When White Americans See “Non-Whites” as a Group:

Belief in Minority Collusion and Support for White Identity Politics

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Abstract

White Americans may find diversity threatening in part because they construe non-White Americans as a coherent social and political force. We argue that this perception manifests in a belief that minority groups collude against White people and that White people should act as a political bloc to defend ingroup interests. In a three-year longitudinal study, the belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics increased significantly among a nationally representative sample of 2,635 White Americans. Compared to White Democrats, White Republicans more strongly endorsed minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics, and increased more in these beliefs over time. Essentialist perceptions of the White ingroup were associated with longitudinal increases in minority collusion beliefs, but not in support for White identity politics. Endorsement of minority collusion and support for White identity politics both predicted lower support for Black Lives Matter and greater support for the Alt-Right movement. Implications for race relations, stigma-based solidarity, and the psychology of partisanship and ideology are discussed. [165 words]

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On January 6, 2021, a violent, nearly all-White mob stormed the U.S. Capitol in an attempt to prevent lawmakers from certifying Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election. The rioters displayed potent symbols of White supremacy, including Confederate flags and nooses, leading many commentators to suggest that the attempted insurrection was driven largely by racial grievances. Indeed, most of the rioters came to Washington from places "awash in fears that the rights of minorities and immigrants were crowding out the rights of white people in American politics and culture" (Feuer, 2021; see also Pape, 2021). Such observations resonate with scholarship tracing White people's political behavior to a sense that their social, economic, and cultural dominance is at risk (Blumer, 1958; Wetts & Willer, 2018; Willer et al., 2016).

White Americans' sense of status threat is largely rooted in the changing racial composition of the U.S. population (Abascal, 2020; Craig & Richeson, 2014a, 2014b; Enos, 2017; Outten et al., 2012). Indeed, non-Hispanic White people are more likely than ever to live near concentrated populations of non-White people (Logan & Parman, 2017) and are increasingly aware that White people are destined to become a national minority (Tavernise, 2018). These trends foster a sense of threat (Blumer, 1958) that can manifest in racial suspicion and anti-minority sentiment (Enos, 2017).

The present research identifies an important catalyst for White threat in the face of diversity: the notion that non-White groups *form a coherent social and political force*. We contend that some White people—and particularly White Republicans—are susceptible to the belief that non-White groups collude with one another to deprive White people of resources and privileges and, correspondingly, that White people should band together as a political force to protect their interests. In a nationally-representative longitudinal study of White Americans, we track the belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics from 2015 to 2018, finding growth in support for these views among White Republicans (but not White Democrats) over time. We also investigate whether minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics stem in part from essentialist perceptions of the White racial ingroup, and whether minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics predict unique variance in White Americans' sociopolitical attitudes.

White People's Sense of Threat in a Diversifying America

The U.S. Census Bureau documents an ongoing increase in the proportion of the U.S. population that is non-White (Vespa et al., 2020), and projects that non-Hispanic White people will represent a minority of the population by the year 2044 (Tavernise, 2018). More striking still, the non-Hispanic White population in the U.S. is projected to *shrink* by 19 million between 2016 and 2060 (Vespa et al., 2020); indeed, non-Hispanic White people are the only racial group whose population in the U.S. is expected to decrease in the foreseeable future.

Population change in the U.S. can induce threat among White people through both direct experience and growing awareness of the group's pending minority status. Experientially, the diversification of the American population, coupled with rising residential segregation (Logan & Parman, 2017), increasingly exposes White people to concentrated populations of racial outgroups without opportunities for meaningful intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Such exposure can threaten White people's sense of social and economic dominance and trigger anti-minority sentiment (Blalock, 1967; Enos, 2017; Fossett & Kiecolt, 1989; Giles, 1977; Giles & Buckner, 1993; Giles & Evans, 1985; Knowles & Tropp, 2018; Quillian, 1995, 1996). Moreover, even mere cognizance of their future minority status can trigger threat among White

Americans, leading them to express more prejudice (Craig & Richeson, 2014a; Outten et al., 2012), adopt more conservative political views (Craig & Richeson, 2014b; Major et al., 2018), and restrict their conception of who should be included in the White ingroup (Abascal, 2020).

Research on White threat in the face of demographic change presents something of a puzzle: In reality, there is no single "non-White" group against which White Americans are competing. Indeed, the blanket term "non-White" refers to a great many racial and ethnic categories whose social and political interests do not always align (see Okamoto & Mora, 2014). Hence, the term *non-White* conflates a heterogeneous array of social groups who often possess non-overlapping interests and agendas. Given the multiplicity of group interests at play in the U.S., and the fact that White people will remain the single largest racial interest group for decades to come (Jardina, 2019), why are so many White people feeling threatened by the prospect of diversity and population change?

Perceiving "Non-Whites" as a Bloc

We propose that current understandings of White threat in the face of diversity are missing a critical piece: the construal of non-White people as a coherent social and political force. As Richeson and Craig (2011) note, the "notion of a majority-minority nation … requires that whites think of themselves as more distinct from various racial minority groups *than they perceive such groups to be from one another*" (2011, pp. 172-173, emphasis added). Thus, the assumption that various minority groups form a meaningful "non-White" category may be a catalyst for White people's sense of demographic threat.

The entitativity literature provides a useful framework for understanding why the perception of racial outgroups as a bloc might exacerbate White people's sense of threat. Whereas some social aggregates are regarded as arbitrary collections of individuals (e.g., people standing in line at a bus stop), others are seen as forming meaningful wholes, or entities (e.g., members of a symphony orchestra). Perceivers rely on several cues when judging the entitativity of a social aggregate—with those whose members are similar, share goals, interact, and share historical ties evoking the strongest perceptions of entitativity (Blanchard et al., 2020; Lickel et al., 2001).

Perceived entitativity has important implications for intergroup attitudes. Compared to non-entitative groups, highly entitative groups tend to evoke more suspicion and prejudice (Agadullina & Lovakov, 2018; Effron & Knowles, 2015; Enos, 2017; Newheiser et al., 2012), are ascribed greater ability to organize against outsiders (Abelson et al., 1998), and are attributed more negative behaviors and traits (Dasgupta et al., 1999). In the present research, we investigate two stances likely to stem from the construal of non-White people as an entitative “group of groups”: the belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics.

Minority Collusion

Individuals perceived to comprise an entitative group may be seen both to share similar attitudes and goals and to be regarded with suspicion. We therefore suggest that, when White perceivers judge non-White groups as constituting a coherent whole, those perceivers are also likely to regard non-White people as negatively disposed toward and willing to cooperate with each other against White people. We term this stance the belief in *minority collusion*. The present study assesses this belief in terms of the impression that various non-White groups dislike White people and work together across group boundaries to deprive White people of valued resources.

White Identity Politics

White people who construe racial outgroups as forming a coherent “non-White” group may feel justified in banding together as a political bloc of their own to defend the ingroup’s interests (Effron & Knowles, 2015). White identity politics refer to White people’s tendency to make political decisions on the basis of their whiteness—for instance, choosing to vote for a political candidate because they are White and presumably have White people’s best interests at heart (see Jardina, 2019; Knowles & Marshburn, 2010). As Jardina (2019) documents, White people have grown more likely to endorse explicitly identity-oriented political thinking. We contend that this trend may in part represent a natural outgrowth of White people’s tendency to construe “non-Whites” as a group.

Proximal Precursors and Consequences of Minority Collusion and White Identity Politics

What might compel White people to see “non-White people” as a group, and thus embrace minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics? The literature on essentialism suggests that people often represent racial categories as having features of “natural kinds” (Haslam, 1998)—that is, as being biologically-based, immutable, and discretely distinguishable from one another (Demoulin et al., 2006; Haslam et al., 2006; Haslam & Levy, 2006; Prentice & Miller, 2007; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008). Essentialist beliefs allow perceivers to render the social world into clear-cut, stable categories. As such, essentialist views would cast a stark contrast between the White ingroup and racial outgroups, thereby obscuring variability among non-White outgroups (Yzerbyt et al., 2004). Given that such subjective homogeneity is a precursor of perceived entitativity (e.g., Brewer et al., 2004), essentialism may ultimately manifest in minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics.

We also surmise that the belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics might be associated with an increased tendency among White people to regard racial outgroups as threatening. Although we did not directly measure intergroup threat in the present study, our survey included measures of sociopolitical attitudes plausibly related to intergroup threat—specifically, support for the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement promoting racial justice and policing reform (*Black Lives Matter*, 2021) and the Alternative Right (Alt-Right) movement promoting White supremacy (*Alt-Right*, 2021). Whereas support for BLM likely indicates low levels of threat in the face of growing diversity, support for the Alt-Right is likely a marker of high levels of such threat.

Who Adopts Minority Collusion Beliefs?

Not all White people feel equally threatened by racial diversity and population change; moreover, not all White people construe relations with other racial groups in binary, White vs. non-White terms. Rather, we theorize that political orientation, as reflected in partisan allegiance, is a major determinant of the tendency to engage in dualistic racial thinking. Here, we propose that political conservatives and Republicans bear an "elective affinity" (Jost et al., 2009; McKinnon, 2010)—that is, a psychological match to or affordance for—rhetoric that fosters the construal of intergroup relations in terms of the White vs. non-White binary. Understanding this dynamic requires examination of both the psychology of political conservatism and the nature of contemporary right-wing rhetoric.

Psychological research has revealed differences in how conservatives and liberals typically think. In their meta-analysis of studies examining ideological differences in cognitive styles, Jost and colleagues (2003, see also 2017) found that, compared to liberals, conservatives are less likely to integrate multiple dimensions of information (Tetlock, 1983), to engage in and enjoy complex thought (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), or to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty (Budner, 1962; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). More than liberals, conservatives tend to see the world as marked by intergroup competition and threats to the social and moral order (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009, 2010; Sibley & Duckitt, 2013)—perceptions that may lead them to endorse simplistic dualities, such as “good vs. evil” and “us vs. them” (Adorno et al., 1964/1950). It stands to reason that conservatives’ tendency to eschew complexity and embrace dichotomies makes them especially prone to construing intergroup relations in White vs. non-White terms.

Those who are predisposed to see racial outgroups in monolithic terms may have an affinity for rhetoric that further reinforces this perception (Westerwick et al., 2017). In the United States, former President Donald Trump’s near-wholesale takeover of the Republican Party, along with his embrace by Fox News (the country’s most-watched news station; Peck, 2019), has lent right-wing populist ideology unprecedented prominence in political discourse. Right-wing populism tends to promote simplistic binaries organized around racial, ethnic, religious, and national axes (Sengul, 2019; Waisbord, 2018a, 2018b). Indeed, the White vs. non-White racial dichotomy at the core of Trumpian populism is made amply clear by the former president’s statements demonizing Central and South Americans immigrants as “rapists” and “bad hombres” (Ross, 2016) and referring to predominantly non-White nations as “shithole countries” (Vitali et al., 2018). Thus, the recent flood of populist rhetoric in the U.S. has likely reinforced Republicans’ view of non-White people as a monolithic and threatening entity.

Linking conservatives’ basic cognitive-motivational predispositions to the growing salience of right-wing authoritarian rhetoric allows us to make specific predictions about partisan differences in minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics. First, the tendency for political conservatives (and, by extension, Republicans) to embrace simplistic dichotomies implies that they should score higher on minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics at any given point in time. Second, the recent upsurge in rhetoric promoting racial binaries implies that conservatives and Republicans, who possess an elective affinity for and disproportionate exposure to such cues, will show greater increases in these beliefs over the last few years relative to liberals and Democrats.

The Present Research

To examine such trends in minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics, we report the results of a longitudinal panel survey of White Americans. In early 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, minority collusion beliefs, support for White identity politics, and essentialistic perceptions of the White ingroup were assessed in a nationally-representative sample of 2,635 non-Hispanic White Americans. Attitudes toward race-relevant social movements—specifically, Black Lives Matter and the Alt-Right—were assessed during the fourth and final wave. Our predictions were as follows:

1. Reflecting conservatives’ greater predilection for binary thinking, White Republicans will display a stronger *overall* belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics than will White Democrats.
2. Reflecting conservatives’ greater receptivity and exposure to right-wing authoritarian rhetoric, White Republicans will show greater *increases* in minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics over time than will White Democrats.
3. Reflecting the theorized role of racial essentialism in fostering monolithic conceptions of “White” and “non-White” people, higher initial perceptions of White ingroup essentialism will be associated with greater increases in minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics over time.
4. Reflecting the theorized consequences of minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics for intergroup threat, we expect that minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics will each predict (less) support for BLM and (greater)

support for the Alt-Right, as assessed in the fourth survey wave.

Method

Participants and Procedure

A total of 2,635 non-Hispanic White Americans were invited to participate in a four-wave longitudinal study spanning three years. Respondents were recruited from a national, probability-based panel maintained by the GfK (2013) internet research firm. Developed using random-digit dialing and address-based sampling, the panel includes respondents typically underrepresented in survey research, including those without landline telephones and internet access. Households that lack internet access are provided with a web-enabled laptop computer. Panel members complete an average of four surveys per month in return for free internet service and other incentives (e.g., cash awards and sweepstakes opportunities). Attrition rates in longitudinal studies are minimized through cash bonuses. Survey samples are drawn from the panel using weighting procedures that ensure a close match between sample demographics and U.S. population distributions for key demographic variables including age, gender, education, and income. Sample demographic and fielding dates for the four survey waves are summarized in Table 1.

Measures

Primary Longitudinal Variables

Three key constructs—minority collusion beliefs, support for White identity politics, and perceived essentialism of the White racial ingroup—were assessed at each of the four waves of the survey. For all items used to assess these constructs, responses were made on a 5-point scale anchored on the left by *strongly disagree* (-2), in the middle by *neutral/no opinion* (0), and on the right by *strongly agree* (2).

Minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics. Respondents were administered three items at each timepoint to measure belief in minority collusion, developed for the purposes of this study. The items were: "*Minorities may disagree about some things, but one thing they agree on is that they don't like White people*," "*Despite their differences, different minority groups regard White people as a common enemy*," and "*Different minority groups are willing to cooperate with each other in order to take power away from White people*."

Respondents were administered a separate set of three items at each timepoint, also developed for the purposes of this study, to assess endorsement of White identity politics. These items were: "*There is nothing wrong with a White person choosing to support a political candidate because that candidate is White*," "*Blacks, Latinos, and Asians often vote for politicians from their same racial group because that's who has their best interests in mind; Whites should not be criticized for doing the same thing*," and "*Blacks, Latinos, and Asians engage in 'identity politics,' and there's nothing wrong with Whites doing the same*."

A principal components analysis including Wave 1 minority collusion and White identity politics items and utilizing varimax rotation yielded two clearly distinguishable factors. The minority collusion items (factor loadings: .82–.91) were therefore averaged to form reliable composite measures at each wave (α = .88, .89, .91, .91). Similarly, the White identity politics items (factor loadings: .78–.84) were averaged to form reliable composites at each wave (α = .82, .86, .88, .86).

Ingroup essentialism. Participants were administered four items at each timepoint to assess essentialistic perceptions of the White ingroup, adapted from Williams and Eberhardt's (2008) Race Conceptions Scale: "*A White person cannot change his or her race—you are who* *you are,*" "*A White person's race is fixed at birth*," "*The average person is highly accurate at identifying whether a person is White*," and "*It's easy to tell whether a person is White by looking at him or her*." The ingroup essentialism items formed reliable composite measures at each wave (α = .77, .81, .80, .78).

Moderator of Longitudinal Change: Political Partisanship

We theorized that respondents' political party preferences would moderate patterns of growth in minority collusion beliefs, support for White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism. To measure these preferences, respondents were administered two questions regarding their voting intentions at Wave 1 (January 2015): "*If the elections for the U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for to represent your congressional district?*" and "*If the election for the U.S. President were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for?*" Respondents selected their response from the following choices; *Democratic Party*, *Republican Party*, and *other/none*.

Participants were deemed to have a preference for one of the major parties if they expressed support for that party's congressional or presidential candidate without preferring another party for either type of election. Participants who selected congressional and presidential candidates from different parties (i.e., "ticket splitters"), and those who selected *other/none* in the absence of any major party preference, were classified as "unaligned" with either major political party. In addition, a small percentage of participants (1.6%) stated no preference for congressional or presidential candidates, and were thus excluded from analysis—leaving a final analytic sample of 2,593 participants (see Table 2).

Adjustment Variables

In order to isolate the effects of interest, we sought in our analyses to adjust for several demographic factors known to affect Americans' political opinions. To this end, GfK provided us with information about respondent age, gender, education, and income at Wave 1. Respondents selected *male* or *female* for their gender, a positive integer for their age in years, an education level from a series of 14 increments ranging from *no formal education* to *professional or doctorate degree*, and an annual income from a series of 19 increments ranging from *$0* to *$175,000 or more*. Because age, gender, education, and income are confounded with political party and independently associated with a range of social attitudes (Gerber & Huber, 2010; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2014; Lizotte, 2017; Wray-Lake et al., 2019), it was necessary to adjust for these factors in testing the effects of interest.

It should also be noted that we conceive of minority collusion beliefs, support for White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism as distinct from affective prejudice. To test this assumption, three feeling thermometers measuring warmth toward three ethnic outgroups—Blacks, Asians, and Latinos—were administered at all waves. Respondents made their ratings on a scale from *very cold* (-50) to *very warm* (50). Analyses of longitudinal change in the thermometer ratings, along with models of our primary outcomes that adjust for these ratings, are reported in the Supplemental Materials.

Political Outcomes

In order to establish the predictive validity of minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics with respect to intergroup threat, we measured two threat-related political outcomes at Wave 4. Respondents were asked, "*To what degree do you oppose or support the following social and political movements in the U.S.?*" Listed were "The Alternative Right ('alt-right') movement" and "Black Lives Matter." Respondents made their responses on a 5-point scale anchored on the left by *strongly oppose* (-2), in the middle by *neutral/no opinion*

(0), and on the right by *strongly support* (2).

Analytic Approach: Latent Growth Models (LGMs)

Longitudinal changes in our key constructs (minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism) were examined using latent growth modeling (LGM). LGM allows the researcher to model fixed and random variation in the intercept and slope of a construct measured at multiple time points (Bollen & Curran, 2006, p. 86). Unlike mixed models, LGM uses the mean structure, rather than each data point, to estimate the model. A key advantage of LGM is the ability to specify multivariate LGMs that model how the intercepts and slopes of different constructs relate to one another. We used Mplus version 8 to estimate our LGMs (Muthén & Muthén, 2019). Mplus uses full information maximum likelihood estimation, which accounts for missing data when missingness is not in exogenous variables and there is more than one endogenous variable.

Univariate LGMs Without Covariates

We first sought to understand the trajectories of minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism in the overall sample, without covariates. To this end, we ran three univariate LGMs (Bollen & Curran, 2006, p. 86)—one for each of the three constructs over time—allowing us to examine patterns of change over the four study waves.

For each construct, regression paths from all waves’ composite scores to a latent intercept term were fixed to 1 (Figure 1, left panel). Paths from Waves 1–4 to a latent linear trend were fixed to -1.5, -.5, .5, and 1.5, respectively. To model any curvilinear patterns, paths from Waves 1–4 to a latent quadratic trend were fixed to 2.25, .25, .25, and 2.25, respectively. Note that, under this specification, the latent intercept and linear trend represent estimates for a time point exactly midway through the study.[1]

Univariate LGMs With Covariates

In another set of three univariate models, we examined whether levels, linear growth, or curvilinear growth in each of our constructs varied by respondents’ partisan allegiance and demographic characteristics. To this end, we regressed the latent intercept, linear, and quadratic terms described above on two dummy variables—Democrat (1 = yes, 0 = no) and unaligned (1 = yes, 0 = no)—in addition to respondents’ age, income, education, and gender. In this analysis, Republican is the reference category; thus, the intercepts estimate latent growth parameters for the average White Republican midway through the study.

Multivariate LGM

We next explored how minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism influence each other over time by fitting a multivariate latent growth model, with the slope of each construct regressed on intercepts of the other constructs as well as its own intercept (see Figure 1, right panel, and Figure 3).[2] For each construct, regression paths from all waves’ composite scores to a latent intercept term were fixed to 1. To keep model manageable, we omitted quadratic terms from the multivariate LGM. Moreover, because we were interested in how longitudinal change in each construct was related to *initial* levels of other constructs, paths from Wave 1–4 composites to a latent linear parameter were fixed to 0, 1, 2, and 3 (unlike the paths in our univariate models). Covariances between the intercept terms for each construct, as

[1]It is more common to use coefficients of 0, 1, 2, and 3 for the linear term and of 0, 1, 4, and 9 for the quadratic term in a four-wave longitudinal study (e.g., Bollen & Curran, 2006). Under this specification, the intercept and linear terms represent a construct’s level and slope at the first wave. In contrast, under our specification, the intercept and linear terms estimate the level and slope of a construct midway through the study (i.e., halfway between the second and third waves). We chose this approach because we are interested in overall increases or decreases in participants’ attitudes, rather than their initial linear trajectories.

[2]Conventionally, many researchers correlate the slope of a construct with its own intercept (see, e.g., Bollen & Curran, 2006, p. 205). However, there are past examples in which researchers have regressed a slope of a construct on its intercept (e.g., Choi et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2013; Seltzer et al., 2003; Soto, 2015).

well as residual covariances between their linear and quadratic growth parameters, were freely estimated in our multivariate LGMs.

Supplementary LGMs

Although not a primary focus of the present study, we also examined longitudinal changes in respondents' scores on feeling thermometers in relation to Black, Asian, and Latino individuals across waves. Longitudinal changes in these outcomes were analyzed using univariate LGMs, with and without party and demographic covariates, analogous to the models for our primary longitudinal variables. In order to test whether outgroup attitudes may have driven longitudinal changes in minority collusion or White identity politics, we re-ran our primary LGMs with the addition of outgroup attitudes as time-varying covariates, and we conducted our multivariate LGM replacing ingroup essentialism with each feeling thermometer in turn. Full analyses involving feeling thermometers are reported in the Supplemental Materials.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 reports descriptive statistics and correlations among our key longitudinal variables and demographic variables at Wave 1. Looking at associations among three key variables, minority collusion beliefs correlated moderately with White identity politics and weakly, though significantly, with ingroup essentialism. White identity politics and ingroup essentialism also correlated significantly.

Next we visualized descriptive statistics regarding the change over time in minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism in the total sample and by party affiliation (see Figure 2). Inspection of averages and confidence intervals reveals that, overall, respondents tended to disagree significantly with the minority collusion items at all time points, disagree significantly with the White identity politics items only at Wave 1, and agree significantly with the ingroup essentialism items at all time points. The descriptive graphs also show that minority collusion and White identity politics increased slightly over time, with significant variation due to party affiliation. During the study, White Republicans shifted from neutrality to significant agreement with the minority collusion items and showed a highly linear increase in support for White identity politics. Ingroup essentialism showed a jump from Wave 1 to Wave 2, followed by a slight decrease—also with substantial between-party variation.

Primary Latent Growth Models (LGMs)

Univariate Models Without Covariates

Table 4 summarizes the primary parameters and goodness-of-fit of the univariate models. For each of the three outcome variables, the random quadratic effect was small and nonsignificant, and was therefore fixed to zero.

The univariate LGM for minority collusion beliefs displayed excellent fit. The significant negative intercept term indicates that, at the hypothetical midpoint of the study, respondents scored below the neutral point of the scale (and thus disagreed with the collusion items). However, minority collusion beliefs increased significantly over the four waves of the study. Scores also exhibited a significant quadratic trend due to the especially large increase in scores between Waves 1 and 2. Inspection of random effects shows that both the intercept and linear slope varied significantly between respondents.

The univariate LGM for White identity politics also displayed excellent fit. The significant positive intercept reflects respondents’ tendency to agree with the White identity politics items at the hypothetical midpoint of the study. Respondents tended to increase steadily in their scores over the four study waves. Scores also displayed a quadratic pattern reflecting the relatively large increase between Waves 1 and 2. Both intercepts and slopes varied significantly between respondents.

Finally, the univariate LGM for ingroup essentialism displayed excellent fit. The intercept of ingroup essentialism lay above the midpoint, reflecting respondents' tendency to agree with these items midway through the study. Essentialism scores increased to a marginally significant extent over the four study waves and exhibited a significant quadratic pattern—due again to a large jump in scores between Waves 1 and 2. The ingroup essentialism intercepts, but not slopes, varied significantly between respondents.

Univariate Models With Covariates

Table 5 displays the results of regressing the intercepts, linear trends, and quadratic trends of our primary longitudinal constructs on respondents' partisan alignment. In order to isolate the role of partisanship, we also adjusted for an array of demographic characteristics in these analyses.

Results for the constructs' intercepts show that Republicans (the reference category) tended to endorse minority collusion beliefs, White identity politics, and perceived essentialism of the White ingroup at the midpoint of the study. Significant negative effects for the Democrat and unaligned contrasts show that these groups were less likely than Republicans to endorse such beliefs at the same time point.

We next examined relationships between linear change in our primary constructs and respondents' partisan alignment. Over the course of the study, Republicans increased significantly in minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics, and marginally in perceived ingroup essentialism. Democrats displayed significantly smaller linear slopes, while unaligned respondents’ slopes did not differ significantly from those of Republicans. It thus appears that overall longitudinal increases observed in the three focal constructs are driven almost entirely by changes among White Republicans.

Finally, Republican respondents displayed significant negative quadratic patterns in their minority collusion beliefs and perceptions of ingroup essentialism, but not in their endorsement of White identity politics. Partisan alignment did not significantly alter these patterns.

In sum, White Republicans were more likely than Democrats to (a) embrace beliefs in minority collusion and White identity politics at the hypothetical midpoint of the study and (b) increase in these tendencies over the course of the study (from 2015 to 2018). These results suggest that, as predicted, Republicans were more susceptible than Democrats to the belief that non-White groups form a cohesive social and political bloc whose aim is to deprive White people of privileges and, correspondingly, to support the view White people should band together to protect their interests. White Republicans were also more likely than Democrats to endorse beliefs in ingroup essentialism midway through the study—and to increase more in these beliefs from 2015 to 2018.

Multivariate Model

The planned multivariate growth model for minority collusion beliefs, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism yielded a non-positive definite latent variable covariance matrix. In such cases, the results are uninterpretable and model changes are necessary (Muthén, 2017). Because the univariate model for ingroup essentialism revealed no significant between-respondent variation in slope (see Table 4), we chose to fix to 0 all regression paths from this slope to the modeled latent intercepts. This version of the multivariate model ran without issue and had an excellent fit, $\chi^2(52) = 143.576$, $p < .001$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA

= .03 90% CI [.02, .03]. Table 5 reports all regression paths and Table 6 reports residual variances and covariances. Focusing on the latent factors (see Figure 3), ingroup essentialism at Wave 1 marginally and positively predicted the trajectory of minority collusion beliefs over time. No other latent intercepts predicted any trajectories ($p \geq .258$).

Our multivariate LGM revealed that minority collusion beliefs tended to increase more among White people who perceived their ingroup in essentialistic terms. This pattern provides some support for our conjecture that essentialistic perceptions of the White ingroup might correspond with a greater tendency to see relations between White people and racial outgroups in stark White vs. non-White terms—in turn helping to foster minority collusion beliefs. At the same time, however, we found no evidence for mutually reinforcing relationships either between ingroup essentialism and White identity politics or between minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics.

Supplementary LGMs

We sought to examine whether outgroup attitudes (measures via feeling thermometers) changed over the course of the study—and whether the findings concerning minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism are robust to inclusion of outgroup attitudes in our models. Full analyses involving the outgroup (Black, Asian, and Latino) feeling thermometers are found in the Supplemental Materials; see Figure S1 for graphs of descriptive statistics.

Simple univariate LGMs for each outgroup thermometer revealed that White respondents’ attitudes became slightly but significantly warmer toward Black people and Latino/as, and marginally warmer toward Asian people, over the course of the study (Table S2). Regressing growth parameters on partisan alignment and demographic variables reveals that the covariates did not significantly alter the linear trend of the thermometer ratings—with the exception of age, which was positively associated with improvement in attitudes toward Black people (Table S3).

Supplementary analyses also showed that the inclusion of feeling thermometers as time-varying covariates (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) in LGMs predicting our primary longitudinal outcomes did not substantively affect any of the reported findings.

Finally, as can be seen in Table S5, there is no indication that scores on feeling thermometers in relation to Black, Asian, or Latino/a people drove change in minority collusion or White identity politics.

In sum, our analyses of outgroup feeling thermometers suggest that levels of, and patterns of change in, our primary longitudinal outcomes (i.e., minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism) are largely independent of White respondents’ affective attitudes toward various racial outgroups. Thus, these outcomes are best regarded as reflecting beliefs quite distinct from more traditional indicators of prejudice.

Threat-Related Political Outcomes

Lastly, we used Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions to examine whether minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics at Wave 4 of the study predicted unique variance in socio-political attitudes assumed to vary inversely or positively with racial threat (i.e., support for Black Lives Matter and support for the Alt-Right movement, respectively). In order to isolate the effects of minority collusion beliefs and White identity politics on these socio-political attitudes, demographic adjustment variables (i.e., age, gender, education, and income) and party indicators were included in the models as covariates. Party indicators were weighted effect coded (Te Grotenhuis et al., 2017) and all other covariates mean-centered, such that the equations’ constants are interpretable as the discrepancy from the midpoint of the dependent measure in the overall sample.

As can be seen in Table 7, minority collusion was negatively associated with support for Black Lives Matter and positively associated with support for the Alt-Right, over and above the effects of all other predictors. Likewise, White identity politics was negatively associated with Black Lives Matter support and positively associated with Alt-Right support, net of all other predictors. These patterns suggest that beliefs in minority collusion and support for White identity politics uniquely contribute to predicting threat-related socio-political attitudes—above and beyond what can be predicted by ingroup essentialism, outgroup prejudice, partisanship, and demographic variables.

Discussion

We contend that White people's experience of threat in the face of diversity and demographic change (Abascal, 2020; Craig & Richeson, 2014a, 2014b) reflects a construal of intergroup relations in binary, White vs. non-White terms (see Richeson & Craig, 2011). The present study examined two theorized products of this construal: a belief in minority collusion (i.e., the idea that minority groups are collaborating to take power from White people) and support for White identity politics (i.e., White people acting as a bloc to defend ingroup interests). We examined patterns of longitudinal change in, and potential precursors and consequences of, collusion beliefs and support for identity politics in a nationally representative sample of 2,635 White Americans spanning the years 2015 to 2018.

Our results show that minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics increased significantly among White Americans over the course of the study. As predicted, however, these increases were driven principally by change among White Republicans rather than among White Democrats. This pattern supports the notion that politically-conservative White people may have an elective affinity for right-wing rhetoric casting intergroup relations in binary, White vs. non-White terms (see, e.g., Jost et al., 2009).

Our findings also suggest that longitudinal change in minority collusion beliefs is driven in part by essentialistic construals of the White ingroup—that is, by construing the White ingroup as fundamentally and immutably distinct from non-White outgroups. This pattern suggests that racial essentialism may be a more proximal component of binary intergroup thinking than minority collusion beliefs. However, we saw no evidence that ingroup essentialism drives support for White identity politics, despite the fact that perceived ingroup essentialism and support for White identity politics were significantly correlated at Wave 1 of the study. Given that entitative perceptions of one’s ingroup can engender identity-based political attitudes and motivations (Effron & Knowles, 2015), we were somewhat surprised to find that initial levels of ingroup essentialism were not associated with longitudinal change in endorsement of White identity politics. In light of the fact that essentialism is a complex and multifaceted construct, incorporating notions of biology, universality, and discreteness (Haslam, 1998; Haslam & Levy, 2006), it may be that our brief measure of the construct did not capture the dimensions most relevant to Whites’ identity-based political attitudes. We therefore suggest that future research explore how varied facets of essentialism relate to both minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics.

Importantly, both minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics emerged as unique predictors of respondents’ socio-political attitudes—including lower support for the Black Lives Matter movement and higher support for the Alt-Right movement—even after adjusting for a range of demographic factors and attitudes toward the racial ingroup and racial outgroups. These findings suggest that both the belief in minority collusion and support for White identity politics shape White people’s responses to social movements that advocate divergent visions of the future of U.S. race relations during a period of rapid demographic change. Moreover, to the extent that events like the January 6 Capitol insurrection are driven by White nationalist ideology and hostility to minority rights movements, such violence may reflect a deeper conception of non-Whites as a monolithic political force.

Whites’ Experience of Threat in the Face of Diversity and Demographic Change

Our interest in minority collusion beliefs was motivated by a puzzle. If “non-White” is an artificial label that blurs distinctions between specific racial and ethnic minority groups, then why do White people find diversity, as well as the mere prospect of becoming a national minority, so threatening? We contend that a belief in minority collusion—that various non-White minority groups are working together to deprive White people of power and resources—helps to resolve this apparent contradiction.

As we have argued, the rapid diversification of the American population can threaten White people’s self-perceived status and interests in two ways. First, demographic diversification is likely to expose White people to large, concentrated populations of racial outgroups, while often providing few opportunities for meaningful intergroup contact (Enos, 2017). Such demographic exposure in the absence of contact has been shown to induce a sense of intergroup competition and threat among many White people (Quillian, 1995). Threat should be most pronounced among White people who live or work in close proximity to minority groups whom they regard as forming a cohesive bloc. Second, research shows that White people often find threatening the mere prospect of becoming a national minority (e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014a). This threat logically presupposes that White people divide the intergroup landscape according to a White vs. non-White dichotomy. We propose that this dichotomy is rendered intelligible through the belief that various non-White groups have something in common: a desire to usurp power from White people.

It should be noted that, while theoretically sensible, our claim that minority collusion beliefs amplify status threat among White people awaits empirical test. A natural extension of the present study would be to test whether exposure to diversity predicts stronger threat reactions among White people high (vs. low) in minority collusion beliefs (cf. Knowles & Tropp, 2018; Quillian, 1995, 1996). Another potentially fruitful extension would be to examine whether reminders of Whites’ future minority status causes stronger feelings of threat among White people high (vs. low) in minority collusion beliefs (cf. Abascal, 2020; Craig & Richeson, 2014a, 2014b; Outten et al., 2012).

Intraminority Coalition and Minority Collusion

We see the present work as complementing scholarship on intraminority coalition and stigma-based solidarity. This research has examined factors that determine whether minority groups perceive shared interests and engage in cooperative, coalitional behavior (Burson & Godfrey, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2012, 2016). While we regard the development of cross-minority coalitions as a positive development for broader social change, the present results suggest that the prospect of such intra-minority solidarity may be threatening to many White people. Hence, what many might regard as healthy cooperation in pursuit of social justice, some White people—and most notably, staunch conservatives and Republicans—may view as conspiratorial. This raises the question of how to foster solidarity among minoritized groups while minimizing White people’s reactionary responses to their efforts. Given findings from the present study, we believe it would be counterproductive to attempt to minimize Whites’ threat reactions simply by telling White people that racial and ethnic minorities do not, in fact, share certain interests or sometimes cooperate to combat discrimination or promote social change.

Rather, it might prove useful to conceptualize minority collusion beliefs as having multiple components that may differentially impact White threat in the face of growing diversity. In part, minority collusion beliefs represent the view that minority groups are working in coordinated ways to reduce White people’s privileges, which would likely threaten White people with the prospect of status loss (Blumer, 1958; Wetts & Willer, 2018; Willer et al., 2016). It may be possible to blunt the threat of lost privilege—for instance, by encouraging White people to regard their group’s status as unearned and bad for its moral reputation (Knowles et al., 2014; Lowery et al., 2012). Moreover, minority collusion beliefs may carry with them a perception that minorities share a dislike of White people. In actuality, this may play no role in the formation of intra-group solidarity among members of minoritized and stigmatized groups. Thus, encouraging White people to reconstrue solidarity between racial and ethnic minority groups as an effort to reduce discrimination and social disparities—rather than as an expression of anti-White affect—may reduce the threat of such solidarity efforts. Such ideas warrant empirical study.

The Psychology of Ideology and Partisanship

Our predictions regarding partisan differences in the belief in minority collusion, support for White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism relied on research documenting ideological differences in thinking preferences and cognitive styles (Jost et al., 2003, 2017). Compared to liberals and Democrats, White conservatives and Republicans may have a more pronounced tendency to construct social reality in terms of binaries (e.g., “us” vs. “them” and “good vs. evil”)—contributing, in turn, to partisan differences in support for the racial beliefs in question.

Owing to this tendency toward binarism, White conservatives and Republicans were theorized to possess an “elective affinity” (Jost et al., 2009; McKinnon, 2010; Waisbord, 2018a) for authoritarian rhetoric that *reinforces* this mode of thought—leading to steeper increases in minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism compared to White liberals and Democrats during a period in which such rhetoric became ubiquitous. Although the present findings corroborate these predictions, further research is needed that directly measures endorsement of binary thinking and its relationship to ideology, partisanship, and racialized beliefs. Such research may then inform the design of interventions to reduce binary patterns of thinking and, correspondingly, undermine support for zero-sum frames of racial and ethnic relations.

Limitations

We believe that the present research makes a clear case for growing partisan divergence in White Americans’ beliefs about race; nonetheless, we are cognizant of limitations inherent in our methodological and analytic strategies. First, despite the use of advanced longitudinal analyses, our research is inherently correlational—thus preventing strong conclusions regarding causality. Second, due to restrictions on the duration of our survey, many of the critical measures consisted of only a few separate items and employed grammar that some of our respondents may have found complex. Third, while we believe the dynamics of “us vs. them” thinking may play out similarly in other pluralistic societies experiencing rapid demographic changes, the present application was limited to American partisan politics. We believe that these shortcomings can and should be addressed in future research—through the use of experimental methods, better measurement, and samples drawn from other national contexts.

Conclusion

The belief that myriad racial minority groups form a coherent whole may catalyze White people’s sense of status threat in the face of growing diversity and rapid demographic change. In this work, we found that two theorized products of this perception—the belief that non-White people groups are cooperating to deprive White Americans of resources (minority collusion) and support for identity-conscious political action to counter this threat (White identity politics)—increased among White Republicans from 2015 to 2018. We believe that minority collusion beliefs and support for White identity politics are defensive reactions to efforts designed to foster inclusion, representation, and opportunity in a rapidly changing country. Thus, future research should investigate ways of modifying White people’s perceptions of such efforts, in order to promote a more equitable and inclusive society.

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Table 1

Sample Characteristics

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Fielding dates	9–15 Jan 2015	11–24 Feb 2016	26 Jan–10 Feb 2017	5–12 Feb 2018
N	2635	1728	1200	725
Attrition vs. Wave 1	—	907 (34.4%)	1435 (54.5%)	1910 (72.5%)
Males	1305 (49.5%)	875 (50.6%)	622 (51.8%)	373 (51.4%)
Age mean (SD)	53.0 (16.9)	54.2 (16.7)	55.1 (16.5)	55.0 (16.1)
Education (median)	Some college	Some college	Some college	Some college
Income (median)	$60,000	$60,000	$60,000	$60,000

Table 2

Party Preference Classification Scheme (N = 2,635)

Partisan Voting Intention				Party Preference Classification	N	%
Congress	President	N	%			
Democratic	Democratic	788	29.9	Democratic	788	29.9
—	Democratic	0	0.0			
Democratic	—	0	0.0			
Republican	Republican	1117	42.4	Republican	1,117	42.4
—	Republican	0	0.0			
Republican	—	0	0.0			
other/none	other/none	519	19.7	Unaligned	688	26.1
—	other/none	1	0.0			
other/none	—	0	0.0			
Democratic	Republican	41	1.6			
Republican	Democratic	22	0.8			
other/none	Democratic	29	1.1			
Democratic	other/none	24	0.9			
other/none	Republican	23	0.9			
Republican	other/none	29	1.1			
—	—	42	1.6	Uncategorized	42	1.6

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations at Wave 1

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Minority Collusion	-.26	.98						
2. White Identity Politics	.13	1.11	.44***					
3. Ingroup Essentialism	.71	.80	.16***	.26***				
4. Age	53.08	16.83	.04†	.12***	.10***			
5. Income	12.51	4.20	-.15***	-.10***	.00	-.05**		
6. Education	10.52	1.81	-.26***	-.21***	-.06**	-.06**	.40***	
7. Female	.50		-.02	-.07***	-.03	.05*	-.03†	-.01

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. ns = 2562 - 2593 due to some missingness. †*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001. Given the large sample size, attention should be paid to effect sizes rather than significance levels. For the female indicator, the reported mean refers to the proportion of female respondents.

Table 4

Univariate Latent Growth Models For Each Construct

	Fixed Effects	Random Effects
Model 1: Minority Collusion (n = 2,584)		
Intercept	-.11 (.02)***	.64 (.03)***
Linear Trend	.03 (.01)**	.02 (.01)**
Quadratic Trend	-.04 (.01)***	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	.01 (.01)
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 18.37$, $p < .05$, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .04 90% CI [.02, .06]		
Model 2: White Identity Politics (n = 2,586)		
Intercept	.20 (.02)***	.80 (.03)***
Linear Trend	.01 (.01)	.03 (.01)**
Quadratic Trend	-.02 (.01)*	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	.01 (.01)
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 6.09$, $p = .19$, CFI = .999, TLI = .998, RMSEA = .01 90% CI [.000, .04]		
Model 3: Ingroup Essentialism (n = 2,585)		
Intercept	.81 (.02)***	.34 (.02)***
Linear Trend	.02 (.01)†	.01 (.005)
Quadratic Trend	-.03 (.01)***	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	.01 (.01)†
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 7.79$, $p = .10$, CFI = .997, TLI = .996, RMSEA = .02 90% CI [.000, .04]		

Note. †$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Random effects of the quadratic trends were small and nonsignificant, and are therefore omitted from the models. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the survey midpoint.

Table 5

Growth Parameters for Main Study Outcomes by Political Alignment and Demographics (Fixed Effects)

	Minority Collusion (n = 2584)			White Identity Politics (n = 2584)			Ingroup Essentialism (n = 2585)		
Predictors	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend
Reference (Republican)	.15 (.03)***	.05 (.02)**	-.05 (.01)***	.44 (.04)***	.05 (.02)**	-.02 (.03)	.95 (.03)***	.02 (.01)†	-.04 (.01)**
Democrat	-.66 (.05)***	-.06 (.02)**	.01 (.02)	-.57 (.06)***	-.06 (.03)*	-.01 (.03)	-.24 (.05)***	-.04 (.02)†	.005 (.02)
Unaligned	-.25 (.05)***	.001 (.02)	.01 (.02)	-.32 (.06)***	-.04 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.26 (.04)***	.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)
Age	.002 (.001)†	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)	.01 (.001)***	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)	.004 (.001)**	.000 (.001)	.000 (.000)
Income	-.01 (.005)**	-.01 (.003)*	-.004 (.002)	-.02 (.01)*	-.003 (.003)	.001 (.003)	.003 (.005)	-.001 (.002)	-.001 (.002)
Education	-.12 (.01)***	.01 (.01)†	.01 (.005)*	-.12 (.02)***	.02 (.01)*	.01 (.01)†	-.04 (.01)**	-.005 (.005)	.001 (.005)
Female	-.06 (.04)	-.01 (.02)	.01 (.02)	-.20 (.05)***	.04 (.02)	.04 (.02)†	-.10 (.04)**	.003 (.02)	.02 (.02)

Note. †p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. MC = minority collusion, WIP = White Identity Politics, IE = Ingroup Essentialism. The reference group is the average White Republican. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Age, income, and education are grand-mean centered; female is effect coded such that -.5 = male and .5 = female. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the survey midpoint.

Table 6

Linear Trends Regressed on Initial Levels of Each Construct in the Multivariate LGM (n = 2,592)

	Linear Trend		
Intercept (Initial Level)	Minority Collusion	White Identity Politics	Ingroup Essentialism
Minority Collusion	-.02 (.03)	-.005 (.03)	.01 (.02)
White Identity Politics	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.03)	-.02 (.02)
Ingroup Essentialism	.04 (.02)†	-.02 (.03)	–

Note. †$p < .10$. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Regression path from the ingroup essentialism linear trend on the initial levels of ingroup essentialism was fixed to 0 to avoid psi matrix error. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the first survey wave.

Table 7

Variances, Residual Variances and Covariances in the Multivariate LGM (n = 2592)

	Intercept			Linear Trend		
	MC	WIP	IE	MC	WIP	IE
Intercept						
MC	.65 (.03)***	–	–	–	–	–
WIP	.47 (.02)***	.82(.04)***	–	–	–	–
IE	.13 (.02)***	.22 (.02)***	.33 (.02)***	–	–	–
Linear Trend						
MC	–	–	–	.02 (.01)**	–	–
WIP	–	–	–	.02 (.003)***	.03 (.01)**	–
IE	–	–	–	.004 (.003)	.01 (.003)**	.01 (.003)*

Note. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. MC = minority collusion, WIP = White Identity Politics, IE = Ingroup Essentialism. Values on the diagonal are residual variances; off-diagonal values are residual covariances. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the first survey wave.

Table 8

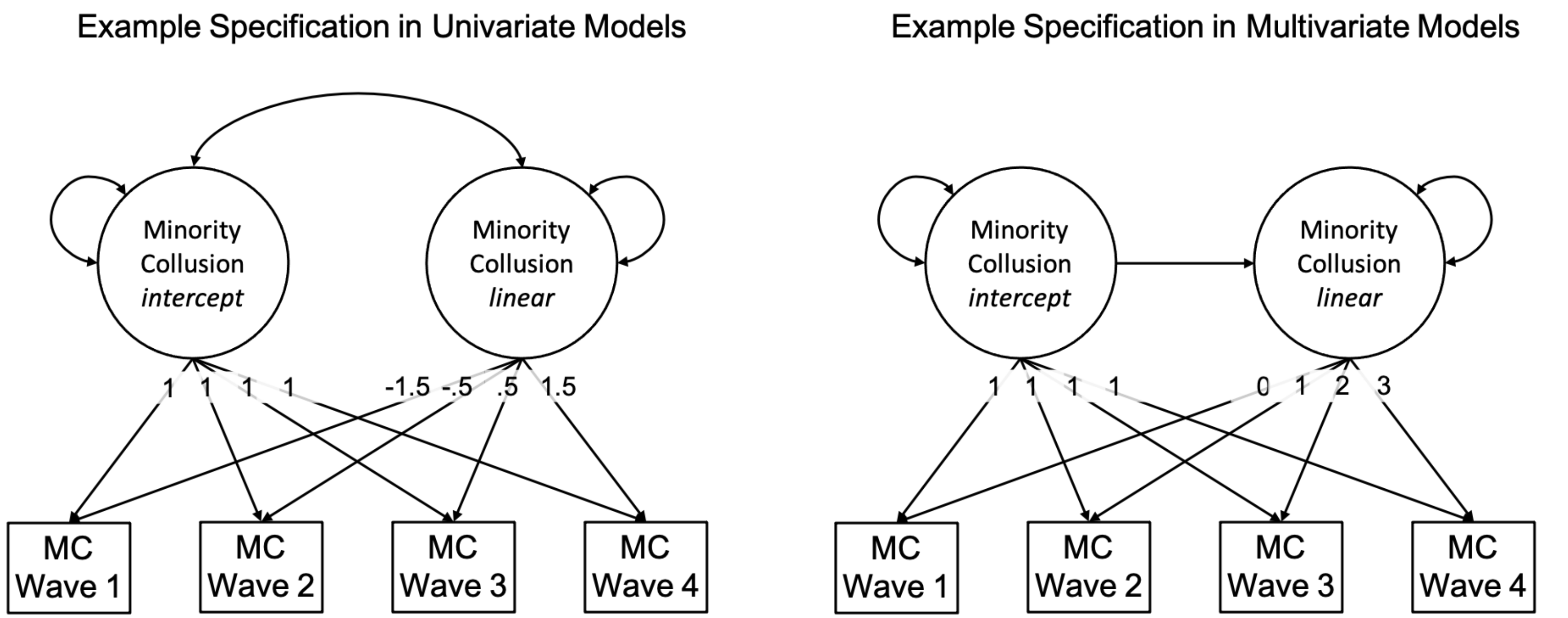
Minority Collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism predicting Support for Black Lives Matter and Alternative Right Movement

Variable	*B*	*SE*	95% CI	β	*t*	*p*
DV: Black Lives Matter support (*n* = 705)						
(Constant)	-.14	.07	[-.28, .004]		-1.91	0.06
Minority collusion	-.17	.04	[-.25, -.08]	-.15	-3.89	< .001
White identity politics	-.10	.04	[-.18, -.02]	-.10	-2.63	< .001
Ingroup essentialism	-.13	.05	[-.22, -.03]	-.08	-2.54	.01
Prejudice	-.01	.002	[-.01, -.002]	-.12	-3.21	.001
Ingroup warmth	-.0005	.004	[-.01, .01]	-.005	-.14	.89
Age	.003	.002	[-.002, .01]	.04	1.33	.18
Female	.17	.08	[.02, .32]	.07	2.22	.03
Income	-.02	.01	[-.04, .005]	-.05	-1.52	.13
Education	.008	.02	[-.04, .05]	.01	.35	.73
Democrat	.60	.10	[.41, .80]	.24	5.98	< .001
Republican	-.40	.10	[-.59, -.21]	-.17	-4.12	.< .001
DV: Alternative right support (*n* = 705)						
(Constant)	-.38	.06	[-.50, -.25]		-6.00	< .001
Minority collusion	.16	.04	[.09, .23]	.16	4.39	< .001
White identity politics	.09	.03	[.02, .15]	.10	2.73	.01
Ingroup essentialism	.02	.04	[-.06, .10]	.02	.47	.64
Prejudice	.002	.002	[-.001, .01]	.04	1.25	.21
Ingroup warmth	.01	.003	[.006, .01]	.07	2.15	.03
Age	.0001	.002	[-.004, .004]	.002	.063	.95
Female	.09	.06	[-.03, .22]	.05	1.46	.15
Income	-.02	.009	[-.03, .0005]	-.07	-1.91	.06
Education	-.07	.02	[-.11, -.03]	-.13	-3.66	< .001
Democrat	-.63	.09	[-.80, -.46]	-.29	-7.25	< .001
Republican	.20	.08	[.04, .36]	.10	2.42	.02

Note. Democrat and Republican contrasts are weighted effect coded (Te Grotenhuis et al., 2017) and all other predictors are mean-centered; thus, the constant is the overall sample mean.

Figure 1

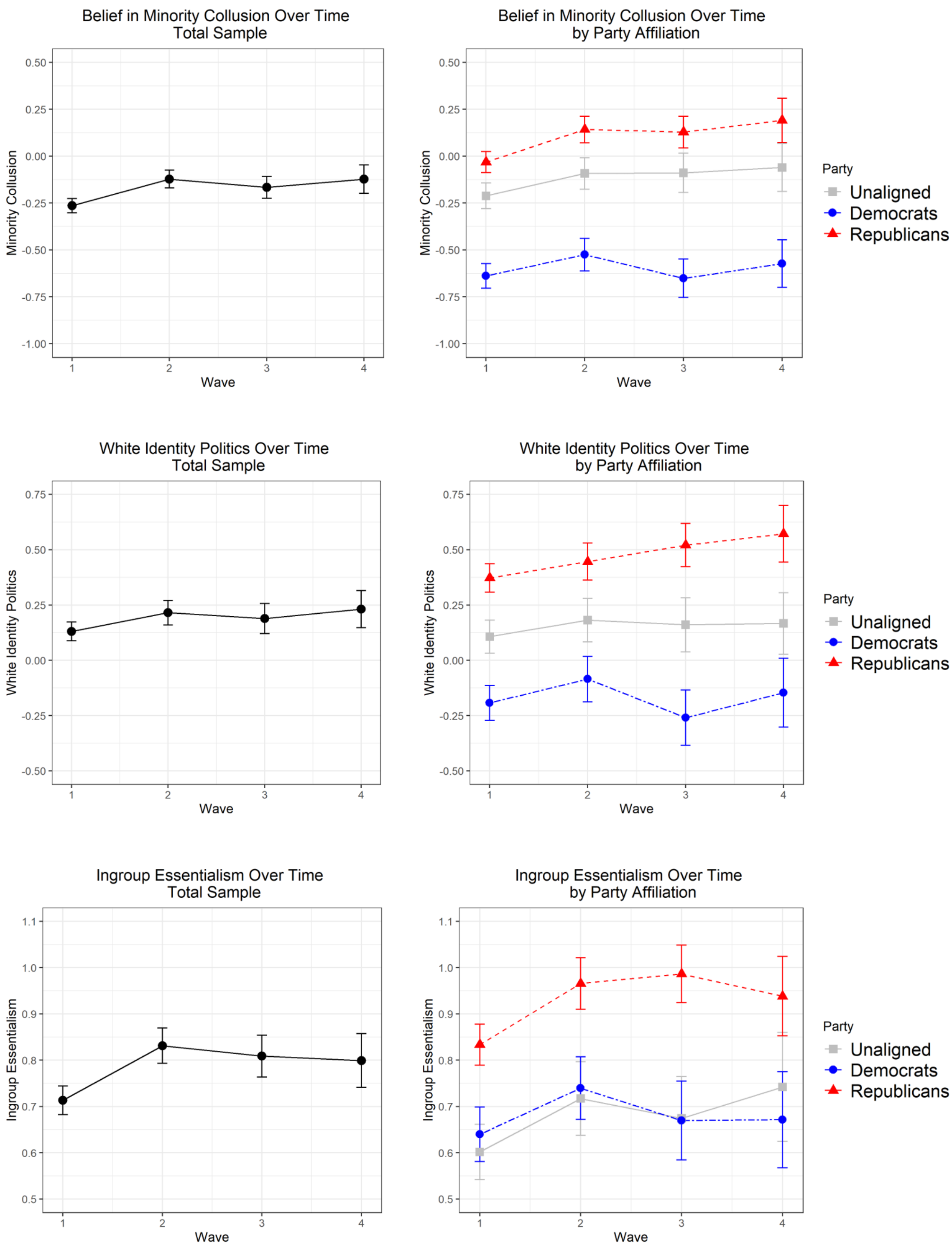
Example Specifications for a Primary Longitudinal Variable



Note. Quadratic trend in univariate models not shown. Growth parameters were correlated in the univariate models, whereas linear trends were regressed on intercepts in the multivariate models. In the univariate models, indicator weights were chosen such that—with the addition of a quadratic trend—the intercept and linear trend would reflect the midpoint of the study. The multivariate models lacked quadratic trends, and therefore weights were chosen such that the intercept would represent initial levels of the construct.

Figure 2

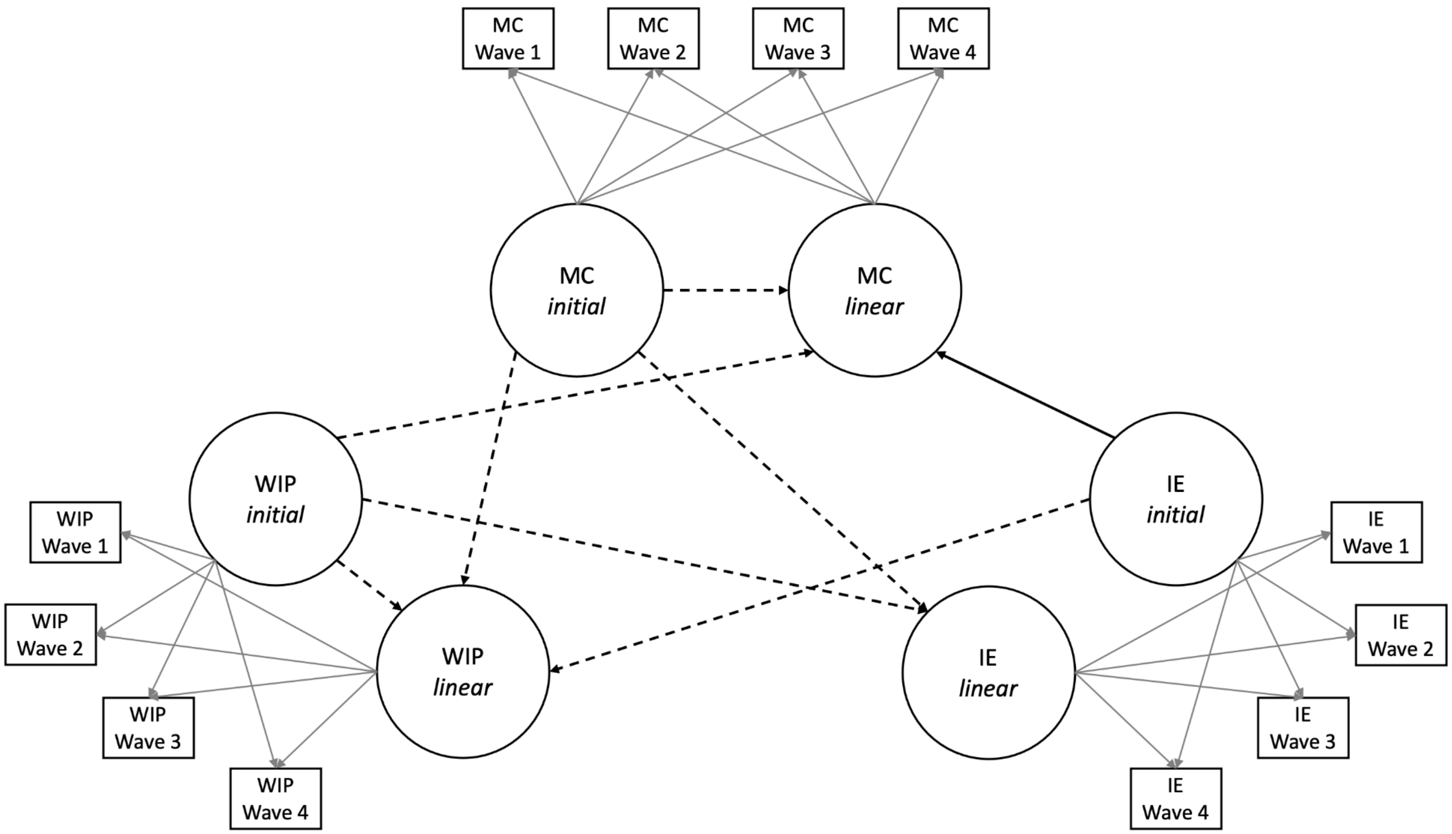
Change Over Time in Minority Collusion, White Identity Politics, and Ingroup Essentialism



Note. Variables centered around scale midpoint.

Figure 3

Multivariate Latent Growth Model for Minority Collusion, Ingroup Essentialism (IE), and White Identity Politics (WIP)



Note. Solid arrow indicates $p < .10$, dashed arrows indicate $p \geq .10$. MC = minority collusion, WIP = White identity politics, IE = ingroup essentialism. Model fit indices: $\chi^2(52) = 143.58$, $p < .001$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .03 90% CI [.02, .03]. Path from the ingroup essentialism intercept to the ingroup essentialism linear trend was fixed to 0 to avoid a psi matrix error. Latent parameters were regressed on age, gender, income, and education (not shown). Intercepts and linear trend residuals were allowed to correlate across constructs.

Supplemental Materials

Analyses of Attrition

To examine patterns of attrition, we created an attrition indicator such that respondents were assigned 0 if they dropped out at any time after the first wave (n = 718) and 1 if they completed all four waves (n = 1,875). We then ran multiple t-tests and chi-square tests to test whether this attrition indicator was related to demographic characteristics or responses on our main survey outcomes at Wave 1 (see Table S1). Attrition was unrelated to all outcomes except for age; respondents who dropped out tended to be slightly older than those who completed all four study waves.

Analyses Involving Thermometer Ratings

We sought to examine whether outgroup attitudes (measures via feeling thermometers) changed over the course of the study—and whether the findings concerning minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism are robust to inclusion of outgroup attitudes in our models. See Figure S1 for graphs of descriptive statistics for Black, Asian and Latino thermometers. Simple univariate LGMs for each outgroup thermometer has excellent fit. Positive and significant intercept terms show that White respondents' attitudes toward all outgroups tended to be positive (greater than 0) at the midpoint of the study. Examination of linear growth terms reveal that White respondents' attitudes became slightly but significantly warmer toward Black people and Latino/as, and marginally warmer toward Asian people, over the course of the study (Table S2). No significant quadratic trends were evident in the overall sample.

Regressing growth parameters on partisan alignment and demographic variables (Table S3) reveals that Democrats, the highly educated, and women had warmer feelings toward all outgroups than Republicans; high- (vs. low-) income individuals displayed warmer attitudes toward Asian people. Politically unaligned respondents reported colder attitudes toward Asian people than did Republicans, but did not differ from Republicans in their attitudes toward Black and Latino/a people. Inspection of linear growth parameters reveals that Republicans' attitudes toward Blacks became significantly warmer over the course of the study, while their attitudes toward Asian and Latino/a people did not. Democrats' linear trends did not differ significantly from those of Republicans, although unaligned respondents' attitudes toward Latino/as tended to improve more than Republicans' attitudes during the study. Examining quadratic trends, we see that Republican respondents' attitudes toward Latino/as exhibited a significant "inverted U" pattern of change, whereas Democrats' and unaligned respondents' attitudes did not.

We next reran our LGMs (with covariates) with the addition of feeling thermometers as time-varying covariates. These models differed from the models reported in Table 5 only insofar each wave's composite score for an outcome was regressed on all outgroup feeling thermometers (see Muthén & Muthén, 2017, p. 160, for an equivalent model). The inclusion of feeling thermometers did not substantively alter any of the effects reported for minority collusion, White identity politics, or ingroup essentialism in the main text. This suggests that our results concerning these variables are not reducible to changes in affective prejudice. Full output for the time-varying covariate model can be found at https://osf.io/d9nex/.

Finally, we conducted multivariate LGMs similar to those reported in Table 6 (main text), replacing ingroup essentialism with each feeling thermometer in turn. As can be seen in Table S5, there is no indication that affective attitudes toward Black, Asian, or Latino/a people drove change in minority collusion or White identity politics. The null cross-lags between minority collusion, White identity politics, and the feeling thermometers suggest that affective prejudice is unlikely to have driven change in collusion and identity politics. Full output for these multivariate models can be found at https://osf.io/d9nex/.

Table S1

Characteristics of Respondents as a Function of Attrition

	Test-statistics	*p*-values
Demographic variables		
Party Affiliation	$\chi^2(2) = 2.72$	.28
Gender	$\chi^2(1) = 1.19$	.28
Age	$t(2{,}591) = 3.54$	< .001
Income	$t(2{,}591) = 1.74$	.08
Education	$t(2{,}591) = .03$	.98
Main survey outcomes variables (Wave 1)		
Minority Collusion	$t(2{,}567) = .33$	.74
White Identity Politics	$t(2{,}580) = 1.84$	.07
Ingroup Essentialism	$t(2{,}574) = .22$	.83
Feeling Thermometer (Black)	$t(,2573) = -.52$	.61
Feeling Thermometer (Asian)	$t(2{,}573) = 1.50$	.13
Feeling Thermometer (Latino)	$t(2{,}573) = .33$	.74

Table S2

Univariate Latent Growth Models For Feeling Thermometers (Outgroup Warmth)

	Fixed Effects	Random Effects
Model 1: Black Thermometer (*n* = 2583)		
Intercept	17.59 (.51)***	314.56 (13.27)***
Linear Trend	.89 (.23)***	6.59 (3.92)†
Quadratic Trend	-.04 (.22)	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	13.22 (4.59)**
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 8.10$ $p = .09$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .02 90% CI [.000, .04]		
Model 2: Asian Thermometer (*n* = 2584)		
Intercept	19.55 (.51)***	296 .86 (13.33)***
Linear Trend	.39 (.23)†	3.84 (4.06)**
Quadratic Trend	.13 (.22)	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	-.19 (4.75)
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 4.51$, $p = .34$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01 90% CI [.000, .03]		
Model 3: Latino Thermometer (*n* = 2584)		
Intercept	17.45 (.52)***	337.42 (14.14)***
Linear Trend	.78 (.23)**	5 .84 (4.13)
Quadratic Trend	-.05 (.22)	–
Covariance (Intercept, Linear)	–	-1.19 (4.81)
Fit: $\chi^2(4) = 3.56$, $p = .47$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .000 90% CI [.000, .03]		

Note. †$p < .10$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Random effects of the quadratic trends were small and nonsignificant, and are therefore omitted from the models. Thermometers are scaled such that -50 = maximum coldness and 50 = maximum warmth. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the survey midpoint.

Table S3

Growth Parameters for Thermometer Ratings by Political Alignment and Demographics (Fixed Effects)

	Black Thermometer (n = 2,583)			Asian Thermometer (n = 2,584)			Latino Thermometer (n = 2,584)		
Predictors	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend	Intercept	Linear Trend	Quadratic Trend
Reference (Republican)	16.35 (.76)***	.82 (.36)*	-.43 (.34)	19.30 (.76)***	.002 (.36)	-.31 (.34)	16.26 (.78)	.33 (.37)	-.88 (.34)**
Democrat	5.07 (1.18)***	-.06 (.54)	-.79 (.51)	2.82 (1.19)*	.52 (.55)	.84 (.52)	4.70 (1.21)***	.29 (.55)	1.44 (.52)**
Unaligned	-1.40 (1.24)	-.02 (.58)	.75 (.54)	-2.52 (1.25)*	.71 (.59)	.69 (.56)	-1.35 (1.27)	1.04 (.59)†	1.46 (.55)**
Age	.04 (.03)	.04 (.01)**	.004 (.01)	.002 (.03)	.03 (.02)†	.01 (.01)	.05 (.03)	.03 (.02)†	-.01 (.01)
Income	.07 (.13)	-.01 (.06)	.06 (.06)	.37 (.13)**	-.11 (.06)†	-.06 (.06)	.19 (.14)	.01 (.06)	.09 (.06)
Education	1.40 (.30)***	.17 (.14)	.03 (.13)	2.02 (.30)***	.19 (.14)	.16 (.13)	2.02 (.31)***	.17 (.14)	.05 (.13)
Female	6.34 (.99)***	-.60 (.46)	-.42 (.43)	2.89 (1.00)**	.30 (.46)	.18 (.44)	3.64 (1.01)***	.34 (.47)	.14 (.44)

Note. †p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. The reference group is the average White Republican. Values in parentheses are standard errors. Age, income, and education are grand-mean centered; female is effect coded such that -.5 = male and .5 = female. Thermometers are scaled such that -50 = maximum coldness and 50 = maximum warmth. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the survey midpoint.

Table S4

Growth Parameters of Main Study Outcomes by Political Alignment and Demographics Adjusting for Thermometer Ratings (n = 702)

	Intercept			Linear Trend			Quadratic Trend		
Predictors	MC	WIP	IE	MC	WIP	IE	MC	WIP	IE
Reference (Republican)	.24 (.05)***	.57 (.06)***	1.00 (.04)***	.04 (.02)*	.06 (.02)**	.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.005 (.02)	-.07 (.02)***
Democrat	-.64 (.07)***	-.57 (.09)***	-22 (.06)***	-.06 (.03)*	-.09 (.03)**	-.07 (.02)**	.01 (.03)	.03 (.03)	-.04 (.02)
Unaligned	-.25 (-.08)**	-.31 (.10)**	-.31 (.07)***	.03 (.03)	-.08 (.03)*	-.01 (.02)	-.02 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.06 (.03)*
Age	-.001 (.002)	.01 (.002)**	.003 (.002)*	.001 (.001)†	.001 (.001)	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	.000 (.001)
Income	-.02 (.01)*	-.03 (.01)**	-.01 (.01)	-.004 (.003)	-.001 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	-.004 (.003)	.001 (.004)	.002 (.003)
Education	-.09 (.02)***	-.09 (.02)***	-.02 (.02)	.01 (.01)*	.02 (.01)*	-.005 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Female	-.04 (.06)	-.22 (.08)**	-.13 (.05)*	.002 (.02)	.03 (.03)	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	.05 (.03)†	.03 (.02)

Note. †$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. MC = minority collusion, WIP = White Identity Politics, IE = Ingroup Essentialism. The reference group is the average White Republican. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Age, income, and education are grand-mean centered; female is effect coded such that -.5 = male and .5 = female. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the survey midpoint. Sample size is reduced due to missing thermometer ratings.

Table S5

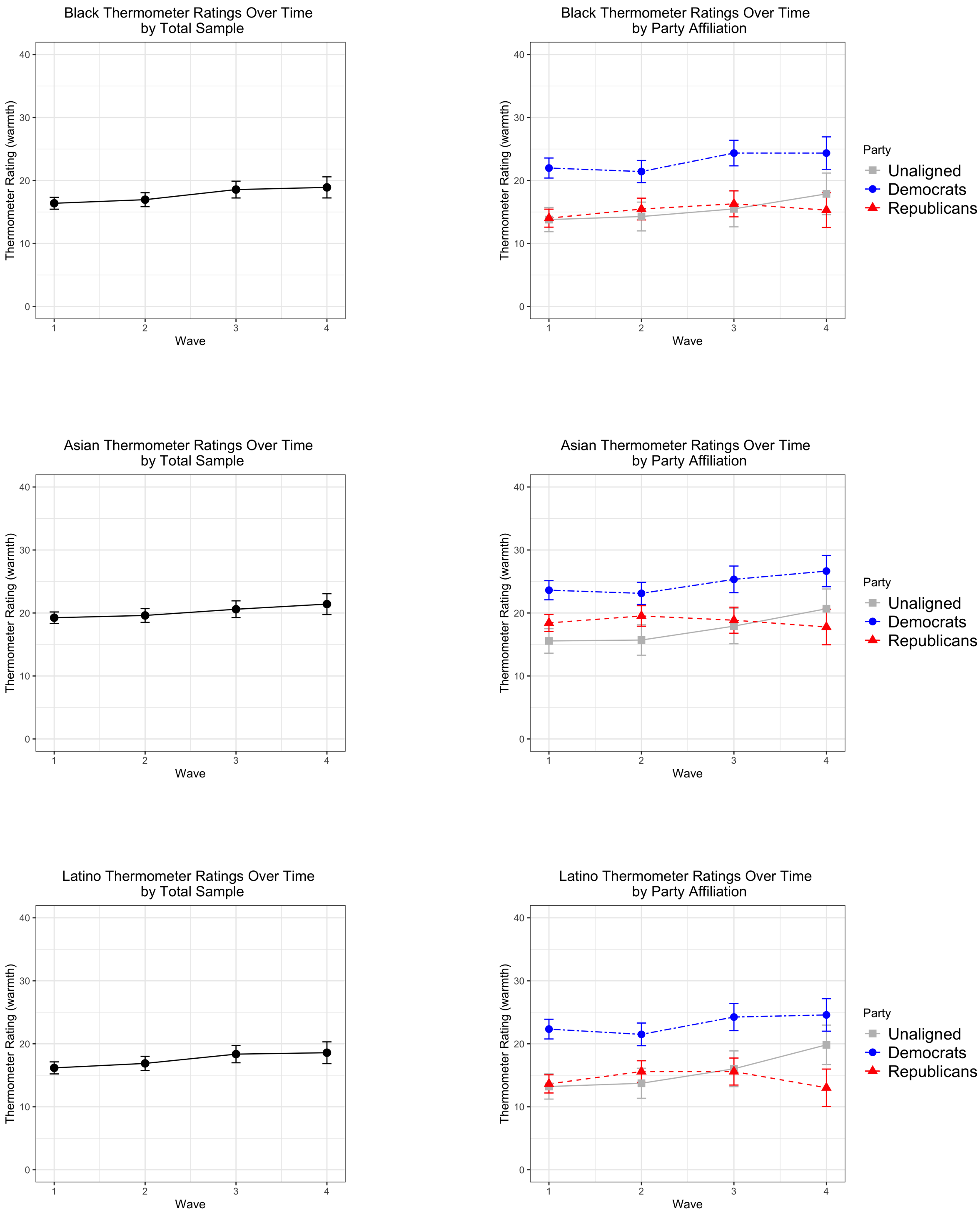
Linear Trends Regressed on Initial Levels of Minority Collusion, White Identity Politics, and Each Feeling Thermometer (n = 2,593).

	Linear Trend		
Intercept (Initial Level)	Minority Collusion	White Identity Politics	Black Thermometer
Minority Collusion	-.02 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.51)
White Identity Politics	-.01 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	.39 (.43)
Black Thermometer	.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.06 (.02)**
	Minority Collusion	White Identity Politics	Asian Thermometer
Minority Collusion	-.02 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.21 (.54)
White Identity Politics	-.005 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	.58 (.45)
Asian Thermometer	.000 (.001)	.000 (.001)	-.02 (.03)
	Minority Collusion	White Identity Politics	Latino Thermometer
Minority Collusion	-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	.61 (.55)
White Identity Politics	-.005 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	-.43 (.45)
Asian Thermometer	.000 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.03 (.02)

Note. ***p* < .01. Values are unstandardized coefficients and their standard errors (in parentheses). Regression path from the ingroup essentialism linear trend on the initial levels of minority collusion, White identity politics, and ingroup essentialism were fixed to 0 to avoid psi matrix error. Latent intercepts reflect mean levels at the first survey wave.

Figure S1

Change Over Time in Black, Asian, and Latino Feeling Thermometers



Note. Thermometers are scaled such that -50 = maximum coldness and 50 = maximum warmth.