

**Race Matters:
Latino Racial Identities and Political Beliefs**

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Prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC, August 31-September 4, 2005. Authors names are presented alphabetically, and their email addresses are polsxn@langate.gsu.edu, Adrian.Pantoja@asu.edu, and gmsegura@u.washington.edu, respectively. Copyright, American Political Science Association.

Abstract

We examine how the racial self-identifications of Latinos affect orientations towards the political system, specifically partisanship, ideology, issue positions, and the sense of commonality Latinos feel towards African-Americans and whites. Our central contention is that racial identities matter in Latino orientations to the political system. While Latinos may, in fact, occupy a “middle” position between whites and blacks, this masks substantial and significant political variation among those claiming a Latino or Hispanic identity, variation which can be attributed, at least in part, to variation in racial identification. We find that racial identity among Latinos appears to significantly influence both their policy views—at least when the policy has a clear racial aspect in the broader population—and their perceptions of other racial and ethnic groups in the US. Afro-Latinos are significantly more supportive of government sponsored health care, and significantly less supportive of the death penalty, than Latinos identifying as white. Moreover, when assessing their “commonality” with non-Hispanic blacks and whites, Afro-Latinos feel significantly closer to African-Americans whereas white Latinos feel significantly closer to whites. By contrast, when we examine broader indicators of political orientation—including partisanship and ideology—the results are far less striking. While there are modest differences occasionally approaching significance, it is not the case that Afro- and white- Latinos were polarized on these measures. We discuss what we see as the important implications of racially driven political diversity among Latinos.

Race Matters: Latino Racial Identities and Political Beliefs

While racial classifications vary across societies, the black-white racial dichotomy has been a long standing feature of the American experience. How present immigrants forge their own identities within this entrenched racial schism—and incorporate identities understood in their nations of origin—is of great interest to social scientists as these identities may alter the nature of race relations in the United States. Although Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos can be classified as any race within the framework of the US Census, researchers have largely treated them as ethnic groups whose identities lie with the ancestral homelands (Garcia 1982; Keefe and Padilla 1987; Oboler 1995) and who may over time or within a particular context develop a broader pan-ethnic identity (Padilla 1985; Jones-Correa and Leal 1996; also see Claassen 2004). As a consequence, there is a presumption that Latino identities fall somewhere in between in the black-white racial divide (Lee and Bean 2004).

On the US Census, however, Latino identity is distinct from racial identity. That is, whether someone identifies as “Hispanic” is determined wholly apart from the question of their racial self-identification, on which “Hispanic” is not an option. When asked to identify their race, Latinos generally select either the category “white,” or the category “some other race,” while a growing number identify as “black” (Rodríguez 2000; Logan 2003). Our interest is in determining the political relevance of these choices and their underlying identities. Specifically, how do Latino racial identities structure their political beliefs? Are the political preferences of white Latinos similar to those of non-Hispanic whites? Do these preferences diverge from those of African Americans

and Afro-Latinos?¹ Finally, how distinct are the political preferences of Latinos who do not identify with the black or white racial categories?

This paper seeks to answer these questions by using the 1999 Harvard Kennedy School/Kaiser Family Foundation/*Washington Post* Latino Survey. The survey includes a nationally representative sample of Latinos, non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks. Among Latinos, and critical to our study, the survey also includes which race Latinos identified—white, black, or Hispanic. Using these racial self-identifications, we examine how they affect orientations towards the political system, specifically partisanship, ideology, issue positions, and the sense of commonality these respondents feel towards African-Americans and whites. Our central contention is straightforward—racial identities matter in Latino orientations to the political system. That is, while Latinos may, in fact, occupy a “middle” position between whites and blacks (Lee and Bean 2004), this observation masks substantial and significant political variation among those claiming a Latino or Hispanic identity, variation which can be attributed, at least in part, to variation in racial identification.

Latino Racial Identities

Ethnic and racial categories are dynamic social constructs (Omi and Winant 1995). Perhaps the most vivid example of this dynamism in the US was the change of eastern and southern Europeans from nonwhite ethnics to whites over the course of the 20th century. How most contemporary immigrants identify with the established white or black racial labels and the accompanying politics is less clear, since Latinos and Asians make up the lion’s share of new immigrants. Because of phenotype and other features

¹ Throughout the paper the terms black Latinos, black Hispanics, Afro-Latinos and Afro-Hispanics is used interchangeably. The term white Latinos is used to differentiate between Latinos who racially identify as white and persons who are non-Hispanic whites.

owing to the unique racial histories of several Latin American societies, some Latinos can pass as white Americans while others are considered to be African Americans, Native Americans, or something altogether distinct. Moreover, a significant percentage identify with the black and white racial categories as designated by the US Census. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the racial composition of the Latino population according to US Census statistics.

	1980	1990	2000
White Hispanic	63.7% (9,397,240)	53.9% (11,776,701)	49.9% (17,601,942)
Black Hispanic	2.6% (388,240)	2.9% (633,516)	2.7% (939,471)
“Some other race” Hispanic	33.7% (4,979,240)	44.2% (9,426,634)	47.4% (16,700,055)
Hispanic Total	100% (14,764,720)	100% (21,836,851)	100% (35,241,468)
Source: John R. Logan, How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans			

Clearly, a plurality of Latinos self-identify racially as white, although this has been in decline. The total number of Afro-Latinos has risen over time, yet as a percentage of the total Latino population, the number has remained relatively constant. Finally, there has been a dramatic growth in the number of Latinos identifying as “some other race” rather than choosing a black or white racial identity, suggesting a growing discomfort with the racial categories used in the census. In fact, slightly more than 97% of persons who checked “some other race” in the 2000 US Census were Latinos (Rodríguez 2000). Nonetheless, given that over half of Latinos are willing to identify with a white or black racial group requires an investigation into the meaning of these racial identities.

A Preference for Whiteness

The choice on the part of the majority of US Latinos to self-identify racially as white may be out of a desire to achieve upwardly mobility as whiteness conveys greater status, access to resources, and political power. Latinos may simply be following the practice of previous immigrants who distanced themselves from blacks in order to transform themselves into white Americans (Jacobson 1998). It has even been suggested that Latinos—specifically Mexican-Americans—are better off politically should they “choose” to identify as white ethnics, rather than see themselves as a permanently racialized “other” (Skerry 1996). Thus, self-selecting a white racial identity may be undertaken for instrumental reasons as African-Americans may rightly be perceived by Latinos—including Afro-Latinos—as facing higher levels of discrimination, segregation, and poverty (Arce, Murguía, and Frisbie 1987; Denton and Massey 1989; Telles and Murguía 1990; Rosenbaum 1996).

Claims that Latino racial identities are forged in the US for instrumental reasons ignores the significance of anti-black and anti-indigenous racism in Latin America (Minority Rights Group 1995; Wade 1997; Andrews 2004; Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004). Despite having high rates of miscegenation and popular declarations that these nations are racial democracies where racial prejudices are virtually non-existent, or at least considerably less blatant than in the United States, the Latin American racial hierarchy also privileges light-skin and European features (Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004; Dulitzky 2005). Within this hierarchy, blacks or *negros* are at the bottom while *indios* or indigenous persons occupy a status equal to—or at least similar to—blacks, that is, somewhere near the bottom depending on the country. It is no surprise that a large

percentage of Latin Americans identify as white or employ terms like *moreno*, *mulato*, *mestizo*, *trigueño*, *indio*, and so forth, as a way of distancing themselves from the category *negro*. Thus, the black-white racial dichotomy of the United States exists as a continuum in Latin America as a result of these unique racial categories and the addition of substantial indigenous populations to the mix (Wade 1997; Andrews 2004).

Further, the mapping of race to phenotype is far more complex in Latin American societies than in the US.² The presence of dark skin and other phenotypically “African” features or, alternatively, brown skin and indigenous features, to the extent that these idealized phenotypes exist, are not alone sufficient to shape the identity of a Latin American migrant, in their country of origin or here in the United States. Other factors, most notably socio-economic status and assimilation, confound this relationship. It is well understood in most Latin societies that money “whitens.” That is, the racial identity attributed to any individual by him- or her-self, as well as the observer, will be endogenous (at least in part) to their social class and economic power.

Similarly, the degree of social assimilation of indigenous and mixed-race individuals varies dramatically as well. For example, though many Mexicans (and, indeed, most rural dwellers) are the descendents of either exclusively indigenous stock or are mestizo—i.e. mixed indigenous and European—the Mexican Census estimates that approximately nine million Mexicans (8% of the population) speak indigenous languages—Nahuatl, Mayan, Mixtec, and Zapotec are the largest—as a first language. It is highly likely that racial self-identification of Spanish-speaking city dwellers will be

² Which is not to say that the relationship between phenotype and race is without complications in the US, only that the level of consensus around racial categories is somewhat greater here than elsewhere.

different from Tarascan-speaking residents of Janitzio, Michoacan, for example. That is, racial identity may be endogenous to both geographic location and language proficiency.

Latino migrants may well have a clear understanding of racial identities and hierarchies in their home-country prior to migrating (Sawyer 2005). However, migrating into a racially bifurcated country like the US invariably forces many Latin Americans, in particular those whose own self-identity and appearance does not map well onto the black-white racial dichotomy, to re-order their racial identities (Itzigsohn, Giorguli and Vazquez 2005). After all, terms like *trigeño* and other intermediate racial categories are non-existent in the English language or the American social context. In some instances, Latin Americans who self-identified and were seen by others in their respective countries as white must change their identities as they are considered people of color in the United States (Levitt 2001). The scholarship and popular literature are rich with examples of Latin Americans who were once *blanco* but are now seen as ethnics or those who thought themselves to be *indios* or *morenos* but are seen as African American (Waters 1994; Duany 1998; Torres-Saillant 1998; Rodríguez 2000; Bailey 2001; Itzigsohn, Giorguli and Vazquez 2005). Much of this research is based on intensive interviews, so there are no clear figures of the number of Latin American immigrants who reorganize their racial identities after migrating to the US. The closest indicators we have are based on census data of Puerto Ricans on the island and mainland (continental United States). Duany (2005) finds that in the 2000 Census 80.5% of Puerto Ricans on the island identified as white, while the number drops to 46.4% on the mainland. Clearly, migration to the US alters the racial identities of many Latinos, but it does not necessarily change their desire to identify as white or reject blackness.

The Afro-Latinos

If most Latin Americans, including those perceived to be African American, reject the label black, who are the nearly one million self-identified Afro-Latinos? Recent census data analysis by Logan (2003) confirms the results drawn from qualitative studies on Afro-Latinos. First, and not surprisingly, Afro-Latinos do not come from a single Latin American country, and most avoid the label black. Among Latin Americans, Dominicans have the highest percentage of people who self identify as black (12.7% or 103,361), followed by Puerto Ricans (8.2% or 277,765). Research on immigrant Afro-Latinos finds a strong desire among the foreign-born to distance themselves from black Americans by stressing their Latin American or Hispanic ethnicity (Torres-Saillant 1998; Waters 1999; Levitt 2001). But immigrants are a smaller share of Afro-Latinos than other groups. According to Logan, Afro-Latinos are much less likely to be immigrants or speak a language other than English at home. Second generation Afro-Latino immigrants are not as quick to distance themselves from African Americans or reject a black identity as they are more likely to develop social ties with African Americans due to their higher rates residential segregation (Denton and Massey 1989; Rosenbaum 1996), and are commonly seen and treated as black Americans by out-groups (Waters 1994).

Several additional characteristics of self-identified Afro-Latinos need mentioning. Half of the self-identified Afro-Latinos are children under the age of 18. Among Afro-Latino children, 45.2% had one parent who was non-Hispanic black. Thus, intermarriage is an important source of black Latino identity, and accounts for the lower share of first generation and higher share of English-speakers among this group. Living in an area with large African American populations increases the likelihood of identifying racially

as black. Finally, Afro-Latinos and non-Hispanic blacks share similar socio-demographic profiles – low incomes, high levels of segregation, high rates of poverty, and low rates of homeownership (Logan 2003).

A quick comparison of the socio-demographic profile by racial identity among Latinos in the 1999 Harvard/Kaiser/Washington Post Latino Survey mirrors these trends.

Table 2. Selected Demographic Characteristics of the non-Hispanics Whites, African Americans, and Hispanics of Varying Racial Identities

	Whites	African-Americans	“White” Identifying Hispanics	“Other-Race” Identifying Hispanics	Volunteered “Hispanic” as a Race	Self-ID Afro-Latinos
Education	3.85 (1.54)	3.40 (1.54)	2.99 (1.91)	2.76 (1.69)	2.72 (1.77)	2.05 (1.76)
Income	4.92 (2.39)	4.12 (2.37)	3.77 (2.47)	3.55 (2.23)	3.40 (2.25)	2.38 (1.86)
Age	47.17 (17.11)	42.08 (18.85)	42.69 (16.77)	35.34 (14.18)	35.97 (14.88)	36.05 (14.20)
N	1693-1802	269-285	681-725	350-373	956-1010	247-264
Nicholson, Pantoja, and Segura 2005			Data Source: 1999 Washington Post/Kaiser/Kennedy School Survey of Latinos Cell Sizes vary as a consequence of missing data, usually on Income.			

Self-identified Afro-Latinos had a mean educational achievement rate lower than all other Hispanics, African-Americans, and whites. What’s more, their income lagged behind all other groups. On the question of age, however, Afro-Latinos appeared to be about as young as other Latinos (compared with non-Hispanic blacks and whites), but not significantly more so.

Social Identity Theory and the Relevance of Race

The evidence reviewed indicates that Afro-Latinos have many commonalities with non-Hispanic blacks as both are low-status groups that frequently occupy the same

geographic, social, and economic spaces (Denton and Massey 1989). Moreover, mixed parentage appears to be a significant source of black-Latino identity. Also, the demographic profiles and residential patterns of white Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites suggest some commonality between them.

What then is the effect of the black-white racial dichotomy on the levels of policy agreement and political similarity between white and black Latinos? It may be the case that socio-demographic polarization between blacks and whites generally may lead black Latinos and white Latinos to hold distinct policy preferences despite sharing the same ethnicity. However, shared socio-economic status may not be as significant as having shared racial identities. In order to understand the political significance of Latino racial identities, we situate our study in social psychological theories of group formation, namely social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982).

Social identity theory was designed to understand the formation and consequences of social groups, in particular inter-group conflict. The theory posits that individuals can be categorized as a group when individuals define themselves or are perceived by others to be members of the same social category (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Persons who are similar to the self become part of the in-group while persons who differ from the self are categorized as out-groups (Stets and Burke 2000). In pursuit of self-enhancement and cohesion, there is a basic need to see members of the in-group positively while viewing members of out-group less favorably, leading to inter-group discrimination and conflict depending on the nature of relations between the groups (Hogg, Terry and White 1995). Individuals are constantly linked to particular groups by virtue of some ascriptive traits. Hence, they become “prototypes,” and are perceived to embody the attitudes, values, and

behaviors of the group regardless of whether or not the individual identifies with the group or embodies the group's traits. While social identity theory can account for a wide-range of group behaviors and attitudes, it has largely been used to examine the consequences of racial and ethnic identities as these are the most significance social categories to which a person can belong (Allport 1954; Tajfel 1982).

Among the most noted research on the political consequences of racial identities is the work by Dawson (1994). Dawson seeks to explain black political homogeneity in the presence of economic or class heterogeneity. In other words, among the social identities available to African Americans, why is a racial identity more politically significant than say a middle-class or working-class identity? He argues that because African American life chances are largely shaped by race, individual blacks identify closely with their racial group – *linked fate*, and rely on their racial identity – *black utility heuristic*, to make political judgments. He writes, “This heuristic suggests that as long as race remains dominant in determining the lives of individual blacks, it is ‘rational’ for African Americans to follow group cues in interpreting and acting in the political world” (pgs., 57-58). Other scholars similarly find that African American political judgments and behaviors are strongly influenced by their racial group identity (Tate 2004).

Does race play a similar role among Latinos? Latinos are different from other minority groups in that they can be members of multiple ethno-racial social groups, e.g., black, Mexican, and Hispanic.³ With the exception of Kaufmann (2003) and Rodrigues and Segura (2004), the research has failed to explore the relative salience of these identities and their political consequences. Kaufmann found that pan-ethnic identities

³ The term and group “Asian-American” is also deeply problematic as a concept but beyond the scope of this paper.

relative to national or racial identities played a larger role in shaping Latino feelings of affinity toward African Americans. Affinity toward African Americans according to Kaufmann is critical for the development of “sustainable minority coalitions.”

Rodrigues and Segura (2004) agree and also find a positive relationship between pan-ethnic identity and the perception of commonality with African-Americans. Their findings differ, however, with the recognition that Latinos are “reluctant” coalition partners who manifest a generally weak sense of commonality with both whites *and* African-Americans. In fact, they find that Latino attitudes towards whites and blacks were generally positively correlated, suggesting the possibility that Latinos do not place themselves on any black-white dimension, and are not necessarily more disposed to feel any solidarity with African-Americans.

Expectations for the formation of sustainable minority coalitions may be a bit unrealistic (Vaca 2004), as there is little evidence of such coalitions among other ethnic or racial groups. If minority coalitions can be formed, however, it is likely that both shared policy interests and the perception of commonality will be critical contributors. That is, members of one group seeing the other as a potential ally, and shared political goals, are important preconditions (Rodrigues and Segura 2004) to the emergence of workable black-brown coalitions.

Racial identities, we suggest, shape both attitudes on particular issues, and the presence or absence of social solidarity with non-Hispanic whites or blacks. Moreover, it may be the case that Latino racial identities are more significant in shaping attitudes and coalitions around racial and implicitly racial policies. If Afro-Latinos employ a black utility heuristic because they have a shared sense of fate with other blacks and white

Latinos employ a white utility heuristic for similar reasons, we would expect to see clear differences in opinions by race when African-American and non-Hispanic white attitudes are polarized. Afro-Latino attitudes will be closely aligned with non-Hispanic black attitudes while white Latino preferences will be relatively similar to those of Anglos. The attitudes of ethnic Latinos are likely to fall somewhere between these two poles (Lopez and Pantoja 2004), though we are agnostic as to whether they will fall closer to the opinions of non-Hispanic blacks or non-Hispanic whites (Uhlener and Garcia 2002).

Hypotheses

Based on the above discussion we offer the following hypotheses. Our first two hypotheses concerns broad political orientations—party identification and ideology. Racial attitudes constitute a fundamental difference between the parties (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Layman and Carsey 2002) with African-Americans overwhelmingly identifying as Democrats and a majority of Anglos identifying as Republicans. Although Latinos identify primarily as Democratic, we hypothesize that the strong association between African-Americans and the Democratic party will produce a greater affinity for the Democratic party among Afro-Latinos.

H1: Afro-Latinos will be more likely to identify with the Democratic party than white Latinos, all else equal.

By contrast, we hypothesize that Latino racial identities are likely to have a minimal effect on broader, non-racialized measures of political attitudes. Whereas many citizens associate racial group interests with political parties (e.g., Carmines and Stimson 1989), ideology—whether self-identified or an amalgamation of issue positions—is less beholden to such perceptions. In other words, the specific issues that make up the

differences between liberal and conservatives—but certainly not all, as we discuss next—do not necessarily activate the racialized utility heuristic.

H2: Afro-Latinos will not differ significantly from white Latinos in ideology.

Yet, black Latino and white Latino differences will be pronounced on implicitly racial policies (e.g., capital punishment) and those issues concerning social welfare (e.g., national health insurance) where black-white attitudes have long been bifurcated (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Winter 2001).

H3: The effect of racial identity among Afro-Latinos will be strong in models of issue preferences on racialized issues. Afro-Latinos will be significantly more supportive of government-sponsored health insurance and significantly less supportive of capital punishment, ceteris paribus.⁴

Finally, we anticipate that questions regarding commonality with other racial groups are very likely to activate a racialized utility heuristic. That is, since race is explicitly mentioned, racial self-identities are very likely to shape Latino opinions about other racial groups. Accordingly, we expect Afro-Latinos to perceive far more commonality with African-Americans than white Latinos, and far less commonality with non-Hispanic whites.

H4: Afro-Latinos will manifest significantly stronger perceptions of commonality with African-Americans, and significantly weaker perceptions of commonality with Anglos, than white Latinos, ceteris paribus.

⁴ One additional racialized issue was queried in this survey—Affirmative Action. The question wording, however, was deeply problematic. Specifically, respondents were asked “Which comes closer to your opinion about college admissions: Colleges and universities should sometimes take a student’s racial and ethnic background into consideration when they decide which students to admit; OR Colleges and universities should select students without considering their racial or ethnic backgrounds.” This phrasing, lacking any explanation for why race might or might not be considered, meant that some respondents may have understood the first option to be favoring the permitting of overt racial bias or exclusion, etc. As a consequence, over 75% of all respondents, without regard to race or ethnicity, selected the second option, making interpretation of any results extremely speculative. Nevertheless, when the models were run on this issue, Afro-Latinos appeared significantly more liberal than white Latinos and had a distribution of opinion closer to that of African-Americans. Results available from the authors.

DATA AND RESULTS

Our data our from the 1999 Harvard Kennedy School/Kaiser Family Foundation/*Washington Post* Latino Survey. The survey includes a nationally representative sample of 2,417 Latinos, 1,802 non-Hispanic whites and 285 non-Hispanic blacks. Among the Latino sample, 30% identified racially as “white,” 11% chose “black,” 15% “some other race,” and 42% volunteered “Hispanic” as their race, though that was not among the original options. These racial identities form the primary independent variables of interest and for each one we create a dichotomous variable where one (1) indicates identification with a racial category and zero (0) indicates otherwise. The unexpressed category for each of the racial identity variables is the category white Latino. We also control for alternative explanations such as national origin group (where the unexpressed category includes all other Latinos, namely Central and South Americans), political interest, registered voter, and a host of demographic characteristics commonly associated with opinion on such issues (e.g., Claassen 2004; Kinder and Winter 2001). Although some of the control variables play an important role in our models, we do not discuss them at length given our interests in racial identity. The coding for these variables are found in the appendix.

Racial Identity, Party Identification, and Ideology

Our first set of analyses concern racial identify and broad orientations toward politics. As covered in our first two hypotheses we expect that racial identity plays a different role in Latinos’ partisan and ideological orientations. In the case of partisanship, as mentioned, we expect significant differences between white and black Latinos whereas for ideology we do not expect such differences. We code *Party*

Identification using a three-point scale where one (1) equals Democrat, zero (0) a non-leaning Independent, and negative one (-1) equals Republican. *Ideology* is coded using a three-point scale where one (1) equals liberal, zero (0) equals moderate, and negative one (-1) equals conservative. Lastly, to ensure that any findings about self-reported ideology are not an artifact of respondents misunderstanding ideological labels, we coded a measure of issue-based ideology. In so doing, we directly measure a respondent's general policy tendencies thus providing a more direct comparison with the black-white racialized policy issues we examine later. For each liberal response (e.g., favor abortion rights), the respondent receives a value of one (1) and zero (0) for conservative responses. Included in this measure are questions about abortion, gun control, government health insurance, military spending, physician-assisted suicide, and the death penalty.⁵ Responses to all these questions were summed to form a cumulative measure of policy liberalism ranging from zero (all conservative responses) to 6 (all liberal responses). Following convention, we used ordered logit to examine party identification and ideology (given they are on three point scales) and OLS regression to examine issue-based ideology.⁶

Table 3 depicts the results from our analyses of party identification and ideology. Our discussion begins with the effects of racial identity on party identification. As consistent with our hypothesis, racial identify has a significant effect on party identification. Afro-Latinos and Latinos that identified Hispanic as a racial category or some other category were significantly different than white Latinos (the baseline

⁵ Questions about gun control and military spending included three point scales with a moderate position located in the middle of the scale. We coded moderate responses to these questions as .5.

⁶ The use of ordered logit on issue-based ideology, rather than OLS, does not appreciably change the results. Given the large number of categories in this dependent variable, we prefer the OLS specification for ease of interpretation.

category) although the result for Afro-Latino is at the .10 significance level (using a two-tailed test). As anticipated, the coefficient for each of these variables is positive indicating a preference for Democratic Party identification. To interpret the coefficients for each racial identity, we calculated changes in probability (Long 1997). Holding all other variables at their mean values, Afro-Latinos were .07 more likely to identify as Democratic, all else equal. The change for Latinos who identified as a race other than white or black was nearly the same in effect as Afro-Latino (.074). Latinos who identified Hispanic as a racial category were .10 more likely to identify Democratic, all else equal.

[Table 3 About Here]

Although not our central concern, the control variables reveal that ethnic identity also plays an important role in shaping party identification. Most notably, and unsurprising, is the significant effect of Cuban ethnicity. Self-identified Cubans were significantly different than other Latinos. Furthermore, the negative coefficient indicates that these respondents are more favorably disposed toward Republican Party identification. Holding all other variables at their mean values, the effect of Cuban identity decreases the probability of Democratic Party identification by .17. The effects of Puerto Rican and Dominican identity were also significantly different from zero and positive indicating an affinity with the Democratic Party. Identifying as Mexican (as opposed to other Latinos) is negatively related to Democratic Party identification. This result, of course, needs to be understood in a comparative fashion, as over 2/3 of Mexican-Americans expressing a partisan preference still prefer the Democrats, just less so than other Central and South Americans (who are the unexpressed category among

nationality groups). Generally speaking, the effects of the ethnic variables are comparable to the effects of the racial identity variables. Identifying as Puerto Rican or Dominican increases the probability of Democratic Party identification by .07 and .14, respectively whereas Mexican identification decreases the probability of Democratic party identification by .07, when compared to other Central and South Americans and holding all other variables at their mean values.

Finally, as expected, Anglos and African-Americans were significantly different from white Hispanics. Specifically, Anglos were less likely to identify with Democrats and African-Americans were dramatically more likely. The changes in probability for these variables are among the largest with Anglos .15 less likely to identify as Democratic and African-Americans .35 more likely to do so. In addition, income, religiosity and political interest all have significant effects.

Our next set of analyses concern whether racial identity shapes ideological orientations. The models for ideology in columns two and three support our central hypothesis about Afro-Latinos. Regardless of which measure of ideology we used—self-reported or issue-based—the effects of Afro-Latino identity were not significantly different from zero. For African-Americans and Anglos, on the other hand, we see significant differences with white Latinos for issue-based ideology (and for Anglos self-reported ideology as well). Thus, the racial divide on policy liberalism between non-Latino blacks and whites is readily apparent but absent between white and black Latinos.

Yet, Latinos who identified Hispanic as a racial category were significantly different than white Latinos on self-reported ideology but not issue-based ideology. Since these respondents perceive their Latino identity in racial terms, their political

beliefs, at least insofar as they think of themselves as liberal or conservative, appear informed by racial identity. The strong differences we see for Anglos and African-Americans for issue-based ideology, however, do not appear for Latinos who identified Hispanic as a racial category so we are less confident concluding that these respondents have joined the black-white racial divide.

Racialized Issues and Racial Identity

As we had anticipated, the racial divide among white and black Latinos was absent for ideological orientations. Afro-Latinos were not significantly different than white Latinos in reporting ideological labels or in actual policy positions as measured by our variable of policy liberalism. Yet, broader ideological classifications, whether issue-based or self-reported, do not necessarily tap into the racial divide between non-Latino black and white Americans to the degree that opinion on specific issues may. In Table 4, we examine differences in racial identity among three policy issues with racial implications—the death penalty, national health care, and vouchers. Of the three issues, Kinder and Sanders (1996, 29) identify the death penalty as an “implicit” racial issue. Issues such as the death penalty do not explicitly address race in the way that affirmative action or equal employment policies do but nonetheless have racial implications.

Kinder and Sanders (1996) also found that issues concerning domestic social spending witnessed marked differences between non-Latino whites and African-Americans with blacks expressing more support for social spending than whites. Opinion on national health care fits squarely within this category and we thus anticipate racial differences between white and black Latinos as well as non-Latino blacks and whites.

The issue of vouchers does not easily fit into any of Kinder and Sander's (1996) categories so we are less certain as to whether it will invoke the racial divide. As with all issues, however, we anticipate that where differences between non-Latino blacks and whites appear so will we find differences between white and black Latinos. Although some of the control variables in the following models play an important role in predicting opinion on these issues we do not discuss them for the sake of brevity and because our purpose is not to explain opinion on these issues per se but rather explore the role of racial identity while controlling for the usual suspects.

Table 4 depicts the results from our analysis of the death penalty, national health care, and vouchers. For each issue, we see that when the racial divide manifests itself between African-Americans and Anglos the same pattern is found for Afro-Latinos. In the case of the death penalty and national health care both African-Americans and Afro-Latinos offer similar opinions. The coefficients for African-American and Afro-Latino are significant and negative for the death penalty whereas for national health care the relationship is significant and positive. The magnitudes of the effects are similar as well. Holding all other variables at their mean values, African-Americans are .11 less likely to support the death penalty whereas Afro-Latinos are .13 less likely. Similarly, identifying as Afro-Latino increases the probability that a respondent will support national health care by .12 whereas African-Americans increases the probability of support for national health care by .10, all else equal. Identifying as a non-Hispanic white has a significant effect on these issues as well but the direction is opposite of the opinion given by African-Americans and Afro-Latinos. Anglos are less supportive of national health care and more supportive of the death penalty.

[Table 4 About Here]

By contrast, racial identity is not a significant predictor of opinion on school vouchers. Neither identifying as an African-American, Afro-Latino or Anglo has an effect statistically distinguishable from zero for opinion on school vouchers.⁷ Thus, the absence of significant differences for non-Hispanic blacks and whites played out among Hispanic blacks and whites. With these data, we cannot be sure why racial identity does not matter for opinion on vouchers. Although conservatives have used this issue to appeal to minority voters and cultivate support for implementing vouchers, it apparently has not further opened the black-white racial divide.

Finding Commonality with Other Races

Our final inquiry concerns the formation of racial coalitions and racial identity, especially the potential for coalitions among African-Americans and Afro-Latinos. To evaluate the potential for racial coalitions we use a question asking respondents how much their group has in common with other groups—a lot in common, a fair amount in common, only a little in common, or nothing at all in common. Given our interest in Latino racial identity, we examined Latino responses to commonality with African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites. The ordinal nature of the dependent variable again requires that we use ordered logit.

The results of the analyses for commonality with African-Americans and Anglos are depicted in Table 5. The first model examines Latinos' sense of commonality with African-Americans and the second model does the same for non-Hispanic whites. In the model examining commonality with African-Americans, the coefficient for Afro-Latino

⁷ It is also worth noting that the level of non-response to the voucher question was among the highest on the survey, explaining the substantial reduction of N for this analysis.

is statistically significant and positive indicating that Afro-Latinos express a sense of commonality with African-Americans. Identifying as Afro-Latino increases the probability of expressing a sense of commonality with African-Americans by nearly .09, all else equal. The effects of racial identity, however, are not restricted to Afro-Latinos. Latinos identifying as some other race or identifying Hispanic as a race also had a positive and significant effect albeit the effect of identifying Hispanic as race is only significant at the .10 level (two-tailed test). Holding all other variables at their mean values, identifying Hispanic as a race and Hispanic as some other race increases the probability of a sense of commonality with African-Americans by .03 and .07, respectively, when compared to the attitudes of white Latinos.

[Table 5 About Here]

Although not central to our analysis, several control variables merit discussion. The coefficients for Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican were all positive and statistically distinguishable from zero thus indicating that these groups expressed greater commonality with African-Americans than “other” Latinos. The variable with the greatest effect, however, was non-Hispanic white. As with the Latino and racial identity variables, the coefficient for non-Hispanic whites is positive and significant. Holding all other variables at their mean values, identifying oneself as a non-Hispanic white increases the probability of expressing a commonality with African-Americans by .24, the largest effect in the model. While this might appear initially counter-intuitive, it is consistent with Rodrigues and Segura’s earlier findings that both blacks and whites expressed a greater sense of commonality with the other than Latinos, who appeared to be reluctant coalition members, regardless of who the potential partner might be.

In addition, education, religiosity, political interest, citizenship, and registered voter status all had positive and significant effects on commonality with African Americans. On the other hand, naturalized citizens and Catholics were not inclined to express greater commonality with African-Americans.

In the next model, we examined commonality with non-Hispanic whites. Although the racial identity variables are significant for Afro-Latino, Hispanic as a race, and Hispanic as some other race, the relationship is negative. Identifying as an Afro-Latino, Hispanic as a race and Hispanic as some other race decreases the probability of expressing commonality with Anglos by .047, .035, and .039, respectively, holding all other variables at their mean values. Thus, just as some Latino racial identities expressed greater commonality with African-Americans than white Latinos, the reverse is also true, that is, they express less commonality with non-Hispanic whites.

Just as before, the results in Table 5 show that African-Americans express a greater sense of commonality with non-Hispanic whites than even white Latinos. The effect of identifying as African-American increases the probability of expressing commonality with non-Hispanic whites by .035, holding all other variables at their mean values. Thus, Latinos continue to appear somewhat more socially distant from both African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites than even these two groups are from one another. This consistent finding, across multiple specifications, suggests that prospects for grass-roots level coalition building among Latinos, with either of the other two largest racial and ethnic groups, appear uncertain.

Finally, in contrast to the models of commonality with African-Americans, ethnicity does not appear to matter as much in explaining commonality with Anglos since

Dominican is the only ethnic category to have an effect statistically distinguishable from zero. Of the other notable control variables, income and citizenship have a positive effect whereas political interest, contrary to the effect it had in the model on commonality with African-Americans, had a negative effect.

Discussion and Conclusion: Does Race Matter?

The investigation into the importance of race and racial identity among Latinos is a remarkably complex undertaking which is only now beginning. Among the many complexities researchers must address are the potential distinctions between physical appearance and self-identity, the enormous differences between how racial categories are understood in Latin American and in the United States, the multiple pathways to racial identity among Latinos, particularly phenotype and intermarriage, the insistence among a significant share of American Hispanics that they are a racial category unto themselves (often without regard to phenotype and continental origin), and the influence of a variety of socio-economic forces—including wealth, income, and conscious political identity-making—in shaping racial identities.

We have obviously not addressed all, or even many, of these questions here. Rather, as a point of departure, we asked whether racial self-identity mattered to politics. Specifically, we examined a variety of political indicators on which racial identity has customarily mattered among blacks and whites in the United States, including partisanship, ideology, issue-position, and sense of commonality. We tested whether racial self-identity among Hispanics influenced their attitudes and behavior on these various indicators. We asked whether, within and among Latinos, race mattered to political behavior. We find that it does.

Specifically, racial identity among Latinos appears to significantly influence both their policy views—at least when the policy has a clear racial aspect in the broader population—and their perceptions of other racial and ethnic groups in the US. Afro-Latinos are significantly more supportive of government sponsored health care, and significantly less supportive of the death penalty, than Latinos identifying as white. Both of these issues are cases where white and black opinion in the broader population diverges considerably (as it does here). Moreover, when assessing their “commonality” with non-Hispanic blacks and whites, Afro-Latinos feel significantly closer to African-Americans whereas white Latinos feel significantly closer to whites.

On the other hand, when we examine broader indicators of political orientation—including partisanship and ideology—the results are far less striking. While there are modest differences occasionally approaching significance, it is not the case that Afro- and white- Latinos were polarized on these measures. The effect came closest for partisanship (where, of course, African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites are substantially polarized), but was altogether absent in broader measures of ideology, measures that incorporate other, non-racial, policy dimensions and thus, we suspect, reduce the effect of racial identity. In short, while race matters among Latinos, it is most likely to matter in exactly those circumstances where race mattered to the broader population of non-Hispanics.

While our results here do suggest the importance of racial self-identification among Hispanics, we do not wish to overstate their importance, nor to suggest that this implies deep and substantial cleavages within the Latino population that would undermine the emergence of a pan-ethnic identity. First, it is important to recognize that

majorities of all Latinos were in agreement on the identified policy dimensions, without regard to differences in racial self-identification. Second, in terms of partisanship and ideology, in all three instances Latinos occupy a middle position between African-Americans and non-Hispanic whites. Third, through racial distinctions appear on the measures of commonality, it is important to recall that both whites and African-Americans appear to hold a more sympathetic view of one another than Latinos hold of either. That is, while there are differences in degree, predicted by racial self-identity, Latinos as a group do not perceive much in common with any other Americans. Finally, though it was the case that Afro-Latinos held views more different from white Latinos than even the African-Americans in the sample—in both instances with Afro-Latinos occupying the most liberal position—non-Hispanic whites were significantly more conservative than white Hispanics, and in magnitude almost as far away to the right as Afro-Latinos were to the left. It would be an error, then, to suggest that white Latinos were—in terms of political beliefs and attitudes—whites. They are not.

Nevertheless, the historical importance of the black-white racial dynamic in the United States, coupled with the substantial phenotypical diversity among America's rapidly growing Latino population and the traditional roles of African and indigenous identities in Latin American societies suggest that race should not be overlooked as an important element of diversity within the Latino population, and an important force shaping both how Latinos will adapt themselves to American society, and how they will adapt American society to themselves.

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Appendix: Coding of Control Variables	
Education	0=None, or grade 1-8; 1=High school incomplete (grades 9-11); 2=High school grad (grade 12 or GED);3=business, technical, or vocational school after high school; 4=Some college, no 4-year degree; 5=College graduate; 6=Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college
Income	0=less than \$20,000; 1=\$20,000 but less than \$30,000; 2=\$30,000 but less than \$40,000; 3=\$40,000 but less than \$50,000; 4=less than \$50,000 unspecified; 5=\$50,000 but less than \$75,000; 6=\$75,000 but less than \$100,000; \$100,000 or more
Catholic	Catholic=1; otherwise=0
Religiosity	I couldn't figure out how this one was made.
Political Interest	Attention paid to politics and government 2=a fair amount, 1=not much;0= or none at all
Citizen	Citizen=1; otherwise=0
Naturalized	Naturalized citizen=1; otherwise=0
Registered Voter	Registered voter=1; otherwise=0

Table 3. Party, Self-Reported Ideology, and Issue-Based Ideology as a Function of Race, Ethnicity, and Racial Identity

	Party Identification		Self-Reported Ideology		Issue-Based Ideology	
	O-Logit Coefficient (S.E.)	Δ in prob Y=1	O-Logit Coefficient (S.E.)	Δ in prob Y=1	Regression Coefficient (S.E.)	Stdz. Coefficients (BETA)
<i>Afro-Latino</i>	.268† (.153)	.070	.138 (.163)	.028	.021 (.112)	.003
<i>Hispanic as Race</i>	.426*** (.107)	.104	.227* (.101)	.046	.040 (.077)	.010
<i>Hispanic Some Other Race</i>	.302* (.142)	.074	.183 (.125)	.037	-.041 (.100)	-.007
<i>Non-Hispanic White</i>	-.642*** (.116)	-.151	-.205† (.108)	-.040	-.341*** (.090)	-.109
<i>African-American</i>	1.487*** (.184)	.351	.234 (.148)	.048	.509*** (.120)	.080
<i>Cuban</i>	-.782*** (.161)	-.170	.257† (.144)	.053	-.119 (.105)	-.019
<i>Puerto Rican</i>	.292† (.169)	.071	.082 (.158)	.016	.242* (.115)	.039
<i>Mexican</i>	-.310** (.103)	-.073	-.127 (.102)	-.024	-.082 (.077)	-.021
<i>Dominican</i>	.563* (.250)	.139	-.200 (.231)	-.037	.182 (.173)	.018
<i>Education</i>	.021 (.022)	.031	.093*** (.021)	.107	.105*** (.017)	.120
<i>Income</i>	-.091*** (.015)	-.171	-.028† (.014)	-.042	.004 (.012)	.006
<i>Catholic</i>	.176* (.071)	.042	-.025 (.066)	-.005	-.041 (.055)	-.013
<i>Religiosity</i>	-.220*** (.037)	-.159	-.389*** (.035)	-.233	-.359*** (.029)	-.208
<i>Political Interest</i>	.101* (.041)	.072	.099* (.042)	.057	-.152*** (.032)	-.083
<i>Citizen</i>	.116 (.126)	.028	.243† (.125)	.045	-.191* (.095)	-.049
<i>Naturalized</i>	.060 (.124)	.014	-.106 (.110)	-.020	.341*** (.085)	.073
<i>Registered Voter</i>	.051 (.095)	.012	-.221* (.090)	-.044	-.163* (.071)	-.050
<i>_cut1</i>	-1.560 (.156)	--	-1.022 (.102)	--	<i>Constant</i> 3.613*** (.120)	
<i>_cut2</i>	.009 (.157)	--	.755 (.155)	--	--	
Chi-Square	389.71***		197.18***		F-test	20.12***
-Log-likelihood	-3756.592		-4721.352		Adj R ²	.088
N	3681		4026		3519	
R2	.13		.05		.09	

Two-Tailed Significance † p<=.10, * p<=.05, ** p<=.01, *** p<=.001

Note: The R² for the ordered logit models is from Mckelvey and Zavonia.

Data Source: Post/Kennedy/Kaiser 1999

Table 4. Issue Attitudes as a Function of Race, Ethnicity, and Racial Identity						
	Death Penalty		Government Health		Vouchers	
	Logit Coeff. (S.E.)	Δ in Prob Y=1	Logit Coeff. (S.E.)	Δ in Prob Y=1	Logit Coeff. (S.E.)	Δ in Prob Y=1
<i>Afro-Latino</i>	-.538*** (.166)	-.127	.924** (.301)	.118	.198 (.223)	.047
<i>Hispanic as Race</i>	-.170 (.108)	-.038	-.048 (.140)	-.008	.247† (.140)	.059
<i>Hispanic Some Other Race</i>	.020 (.143)	.005	.001 (.187)	2.0*10 ⁻⁴	.049 (.186)	.012
<i>Non-Hispanic White</i>	.498*** (.128)	.108	-.617*** (.149)	-.105	-.101 (.143)	-.025
<i>African-American</i>	-.479** (.174)	-.112	.700** (.241)	.095	.091 (.201)	.022
<i>Cuban</i>	.491** (.160)	.100	.214 (.222)	.033	-.052 (.188)	-.013
<i>Puerto Rican</i>	-.160 (.163)	-.036	.364† (.212)	.054	.792*** (.210)	.175
<i>Mexican</i>	-.085 (.109)	-.019	-.081 (.146)	-.013	-.047 (.146)	-.012
<i>Dominican</i>	-.260 (.230)	-.060	.273 (.372)	.041	.437 (.374)	.101
<i>Education</i>	-.093*** (.024)	-.122	.017 (.027)	.016	-.035 (.027)	-.050
<i>Income</i>	.036* (.017)	.063	-.096*** (.019)	-.132	-.030 (.019)	-.059
<i>Catholic</i>	.098 (.081)	.022	.062 (.087)	.010	.448*** (.087)	.108
<i>Religiosity</i>	-.153*** (.042)	-.100	-.099* (.045)	-.048	.297*** (.045)	.215
<i>Political Interest</i>	.010 (.045)	.007	-.121* (.054)	-.058	-.196*** (.053)	-.139
<i>Citizen</i>	.709*** (.138)	.166	-.438* (.175)	-.066	-1.044*** (.184)	-.228
<i>Naturalized</i>	-.496*** (.122)	-.115	.727*** (.171)	.101	.217 (.147)	.052
<i>Registered Voter</i>	.056 (.104)	.013	-.038 (.120)	-.006	.125 (.122)	.030
<i>Constant</i>	.408* (.175)	--	2.462*** (.222)	--	.968*** (.215)	--
Chi-Square	275.58***		281.52***		287.27***	
% Correct	68.1		76.8		64.3	
PRE (Tau-C)	.291		.349		.272	
N	3971		4002		2917	

Data Source: Post/Kennedy/Kaiser 1999

Table 5. Commonality Towards African-Americans and Non-Hispanic Whites as a Function of Race, Ethnicity, and Racial Identity Among Latinos				
	Sense of Commonality with African-Americans		Sense of Commonality with Non-Hispanic Whites	
	O-Logit Coeff (S.E.)	Δ in prob Y=1	O-Logit Coeff (S.E.)	Δ in prob Y=1
<i>Afro-Latino</i>	.549*** (.171)	.085	-.449** (.162)	.047
<i>Hispanic as Race</i>	.203† (.114)	.028	-.318** (.105)	.035
<i>Hispanic Some Other Race</i>	.474*** (.146)	.071	-.368** (.138)	.039
<i>Non-Hispanic White</i>	1.729*** (.135)	.243	--	--
<i>African-American</i>	--	--	.299* (.153)	.035
<i>Cuban</i>	.460** (.158)	.069	-.250 (.144)	.027
<i>Puerto Rican</i>	.656*** (.169)	.104	-.230 (.158)	.032
<i>Mexican</i>	.108 (.110)	.015	.011 (.104)	.001
<i>Dominican</i>	.562* (.254)	.088	-.718** (.235)	.073
<i>Education</i>	.089*** (.023)	.069	.108*** (.026)	.072
<i>Income</i>	.011 (.015)	.011	.030 (.020)	.027
<i>Catholic</i>	-.189** (.066)	-.025	-.022 (.085)	.002
<i>Religiosity</i>	.108** (.037)	.042	.050 (.048)	.017
<i>Political Interest</i>	.209*** (.044)	.078	-.282*** (.054)	.091
<i>Citizen</i>	.745*** (.137)	.084	.425** (.147)	.046
<i>Naturalized</i>	-.502*** (.128)	-.058	-.158 (.118)	.017
<i>Registered Voter</i>	.241** (.090)	.031	.170 (.116)	.019
<i>_cut1</i>	.557 (.173)	--	-.147 (.192)	--
<i>_cut2</i>	2.432 (.180)	--	1.77 (.195)	--
<i>_cut3</i>	4.250 (.193)	--	3.13 (.206)	--
Chi-Square	876.61***		267.09***	
- Log-likelihood	-4236.812		-2721.4446	
N	3537		2170	
McKelvey and Zovonia's R2	.27		.12	

Two-Tailed Significance † p<=.10, * p<=.05, ** p<=.01, *** p<=.001

Data Source: Post/Kennedy/Kaiser 1999