lives Matter" racial justice protests (Newman, Reny & Merolla 2023). Similarly, the juxtaposition of the science believing home with its free-flowing lawn versus the more orderly, security-system-clad home, reflects the dichotomy between fluid and fixed psychological worldviews that have proven uniquely polarizing in current American politics (Hetherington & Weiler 2018). By housing these clashing racial identities and core values in adjacent lots, the subtext of the image is clear. Residents of the left house see the resident of the right house as un-American, and vice versa. If one is American, the other must be un-American.

This book tackles how American citizens psychologically make sense of their national identity in the polarized climate depicted in the *New Yorker* magazine's cover, how the concept of American nationhood has been weaponized by Democratic and Republican elites, and how partisan divisions shape mass public beliefs that fellow citizens are un-American. In doing so, I offer a new twist on American nationalism and nativism wherein demonization of un-American outsiders turns inward and targets fellow citizens based upon their partisan affiliations. I also illuminate a more extreme form of partisan animosity that, when embraced, undermines public collective endeavors and

[1] https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cover-story/cover-story-2022-07-04

bolsters democratic backsliding. Democracy depends upon an open discussion of ideas between the parties. But when America's red and blue teams see one another as un-American, the partisan divide is so wide that discussion never begins.

Other references to a bifurcated American citizenry, and the weaponization of national identity for political gain, have emerged in the nascent years of the twenty-first century. During the 2004 presidential campaign, Democratic vice-presidential candidate John Edwards declared that "we still live in a country where there are two different Americas -- one for all of those people who have lived the American dream and don't have to worry, and another for most Americans, everybody else who struggle to make ends meet every single day."[2] Edwards' speech raised issues of economic inequality, racial segregation, and discrimination, intentionally harkening back to Martin Luther King Jr.'s "The Other America" speech from 1967, in which King detailed the plight African Americans faced in a country that did not provide them with full equality and protection under the law. In Edwards' view, issues of race, equality, and civil rights *should* be championed by all Americans, but in a country with two Americas – one privileged, one burdened – that is not the case. The "two Americas" metaphor suggests that American identity is not a consensus issue, but one that divides citizens into an us versus them. Further, Americans fighting over tangible resources produces a type of within-citizen competition that psychologists have long linked to in-group bias (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Brewer 1999, 2007), hostility (Sherif & Sherif 1954), prejudice (Sumner 1906; Allport 1954), ethnocentrism (Kinder & Kam 2010), and dehumanization (Kteily & Bruneau 2017; Martherus et al. 2021; Cassese 2021). Yet, Edwards continued to use his "two Americas" allegory throughout his political career, including during his short-lived 2008 presidential campaign, inadvertently perpetuating more exclusionary visions of American identity, where certain members of American society are outsiders, and consequently un-American.

On the 2008 campaign trail, Republican vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin extolled the virtues of America during a fundraising event in Greensboro, North Carolina. She asserted that: "the best of America is in these small towns that we get to visit, and in these wonderful little pockets of what I call the real America, being here with all of you hard working very patriotic [very] pro-America areas of this great nation."[3] The cities where Palin hosted campaign events in 2008 – "real America" – had a higher percentage of Whites compared to the national average and to the cities that Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama visited.[4] While not directly saying so, Palin implied that real America is White America. If small towns are real America, then big cities are not. By stating that certain citizens are real Americans, the converse must exist. There must be un-American citizens.

In his 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump took a similar approach when he coined the slogan "Make American Great Again" (MAGA). Trump presented himself as America's hero who would "drain the swamp" of government corruption and ensure that America starts "winning" again (Mercieca 2016a, 2016b). But Trump's rhetoric was also racist, sexist, and xenophobic (Smiley 2016; Schaffner, Macwilliams & Nteta 2018; Williamson & Gelfand 2019), and participates at Trump's rallies, including at the January 6th Capitol Attack, often wielded Confederate battle flags, right-wing militia symbols[5], and White Christian nationalism narratives (Gorski & Perry 2022; Jones 2023). It became common knowledge that "Make America Great Again" meant preserving a cultural and

[2] https://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/07/28/dems.edwards.transcript/index.html
[3] http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/10/palin-clarifies-her-pro-americ.html
[4] https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/real-america-looks-different-to-palin/
[5] https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/video/extremist-signs-symbols-capitol-riot.html

political hierarchy that benefitted White Christian men at the expense of everyone else (Olasov 2016; Shapiro 2020). As Trump condoned White Christian nationalism during his presidency and his 2020 and 2024 presidential campaigns, the divisive nature of MAGA became engrained in the public psyche. Thus, if Trump is America's savior, he acts as such by protecting loyal patriots from the nefarious, invasive forces of African Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, atheists, feminists, liberals, journalists, and Democrats that seek to destroy the country (Mercieca 2016). Importantly, Trump's named enemies were, by legal definition, American citizens. By employing MAGA rhetoric for nearly a decade, Trump perpetuates views that these individuals, despite their American citizenship, are un-American.

Democrats have responded in kind, openly deriding Donald Trump and members of the political right as un-American. For instance, in July 2019 President Trump tweeted that four progressive Democratic, non-White Congresswomen critical of his leadership – Reps. Ilhan Omar, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, and Ayanna Pressley – were not "capable of loving our country" and should "go back" to where they came from, leading attendees at his July 17, 2019, rally to chant "send her back." In response, a USA Today/Ipsos poll[6] found that 59 percent of Americans saw these tweets from Donald Trump as un-American. Similarly, as president, Joe Biden regularly[7] used the term "un-American" to describe Trump's stance on NATO[8], immigration[9], and the 2020 election[10]; state legislation curbing voting rights[11] or instating anti-LGBTQ[12] policies; and instances of hate crimes[13] past and present. For Biden and other Democrats, Trump and his Republican allies who espouse racist, sexist, xenophobic, and anti-democratic views, are un-American.

The above instances exemplify different, and oftentimes conflicting, definitions of who does and does not count as American. Combined, they highlight a withering public consensus surrounding America's national identity, generating instead perceptions that certain groups of citizens are un-American. These examples also reveal that the boundaries of American national identity vary by political party, creating two variants of un-American labels. On the political right, un-American labels target members of historically marginalized and minority groups, by suggesting, for instance, that citizens who live in urban areas, are not White or Christian, or identify with the Democratic Party are not "real Americans" or are preventing America from becoming "great" again. On the political left, un-American accusations, such as those employed by President Biden, are directed at majority groups or the Republican Party because of their resistance to multi-ethnic democracy and their desire to preserve inequitable and illiberal systems of governance. Importantly, both variants of un-American labels are motivated by group status threats endemic of a demographically changing

[6] https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/07/17/trump-tweets-poll-unamerican-offensive-partisan-divide/1748737001/

[7] According to UCSB's American Presidency Project database, 70 of the 253 presidential speeches and press releases that include the phrase "un-American" come from Biden and his administration, representing the largest share of any U.S. president on record (see https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ for details).

[8] https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/4472397-biden-campaign-highlights-trumps-shameful-nato-remarks-battleground-ad/

[9] https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/26/politics/biden-southern-border-thursday/index.html

[10] https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/06/politics/january-6-anniversary/index.html

[11] https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/26/statement-by-president-biden-on-the-attack-on-the-right-to-vote-in-georgia/

[12] https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-lgbtq-pride-month-reception

[13] See here: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-10341-day-remembrance-japanese-american-incarceration-during-world-war-ii and here: https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-black-history-month-celebration-and-exchange-with-reporters

society. On the political right, the threat encompasses a psychological loss of status, where Whites, Christians, and men are no longer the automatically privileged members of American society (Jardina 2019), while on the political left, the threat entails a reversal of the rights revolution, where women no longer have bodily autonomy, and racial minorities are subject to the discrimination and terror of the Jim Crow Era (Brownstein 2024). Both variants of un-American labels, whether overt or implied, shift citizens' psychological boundaries of their national community (Brewer 2003, Theiss-Morse 2009) – marginalizing and excluding certain groups from the American whole based upon political orientations. Thus, if America is defined as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) or a "circle of we" (Wong 2010) whose citizens are bound together by common political culture and shared beliefs (Miller 1995), then partisan-driven contestations regarding who counts as American or un-American create two Americas instead of one. Ultimately, when political elites leverage the phrase "un-American" to attack the other party's vision of America, they reinforce and exacerbate the stark, irreconcilable differences between red and blue America portrayed in the *New Yorker*'s "House Divided" July Fourth cover.

A New Way of Thinking About American Identity

Despite un-American accusations surfacing within the public sphere, they are largely absent from national public opinion polls. Given this lacuna, the first and foremost goal of the book is to establish which types of people are perceived as un-American and measure the extent to which Americans openly categorize their fellow citizens as un-American. I propose a theory of *exclusionary partisan national identity* wherein the landscape of twenty-first century American citizenry is too racially, ethnically, religiously, and ideologically dissimilar for its members to differentiate between the American "us" and the un-American "them." This diverse social landscape on its own is insufficient to make people view their fellow citizens as un-American – at least not in any meaningful or systematic way. Political leaders must instead alert citizens that their country contains others who do not look, feel, or think like them. These conditions are satisfied in current American politics, where campaigns and media narratives – from John Edwards' "two Americas" to Sarah Palin's "real America" to Donald Trump's "MAGA" to Joe Biden's "un-American" – exacerbate partisan conflict and turn elections into competitions for the heart and soul of American identity. Consequentially, the Democratic and Republican parties become mental shortcuts people use when constructing the boundaries of American national identity – relying upon their knowledge of partisan group alignments and affiliated values (i.e. freedom, equality) to establish who counts as an American and who is outcast as un-American.

To test the theory of exclusionary partisan national identity, I develop a novel survey measure that taps into citizens' explicit perceptions of various social and political groups as American or un-American. My measure builds upon extant treatments of American identity that focus on which characteristics are considered "truly" or "typically" American (e.g. Huddy and Khatib 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009; Schildkraut 2011; Wong 2010), by also asking what makes someone un-American. I expand the number groups and behaviors assessed as American or un-American by including political movements that shape political discourse (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Trump Supporters, Feminists, LGBT+ Community, people not following COVID-19 precautions) and the parties themselves. Across several unique nationally representative datasets of observational, survey, and experimental studies collected between 2016 and 2022, I ask citizens to rate various social and political groups on a spectrum from American to un-American. Throughout these studies, I find a stable percentage of Americans willing to deem a group un-American – on average 10-20%, with a range from about 0% to 50%, for any given group in any given survey. Additionally, when provided

with a slate of various groups, at least half of those surveyed classify at least one group as un-American. While these percentages are relatively low, they are nonetheless troubling because they reflect the extreme attitudes of the members of the American populace who are willing to act on their political attachments in anti-democratic and violent ways (see Hibbing 2020; Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Importantly, un-American labels are not confined to radical groups or fringe political movements. Such exclusionary views emerge when describing partisans writ large, and do so in conflicting ways that exacerbate partisan animosity, suggesting that un-American labels are a regular part of the political landscape.

Defining those who do *not* belong to the American national community provides additional information regarding the features of American identity, resulting in a more nuanced measure that better explains current political attitudes and behaviors. With this superior measure in hand, the second goal of the book is to assess the consequences of viewing groups of citizens as American or un-American for multi-ethnic democracy and national cohesion. When groups of citizens are marginalized or excluded from American society, they do not benefit fully from the rights and privileges of the United States government, nor are they assisted by their fellow citizens (Theiss-Morse 2009; Wong 2010). I thus empirically demonstrate that views of fellow citizens as un-American are related to three types of social harm, all of which threaten collective action solutions and multi-ethnic democracy in current American politics. Specifically, views of social groups as un-American underscore support for policies that curtail civil liberties and voting rights, denial of assistance to those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic, and justification of partisan political violence. Across several survey and experimental studies, I provide robust evidence that the idealized *e pluribus unum* vision of representative democracy erodes when the mass public views their fellow citizens as un-American.

While exclusive national identity boundaries are problematic for America's democratic governance, they are a natural consequence of full democracy in a multi-ethnic state such as the United States. Americans' value of democracy and our psychological need to belong to a well-defined, exclusive group are fundamentally in tension with one another, presenting one of the most vexing political and social problems of our time. Yet, shared beliefs among members of the mass public that certain groups are un-American, while concerning, are not necessarily a threat to democracy on their own. In fact, broad agreement that certain types of groups are un-American or are violating American norms can help bind members of a diverse country together. A more worrisome threat emerges when views regarding which groups are the American heroes or the un-American enemies are internally contested, unearthing deep divisions that make democracy vulnerable. It is thus the *conflict* over defining who is worthy of full, unfettered access to democracy that poses the biggest risks to America's political stability. Paradoxically, as the United States moves towards full citizenship rights and privileges, un-American labels emerge in political rhetoric and public opinion. Thus, the path to full multi-ethnic democracy is also the path to conflicting beliefs regarding who does (and does not) count as an American, including who is deserving of receiving democratic representation.

What Is Un-American?

For many, the phrase "un-American" summons images of Cold War era witch hunts and the Red Scare of communist infiltration. It invokes accounts of Senator Joseph McCarthy infamously crusading against alleged communists in the U.S. government. It recalls history lessons about the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) which was specifically created for and tasked with seeking out and removing "un-American" citizens from positions of power and public influence. McCarthyism and the HCUA equated being un-American with being a Communist, a

traitor to the United States. Un-American, to them, was someone who tried "to promote class or racial hatred, to advocate a planned economy, or to weaken constitutional checks and balances" (Davis 1971, pg. 279). Un-American meant that a United States citizen was actively promoting the Soviet cause above the American one. An un-American citizen needed to be jailed or blacklisted. As a result, McCarthyism disrupted prominent individuals' lives, rather than characterizing groups of private individuals. Ultimately, the Senate censured McCarthy, the HCUA was abolished, and the Cold War ended. Public accusations of being an un-American citizen subsided. But debates about who constitutes an American – debates that have existed since the inception of the nation – persisted.

Much ink has been spilt, spanning countless scholars and countless decades, debating who and what is American.[14] Surprisingly, little of this work has directly addressed who or what is "un-American," instead defining un-American as the counter-factual to American. From my perspective, however, being un-American is more than a counter factual. Throughout the book, I define "un-American" as the groups of individuals purposely cast outside the boundaries of American national identity. [15] If social groups rely on demarcating "us" from "them," then Americans are the "us" and un-Americans are the "them." If there is a barrier that separates those who are American from those who are not – for instance Trump's Southern Border wall – un-Americans are those persons standing on the outside looking in. Now imagine Trump's wall, but instead of it being a tangible object on the US-Mexico border, it exists in our minds. The people on the outside of our mental border wall are un-American.

Who or what is un-American may mean different things for different people. Just as being American is subjective (Huddy 2001; Huddy & Khatib 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009), being un-American is also subjective in nature. Occasionally, people use un-American labels in a literal sense, typically assigning the term to those who fail to meet the objective legal criteria of United States citizens. Calling someone like Kim Jung Un, Queen Elizabeth II, a Mexican immigrant who just entered the country, or a Scandinavian tourist visiting New York City "un-American" is neither subjective, nor controversial.[16] While these individuals are all on the outside of the mental border wall due to their legal citizenship, this is not the definition of un-American that I am concerned with.

I am instead interested in groups of individuals, who by all objective legal criteria are U.S. citizens, but are viewed as existing on the other side of the mental border wall because their words, actions, or appearance violate American ethno-cultural or civic norms. For instance, un-Americans are people belonging to certain ethnic, racial, or religious groups that deviate from the White, Christian American prototypes (i.e. people who are non-White, non-Christian, or originate from non-European countries). Un-Americans also reflect individuals who are violating ethnocultural norms

[14] Some of key historical works about the meaning of American identity include: de Tocqueville 1835; Myrdal 1944; Hartz 1995; Lipset 1996; Smith 1993, 1999; and Huntington 2004.

[15] Un-American is the term I employ throughout this book, but other terms can convey a similar sense of the "other." For my purposes, the intent of the phrase is more important that the specific words used to convey it. In this way, rhetoric that employs phrases such as: "not an American," "fake American," "not a real American," "anti-American," or "against America" all capture the same underlying construct – they are all expressing the belief that the groups and individuals labeled as such are *not* a part of the American national collective. These others are legally citizens but deemed outside the boundaries of the national community.

[16] I treat historical acknowledgments of the HUAC and McCarthyism as similar to stating that certain individuals or groups are objectively foreign nationals. Discussion of McCarthy's hunt for "un-American" citizens are not making present-day judgments about those people or their activities during the Cold War.

by not fully assimilating into American culture and holding on to their native (non-English) language and customs. In this way, an un-American classification is more than skin tone, ethnic heritage, or other ascriptive traits. They are un-American because they incorporate their non-Christian, non-European practices into American daily life and culture. They are un-American because they resist assimilation, insisting instead that American culture bend to include their languages, religions, and customs.

Un-Americans are individuals who do not possess unwavering patriotism regardless of their ethnic background or national origin (i.e. people who burn the American flag, kneel during the national anthem, or say they are not proud to be American). Un-Americans possess traits that preclude them from contributing to American society (i.e. people who are selfish, greedy, hateful, and lazy).[17] Un-Americans shirk their civic duty (i.e. people who do not vote), or embrace constructive patriotism instead of blind patriotism or nationalism (i.e. people who are critical of the military and U.S. foreign policy; see Schatz, Staub & Lavine 1999; Huddy 2022). Un-Americans endorse anti-democratic practices (i.e. limiting freedom of speech or the press, supporting restrictions on voting rights and accessibility) or undermine the rule of law through cronyism and corruption. Un-Americans nominally endorse democratic values but vote for candidates and ballot initiatives that limit civil rights and liberties.

Un-Americans prevent America from becoming an ideal nation, regardless of whether that ideal exists in the past (e.g. MAGA) or the future (e.g. Obama's Hope). Un-Americans destroy America's past glory or stymy progress towards multi-ethnic democracy. *New York Times* columnist Beverly Gage (2017) opines that "to label something 'un-American' is to imagine America as it should have been or as it might yet be but not as it ever was. Far from bringing back a meaningless insult, the revival of the charge suggests that something very big is now at stake: not only the direction of federal policy or the partisan balance of power but America's identity as a nation." In short, un-Americans undermine the American Dream.

Ultimately, un-American classifications are about *power* – who makes the rules and who is subjugated by those rules. Un-Americans are unworthy of political, legal, and economic benefits within American society. Conversely, un-Americans support power structures that promote and maintain inequality and injustice. In effect, those who deny others' political, legal, and economic rights because of their race, sexual orientation, gender, or creed are un-American and should be stripped of their power. In fights over political power, un-Americans emerge on both sides of the political aisle as they compete for incompatible visions of American society.

For example, during the 2022 Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson (KBJ), the first African-American woman appointed to the Supreme Court, the founder of the conservative-leaning organization Turning Point USA organization did not mince words when discussing his thoughts about KBJ on his YouTube broadcast.[18] Donning a baseball cap with an embroidered American flag, Kirk stated that Ketanji Brown Jackson is what America looks like on critical race theory (CRT). He went even further, warning that "your children and your

[17] Interestingly, if citizenship entails actions meant to benefit the nation (Bar-Tal & Staub 1997), it is telling that the parts of the country Sarah Palin coined as "real America" do *not* consistently give back to nation in terms of military enlistment, voter turnout, taxes to the federal government, or census response (Abascal & Centeno 2017).

[18] https://www.mediamatters.org/charlie-kirk/charlie-kirk-ketanji-brown-jackson-what-your-country-looks-critical-race-theory

grandchildren are going to have to take orders from people like her." While not explicitly using the phrase un-American, Charlie Kirk made his viewpoint clear. The juxtaposition of his ownership of the American flag with his warning that Ketanji Brown Jackson is America on CRT was stating that an African American woman on the United States Supreme Court is un-American and those that support her are un-American as well.

Democratic Senator Cory Booker also did not mince words during his questioning of Ketanji Brown Jackson. In an impassioned speech, Booker told Brown that she is a great American.[19] Reflecting on her, her family, and heroes like Harriet Tubman, he noted that "they didn't stop loving this country even though this country didn't love them back." He went even further describing the struggles of individuals from other previously marginalized groups, including the Irish, Chinese Americans, the LGBT community, suffragettes, and other African Americans, all of whom boldly faced adversity to forge an America that could live up to its ideals. Booker spoke of people who worked to make America "the land that never has been yet but yet must be the land where everyone is free." If fighting for equality and representation is American, then the likes of Charlie Kirk who gatekeep and block them out of positions of power are un-American.

Who is un-American? Is it Ketanji Brown Jackson and other women of color trying to find equal representation through America's highest echelons of political power with the support of people like Democratic Senator Cory Booker? Or is it Charlie Kirk and similar conservative voices who openly describe people like Ketanji Brown Jackson as "an embodiment of the tyranny that we currently live under?" Because un-American characterizations are in the eye of the beholder, either could be considered un-American depending upon who you ask. Thusly, there are two versions of un-American citizens: those whose actions undermine the principles of equality (like Charlie Kirk), and those whose actions undermine existing political power structures (like Ketanji Brown Jackson and Cory Booker).

These contradictory visions for America's power structure have taken center stage in recent politics, where the groups viewed as existential threats to power structures in American society – the un-American citizens – have divided and sorted themselves into the Democratic and Republican parties. The last three presidential election cycles, each with Donald Trump on the ballot, have grappled with the question of whether America should be a multi-ethnic pluralistic democracy, or if it needs to revert to a more traditional, and more exclusive, form of democratic representation (Sides, Tesler and Vavreck 2019; Drutman 2020). Trump's most ardent supporters have negatively responded to any suggestion that outsiders (e.g. non-Whites, non-Christians) could wield economic, political, or cultural power in the United States (Hibbing 2020). It is this type of reaction that Charlie Kirk had to a Black woman sitting on the nation's highest court, and a key consideration behind beliefs that the Democratic Party and its aligned groups are un-American. The counter-reaction to these fears underscores beliefs that the Republican Party and its core constituent groups are un-American. As American elections increasingly become referendum on the heart and soul of national identity, partisan and political rivals become the un-American citizens.

[19] https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/us/politics/ketanji-brown-jackson-cory-booker.html

Improving Measures of American Identity

The legal criteria for United States citizenship are clear. One must have either been born in the United States, been born to U.S. citizens abroad, or became naturalized after living in the U.S. for at least 5 years and meeting the necessary requirements.[20] For those not naturalized at birth, citizenship is essentially a loyalty pledge to the United States Constitution and the "American Creed" (Myrdal 1944; Huntington 2004; Citrin & Sears 2014). Becoming a U.S. citizen is essentially a religious conversion, involving the shedding of old beliefs in favor of a civil religion grounded in the values of democracy, individualism, liberty, equality, and property rights (Citrin & Sears 2014). American identity, from this legal definition, is intended to be inclusive. Anyone, regardless of where and to whom they were born, can be an American so long as they embrace the civil religion via the legalization process.

These objective, legal boundaries for U.S. citizenship, however, are not what individual citizens use when they think about themselves or others as fellow Americans. For one, people do not wear their citizenship on their sleeve. Second, a legal certification does not carry sufficient emotional heft to bond people together – especially when citizenship does not demand bloodline or language requirements. People bond with those who share their same hopes, dreams, fears, and struggles, with those who look, act, and think like them. This makes American identity a *social identity* that is rooted in a strong sense of shared community with their fellow compatriots (Theiss-Morse 2009; Huddy & Khatib 2007). Importantly, a shared national community is based upon the *people* within it, not its geographic borders or sovereignty (Anderson 1983; Miller 1995; Tamir 1995; Wong 2010). An American, from this perspective, is someone who considers themselves as part of this national collective. Fellow Americans are those who, in addition to possessing requisite citizenship, value the same norms and feel equally bonded to the national collective. They also possess racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic traits associated with a typical American (Devos & Banaji 2005; Theiss-Morse 2009).

Whether thinking about themselves or others, people have some ideas regarding what makes someone a good American citizen (see Goodman 2022). Specific understandings of American national identity fall into the categories of ethnic and cultural attributes, civic principles, community, and patriotism,[21] where the tension between inclusive civic criteria and exclusive ethnic criteria allows people to hold varying definitions of American identity.[22] The softer civic version of American identity is bestowed onto anyone who buys into the principles of "individualism, minimal government intervention into private life, hard work, equal opportunity, and political freedom" (Schildkraut 2014, pg. 447), while the harder ethnocultural version of American identity is only granted to people of White, Christian, European, English-speaking heritage.

The social identity approach to American identity relies upon introspection of individual citizens regarding their relationship to these ethno-cultural traits and civic principles, and their attachments

[20] https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/citizenship-and-naturalization

[21] These categories as sometimes referred to as "Americanisms" and can also include categories for nativism and national chauvinism. See Citrin et al. 1990; Citrin, Wong & Duff 2001; Citrin & Wright 2009; Wright et al. 2012; Citrin & Sears 2014; and Schildkraut 2014 for a review of the distinction between ethnocultural and civic versions of American identity and their measurement in public opinion survey research.

[22] Though these categories are not mutually exclusive, and individuals tap into both when assessing what it means to be American (Schildkraut 2007).

to the nation. Like any other social identity, people's views about their American identity are subjective (Huddy 2001) and context dependent (Wolak & Dawkins 2017).[23] This body of work measures American identity as the extent to which individuals think being American is important to them, and how well the term American describes them (Huddy & Khatib 2007), as well as through individuals' levels of patriotism, their emotional reactions to American symbols like the flag (Conover & Feldman 1987), and their commitment to America and its government (Kosterman & Feshbach 1989; Sidanius et al. 1997).

While not asked explicitly, measures of patriotism and American national attachment require boundaries that separate those who belong from those who do not. For instance, when someone decides whether they feel like a "typical" citizen, or "close" to other Americans, or "different" from most Americans (see Transue 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009; Schildkraut 2011), they need a mental image of who or what constitutes typical, other, or most Americans. According to Schildkraut (2011), American citizens use "informal boundary making that leads us to use terms such as true American, all-American, and even un-American." (pg. 6) This means that people must hold a mental image of an un-American outsider against which they can compare themselves.

Yet, extant survey research only examines gradations of one's American identity, leaving the definition of un-American ambiguous and ignored.[24] Take, for example, the work of Schildkraut (2011), who examines which characteristics are important in making someone a true American. She includes a bevy of traits that encompass ethno-cultural (e.g. being born in America, being a Christian, being White, etc.) and civic (e.g. respecting America's institutions and laws, being involved in local and national politics, etc.) definitions of America. Yet her response options only range from very important to very unimportant. If someone were to answer that "being White" is very important to making someone a true American, we cannot conclude that this person would also consider non-Whites un-American. Sentiments that one does not feel attached to America, view certain traits as a typical of true Americans, or believe that being American is important to them, all reflect an *absence* of American identity. Indeed, Theiss-Morse (2009) delineates the opposite of prototypical, true Americans as "marginalized" Americans who are not accepted as fully part of the group. Even here, marginalized Americans are still Americans – a part of the national community, just to a lesser degree.

When using these kinds of public opinion surveys, we cannot disentangle the effects of thinking about groups as lacking American characteristics from groups that are actively violating norms of American culture. The existing measures are imprecise because they focus on who belongs to the American national community, while failing to ask who the un-American outsiders are. I go a step further than previous research on American national identity by decoupling the absence of being American from actively being un-American. I do this by directly asking individuals which social groups they see as containing un-American citizens, including the groups to which they themselves belong. My approach reflects a tighter conceptualization of American identity which differentiates omitting groups from overtly identifying them as potential outsider enemies.

[23] See Huddy 2022 for a comprehensive review of national identity, patriotism, and nationalism.

[24] More recently, the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2020 pilot survey asked people to rate various social and political groups on a spectrum from "American" to "foreign," thus omitting the possibility that certain groups of legal citizens can be perceived as un-American (see https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-exploratory-testing-survey/)

Understanding who does *not* belong in the American social group is just as, if not more, important than defining who belongs, given the racially, ethnically, religiously, and ideologically diverse nature of 21st century American citizens. First, in-group love alone is insufficient to drive out-group animosity (Brewer 1999), which means commitment to a national group is not a theoretically accurate way to predict animus against fellow American citizens. Measures of explicit un-American othering are necessary to properly explain trends in anti-democratic behavior including partisan animosity (Mason 2015; Abramowitz & Webster 2018; Groenendyk 2018; Robison & Moskowitz 2019), dehumanization (Cassese 2021; Martherus et al. 2021), and political violence (Kalmoe & Mason 2022). Second, an overly diverse and inclusive group, such as the United States citizenry, cannot sufficiently demarcate between in-group and out-group members. When this occurs, the group in question will either cease to exist, or will significantly reconfigure its membership boundaries (Brewer 1991; 2003). The former is not feasible while the United States remains a single, sovereign nation. Thus, citizens must mentally tighten their boundaries of American identity to counter increasing diversity and inclusiveness, drawing these more exclusionary boundaries *within* group members. Un-American exclusion within and among a highly diverse group of citizens, therefore, becomes necessary to preserve the existence of American national identity.

Implications for Democracy

America is a nation forged out of multiple ethnicities, nationalities, and religions. For over two centuries, America has pulled off the unprecedented trick of maintaining a cohesive national identity across an increasingly diverse set of people. America has defied the wisdom of philosophers like John Stuart Mill (1861), who suggested that "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities." America accomplished this feat through forced assimilation into a shared national culture, and coined it *e pluribus unum* – the many into one.

When proposed as the nation's motto in 1776, *e pluribus unum* represented the joining of 13 unique colonies into one new country, the United States. This phrase also represented an assimilation of peoples from various national origins into a singular American people with a culture and identity distinct from its predecessors. *E pluribus unum* symbolized the American melting pot, where immigrants would strip the cultural, linguistic, and religious vestiges of their homelands to assimilate into American culture. Future waves of immigrants became expected to shed their old folkways and assume the values of the "American Creed" (Myrdal 1944; Huntington 2004). The boundaries of American national identity were thusly forged by mid-18th century men of European heritage experimenting with democratic governance. The "American Creed" – the ideals of inalienable human rights, freedom, justice, opportunity, and equality (Myrdal 1944) – became the country's new religion, language, and culture all rolled into one.

However, the American Creed and, by extension, full democratic representation was never granted to all U.S. citizens until only a few decades ago.[25] *E pluribus unum*, and the American Creed worked because it kept the "necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationalities." (John Stuart Mill, 1861) In order to participate in and reap the benefits of American democracy, one would have to shed their old national identities and assimilate into a new nationality symbolized by the American Creed. Yet, the ideals contained in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights

[25] https://www.v-dem.net/data_analysis/CountryGraph/

were never intended to apply all people living on American soil (Smith 1997). Democratic ideals thrived, despite ethnic diversity among early colonials, because there was a consensus regarding the boundaries of who belonged to the American national community. As only a handful of residents could participate in American democracy, those boundaries were exclusive enough to demarcate Americans from un-Americans. American democracy thus originated from a context of exclusion (Levitsky & Zieblatt 2018).

Groups considered outside the boundaries of American identity, most notably African American slaves and their descendants, were not granted citizenship status and were never guaranteed rights under the Constitution. Despite centuries living on American soil, African Americans were never able to fully assimilate into American culture and were always treated as lower on the social totem pole relative to new waves of immigrants who could ultimately become "White" and thus American (Hacker 2010). As a result, "the United States at its inception divided the political community by race, creating a formative right that has organized our politics ever since." (Mettler & Liberman 2020, pg. 19) Political exclusion, segregation, and discrimination on race, gender, national origin, and immigrant status has been codified for much of America's short history. Importantly, this exclusion was necessary for political stability.

Yet, the cost of this political stability was anti-democratic norms and institutions meant to exclude people who were not assimilated into American culture and identity. Since one cannot change their genetically assigned gender, skin color, or other physical features, racial, ethnic, and gender minorities could not simply assimilate their way into the American national community. They had to fight their way in. Thus emerged the paradoxical tension between American national identity and American democracy. The process of granting full participation in America's democracy to once subordinate or unequal groups fundamentally shifts the boundaries of the American national community and upends the consensus regarding who does and does not count as an American.

The path to full democratic representation and citizenship for all individuals residing on United States territory, is also the path to un-American characterizations of fellow citizens *because* granting rights shifts the boundaries of national community. Throughout America's history, exclusionary versions of American citizenship and democratic representation based on national origin came into question and were gradually replaced with more inclusive laws based on Jeffersonian ideals of equality, liberty, and freedom for all. Yet these transitions were far from smooth. Each group that gained rights – African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement, non-European immigrants through the 1965 Immigration Act, women during feminist waves of the 1970s and 80s, and the LGBT community in the gay pride movements of the early twenty-first century – was met with backlash. Such reactionary forces are a natural occurrence in countries with large subordinate groups, since their presence politically threatens dominant group members (Blumer 1958; Bobo & Hutching 1996; Citrin & Sears 2014). As dominant groups in America – Whites, Christians, men – became motivated to protect their power within society, political factions linked with grievance politics, like the Tea Party and Trump's MAGA movement, took hold of the Republican Party (Gest 2016; Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016) and wielded their influence to cast subordinate groups as un-American outsiders.

Minority groups did not remain silent in response. They had established political clout within the Democratic Party and had a champion in President Barack Obama and later Vice President Kamala Harris. They could exert their own forms of backlash against a regressive political right that included individuals like Donald Trump, his Conservative supporters, and White supremacists. Once the

Democratic and Republican parties were divided over race and racial attitudes – as they were via Obama's presidency (Tesler 2010) – they began to see each other as existential threats (Levitsky & Zieblatt 2018).

By the 2016 election, when I fielded my first national survey asking citizens which groups they considered American or un-American, the pieces were in place for both sides of the political aisle to perceive one other as fundamentally un-American, but for profoundly different reasons. Each reason aligned with a vision of the types of people American democracy should represent. Levitsky & Zieblatt (2018) warn that democratic institutions and norms are swept away in favor of authoritarianism under conditions of elevated distrust and concern that the current government is corrupt. A society that believes that their fellow citizens are un-American meets these conditions and cannot be governed. A prevalence of un-American labels in the mass public is a diagnostic warning sign, *especially* when there are conflicting views within the populace regarding who is un-American. Un-American characterizations of fellow citizens is evidence that Americans are primed to see one other as foreign enemies, only in need of a single spark to ignite the smoldering kindling.

These kinds of entrenched beliefs about un-American citizens moved political jabs into a call for action on January 6, 2021. The insurrection on the United States Capitol, and the members of Congress who were certifying the Electoral College votes that won Joseph Biden the presidency, is a natural outcome when citizens view their rival political party and its members as un-American. One of the most striking images from that fateful day featured the insurrectionists wielding the American flag as weapon to break into the United States Capitol, juxtaposing a symbol of democracy with unambiguously anti-democratic behavior. These rioters believed that they were fighting for their country by attempting to prevent Congress from conducting the peaceful transfer of power in a free and fair election. Not only did the insurrectionists see themselves as American, they saw members of Congress certifying Biden's presidential victory as un-American.

What occurred on January 6 was the transformation of rhetoric into action. Before physically attacking your internal enemy, you need to believe that they are un-American. Un-American citizens are those citizens who present a clear and present danger to American national identity. While not widespread in the mass public, it only takes a few people who deem members of a racial, religious, gender, or political groups un-American to incur dire consequences for American democracy (Kalmoe & Mason 2022). Only 10,000 people made it to the Capitol grounds, and of those, only 2,000 successfully broke into the Capitol building.[26] Yet, for a few hours, the fate of America as a democracy and a nation hung in the balance.

Viewing fellow citizens as un-American is also problematic for the process and maintenance of democratic governance. While the United States Constitution intentionally built conflict into the system of self-governance, it offered political compromise across myriad factions within the country as a solution. Yet, when those who disagree over policy preferences are not viewed as political opponents working within the same governing system, but as un-American others who do not share core values or beliefs, compromise is near impossible to achieve. Indeed, we have seen numerous recent examples of political hardball, such as the blocking of Merrick Garland's Supreme Court nomination and a sharp increase in Senate filibusters. When political rivals are viewed as un-American, governance can be taken hostage by one or both sides of the political aisle. This results in gridlock and obstruction that prevents the government from providing basic services to the people,

[26] https://abc7.com/jan-6-insurrection-us-capitol-riot/11428976/

and stymies the American Dream by perpetuating once-in-a-century high levels of economic inequality (Page & Gilens 2017).

Additionally, the four pillars of democracy – free and fair elections, the rule of law, the legitimacy of the opposition, and the integrity of rights (Mettler & Lieberman 2020) – erode when groups of citizens are considered un-American. When people view certain citizens as un-American, support for their access to the ballot and tolerance of their political speech declines. If democracy is defined as "policy responsiveness to ordinary citizens" (Page & Gillens 2017, pg 5), un-American citizens will be denied policy responsiveness despite their legal status, since they are viewed as outside of the national community and unworthy of representation. Only the voting and policy preferences of *Americans* should be honored. There cannot be political equality – an equal voice for each citizen – when the mass public believes that some citizens are un-American.

Should the United States wish to be a full democracy, its governing apparatuses must be inclusive of all citizens. Yet, the act of full inclusion in highly diverse societies dilutes the sense of shared community needed to build national consensus. Exclusion of fellow citizens becomes necessary for Americans to feel part of a shared community. Thus, the value of democracy and the psychological need to belong to a well-defined, exclusive group are fundamentally in tension with one another. Paradoxically, the more the United States moves towards full citizenship rights and privileges, the more un-American labels will emerge in political rhetoric and public opinion. The path to full multi-ethnic democracy is the path to the intractable political and social divides captured in the labeling of un-American citizens.

According to Mettler and Liberman (2020) "Democracy has been built most successfully in places where citizens share broad agreement about the boundaries of national community: who should be included as a member, and on what terms, meaning whether all should have equal status or if rights should be parceled out in different ways to different groups." Shared beliefs among members of the mass public that certain groups are un-American are not necessarily a threat to democracy on their own. In fact, broad agreement that certain types of groups are un-American, such as Nazis during WWII or Communists during the Cold War, can help bind members of a diverse country together. Formative rifts regarding who should have equal rights in America can be resolved when citizens *en masse* decide that certain groups are un-American. But when deep divisions regarding which groups are the American heroes, or the un-American enemies are internally contested, democracy becomes vulnerable. It is the *conflict* over defining who is worthy of full, unfettered access to democracy that animates perceptions of fellow citizens as un-American throughout my data.

Political scientists and practitioners keenly interested in the deleterious effects of political polarization often turn to American national identity as a potential salve for the increasingly toxic levels of partisan hostility and negative partisanship. For instance, the Strengthening Democracy Challenge (2023) found that the third most effective intervention for reducing partisan animosity highlighted that Democrats and Republicans share a common national identity as Americans, while political scientist Matthew Levendusky (2018; 2023) offers a shared American experience of patriotism, including the 4th of July holiday and the Olympics, as a means of lessening affective polarization. Yet, American identity only reduces partisan divisions and animus when the principles of Madison's Federalist no. 10 hold, where expanding the sphere of smaller factions across the United States precludes any one faction (or political party) from outnumbering the rest. But in a political system that has sorted itself into two diametrically opposing teams based upon social group identities (Mason 2018; Mason & Wronski 2018; Kane, Mason & Wronski 2021), ideology

(Levendusky 2009), racial attitudes (Tesler & Sears 2010; Griffin et al. 2021), geography (Bishop 2008; Enos 2017), and personality traits (Hetherington & Weiler 2009; 2018), there are no longer myriad smaller, cross-cutting factions. There are only two factions, team Republican and team Democratic, each a mega-identity (Mason 2018), and each claiming the mantel of American identity (Dawkins & Hanson 2023). When party elites weaponize American national identity, the effectiveness of shared national identity interventions evaporates (Levendusky 2023). When members of the Democratic and Republican parties see one another as un-American within a two-party system, invoking national identity will exacerbate rather than mend existing divides.

Mass public perceptions that members of the Democratic and Republican parties are un-American explain why losing political power now feels like losing your country,[27] and why political sectarianism and democratic backsliding are on the rise (Finkel et al. 2020). Throughout world history, countries break apart "when they fail to give ethnically diverse peoples compelling reasons to see themselves as part of the same nation." (Schlesinger, 1998, pg. 14) The data and analyses provided throughout this book depict the United States as a country dangerously close to these conditions of internal demise. There are currently two competing visions of American identity, each aligned with one of the two major political parties, and each wielded to cast the opposing political side as un-American. Without a shared common national consensus our political divides quickly escalate to heated conflict, with potentially disastrous results for the future tenability of America as a functioning democratic nation.

Plan of the Book

Explorations into American national identity, and nationalism more broadly, are far from novel pursuits. Decades of research across myriad disciplines have addressed what it means to be American and the boundaries of American national community. Yet, this work continuously fails to concretely define or measure what it means to be *un-American*. Instead, views that certain groups or individuals are un-American are treated as an outcome of individuals' patriotism, their own sense of personal identity and attachment to the nation, and which individuals they define as being members of the American in-group. Political scientist Deborah Schildkraut, for instance, discusses that the "informal boundary making that leads us to use terms such as true American, all-American, and even un-American." (2011, pg. 6) Similarly, Theiss-Morse (2009) sees un-American claims as extreme responses from individuals with tight group boundaries and strong group commitments – a dark side of nationalism where "the exclusionary nature of strong identifiers' pro-group behavior is unacceptable." (pg. 172) In both cases, un-American labels are the *result* of the psychological social identity process taken to its extreme, not a core part of the process itself.

An approach to American national identity that largely omits the role of un-American citizens is appropriate when un-American perceptions are relegated to a few fanatics from the shelves of history, such as Senator Joseph McCarthy. It is also appropriate when Americans largely agree on the contents of American identity and what makes someone un-American, with those few un-American citizens reflecting extremist sects of the population, such as White Supremacists. However, as the examples at the start of this chapter reveal, un-American labels, whether implicit or explicit, are a part of the political lexicon, are employed by mainstream candidates and pundits, and their meanings contested across party lines. This current political context necessitates a different way of thinking about national identity that integrates features of American citizens who do *not* belong to

[27] https://www.nytimes.com/2024/04/24/opinion/partisan-polarization-republicans-democrats.html

the national community. This alternative approach to national identity is imperative in a political climate where un-American rhetoric is commonly employed as an extension of partisan divisions, where symbols of American patriotism are weaponized against political opponents, and where vitriolic political polarization run so deep that members of one's out-party are viewed as existential threats to the nation's future.

My alternative approach, the exclusionary partisan national identity theory, better explains national identity in a politically divided country. This theory, as laid out in Chapter 2, synthesizes classic psychological work on social identities with recent political science research on polarization to argue that American citizens psychologically make sense of their national identity through the lens of the Democratic and Republican partisan coalitions and the associated values. I build upon the premise that legal American citizenship is too inclusive, and therefore too weak, to serve as the basis for how people decide who is part of their shared national community versus who is relegated as an un-American outsider (per Brewer 2003). As citizens are left to draw their own subjective psychological boundaries of who does and does not count as an American, they turn to their trusted political elites, media sources, and social context for guidance (per Zaller 1992; Taber & Lodge 2006).

Chapter 3 discusses how the combination of America's swiftly diversifying racial, ethnic, and religious landscape (Major et al. 2018; Gest 2022; Jardina 2019; Jones 2016), a media environment incentivized to outrage and entertain rather than inform (Berry & Sobieraj 2014; Young 2020), and a two-party system that treats elections as zero-sum, us-against-them battles for the soul of America (Drutman 2020; Sides et al 2019) creates fears that American identity is in crisis. Such group status threats and uncertainties lay at the core of tighter, more exclusionary group boundaries (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Doosje & Ellemers 1997; Brewer 2007; Hogg & Mullin 1999; Mullin & Hogg 1999), meaning that the current political climate is ripe for the manifestation of un-American perceptions of fellow citizens in the mass public. It also means that people receive *conflicting* accounts about which groups are America's internal enemies – those that the Democratic Party view as threats versus those that the Republican Party see as threats. As a result, partisan social sorting – the "increasing social homogeneity within each party, such that religious, racial, and ideological divides tend to line up along partisan lines" (Mason 2018 pg. 18)[28] – provides the mental road map people use when matching various groups with American or un-American labels.

This book demonstrates that our political institutions allow un-American perceptions to fester in the mass public in ways that are shaped by current partisan coalitions (Chapter 4). Further, when un-American labels surface, they do so in conflicting ways driven by individuals' psychological proclivities towards tighter (or looser) group boundaries (Chapter 5) and social and political groups' advocacy for (or against) full multi-ethnic democracy in the United States (Chapter 6). As a result, beliefs of fellow citizens as un-American preclude solutions to democratic backsliding, instead causing social harm by justifying fewer civil right and liberties (Chapter 7), less aid to those in emergency need (Chapter 8), and increased partisan political violence (Chapter 9). When un-American labels are directed at groups aligned with the Democratic Party, support increases for anti-democratic practices, including voter restriction and political intolerance. When Republicans and their constituent groups are viewed as un-American, erosion of social trust and denial of communal resources during times of national crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, occurs. And when un-American labels are levied at groups across the political and ideological spectrum, regardless of their partisan affiliations, they motivate political violence.

[28] See also Mason & Wronski 2018; Kane, Mason & Wronski 2021; Alher & Sood 2018

Over the course of the book, I find that views of fellow citizens as un-American both stem from and curb progress towards multi-ethnic democracy. Therefore, if the United States wants to become a multi-ethnic democracy, there must a subsequent reimagining of our country's governing institutions that will ensure all citizens are included in the national community with all its intended rights and privileges. But, to fully understand un-American labels in the present, we must first turn to the past. Thus, in the next chapter, I embark down the winding road that America's national identity has taken since its colonial origins. America's historical legacy, that simultaneously welcomed and rejected cultural diversity from immigrant groups, that both granted and denied civil rights based on race, ethnicity, religion, and gender, created two opposing visions of American national identity which are now weaponized by political elites via un-American labels.