

A Crucible for Allyship: Dynamic Relations Between Partisan Identity and Solidarity Between People of Color in Polarized Times

Research establishes that solidarity between people of color (PoC) can mute divisions between non-White adults. Yet PoC solidarity's political sources remain unclear, leaving scholars unsure about *why* stable levels of PoC camaraderie exist and *how* they are sustained. We evaluate whether PoC solidarity is partly connected to partisan dynamics. Specifically, we reason that a racially heterogeneous Democratic Party requires cross-racial alliances to coordinate politically, providing a crucible for PoC allyship. Thus, partisanship might shape PoC solidarity and—equally important—PoC solidarity might affect partisanship. We test this with the 2023 American Multiracial Panel Study—a two-wave survey of Asian, Black, Latino, and Multiracial adults. We find a bidirectional relationship: present partisanship predicts future solidarity between people of color while current camaraderie between PoC predicts future partisanship. Both dynamics are substantively identical across all four populations of color, illustrating how interparty and interracial forces share a symbiotic relationship in polarized times.

“Voters of color have long been pivotal to Democratic election prospects.”

-Armani Syed, journalist

“We know that voters of color are critical to Democrats’ coalition and the...investments highlight our commitment to continuously engaging with communities of color on issues they care about.”

-Rep. Suzan DelBene, Democrat¹

America’s racial sands are rapidly shifting, with nearly 40% of the U.S. population now comprised of people of color (PoC)—African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and other non-Whites (Pérez 2021). Research documents robust solidarity levels between PoC and its ability to mute political divisions between these groups (e.g., Cortland, Craig, Shapiro, et al. 2017; Pérez, Vicuña, and Ramos 2024a; Pérez, Goldman, Huo, et al. 2024b; also see Benjamin 2017; Wilkinson 2015). Specifically, political scientists have shown that a heightened sense of shared discrimination catalyzes PoC solidarity, which then steers them to support pro-Asian, pro-Black, and pro-Latino policies—even if they are not members of these outgroups (for a meta-analysis see Pérez et al. 2024a; also see Cortland et al. 2017; Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos 2021). But where does this PoC solidarity arise from?

Clear answers to this question are hindered by theoretical and methodological blind spots in this literature. First, although researchers have closely studied solidarity’s effects on public opinion among people of color, this variable’s political roots remain murky. Across multiple experiments, researchers have directly controlled exposure to shared forms of discrimination, which catalyzes PoC solidarity (i.e., heightens it from baseline levels) (Pérez et al. 2024). For example, when Asian and Latino individuals perceive they are similarly discriminated against as *foreigners* (Zou and Cheryan

¹ The first quote is from: Syed, Armani. 2024. “Democrats Launch \$35 Million Push to Court Black, Latino, and Asian Voters in Battleground States.” *Time Magazine*. The second quote is from: Altmari, Daniela. 2024. “House Democrats Boost Spending to Reach Black, Latino, Asian Voters.” *Roll Call*.

2017), it raises their sense of solidarity with other PoC. This provides clear evidence that a sense of shared discrimination can *cause* increases in PoC solidarity, but without clarifying how this allyship emerges organically in the mass public—a void that likely has many explanations (cf. Elster 1989).

Further compounding this challenge, more than thirty years of political science research finds that relations between African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and other PoC are generally conflictual as they vie for status, public resources, and policy issues in civic settings (e.g., school districts, city councils, lawsuits) (McClain and Karnig 1990; Kaufmann 2004; Meier et al. 2004; Vaca 2004; McClain et al. 2007; Wilkinson 2015; Carey et al. 2016; Benjamin 2017; Carter 2019; Kim 2023). The key, then, is to illuminate how PoC solidarity emerges and is maintained in a tumultuous “real world” of inter-minority politics outside the confines of tightly controlled experiments.

A second blind spot in this literature is whether feeling PoC solidarity has durable political effects. The experimental paradigm described above finds clear evidence that solidarity can be heightened through light treatments (e.g., mock news articles) (Pérez et al. 2024a). Yet the brief nature of these studies (i.e., minutes) prevents scholars from determining whether solidarity persists across longer intervals (e.g., months). Although these experiments find that heightened PoC solidarity influences downstream political attitudes, this pattern is supported through research designs where PoC solidarity is measured rather than directly manipulated (i.e., *measurement-of-mediator* design) (Pirlott and MacKinnon 2015). This means the observed association between heightened solidarity and political attitudes in these studies could be driven by the contemporaneous assessment of solidarity and political attitudes in these cross-sectional samples (Chaudoin, Gaines, and Livny 2021). What is missing, however, is evidence that PoC solidarity shapes downstream political outcomes in the *long-run*—beyond the effects observed in brief experiments. This is

especially critical to assess because mass politics is a distal realm that many people pay scattered attention to (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Hutchings 2005; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022).

Finally, methodologically speaking, existing assessments of PoC solidarity and its dynamics are limited by overreliance on survey experiments (Druckman 2022). The benefit of this methodological approach is *causal* evidence on the triggers of PoC solidarity. But one major downside to this strategy is the production of evidence that is lower on *external validity* (Shadish et al. 2002). That is, to what extent do the experimentally induced effects of PoC solidarity generalize to other settings, outcomes, treatments, and populations (Campbell and Stanley 1963; see also Kinder 2011)?

A careful look at the experimental evidence on PoC solidarity reveals two areas that can be improved with alternate methodologies. One area involves appraising solidarity’s dynamics among other hard-to-reach populations besides Asian, Black, and Latino adults—the “usual three”—such as Multiracial Americans (Davenport 2018; Masuoka 2017), who are one of the fastest-growing populations in the U.S. (Jones et al. 2021). Broadening the scope of analysis to new populations can boost confidence in the range of solidarity’s effects. Additionally, it behooves scholars to assess solidarity’s effects on outcomes beyond cognitive impressions (Cortland et al. 2017) and issue opinions (Pérez et al. 2024b), where existing work has focused. Studies that analyze solidarity’s effects on deep-seated political orientations, such as partisan self-identification (PID), would be especially revealing because PID is highly stable and known to profoundly affect mass political behavior (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Schickler, and Palmquist 2002; McCann and Jones-Correa 2020; Hopkins et al. 2023).

We move the needle forward on these three fronts by synthesizing growing research on PoC solidarity with established insights about partisan identity—the “unmoved mover” of American mass politics (Jennings and Niemi 1978; Green and Palmquist 1994). Our theory-building efforts

yield a set of competing expectations about the longitudinal links between these two key variables, which we then test with the 2023 American Multiracial Panel Study (AMPS)—a unique two-wave panel of African American, Asian American, Latino, and Multiracial adults (N=2,206). By leveraging the over-time structure of this survey, the extensive measures of PoC solidarity and PID it contains, and the multiple populations it covers, we evaluate the temporal dynamics between PoC solidarity and partisan identity for the first time.

We report three major findings. First, consistent with classic understandings of PID as an “immovable mover” (e.g., Green et al. 2002; Hopkins et al. 2022), we discover that present levels of Republican self-identification among PoC significantly undercut future levels of solidarity between people of color. Given that PID manifests as an ordinal variable, this means that present levels of Democratic self-identification also *increase* future levels of PoC solidarity. We attribute these patterns to the asymmetric opportunities that PoC have to “rehearse” cross-racial alliances within each party. Whereas Republicans are a majority-White party with relatively few PoC, Democrats are a multiethnic party that demands cross-racial alliances to coordinate politically (Schickler 2016; Rosenfeld 2018). Further, whereas the GOP is strongly associated with White Americans, Democrats are strongly associated with people of color (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022; Westwood and Peterson 2020). Together, these patterns clarify one expressly political source of PoC solidarity via PID’s longer-run effect on PoC. These patterns are all the more remarkable considering that earlier work construed PID among Asian Americans and Latinos as weakly crystallized (Hajnal and Lee 2011).

Second, we find that present levels of camaraderie between PoC significantly weaken their future levels of self-identification with the Republican party (again, relative to the Democratic party). PID is a stable variable, conventionally measured on a scale from 1-strong Democrat to 7-strong Republican. Thus, we interpret this association between PoC solidarity and PID as remarkable

because partisanship is widely considered deep-seated and generally resistant to major shifts (Green and Platz 2022), including among people of color (McCann and Jones-Correa 2020; White and Laird 2020; Hopkins et al. 2022). This observed influence of PoC solidarity on PID reaffirms the current characterization of Democrats as racially liberal and Republicans as racially conservative (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022; Westwood and Peterson 2020), while revealing how each party's content—e.g., their public brand and issue priorities—is shaped by alliance-building efforts between partisans.

Third, we demonstrate that this symbiotic relationship between PID and PoC solidarity is substantively similar across all four populations under study, including among multiracial individuals (Masuoka 2017; Davenport 2018), who have been overlooked in prior studies of PoC solidarity (e.g., Pérez et al. 2024). This increases confidence in our observed dynamics' generalizability, while enhancing the external validity of prior experimental work on PoC solidarity by demonstrating consequences for actual partisan loyalties. We conclude by discussing our results implication for both political scientists and political practitioners in a racially diversifying polity.

Theory and Hypotheses: The Partisan Roots of PoC Solidarity

We seek to explain why political dynamics may exist between PoC solidarity and PID, in particular. To accomplish this, we first define these variables and their nature, which will clarify why we should (not) expect meaningful relationships between them.

Literature on PoC solidarity conceptualizes it as a byproduct of identifying as a *person of color* (e.g., Cortland et al. 2017; Chin, Martir, Huo, et al. 2023; Pérez, Goldman, Huo, et al. 2024; Pérez et al. 2023). Solidarity entails behavioral commitment to an ingroup, which manifests as coordination and collective action with fellow ingroup members. Accordingly, solidarity is “associated with approaching...group-based activity” (Leach et al. 2008: 147). This situational aspect of solidarity implies it is the outcome of antecedent influences (e.g., shared discrimination), as well as a driver of political behavior.

In turn, research on partisan self-identification (PID) finds an even more stable variable than solidarity and one characterized as a primary influence on individual-level political attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Campbell et al. 1960; Green et al. 2002). Early pioneering work used cross-sectional surveys to establish that many people of color (i.e., Asian Americans and Latinos) held a weak and uncrystallized sense of partisan self-identification (Hajnal and Lee 2011). However, more recent work has focused on the consequences of partisan polarization for these populations, finding that many Asian Americans and Latinos have sorted themselves ideologically into their “correct” party, thus producing a stronger and more stable sense of PID (Perez et al. 2025). Using high-quality longitudinal surveys, independent research teams are finding that PID at the individual-level holds steady across the lifespans of many people of color, which makes it difficult (though not impossible) to shift dramatically (McCann and Jones-Correa 2020).² For instance, using a longitudinal panel of Asian American and Latino adults, Hopkins et al. (2023) find that across two waves of survey data collected at the height of Donald Trump’s (2016-2020) nativist presidency, only 7%-10% of Asian American and Latino adults moved more than a point on a traditional 7-point scale of partisan self-identification, a pattern meshing with similar analyses of non-Hispanic Whites (e.g., Green and Palmquist 1994; Green and Platz 2022).

² Besides using cross-sectional surveys to diagnose PID among Asian Americans and Latinos, another key difference between this earlier work and more recent longitudinal analyses involves PID’s measurement. Whereas prior work often gauged PID without probing non-compliant replies (e.g., don’t know, unsure) (Hajnal and Lee 2011), more recent work using conventional PID measures finds many of these non-compliant respondents lean toward Democrats or Republicans (Hopkins et al. 2022).

Given this sketch, what kind of relationship should we expect between PID and PoC solidarity? Although PID and PoC solidarity are real concepts that exist in PoC's long-term memories (Collins and Loftus 1975; Tourangeau et al. 2000; Lodge and Taber 2013), there might be no relationship between them because they are stored in distinct domains. Whereas PID is an explicitly political orientation that heavily structures reactions to and behavior in civic arenas, PoC solidarity is sporadically experienced, as highlighted by chronic tensions between PoC (e.g., Black-Latino conflicts) (McClain and Karnig 1990; Kaufmann 2004; Meier et al. 2004; McClain et al. 2007; Wilkinson 2015; Carey et al. 2016; Benjamin 2017; Carter 2019; Kim 2023). This might make solidarity a distal outcome beyond PID's reach. Moreover, although elections prime PID's salience (Sears and Valentino 1997; Michelitch and Utych 2018), this does not require activation of citizen's experiences *as* people of color, especially since PID is a mega-identity that encapsulates and supersedes other group attachments during elections (Mason 2018). Thus, our first null hypothesis ($H1_0$) is that PID is unrelated to PoC solidarity.

In contrast, another reading of these literatures suggests PID should positively influence PoC solidarity, which would align with growing research demonstrating PID's influence on a host of race-related attitudes and identities (e.g., Agadjanian and Lacy 2021; Engelhardt 2021; Enns and Jardina 2021; Egan 2021). The ideological sorting of the mass public into Democrats and Republicans has produced parties that are significantly more racially and ideologically homogenous than before (Levendusky 2009; Mason 2018). This polarization, along with increased attention to identity-inflected issues (Sides, Tausanovitch, and Vavreck 2022; Hopkins, Lelkes, and Wolken 2024), has yielded clearer stereotypes about who comprises each party and what its primary stances are (Ahler and Sood 2018; Westwood and Peterson 2020). Indeed, citizens have acquired racialized images about Democrats and Republicans (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022), with the former perceived

as intertwined with PoC and the latter with Whites, the “real” *Americans* (Devos and Banaji 2005; Danbold and Huo 2015). As some political scientists describe it:

“...Whites are the prototypical partisan among Republicans and Democrats...Yet both parties differ in the degree of variance around this central tendency. Among Republicans, Whites abound in a shallow pool of non-Whites ...In contrast, although Whites...prevail within the Democratic party...there is greater variance around this mean, with significant numbers of partisans of color, including Latinos...and African Americans...”(Pérez, Kuo, Russel, et al. 2022: 694).

This structural feature of parties facilitates stronger mental links between them and racial imagery—Democrats privilege the identities of PoC, while Republicans enshrine American identity (Dawkins and Hanson 2024). Thus, the Democratic party’s racial diversity provides PoC members regular opportunities (e.g., elections) to mentally rehearse inter-minority solidarity (Fazio 2014), with the possibility that this camaraderie accumulates and persists over time. Indeed, even if campaigns do not explicitly encourage PoC solidarity, the ideological sorting and racialized images of both parties might be sufficient for citizens to simultaneously consider themselves PoC *and* partisans, thereby strengthening interdependence between Democrats (relative to Republicans) (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015; Huddy, Mason, and Horwitz 2016). Our first alternate hypothesis, then, is that present levels of Republican self-identification among PoC will significantly decrease future solidarity between them (H1₁).³

What about the reverse relationship—that is, can PoC solidarity also influence PID among people of color? The prevailing view on PID suggests this is unlikely. Decades of research, much of it with survey panel data, suggests party self-identification is a stable orientation that changes minimally over people’s lifespan and generally serves as a parsimonious predictor of individual political behavior (e.g., Jennings and Niemi 1978; Green and Palmquist 1994; Green et al. 2002;

³ We use the label Republican stylistically, as the relationship works on a continuum: Democratic self-identification among PoC *heightens* future levels of solidarity.

McCann and Jones-Correa 2020). From this angle, partisan self-identification is open to occasional, fleeting changes, but largely persists across individuals' adult lives. Critically, partisanship's resistance to lasting and dramatic changes also occurs among people of color, as new research on Asian, Black, and Latino adults reveals (White and Laird 2020; McCann and Jones Correa 2020; Hopkins et al. 2023). Thus, our second null hypothesis is that PoC solidarity does not relate to PID over time among people of color ($H2_0$).

Nonetheless, a closer reading of solidarity's functionality, as well as recent developments in the polarization of the mass public, indicate that perhaps PoC solidarity can, in fact, shape one's sense of PID among Asians, Blacks, Latinos, and other people of color. Careful conceptualization and measurement work characterizes solidarity as the degree of self-involvement in an ingroup one identifies with (e.g., people of color) (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, et al. 1999). As Leach and co-authors (2008) describe it, solidarity drives ingroup members to engage in group-centric activities. Consequently, solidarity reflects a commitment to preserve an ingroup's well-being and coordinating with ingroup members to accomplish this through available means—including via politics.

This latter proposition is supported by decades-long trends in the racial diversification of the Democratic party and the racial homogenization of the Republican party. These trends have recently accelerated as both parties have increasingly polarized (Rosenfeld 2018; Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, et al. 2019). Beginning in the 1930s, Democrats began to organize and convert African Americans in northern cities to their party as part of a larger effort to rebrand itself as the party of “workers” during the Great Depression (Schickler 2016; Carmines and Stimson 1989). Decades later in 1965, after the revision of immigration laws to facilitate the entry of newcomers and their families, Democrats worked to gradually incorporate Asian and Latino immigrants and their descendants into their ranks, a trend most visibly seen in the upsurge in new Asian and Latino voters in 1990s

California (now, a reliably “blue” state) (Lien 2001; Pantoja, Segura, and Ramírez 2001; Wong 2005; Ramírez 2015).

In turn, Democrats’ increased focus on civil rights and PoC spurred the outflow of White conservative Democrats toward Republicans (e.g., Lublin 2004; Valentino and Sears 2005; Abrajano and Hajnal 2016), transforming the latter into a party whose center of gravity is racially White, surrounded by sparse numbers of non-Whites (cf. Pérez et al. 2022). This racial asymmetry between the parties means that, as key members of Democrats’ electoral coalitions in recent memory, Asian Americans, Black Americans, Latinos, and other non-Whites have had recurring opportunities to “practice” building intraparty alliances based on issues affecting their specific communities. This rehearsal of cross-racial allyship—and the general expectation that Democrats of color will earnestly engage in it (Kaufmann 2004; Benjamin 2017)—suggests PoC regularly learn to build solidarity through common interests and a shared identity as *people of color* (Pérez 2021; see also Wilkinson 2015; Sirin et al. 2021). In this way, intraparty dynamics within the Democratic party provide a crucible for allyship between PoC, which yields our final hypothesis: present levels of PoC solidarity weaken future Republican self-identification among Asian Americans, Black Americans, Latinos, and other non-Whites (H2₁). Table 1 displays our four hypotheses for convenience.

Table 1. Hypotheses about Temporal Dynamics Between PID and PoC Solidarity

PID → PoC Solidarity?	PoC solidarity → PID?
(H1 ₀) PID is unrelated to PoC solidarity.	(H2 ₀) PoC solidarity is unrelated to PID among people of color.
(H1 ₁) Republican PID significantly decreases PoC solidarity.	(H2 ₁) Solidarity between PoC weakens Republican PID among people of color.

Research Design

We test this collection of hypotheses with the 2023 American Multiracial Panel Study, a two-wave panel data set collected in June 2023 and December 2023 via YouGov.⁴ The first wave was collected June 10-21 and sampled large numbers of African American ($n = 985$), Asian American ($n = 678$), Latino American ($n = 975$), Multiracial American ($n = 764$), and White American adults ($n = 1,000$), for a total $N = 4,402$. Wave 2 ran November 17 – December 12, with YouGov able to recontact at least 50% of the Wave 1 respondents in each group (Black Americans $n = 514$, Asian Americans $n = 474$, Latinos $n = 562$, Multiracials $n = 476$, and White Americans $n = 695$).⁵ We focus on the samples of Asian, Black, Latino, and Multiracial adults ($n = 2,026$) and use survey weights constructed by YouGov to adjust for attrition and maintain sample representativeness.

We operationalize PoC solidarity with a previously validated three-item battery (Pérez, Goldman, et al 2024). In both waves, respondents used 5-point agree-disagree scales to answer three items: 1) “I feel solidarity with people of color, which include Black, Asian, and Latino people;” 2) “The problems of Black, Latino, Asian, and other people of color are similar enough for them to be allies;” and 3) What happens to people of color in this country has something to do with what

⁴ While not strictly a probability sample, YouGov’s synthetic random sampling approach offers high-quality data given its opt-in pool. We also readily acknowledge that YouGov and other vendors face selection issues into political surveys that may produce inaccurate generalizations (Bailey 2024). We return to this in the conclusion.

⁵ While the 6-month period may be arbitrary, work finds change between presumptively fundamental orientations in short-term windows (e.g., Engelhardt 2021). If anything, this timeframe offers a restrictive test for uncovering potential interrelationships given work detailed above that partisanship and solidarity are closely-held orientations.

happens in my life as a [Black, Asian, Latino, multiracial] person” (cf. Leach et al. 2008; Dawson 1994).

We operationalize partisanship by pooling together 3 items available in both AMPS waves. Doing so allows us to tame measurement error and enhance variation beyond the typical American National Election Study single item. We use individuals’ responses to the 7-point branched ANES item as well as their ratings of Democrats and Republicans on separate 101-point feeling thermometers (cf. Goren 2005). This partisanship measure thus captures people’s affective and cognitive orientations toward the parties, which are key aspects of one’s self-identification with a group (Tajfel 1981; Leach et al 2008). We score the items such that high values denote greater affiliation with, and warmer affect toward, the Republican party relative to the Democratic party.⁶

Modeling Strategy

We test our hypotheses by estimating a cross-lagged panel model (e.g., Engelhardt 2021; Goren 2005; Finkel 1995). Compared to other panel models, this approach assesses dynamics by estimating connections between variables across waves. Specifically, we test if average scores on a construct measured at time one (T_1) predict average scores on another construct at time two (T_2), after accounting for initial (T_1) average scores on this other construct. By relying on two waves of data, we cannot distinguish how much stable trait-like differences in solidarity and partisanship or state-like within-person fluctuations in the same variable account for any potential temporal connections (Hamaker et al 2015). Yet this distinction only matters when trying to infer the specific source of observed dynamics. Our theory is agnostic about whether *changes* in (rather than *levels* of) partisanship precede changes in solidarity. It is also agnostic about whether partisanship, as a stable

⁶ Our substantive results do not depend on the inclusion of the feeling thermometers but we retain them for enhanced precision.

feature of individuals, promotes *changes* in solidarity (e.g., through repeated exposure to messages and ideas) (Miller 2000). Our more modest and specific goal here is to clarify the temporal order between PoC solidarity and PID, which makes our two-wave cross-lagged approach highly suitable for this objective. Because time invariant individual differences can still confound temporal relationships like these, we address this possibility through our longitudinal modeling of these data (Zyphur et al 2019; Hamaker 2023).

We estimate our cross-lagged model within a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework (Goren 2005; Finkel 1995). This approach is advantageous because it allows us to address measurement error while specifying longitudinal relationships between our explanatory variables. For our model's measurement component, we specify PoC solidarity and partisanship as separate latent variables in each wave, allowing us to remove random error from the observed items. To ensure temporal consistency in the latent variable's meaning (e.g., partisanship), we constrain item factor loadings and thresholds or intercepts to equality across waves 1 and 2. Because we measure PoC solidarity on agree-disagree scales that are all phrased in the same direction, we also estimate a *method* factor to avoid confounding substantive variation with variation due to acquiescence bias. We define this method factor as a third latent variable on which all 6 PoC solidarity items load, as well as four items, two in each wave, that are unrelated to race but also use agree-disagree response scales to define this acquiescent-responding dimension (Watson 1992).⁷ To identify this factor we fix all the agree-disagree items' factor loadings to 1 under the assumption that response bias affects each item similarly (Savalei and Falk 2014). Finally, we constrain to 0 the method factor's correlation with the other substantive factors.

⁷ These items ask: "In general, it feels like most people in this country can be trusted." and "Overall, it feels like most people in this country trust each other."

The model's structural component features two regressions which offer information on each construct's temporal effects. To test H1, we predict wave two PoC solidarity with partisanship and PoC solidarity measured in wave one. A statistically significant coefficient on partisanship supports H1₁—knowing someone's initial partisanship gives us information on later PoC solidarity, net of initial solidarity. To test H2, we predict wave two partisanship with the same variables. Evidence for H2₁ comes from a significant coefficient on PoC solidarity, indicating someone's initial solidarity with PoC gives us information on later partisanship, net of initial partisanship.

To strengthen our inferences about PoC solidarity, our model includes PoC identity as a covariate. By indexing “the salience and importance of ingroup membership” (Leach et al 2008: 147) PoC ID is related to PoC solidarity ($r_s = .47-.64$ in wave 1 across groups) and published evidence indicates they are related but distinct (Pérez et al. 2024b). However, whereas PoC identity indexes one's sensitivity to events that implicate people of color, PoC solidarity captures the propensity to behaviorally invest in and coordinate with other people of color toward common goals. This focus on intragroup coordination underpins our theoretical focus on PoC solidarity (rather than PoC ID). Indeed, one can say that alliance-building within parties demands such camaraderie. Thus, our analysis ensures that any observed relationship(s) between PoC solidarity and PID is independent of PoC identity's influence. Consequently, we define a latent PoC ID variable with three items in wave one (e.g., “The fact that I am a person of color is an important part of my identity.”). Because they also record responses on agree-disagree scales, we include them on our method factor. We take advantage of the SEM framework to freely estimate within-wave residual covariances between PoC solidarity, PoC ID, and partisanship under the assumption they are related for reasons separate from the cross-lagged effects (McArdle 2009).

Results: Partisanship and PoC Solidarity Display a Bidirectional Relationship

Table 2 reports estimates from two versions of the cross-lagged model. The first includes only partisanship, PoC solidarity, and PoC ID. The second controls for a series of other background characteristics that may bias the estimates in a two-wave model (Zyphur et al 2019; Hamaker 2023). These include political interest, gender, age, education, and immigrant generation, which are common covariates in studies of public opinion among PoC (Pérez 2021). The appendix reports estimates for these parameters, as well as a model controlling for racial identification.

We first consider the top panel, which tests H1: Republican partisanship decreases PoC solidarity. The parameter estimates offer evidence consistent with this hypothesis. Partisanship measured in June 2023 predicts PoC solidarity in November/December, with Republicans expressing less solidarity than Democrats. This effect from partisanship to PoC solidarity is sizeable. Its standardized coefficients (β) of -0.12 (without covariates) and -0.14 (with covariates) fall between the 75th and 80th percentiles in observed effect sizes (Orth et al 2022). The sharpened precision of this estimate after adding controls indicates some unaccounted-for confounding from more stable individual-level characteristics related to these constructs.

Table 2. Cross-Lagged Panel Model of Partisanship and PoC Solidarity

	Baseline	Demographics
	<u>Standardized Regression Slopes</u>	
<u>DV: PoC Solidarity_{w2}</u>		
PoC Solidarity _{w1}	0.47(0.07)***	0.44(0.05)***
Partisanship _{w1}	-0.12(0.05)*	-0.14(0.04)***
PoC ID _{w1}	0.15(0.07)*	0.12(0.05)**
<u>DV: Partisanship (Republican)_{w2}</u>		
PoC Solidarity _{w1}	-0.08(0.03)**	-0.07(0.02)**
Partisanship (Republican) _{w1}	0.79(0.03)***	0.77(0.03)***
PoC ID _{w1}	-0.06(0.02)**	-0.02(0.02)
	<u>Fit Indices</u>	
χ^2_{scaled} (DF)	616.69 (150)	1362.29 (305)
CFI	0.98	0.99
SRMR	0.07	0.07
RMSEA [90% CI]	0.040	0.041

[0.037, 0.044]

[0.043, 0.045]

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < 0.001$. Method factor estimated but withheld from table. Analyses weighted.

The bottom panel tests H2: PoC solidarity weakens attachment to the Republican party, conversely strengthening attachment to the Democratic party. The parameter estimates support this hypothesis as well ($\beta = -0.08$, without covariates; $\beta = -0.07$, with covariates). Specifically, PoC solidarity captured in June predicts partisanship measured in November/December, with the negative sign indicating solidarity has the expected relationship with Republican partisanship. These associations persist even after adding key covariates. Substantively, solidarity's estimated cross-lagged effect falls between the 50th and 55th percentiles of observed effects (Orth et al 2022). Thus, while partisanship's cross-lagged effect on PoC solidarity is larger than PoC solidarity's on partisanship, this difference is more likely non-zero in the model without controls ($p = .031$) than with ($p = .077$).

The Dynamic Between PID and PoC Solidarity Operates Equivalently Across PoC

Although we find support so far for H1₁ and H2₁, our analyses assume these dynamics work equivalently for all people of color. Yet orientations toward partisanship can vary between racial and ethnic groups in important ways (Carlos 2018; Hajnal and Lee 2011; Pérez, Lee, and Mártir 2024; Raychaudhuri 2018). For instance, Black Americans have uniquely strong connections to the Democratic party (White and Laird 2020; Hajnal and Lee 2011), and only recently have scholars identified more crystallized partisan orientations among Asian and Latino PoC (Hopkins et al. 2022; McCann and Jones-Correa 2020; Pérez et al. 2025). Similarly, (non-)Whites consider Black adults the prototypical person of color, which means they define this mega-group's norms and values. Thus, the category, *people of color*, may lead Black Americans to have unique beliefs about group solidarity and its connection to partisanship (Chin et al. 2023).

We therefore test whether evidence for $H1_1$ and $H2_1$ varies between Black and non-Black PoC. Within an SEM framework, we estimate a model that fixes the measurement of the latent variables to equality across groups (i.e., Black and non-Black PoC), but allows the structural parameters to vary freely across groups. In other words, we hold constant the meaning of partisanship and PoC solidarity, but allow the estimated relationships between these variables, including the cross-lagged effects and covariances between the latent variables, to differ between PoC. We then test whether these relationships are statistically similar across PoC by estimating a second model that constrains these structural parameters to equality across groups. This second model reflects the hypothesis that our observed dynamics are statistically equivalent across PoC. Since the constrained model is nested within the unconstrained model, we test for heterogeneity by fixing to equality the structural parameters (regression slopes and latent variable covariances) and evaluating how much the model's fit deteriorates. If it deteriorates, then the unconstrained model better reflects the observed relationships, providing clear evidence for differences between Black and non-Black PoC in the observed dynamics between PoC solidarity and PID.

Table 3 reports common SEM fit statistics from these two models. Conventionally, CFI values between .90 and 1.00 are considered ideal, while SRMR values below .10 generally indicate good model fit. Moreover, RMSEA values between 0.00 and 0.05 reflect a very well-fitting and parsimonious model (Brown 2007). In terms of our unconstrained model, the corresponding CFI, SRMR, and RMSEA indicate good fit. Further, we find that the fit of our constrained model improves, if anything. While the likelihood ratio test is near significance ($\Delta\chi^2(8) = 14.7, p = .07$), this procedure is over-powered to detect trivial model differences when sample sizes are large (as is the case here) (Brown 2007). The CFI slightly increases and RMSEA slightly decreases, with both shifts indicating better-fitting models. We thus conclude that there is little meaningful heterogeneity in the observed dynamics between PoC solidarity and PID across PoC. In short, the evidence for

H1₁ and H2₁ that we find appears to apply to all racial and ethnic subsamples of people of color in our dataset (i.e., African American, Asian American, Latino, and Multiracial adults).

Table 3. Model Fit Comparison of Group Heterogeneity vs. Homogeneity in Temporal Relationships between PoC solidarity and Partisanship

	χ^2_{scaled} (DF)	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA (90% CI)
Unconstrained	1077.28 (325)	.973	.080	.049 (.046, .052)
Constrained	1054.47 (333)	.974	.089	.048 (.044, .051)

Robustness to Political Awareness

Next, we examine the robustness of our results by evaluating the sensitivity of the estimated dynamics to omitted variable bias. Scholars sometimes find that the links between partisanship and other orientations often depend on individual differences in political interest and awareness (e.g., Carsey and Layman 2006; Engelhardt 2021). Even orientations presumed to be more easily linked to politics, such as attachment to social and racial groups (Green et al. 2002), sometimes depend on one's interest in and awareness of politics (Lee 2008; Jones 2023). Although our dynamic model (with demographic controls) is adjusted for individual differences in political interest and education, our specifications still assume the cross-lagged influences of partisanship and PoC solidarity have similar effects *across* levels of political engagement.

We address this potential limitation by operationalizing awareness with a political interest item included in the AMPS, which asks people how often they pay attention to social and political affairs (1 = Hardly at all, 4 = Most of the time). While research suggests political knowledge items better index chronic cognitive engagement and understanding (Zaller 1992), we do not have relevant

measures in the AMPS and constructing truly comparable knowledge measures across racialized groups is known to be challenging and often unattainable (Abrajano 2015; Pérez 2015).⁸

Given the distribution of the political interest variable, we create 3 categories of interest, which we define as being below, at, or above the sample median.⁹ We then estimate a model constraining its measurement parameters to equality across groups but freely estimating its structural parameters (which capture the dynamics between PoC solidarity and PID). After fitting this model, we estimate a second model that constrains the structural parameters to equality. Table 4 displays the results for this comparison of (un)constrained models. We find some evidence that the constraints slightly reduce the model's global fit, as indicated by changes in our CFI and chi-square test ($\Delta\chi^2_{scaled}, p=.01$). However, the reduction in CFI is trivial and well below recommended thresholds ($\Delta = +/- .01$) (Cheung and Rensvold 2002). Moreover, the significant chi-square test observed here is unsurprising given this procedure's elevated Type I error rate in large samples like ours (Brown 2007). What is especially diagnostic in this case is the persistently small differences in RMSEA: a fit statistic that penalizes more complex models. As table 4 shows, moving from an unconstrained to constrained model leaves our low RMSEA value statistically intact, as evidenced by the overlap in confidence intervals for this fit statistic. We thus favor the constrained model and conclude that evidence for H1₁ and H2₁ does not vary appreciably by political interest.

Table 4. Model Fit Comparison of Heterogeneity vs. Homogeneity in Temporal Relationships between PoC solidarity and Partisanship by Political Interest

	χ^2_{scaled} (DF)	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA (90% CI)
Unconstrained	969.85 (498)	.978	.082	.039 (.035, .043)
Constrained	1089.85 (518)	.974	.105	.042 (.038, .045)

⁸ Jones (2023) reports self-reported political interest has effects similar to political awareness as indexed by political knowledge on the identity-to-politics link.

⁹ These contain 27%, 34%, and 39% of respondents respectively.

Summary and Implications

We began this paper by asking about the political origins of PoC solidarity—a keen theoretical question with few empirical answers so far. We suggested that perhaps, just perhaps, the high and persistent levels of PoC solidarity previously observed by scholars are shaped, in part, by partisan self-identification: one of the most fundamental variables in the study of mass political behavior in the U.S. (Green et al. 2002; McCann and Jones-Correa 2020; Hopkins et al. 2023). By leveraging a unique panel survey of African American, Asian American, Latino, and Multiracial adults, we found evidence that helps to clarify one of the roots *and* consequences of PoC solidarity. Specifically, we found that Republican PID (at time 1) significantly reduces PoC solidarity (at time 2). We also discovered that net of this relationship, PoC solidarity (at time 1) significantly decreases self-identification as a Republican among African American, Asian American, Latino, and Multiracial adults (at time 2). Together, these patterns support the view that partisan identity serves as a crucible for allyship between PoC, with the observed dynamics operating uniformly across all four populations under study.

While informative, we note one potential limitation. Political interest increasingly influences who completes political studies, including on YouGov (Bailey 2024).¹⁰ A sample more politically engaged than the true population would mean we might overestimate partisanship’s contribution to PoC solidarity given the former’s heightened crystallization among the politically involved. But simultaneously, a more engaged sample would mean that people’s attitudes and attitudes *in general*, not just partisanship, are more likely crystallized, making them less likely to change and enabling

¹⁰ While weighting can adjust for non-response, it can actually add bias (Bailey 2024). We thus report in the appendix unweighted analyses comparable to those we report here.

alternative causal paths. So, while our sample is potentially unique in these regards, sample biases of this kind are hard to predict.

With caveats like these in mind, where should scholars go next with these findings? There are many directions, but in the interest of space, we wish to highlight and discuss three possibilities. The most obvious implication of our findings, at least to us, is that solidarity between PoC has *structural* political roots, as manifested through PID. Why is this important? A close look at the published record in political science (Pérez et al. 2024a) and social psychology (Cortland et al. 2017) shows that the triggers of PoC solidarity are mostly social in nature and largely *devoid* of politics. This is remarkable in its own right, given that something non-political (i.e., perceived shared discrimination) has significant downstream consequences for political attitudes. However, our results open a new door to better understanding the *political* conditions that give rise to (or reduce) PoC solidarity. One promising start here would be to simply develop and test new manipulations that focus on the political triggers of PoC solidarity, with this helping unpack what aspect of partisanship's content (e.g., ideological programs, issue positions, candidate traits, electoral appeals) facilitate the relationships we found. This would not only help to further enhance the external validity of published findings so far, but also help to synthesize the study of racial and ethnic politics (REP) and the study of partisan polarization: two fields which generally do not cross-fertilize each other (Pérez and Cobian 2024). We find the latter to be an especially important next step because the overwhelming majority of research on the polarization of the U.S. mass public centers on non-Hispanic Whites, with few studies expressly focused on PoC (e.g., Huddy et al. 2016). Thus, an integrative effort like this would serve social scientists well by providing deeper evidence about polarization's consequences for people of color.

In addition, we think our findings highlight a clear opening to better cement conceptual and theoretical links between how political scientists study PoC solidarity and how social psychologists

study the same phenomenon (e.g., Chin et al. 2023; Craig et al. 2022). Social psychologists have invested deeply in better understanding the types of social situations (e.g., perspective-taking) and cognitive outputs (e.g., perceived similarity) of solidarity between PoC, but usually at the expense of political outcomes. In turn, political scientists are generally interested in the political triggers of PoC solidarity, but at the expense of truly grasping and fully detailing the psychological processes behind these relationships. A deeper synthesis between these two research areas stands to bring new questions and new insights about PoC politics. We think this is especially the case when it comes to political behavior (e.g., voting). If, as we have observed, PoC solidarity has deep political roots, then it stands to reason that it might also have strong political effects, especially when it comes to political *behavior*. Interestingly, while political behavior scholars have faced conceptual and theoretical challenges in explaining when attitudes drive political behavior (Pérez and Mártir 2025), social psychologists have plenty of validated mechanisms worthy of exploration, including the role of attitude importance and behavioral intentions in producing actual political behavior (Ajzen and Kruglanski 2019; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; see also Chin et al. 2022; van Zomeren et al. 2008). Integrating these insights, we think, will help scholars better anticipate *when* and *how* PoC solidarity yields downstream *behavioral* effects.

Finally, we think that our results raise interesting new questions about the coherence and political dynamics of people of color as a mega-group in American politics. The evidence we report here is consistent with the view that political solidarity mutes divisions between PoC—a pattern we can now trace, in part, to intraparty dynamics among Democrats. But it is important to note that this evidence, and other evidence like it (e.g., Pérez et al. 2024b), is gleaned from studies of national-level politics. This leaves questions open about whether the patterns we have observed here generalize to other settings, such as state-level and local-level politics. In fact, we urge scholars to push in these two directions, given that a big slice of interminority politics in the U.S. happens between

communities of color at the state and local levels (e.g., McClain and Karnig 1990; Kaufman 2004; Meier et al. 2004; Benjamin 2017). Therefore, to have a fuller grasp about the coherence and political promise of a mega-group, like people of color, scholars must theorize about why we should (not) observe comparable dynamics in other major political settings that are strongly suspected of conditioning politics between PoC.

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