Latino Racial Classifications and Political Behavior: The Implications of Linked Fate Prioritization

Giovanni Castro Irizarry
University of California, Los Angeles
giovannicastro@ucla.edu

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Abstract:

Scholars and politicians often refer to a "Latino vote" or a shared set of Latino political attitudes. This paper argues that such characterizations are, in part, an artifact of analytically aggregating Latinos across distinct racial classifications. Disaggregating Latinos by racial self-classification reveals systematic political sorting along the broader U.S. racial hierarchy. Using data from the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), I examine how Latino racial self-classification and a new measure—*Linked Fate Prioritization*—shape political attitudes and behaviors. Analysis 1 shows that racial self-classification influences Latino political views; Latino whites tend to lean more conservative, Latino Blacks tend to lean more liberal, and Latinos who do not select a racial category tend to fall in between. Analysis 2 shows that among Latino whites, those who prioritize white linked fate over Latino linked fate tend to be more conservative and show less support for Black political causes. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Latino political attitudes are structured by racial self-classification and linked fate prioritization, challenging the notion of a unified Latino political ideology and underscoring the importance of race in shaping Latino political behavior. I offer some theoretical explanations for these patterns.

Keywords: Latinos, race and ethnicity, linked fate prioritization, political behavior, political attitudes

Introduction

Latinos' perspectives on political issues often fall between those of Blacks and whites. However, scholars argue that Latino political attitudes do not fit Black-white patterns. While such patterns apply to Latinos as a whole, studies indicate that Latino political behavior varies by racial classification (Basler 2008; Bowler and Segura 2012; Masuoka 2017; Nicholson, Pantoja, and Segura 2005). Important questions then emerge: Do Latinos behave politically according to their racial self-classification? And if so, do Latino whites exhibit more conservative attitudes and behaviors commonly associated with whites, while Latino Blacks tend to exhibit behaviors commonly associated with Blacks? Both statements are likely true, but little research systematically examines how racial self-classification influences Latino political attitudes and behavior. Studying Latinos as a homogeneous group, without considering their racial classification, does not fully address the complex dynamics underlying the political attitudes and behaviors of this panethnic group. This study addresses that gap by exploring the political implications of Latino racial self-classification.

This article treats *Latinidad* not as a natural or homogeneous category but as a social and political construction. Calls for Latino unity often mask internal diversity and political contestation (Beltrán 2010). Government agencies, advocacy organizations, and the media have institutionalized the "Hispanic/Latino" category, shaping who counts as Latino and under what conditions (Mora 2014). As a result, *Latinidad* encompasses people of multiple races, national origins, and migration histories, and its meaning varies across contexts (Lavariega Monforti and Sanchez 2010). Recognizing this heterogeneity is crucial to understanding why Latino racial classification carries political consequences.

I examine how Latino racial classification and a new measure—prioritization of white over Latino linked fate, which I call *linked fate prioritization*—shape political attitudes and behaviors. I argue that Latino whites not only align more closely with non-Latino whites in partisan and ideological

terms, but also that prioritizing white linked fate is a powerful mechanism connecting incorporation or aspiration into whiteness with conservative attitudes. This perspective extends conservatism beyond party identification to racialized dimensions such as support for Black Lives Matter (BLM) and perceptions of anti-Black discrimination. Conversely, Latino Blacks tend to be more liberal than those who only self-classify as Latino, suggesting political alignment with racial classifications. By centering linked fate prioritization, this study highlights an underexplored pathway through which Latinos navigate American racial hierarchies and expands our understanding of Latino political behavior by considering both racial classification and the relative prioritization of linked fates.

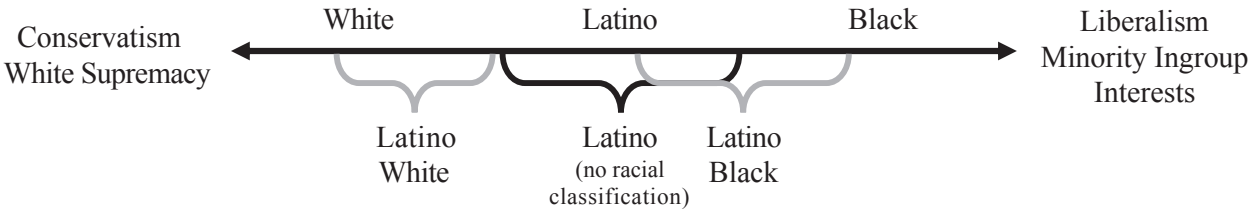
I begin by discussing how Latinos, disaggregated by racial self-classification, can be more accurately positioned within the American racial hierarchy. I then review scholarship on racial conceptualizations among Latinos, how Latinos select racial categories, and their political implications, which together provide potential theoretical mechanisms driving the patterns examined in this study. Using data from the 2020 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey (CMPS), I analyze how Latino racial classifications are politically sorted along the American Attitudinal Scale (Masuoka 2017) and use linked fate prioritization to examine how this mechanism shapes the political attitudes and behaviors of Latino whites.

Latinos in the American Racial Hierarchy

Given the racial diversity of Latinos and the importance of race in American politics, Latinos are likely influenced by the political positions of their racial classification and may want to behave as a more positively perceived social group, even as they hold group interests and maintain ethnic distinctiveness. It is possible that some political attitudes typically attributed to Latinos are the result of traditionally merging Latinos from all racial groups. If so, Latino whites would align more with ideological worldviews commonly associated with non-Latino whites; Latinos without racial classifications would align with typical Latino political positions, and Latino Blacks would align more

with non-Latino Blacks. Fig. 1 presents my core theoretical contribution: a model that situates Latino racial subgroups within the American Attitudinal Scale according to their racial self-classification.

Fig 1. Proposed placement of Latinos by Race in the American Attitudinal Scale.



Note: Asians have been omitted.

I build on Masuoka's (2017) Attitudinal Scale, which places racial groups according to their ideological orientations and racial considerations, with whites on the conservative end, characterized by weak racial considerations and support for the status quo, followed by Asians, Latinos, and Blacks on the liberal end, characterized by having strong racial considerations and support for redistribution policies. This attitudinal ordering closely parallels the U.S. racial hierarchy, in which whites occupy the most privileged position and Blacks the most disadvantaged (Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023; Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Zou and Cheryan 2017). Yet some scholars argue that the white-Black binary no longer captures the complexity of the American racial order, given Latino and Asian population growth (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Lee and Bean 2007). Latinos are often analyzed as an in between group (e.g., Masuoka 2017), but they are diverse and may adopt the ideological worldview of any racial group, as they assimilate into or are racialized within that group. Thus, greater attention should be devoted to disaggregating Latinos by race and analyzing them accordingly, rather than only in comparison to other ethnoracial groups.

Although Latinos as a group often occupy a middle ideological space between Blacks and whites (Masuoka 2017; Masuoka and Junn 2013), little empirical work has disaggregated Latinos by race to examine how classification shapes political attitudes and behaviors. However, research suggests notable differences in Latinos' political attitudes by race (Cuevas-Molina 2023; Filindra and Kolbe

2022; Saavedra Cisneros 2017). For example, Alamillo (2019) links denial of racism among Latinos to Trump support in 2016. Alamillo concludes that Latinos who supported Trump did so to mimic white behavior as an aspiration to assimilate into white culture and achieve whiteness, though his study does not measure whiteness directly. Cuevas-Molina (2023) found that Latino whites are more likely to support the Republican Party than Latino non-whites. Similarly, Filindra and Kolbe (2022) show that white self-classification among Latinos is associated with conservatism, Republican partisanship, and restrictive policy preferences. Yet these studies only distinguish white from non-white Latinos, leaving Black Latinos unexamined.

Building on this work, I extend the analysis in two ways. First, I disaggregate Latinos into three racial self-classification groups—Latino whites, Latinos without reported racial classification, and Latino Blacks.[1] This approach draws on Bonilla-Silva's (2004) theoretical framework, which suggests that the U.S. racial order is shifting toward a tri-racial system. This trichotomous structure, further supported by Golash-Boza and Darity Jr (2008), enables a more nuanced examination of ideological variation within the Latino population. Second, I introduce *linked fate prioritization*, which captures whether Latino whites place greater weight on Latino or white linked fate and provides a new way to examine how ethnoracial linked fates relates to political attitudes and behaviors.

This project recognizes the American racial order as multi-group, not limited to a Black-white binary. Nevertheless, I limit the scope of this study to Black and white racial categories, as these are most historically relevant to the Latino experiences. This framing follows scholarship positioning *Latinidad* within a tri-racial system shaped by Blackness, whiteness, and racial ambiguity (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Golash-Boza and Darity Jr 2008). While some Latinos self-classify with other racial groups, their

[1] "Without reported racial classification" refers to Latinos who did not select any listed racial category. This does not mean they are raceless; many, as Cárdenas, Silber Mohamed, and Michelson (2023) show, treat "Latino" itself as a racial category, with meaningful political consequences.

share is small, limiting statistical inferences. Thus, this study focuses on the most demographically and theoretically central racial classifications among Latinos.

I argue that Latino conservatism functions as a racial mobility strategy that reflects alignment with whiteness rather than ethnicity alone. Specifically, Latino whites adopt conservative ideological positions associated with whiteness as a means of distancing themselves from Blackness and repositioning themselves within the American racial hierarchy. This argument is consistent with prior work suggesting that Latino conservatism seeks to emulate conservatism to resemble whites (Gans 2012), distance from Black identity (Basler 2008; Hickel et al. 2020; Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023), avoid persecution and racism (Murguia and Forman 2003), or gain inclusion, validation, or protection (Basler 2008). Collectively, these factors suggest that among Latinos, conservatism serves as a racial mobility strategy, aimed at achieving whiteness or distancing from Blackness.

Whiteness is not only a matter of phenotype or ancestry but also a political project. Beltrán (2021) introduces the concept of *multiracial whiteness* to describe how nonwhite groups can participate in sustaining white democracy by embracing political projects historically associated with whiteness. This perspective suggests that when Latino whites align with the Republican Party or adopt conservative positions, these choices may reflect not just individual incorporation into whiteness but also participation in broader political projects that reproduce racial hierarchies.

Racial Conceptualizations and Aspirations in Latin America

To understand the racial dynamics of Latinos in the U.S., it is essential to understand the historical construction of race in Latin America. The legacy of European colonization and the resulting racial hierarchies in Latin America clarify the whitening racial aspirations and identities of some Latinos in the U.S. and their potential implications for political behavior. This historical context forms one of the key theoretical mechanisms explored in this study.

During European colonization of Latin America, Spain and Portugal perceived peoples they called Indigenous as primitives with the potential to be civilized and exploited. This led to extractive systems and the white European subjugation of Indigenous and African populations.[2] Latin American societies were further shaped by *mestizaje* (racial mixing among Europeans, Indigenous groups, and Africans) and a caste system placing Europeans at the top, Indigenous in the middle, and Africans at the bottom (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, and Organista 2014). Thus, racial mixing produced intermediate categories based on the degree of Spanish ancestry (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, and Organista 2014). In Latin America, race is not conceptualized in terms of strict racial categories but as a spectrum that ranges from darker individuals with more African features, through intermediate categories like *trigueños* or *morenos*, to those phenotypically white. This continuum entails within-group racial classification and discrimination, privileging lighter-skinned individuals over darker-skinned ones (Hunter 2007). For example, since Indigenous people (lighter than Blacks) tend to rank above Africans, *mestizos* (Indigenous and white) tend to be considered superior to mulattoes (African and white) (Cruz-Janzen 2002).

A lack of official records did not allow for effective categorization of people based on their ancestry. Therefore, a social system emerged classifying individuals by skin color and physical features, structurally privileging "whiter" individuals (Ostfeld and Yadon 2022). Comparable systems were implemented across Latin American colonies. While countries differ in their demographic compositions, the logic of racial ordering has historically followed similar patterns (Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, and Organista 2014; Telles 2014). Thus, *mestizaje* allows people to try to "ascend" to a privileged European position with the aspiration of "improving" the race (Ostfeld and Yadon 2022).

[2] This system differs from Britain's lack of interest in integrating American Indigenous peoples into their new colonies. The systemic genocide of those populations enabled settler colonialism to establish itself in those territories.

Some Latinos' aspiration to whiteness can be traced to these social structures in Latin America. This conceptualization persists today, regardless of the actual racial compositions within these societies, as racial hierarchies remain largely unchanged from the structure that existed during colonial times (Fernandes 1969). This does not mean that all Latin Americans aspire to whiteness, but that a structural system privileges whites over non-whites, and within this structure some Latin Americans aspire to whiteness.

Yet *mestizaje* does not guarantee identification with whiteness; access depends on phenotype and, in the U.S., on the degree of incorporation into American whiteness. This may help explain why foreign-born Latinos often find it easier to claim whiteness than their U.S.-born counterparts. As part of this process, some Latino whites may adopt conservative attitudes associated with whiteness to reposition themselves within the Attitudinal Scale and gain acceptance from mainstream whites (see Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023).

Latino Racial Self-Classification and Political Attitudes

Understandings of race in the U.S. and Latin America differ (Darity Jr, Hamilton, and Dietrich 2002; Golash-Boza and Darity Jr 2008), making it challenging for Latinos to know how to self-classify in the U.S. system (Duany 2016). Latino immigrants carry their native country's racial conceptualizations and may not identify with U.S. racial categories (Zamora 2022). This decision is not random; Latinos grapple with which categories to use, their meanings, and consequences (Wimmer 2007, p. 15). Although *mestizaje* theoretically allows Latinos to claim a Black identity, few do so (Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004). The way federal surveys collect race and ethnicity has also shaped opportunities for Latinos to classify as white. For example, Dowling (2014) shows that many Mexican Americans select "white" on the U.S. Census not because they see themselves as white in everyday life, but as a defensive strategy to resist racial "othering" and assert belonging as Americans.

Until 2020, the U.S. Census asked two questions: whether an individual was Latino or Hispanic and what their race was.[3] After answering the ethnicity question, Latinos had to navigate the racial question, choosing from categories that did not include Latino or Hispanic. Because these categories are U.S. constructs, many new immigrants may not identify with them (Junn and Masuoka 2008; d'Urso 2025) and instead select the closest category, even if it does not reflect their identity.[4] For this reason, I describe Latino responses to the Census race question as "classification" rather than "identification" (see Wimmer 2007).

In the 2020 Census, over 62 million people self-classified as Latino. Of these, 20.2% self-classified as white alone, 42.2% as Some other race alone, 32.7% with two or more races, and only 1.8% as Black alone. Scholars argue that some Latinos are reluctant to self-classify as Black (Darity, Dietrich, and Hamilton 2005; Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004), a tendency evident among Dominicans, who are often racialized as Black in the U.S. but frequently self-classify as white (Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000). These patterns underscore that Latino racial self-classification is not trivial; it reflects broader processes of racialization and positioning within the U.S. racial hierarchy.

Recent changes in how federal surveys measure race and ethnicity are not mere administrative adjustments but carry major implications for Latino politics. Flores, Telles, and Ventura (2024) demonstrate that combining the race and ethnicity questions reduces the share of Latinos selecting a racial category and increases reporting "Latino" as both an ethnic and racial identity. They argue this shift alters how Latinos position themselves in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Incorporating their insight, this study situates Latino racial self-classification within a changing institutional context where official categories are in flux, with effects on political attitudes, group consciousness, and racial alignment.

[3] On March 28, 2024, the U.S. Census Bureau decided to incorporate Latinos and Middle Eastern and North African into a single question on race and ethnicity.
[4] Concepts such as White and Black have different meanings in Latin America and in the U.S. (Duany 2016).

Latinos are not phenotypically homogeneous; their physical appearance and skin color vary widely. Some look stereotypically Latino; others may pass as either Black or white. An attempt to make their *Latinidad* less salient may be aspirational and challenging for darker-skinned or stereotypical-looking Latinos, but that attempt may be more realistic for "white-passing" light-skinned Latinos with European features (Alba and Nee 2003; Harris 2018). Thus, whiteness being generally considered a superior racial quality in Latin America (Cruz-Janzen 2002; Hunter 2007) and the U.S. (Zou and Cheryan 2017) is not the only reason for Latinos to self-classify as white.

I argue that Latino whites and Latino Blacks diverge politically because racial self-classification aligns them with distinct racialized political attitudes and behaviors in the United States. Latino whites could have conservative ideological worldviews often associated with whiteness, while Latino Blacks may embrace progressive ideological worldviews often associated with Black political thought. This argument echoes predictions by Haney-López (2006) and Bonilla-Silva (2004), who anticipate a racialized bifurcation among Latinos into those self-classifying as Black, Latino, or white. Haney-López (2005) and Bonilla-Silva (2004) argue that Americans will accept as white only a select group of light-skinned Latinos with high socioeconomic status. Vargas (2015) provides empirical support for this argument. Bonilla-Silva (2004, p. 937) predicts that assimilated white(*-skinned*) Latinos will become white, [5] "developing white-like racial attitudes befitting their new social position and differentiating (distancing) themselves from the 'collective black,'" while dark-skinned Latinos will join the "collective black" and continue to face racial discrimination.

This study recognizes three main scenarios in which Latinos may self-classify as white. First, white-passing Latinos can cross the color line into whiteness, because their light skin and "racially ambiguous physical appearance" allow them to hide or make their Latino ancestry less salient (Harris

[5] In this paper, I use "Latino whites" to refer to Latinos who racially self-classify as white. Bonilla-Silva uses "white Latinos" to refer to Latinos with light skin color.

2018). They can thus avoid the difficulties faced by more Latino-looking counterparts, leading them to rationally consider that supporting Latino in-group interests may not be beneficial (see Hindriks, Verkuyten, and Coenders 2015). Studies confirm that lighter-skinned Latinos tend to self-classify as white (Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010; Golash-Boza and Darity Jr 2008). Second, Latinos with one Latino and one white parent would tend to racially self-classify as white. Research suggests that individuals of mixed parentage often face competing logics of racial identification: some may emphasize ancestry and identify as multiracial or white, while others adopt monoracial identities consistent with social norms or external perceptions (Masuoka 2017). Third, Latinos with two Latino parents or no white parents may also self-classify as white if they seek incorporation into whiteness, an evident pattern among U.S.-born and later-generation Latinos, who are more likely than immigrants to identify as white (Basler 2008). In all three cases, their status as less prototypical whites may lead to feelings of threat stemming from the possibility of not being recognized as white by society (Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023). To claim whiteness and distance from Blackness, they can exhibit conservative and anti-Black political attitudes and behaviors (Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023).

While many Latinos align with whiteness, only 1.8% self-classified as Black in the 2020 Census. Several explanations exist for this low identification. Some scholars argue that many Latinos are reluctant to self-classify as Black (Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004). Others contend that Latinos consider the racial category Black or African American as reserved for African Americans with U.S. ancestry and no Latin American roots (Clealand and Gutierrez 2025). Additionally, while many darker-skinned Latinos may refrain from identifying as Black in racial terms, research suggests they tend to report their skin tone with greater precision in surveys (Telles 2017).

There are at least two scenarios in which Latinos may self-classify as Black. First, Latinos with one Black parent may identify as Black due to familial ties, cultural upbringing, and socialization in Black spaces. Second, Latinos phenotypically perceived as Black may be racialized as Black by others

regardless of ancestry, which can shape their self-identification and political orientation. Both cases imply greater proximity to Black social worlds and experiences of anti-Black racism, fostering stronger identification with Black political causes and progressive attitudes.

Latino Blacks often come from countries with prominent African diasporic populations, such as Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Colombia, and Brazil (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000). Their identification as Black can reflect both racialized experiences in the U.S. and pride in their cultural heritage and national origin. Unlike many Latinos who avoid a Black identity, Latino Blacks frequently embrace Blackness as an integral part of their identity, often drawing on cultural and political traditions of Black resistance and pride (Candelario 2007).

Stokes-Brown (2012) examined factors influencing Latino racial self-classification, identifying significant national group variations. Cubans tend to self-classify as white, while Dominicans and Latinos from countries with substantial Afro-Latino populations are less likely. Age, education, and income also correlate with white classification among Latinos. Older Latinos and those perceiving socioeconomic commonalities with whites often self-classify as white. Conversely, those who perceive socioeconomic and political commonalities with Blacks often self-classify as Some other race rather than Black. This suggests that "while some Latinos may feel a sense of affinity with Blacks, that racial category does not capture their sense of themselves and they are therefore reluctant to assume a Black identity" (Stokes-Brown 2012, p. 321). Although Stokes-Brown did not test the relationship between racial classification and conservatism, many factors associated with white self-classification are known to correlate with conservatism, suggesting a potential link between Latino conservatism and white racial self-classification that merits further research.

Another theoretical mechanism proposed in this research is that Latino racial self-classification shapes political attitudes through alignment with the racialized norms of whites or Blacks. Race has structured American politics since the country's inception. Consequently, political attitudes and

behaviors are related to race (Dawson 1994; Haney-López 2014; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Mendelberg 2001). For example, whites often emphasize individualism and meritocracy, deny that race limits opportunities, prioritize their individual interests, uphold meritocratic beliefs, and support the racial status quo that benefits them (Apostle et al. 1983; Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Whites often support the Republican Party (Craig and Richeson 2014), conservative policies (Craig and Richeson 2014; Knowles et al. 2013), and openly racist politicians such as Donald Trump. For example, the nomination of a Black presidential candidate in 2008 pushed whites to the Republican Party (Krupnikov and Piston 2015).

Historical precedents show that groups once considered non-white can later be recognized as white in the U.S. In the early 20th century, Italian, Jewish, and other Southern and Eastern European immigrants distanced themselves from Black communities through prejudice and segregation (Roediger 2005). Over time, mainstream society accepted and recategorized them as white (Gans 2012). Gans (2012) calls this process deracialization: a multi-step social process in which a privileged group stops stigmatizing physical differences of another group, ceases to categorize the other as another race, stops focusing on differences, and ultimately no longer acknowledges differences.[6]

Similarly, some Latino whites can move individually in the racial hierarchy by positioning themselves above Latino non-whites, without carrying the whole Latino group toward whiteness (Golash-Boza and Darity Jr 2008), expressing conservative and anti-Black attitudes to reduce the distance from non-Latino whites (Pérez, Robertson, and Vicuña 2023).[7] Social identity theory holds

[6] While this study references Gans's (2012) framework of *deracialization*, it does not endorse the notion that whiteness is a raceless category. Rather, this paper understands whiteness as a racialized position that carries social, political, and historical meaning (see Jardina 2019). Any apparent movement toward whiteness by Latinos is therefore conceptualized as a form of ethnoracial repositioning within an existing hierarchy, not an exit from racialization itself.

[7] Scholars have indicated that perceptions and judgements about others are influenced by skin color, leading to lighter-skinned individuals being perceived as more intelligent, trustworthy, and attractive compared to those with darker skin (Glenn 2008).

that individuals may seek to enhance their social standing by joining a more positively perceived group, such as whites (Tajfel and Turner 1979), and may use out-group derogation, including prejudice toward Blacks, to facilitate that transition and downplay their marginalized status in U.S. society (Roediger 2005). Recent work shows these dynamics are not merely hypothetical. Ocampo, Ocampo-Roland, and Uribe (2025) demonstrate that Latinos aspiring to a higher ethno-cultural status approximating whiteness tend to support right-wing causes. Their findings suggest that aspirational whiteness operates as a contemporary mechanism aligning some Latinos closer to non-Latino whites, echoing the historical processes of deracialization that Gans (2012) describes.

This study does not suggest all white Americans are conservative or racist. However, because whites, on average, exhibit higher levels of conservatism and racial resentment than other groups (Abrajano and Hajnal 2017; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Tesler 2016), some Latinos may create a stereotype of what it means to be white and can perceive conservatism as a means of aligning with whiteness. Thus, Latino whites and Latinos seeking incorporation into whiteness may adopt conservative attitudes and behaviors stereotypically associated with whites.

If Latino whites adopt political attitudes and behaviors stereotypically associated with whites, they should be more likely than Latino non-whites to be Republicans, have voted for Donald Trump, and perceive less discrimination against Blacks. Conversely, Latino Blacks should be more likely to be Democrats, less likely to support Donald Trump, and be more aware of discrimination that Blacks experience. These racial aspirations and alignments do not exist in the abstract; they are expressed politically. Because whiteness in the U.S. is associated with conservatism, Republican identification, and denial of structural racism, I expect Latino whites to mirror these political attitudes as part of their racial alignment. Specifically, I examine vote for Donald Trump, Republican partisanship, and attitudes toward BLM as manifestations of this alignment. Conversely, Latino Blacks are expected to reflect the Black political tradition of liberalism and support for racial justice movements.

H1a: *Latino whites are more likely than Latinos without reported racial classification to be more conservative, support the Republican Party, and have voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 Election.*

H1b: *Latino Blacks are less likely than Latinos without reported racial classification to be more conservative, support the Republican Party, and have voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 Election.*

Being conservative, Republican, or voting for Donald Trump does not mean that Latinos hold these preferences for inherently racist reasons. For example, although Trump has made racist statements, people could support him for reasons unrelated to racism. The possibility remains that some individuals hold these political preferences for economic reasons rather than because of racial beliefs. While the Racial Resentment Scale (Kinder and Sanders 1996) is commonly used to measure racial conservatism, I refrain from applying it to Latinos. As Davis and Wilson (2021) note, the scale was designed for whites and grounded in assumptions—such as individualism and meritocracy—not necessarily shared across racial groups. Applying it to Latinos risks misinterpretation, as it may not capture their attitudes in a conceptually valid or reliable way.

Similarly, I do not use measures from Social Dominance Orientation theory. While these measures capture preferences for group-based hierarchy, they assume a high consensus on which groups occupy dominant positions in society (Pratto, Stewart, and Bou Zeineddine 2013). Latinos are generally not perceived as part of the dominant racial group in the U.S., which complicates the applicability of these instruments for capturing their racialized political attitudes—particularly in the context of this study, which disaggregates Latinos by racial self-classification.

I also avoid measures of *group distance* between Latinos and whites, because Latinos may hold divergent interpretations of that distance that lead to the same self-classification outcome. For example, some may perceive Latinos as culturally and historically close to whites—particularly through *mestizaje*—and thus classify as white, while others may view Latinos as distant and hierarchically inferior to whites yet still choose a white classification as a strategy for social mobility. These different

logics would be indistinguishable in a conventional *group distance* score, obscuring the underlying motivations for racial self-classification.

Instead, I use two racialized indicators better suited to capture Latino attitudes toward racial hierarchies in the U.S.: perceived discrimination against Blacks and support for BLM. These measures are useful because they allow us to see how Latinos may manifest conservatism toward Blacks—positioned below themselves in the racial hierarchy—without extending these attitudes toward Latinos as an in-group.

Whites tend to perceive less discrimination against Blacks than Blacks themselves do (Zigerell 2021). Latino non-whites tend to perceive more commonality with Blacks than Latino whites (Kaufmann 2003). Therefore, if Latino whites align politically closer to whites, they should perceive less discrimination against Blacks than Latino non-whites. This hypothesis is bolstered by findings that Latinos who supported Trump in 2016 were more likely to deny racism, presumably mimicking white behavior (Alamillo 2019).

BLM protests the police killings of Black people. Whites, on average, show little support (Drakulich et al. 2021). In CMPS 2020, whites rated the movement lower than Blacks ($\bar{x}$ for whites = 3.07 vs. $\bar{x}$ for Blacks = 4.05, on a 5-point Likert scale). Since Corral (2020) found differences between whites and Latinos in their awareness and support for BLM, I expect Latino whites to rate BLM lower than Latino non-whites.

H2a: *Latino whites are less likely than Latinos without reported racial classification to perceive discrimination in the U.S. against Blacks and are less likely to support BLM.*

Latino Blacks are generally more progressive on racial issues than Latino whites. They more often report experiences of racial discrimination in the U.S., reinforcing ties to marginalized communities (Lavariega Monforti and Sanchez 2010). These experiences contrast with those of lighter-skinned or white-identifying Latinos, reinforcing the salience of race as a lived experience rather

than just a matter of bureaucratic classification and deepening alignment with anti-racist and redistributive ideologies.

African Americans have endured centuries of racial oppression, systemic disadvantage, and exclusion in the U.S., fostering a collective political orientation marked by resistance, solidarity, and sensitivity to racial injustice (Dawson 1994). Latino Blacks, by virtue of their racial identification, skin tone, phenotype, and the social environments, often share overlapping experiences with non-Latino Blacks. They are frequently racialized as Black, regardless of ethnic background, and consequently experience similar patterns of discrimination and marginalization. These shared life experiences may foster solidarity and political alignment with African Americans, leading Latino Blacks to adopt political attitudes, behaviors, and worldviews similar to non-Latino Blacks.

> ***H2b:*** *Latino Blacks are more likely than Latinos without reported racial classification to perceive discrimination in the U.S. against Blacks and are more likely to support BLM.*

Latino and White Linked Fate Prioritization

Race has historically limited opportunities for African Americans, leading them to rely on their communities to advocate for their interests (Dawson 1994). According to Dawson, "determining what political and social policies would provide the most utility for each individual African American by calculating the benefits for the group was more cost-effective than the calculation of individual utility" (1994, p. 57). Consequently, African Americans often view politics through a racial lens, prioritizing racial group over individual interests. This behavior explains their sense of racial linked fate.

Linked fate has been applied to multiple groups beyond African Americans, including Latinos, whites, and Asians. While widely used as a measure of shared group interests, its application to Latino politics remains debated (Rogers and Kim 2023; Saavedra Cisneros 2017). In this study, I treat linked fate not as a catchall measure of group consciousness but as a comparative indicator of Latino versus white linked fate. Research demonstrates that these groups hold considerable levels of linked fate, but

that linked fate may operate differently for them (Masuoka 2006; Sanchez 2006; Sanchez and Masuoka 2010). For example, whites perceive linked fate at levels comparable to Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, but the utility of that fate may lie in defending their dominant status (Berry, Ebner, and Cornelius 2021). Masuoka (2006) finds similar levels of linked fate among Latinos and Asians but cautions that linked fate may not operate among them as among African Americans, primarily because Latinos and Asians are largely composed of immigrants with recent presence in the U.S. and heterogeneous in national origin and native language. McClain et al. (2009) likewise stress that the concept was designed for Black Americans' unique experience and may not directly translate to other groups. Still, scholars show that many Latinos report a sense of linked fate, and that this perception is politically meaningful (Sanchez and Masuoka 2010).[8]

Social identity theory (SIT) helps explain why linked fate may shape political behavior. SIT posits that people derive a sense of identity from their group memberships and align their behavior accordingly (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979).[9] In addition to Latino identity, Latinos may have racial classifications that they may prioritize. How such prioritization of ethnoracial linked fates relates to political behavior remains unexplored. Research shows that Latinos emphasizing their American identity often hold conservative attitudes (Hickel et al. 2020). However, American identity is not synonymous with whiteness. Although Devos and Banaji (2005) show that Americanness is implicitly associated more strongly with whiteness than with other racial groups, Zou and Cheryan (2017)

[8] Given these considerations, I acknowledge the conceptual limitations of applying linked fate to Latinos, particularly in contrast to its original use in Black politics. However, the operationalization of linked fate remains analytically useful for this study because it captures how Latino whites perceive their relationship to other Latinos and to whites.

[9] While monoracial individuals are expected to act as their group does, Latino whites have two group classifications with different known political attitudes. Masuoka (2017) found that "among Latinos, those who say they are multiracial are more aware of racial discrimination than those who say they are monoracial" (p. 134-35). Multiracial Latinos also perceive more discrimination in the U.S. than monoracial Latinos. These results, however, include multiracial Latinos of any racial combination.

similarly find that American society considers Blacks more American than Latinos and Asians. Latinos can associate Americanness with assimilation-related outcomes such as legal status, nativity, English proficiency, years since migration, or generation of immigration (Basler 2008). Thus, embracing an American identity can facilitate assimilation without necessarily associating that American identity to whiteness. For that reason, prioritizing an American identity should not be conflated with prioritization of whiteness.

Lighter-skinned or white-passing Latinos can hide their minority status or make it less salient if desired and access privileges associated to whiteness (Harris 2018). As a result, Latino whites may feel less affected by challenges other Latinos face and calculate that their personal benefits from a Latino utility heuristic are less cost-effective than a white group linked fate. In other words, they may consider it more cognitively efficient to prioritize a sense of linked fate with whites over Latinos. This prioritization likely represents a strategy to approach whiteness or distance themselves from *Latinidad* or Blackness. I argue that it manifests in (1) support for racialized conservative attitudes and behaviors and (2) reduced recognition of discrimination against Blacks and lower support for BLM.

> ***H3:*** *Latino whites who prioritize white over Latino linked fate will be more conservative and more likely to support the Republican Party and to vote for Donald Trump in the 2020 election.*
>
> ***H4:*** *Latino whites who prioritize white over Latino linked fate will be less likely to perceive discrimination against Blacks in the U.S. and support BLM.*

Data and Methodology

I examine these hypotheses using data from CMPS 2020, a nationally representative post-election survey that collects responses about political behavior and attitudes.[10] The survey includes an

[10] Other datasets commonly used to study Latino political behavior—such as the LNS 2006, LINES 2012 and 2016, earlier CMPS datasets, and ANES—are less suitable for the present analysis. CMPS 2016 includes only 45 Black Latinos. Only two of them identified as Republicans and none reported voting for Trump in 2016. LNS 2006 and ANES measure race and ethnicity with a two-question

oversample of 4,577 Latinos and incorporates sample weights by racial group, constructed using the 2019 American Community Survey to generalize to the national adult population. One advantage of CMPS 2020 is that it asked about race and ethnicity in a single question, mirroring recent U.S. Census changes. Flores, Telles, and Ventura (2024) show that this format reduces the share of Latinos selecting a racial category, leading more to report "Latino" as both a racial and ethnic identity. Using CMPS 2020 ensures that the results in this article align with the new U.S. Census questionnaire.

To analyze H1 and H2, I constructed a categorical independent variable of race and ethnicity using the CMPS 2020 question, "*What do you consider your race or ethnicity? Mark one or more boxes.*" Models use the same sample (N = 10,225) across models for comparability: 3,145 non-Latino whites, 1,162 Latino whites (selected "White" and "Hispanic or Latino" but not "Black or African American"), 2,265 Latinos (selected only "Hispanic or Latino"), 156 Latino Blacks (selected "Black or African American" and "Hispanic or Latino" but not "White"), and 3,497 non-Latino Blacks.

CMPS provides parentage data. A small share of respondents (n = 340) reported at least one Latino parent but did not self-identify as Latino. Among them, 83 identified as white and 126 as Black. As a robustness check, I reclassified them as Latino whites and Latino Blacks. Results remain consistent with the main findings (see Online Appendix).

To test H3 and H4, I use a subsample of Latino whites (N = 1,162). The key predictor is *linked fate prioritization*, treated as a direct independent variable capturing whether Latino whites place greater weight on Latino or white linked fate.[11] CMPS 2020 asked Latino white respondents the extent to which "What happens to [Hispanic/white] people will have [Nothing, Only a little, Something, A lot,

format following the 1980-2020 U.S. Census questionnaire. LINES 2012 and 2016 do not ask respondents to self-classify racially. Moreover, several of these datasets do not provide measures of white and Latino linked fate, a key component of this paper's framework.

[11] This does not imply that overlapping identities are inherently problematic; it simply highlights the political effects of such prioritization.

A huge amount] to do with what happens in my life." Using these two questions, I construct a measure of white linked fate prioritization over Latino linked fate by subtracting Latino from white linked fate. Thus, *linked fate prioritization = white linked fate – Latino linked fate*. The resulting variable ranges from -4 to 4. Positive values indicate a higher prioritization of white over Latino linked fate, while negative values indicate a higher prioritization of Latino over white linked fate. A score of zero indicates equal levels of Latino and white linked fate. While this can result from high values on both, low values on both, or equal midpoints, the focus of this study is not the absolute strength but the *relative prioritization*.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Before turning to the multivariate analyses, I first examine descriptive statistics to establish baseline patterns across Latino racial subgroups. To estimate the overrepresentation of Latino whites, Latinos, and Latino Blacks within specific variables, I calculate the difference between a group's share within a category and its overall share in the sample. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and a Delta measure capturing whether a group is overrepresented or underrepresented relative to the sample mean. A detailed explanation of how Delta was calculated is available in the Online Appendix.

Table 1 provides an empirical starting point to answer which Latinos tend to identify as white. Latino whites are disproportionately U.S.-born, Protestant, more educated, and more affluent than their co-ethnics, and are especially overrepresented among Cubans. This aligns with interviews showing Latinos claiming whiteness and Americanness based on U.S. nativity (Basler 2008) and with Cuevas-Molina's (2023) finding that later immigrant generations are more likely to identify as white. Their overrepresentation among higher-income respondents also reflects the Latin American pattern of "money whitening," where rising socioeconomic status fosters white reclassification (Golash-Boza 2010; Howard 2001; Lovell and Wood 1998; Sue 2013; Telles 2004). The largest disparity appears among Protestants, where Latino whites are overrepresented by more than 9%. Because religion and

race are closely linked for white Christians (Joshi 2020), this suggests Latino whites disproportionately adopt Protestantism. Overall, white identification is not random but rooted in national origin, class, and religion.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables by Latino Racial Identity

	Latino Racial Classification					
	White *N* = 1,162 (32.4%)		No racial classification *N* = 2,265 (63.2%)		Black *N* = 156 (4.4%)	
	%	Δ	%	Δ	%	Δ
Education						
HS or Less	24.04%	-8.39%	71.69%	8.48%	4.26%	-0.09%
More than HS	35.31%	2.88%	60.31%	-2.91%	4.39%	0.03%
Income						
Below $50,000	27.04%	-5.39%	69.52%	6.31%	3.44%	-0.91%
Above $50,000	37.07%	4.64%	57.79%	-5.43%	5.14%	0.79%
Gender						
Female	32.48%	0.05%	63.43%	0.21%	4.10%	-0.26%
Male	32.37%	-0.06%	62.91%	-0.30%	4.72%	0.37%
Religion						
Protestant	41.68%	9.25%	52.51%	-10.71%	5.81%	1.46%
Non-Protestant	30.93%	-1.50%	64.95%	1.73%	4.12%	-0.24%
Birthplace						
Foreign Born	23.31%	-9.12%	75.19%	11.97%	1.50%	-2.85%
Born in USA	37.01%	4.58%	57.21%	-6.01%	5.78%	1.43%
Place of Origin						
Mexico	28.36%	-4.07%	68.93%	5.72%	2.70%	-1.65%
Puerto Rico	31.40%	-1.03%	59.07%	-4.15%	9.53%	5.18%
Cuba	48.07%	15.64%	48.07%	-15.15%	3.86%	-0.49%

Note: Descriptive statistics based on the sample used in Models 1-5.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

I examine five dependent variables: (1) ideology on a 5-point scale from very liberal to very conservative; (2) Republican Party identification; (3) Trump vote in 2020; (4) perceived discrimination against Blacks on a 4-point scale, recoded so higher values indicate greater perceived discrimination; and (5) support for BLM on a 5-point Likert scale, recoded so higher values indicate greater support. Descriptive statistics by race and ethnicity appear in Table 2, with non-binary variables rescaled as

binary. Results show a consistent gradient: non-Latino whites are most conservative, followed by Latino whites, Latinos without racial classification, Latino Blacks, and non-Latino Blacks.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Political Attitudes by Ethnic and Racial Identity

	Means				
Variable	Conservative Ideology	Republican	Voted for Trump	Discrimination against Blacks	BLM
NL White	0.56	0.44	0.52	0.63	0.45
Latino White	0.50	0.26	0.33	0.69	0.56
Latino	0.44	0.16	0.22	0.70	0.62
Latino Black	0.36	0.09	0.14	0.70	0.72
NL Black	0.41	0.06	0.09	0.83	0.79
N	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225

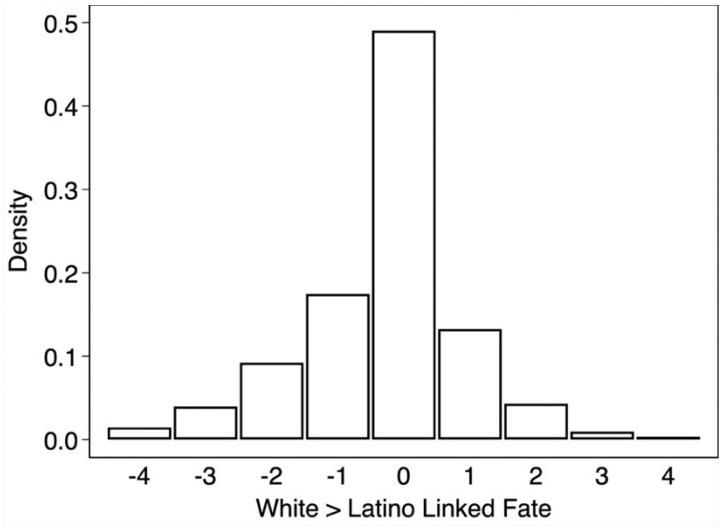
***Note*:** Statistics adjusted for survey design. Values recoded to 0-1. Descriptive statistics based on sample used in Models 1-5.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

I next examine how Latino whites balance linked fate prioritization. Figure 2 reveals substantial heterogeneity in how Latino whites navigate linked fate prioritization. While nearly half of Latino whites (49.1%) show no preference between Latino and white linked fate, a sizable share prioritizes Latino linked fate (32.4%), and a nontrivial minority (18.5%) prioritizes white linked fate.

This distribution is theoretically informative in several ways. First, it demonstrates that prioritization of whiteness among Latino whites is neither universal nor dominant, underscoring that incorporation into whiteness is not a uniform or automatic process. Instead, most Latino whites either retain stronger ethnic attachments or balance competing racial and ethnic considerations.

Second, the presence of a substantial minority that prioritizes white linked fate provides direct descriptive evidence of a pathway of incorporation into whiteness that is already observable, rather than merely theoretical. These individuals appear to anchor their political outlook more strongly in whiteness than in Latinidad, which aligns with arguments that some Latino whites adopt racialized political orientations associated with whiteness as part of a broader strategy of racial positioning.

Fig 2. Distribution of White to Latino Linked Fate



Note: This graph shows the distribution of white to Latino linked fate prioritization among Latino whites. Negative values indicate a higher prioritization of linked fate with Latinos over whites. Positive values indicate a higher prioritization of linked fate with whites over Latinos. A zero (0) means the linked fates are equal, regardless of their strength.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

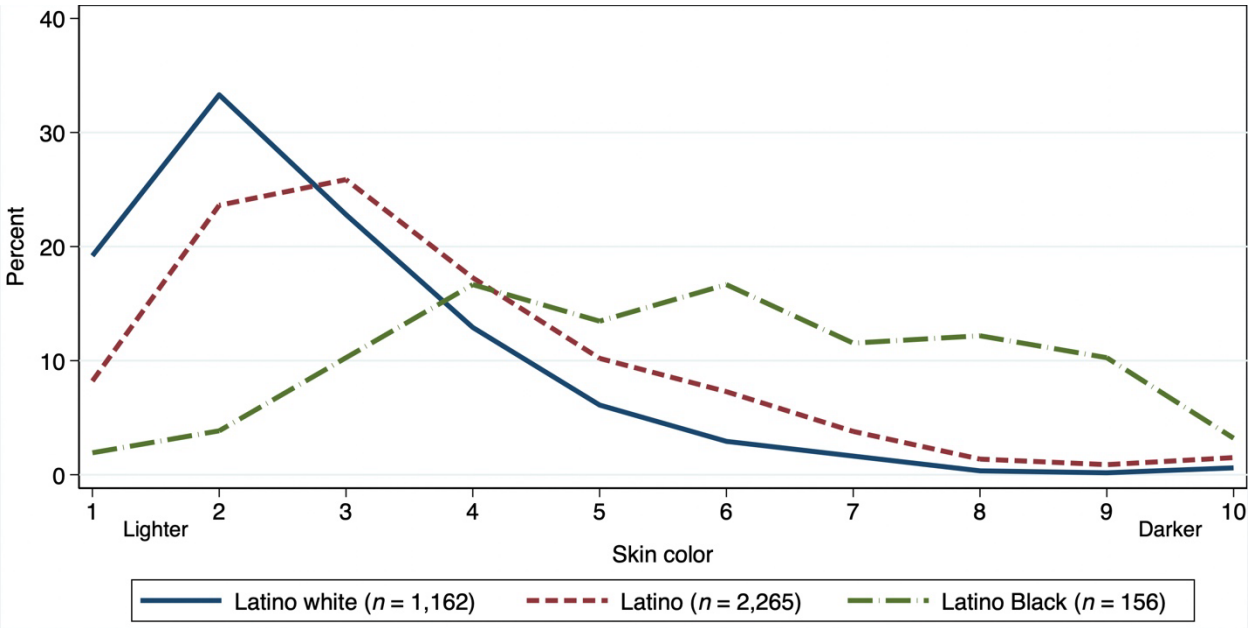
Taken together, Figure 2 establishes the empirical foundation for my central argument: variation in linked fate prioritization among Latino whites reflects meaningful differences in how individuals navigate the American racial hierarchy, and these differences are likely to translate into distinct political attitudes and behaviors. The analyses that follow examine whether prioritizing white over Latino linked fate systematically corresponds with more conservative ideological positions and racial attitudes.

Skin Color and Racial Self-Classification

Skin color has long been a central axis of stratification in Latin America and among Latinos in the U.S., shaping social interactions, access to resources, and political attitudes (Hunter 2007; Ostfeld and Yadon 2022). Lighter skin is often tied to higher status and proximity to whiteness, while darker skin is linked to greater exposure to discrimination and racialization as Black, influencing both external perception and self-classification.

CMPS 2020 measures respondents' skin color using the Yadon-Ostfeld Skin Color Scale, a 10-point measure ranging from very light to very dark (Yadon and Ostfeld 2020). Skin color is moderately correlated with Latino racial self-classification (r = 0.31). Mean skin tone scores are 2.76 for Latino whites, 3.57 for Latinos without racial classification, and 5.77 for Latino Blacks (1 = lightest, 10 = darkest). Lighter Latinos more often self-classify as white, whereas darker Latinos are more likely to self-classify as Black. Figure 3 shows the distribution, revealing clear separation across groups. These patterns matter for the models in this article: if racial self-classification merely proxies for skin color, controlling for skin color should eliminate its statistical significance. But if racial self-classifications are significant with controls for skin color, this indicates that racial self-classification captures political differences beyond phenotype, underscoring race as a distinct social and political construct among Latinos.

Fig 3. Skin Color Distribution by Latino Racial Self-Classification



Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020

First Analysis: Latino Whiteness and Political Outcomes

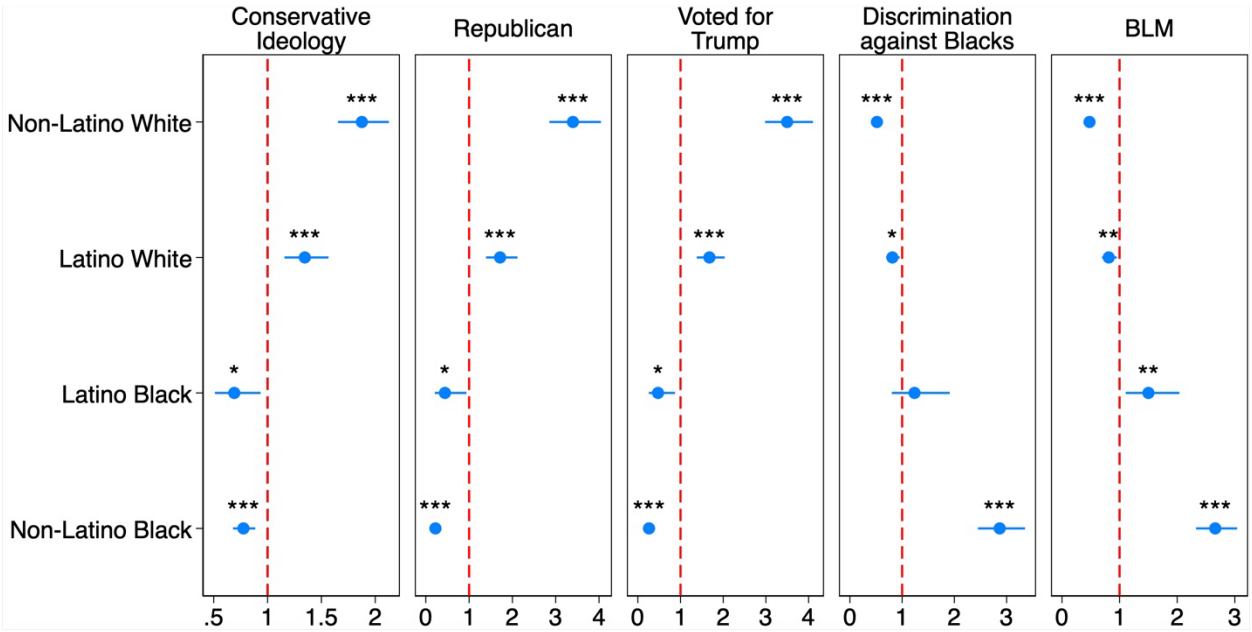
I first explore how race shapes Latino political behaviors and attitudes. To situate Latinos within the U.S. racial hierarchy, Models 1 to 5 include non-Latino whites and Blacks as a guide. The main independent variable, race and ethnicity, is categorized into five groups: non-Latino whites, Latino whites, Latinos without racial classification (reference group), Latino Blacks, and non-Latino Blacks. Odds ratios for ethnoracial groups are compared against Latinos without racial classification.[12]

To assess how racial self-classification among Latinos relates to political ideology, Republican identification, voting for Donald Trump in the 2020 election, perceived discrimination against Blacks, and support for BLM, I estimate three Ordinal Logit regressions (Models 1, 4, and 5) and two Logit regressions (Models 2 and 3). Models control for skin color, age, education, income, gender, and Protestant identification. Because these models also include non-Latino whites and non-Latino Blacks, it is not possible to control for country of origin. Models incorporate sample weights. Table 1A in the Online Appendix and Figure 4 present odds ratios from these models and Figure 5 the predicted probabilities.

Panel A of Figure 5 presents predicted probabilities from an ordinal logit regression predicting ideological conservatism (5-point scale from very liberal to very conservative). Latino whites have a 13.3% probability of identifying as very conservative, compared to 10.2% for Latinos without racial classification and 7.3% for Latino Blacks. The differences between Latino whites and Latino Blacks with Latinos without racial classification are significant. Latino Blacks' probability (7.3%) is statistically indistinguishable from that of non-Latino Blacks (8.2%). These results position Latino whites as the most conservative group and Latino Blacks as the least in the Latino Attitudinal Scale.

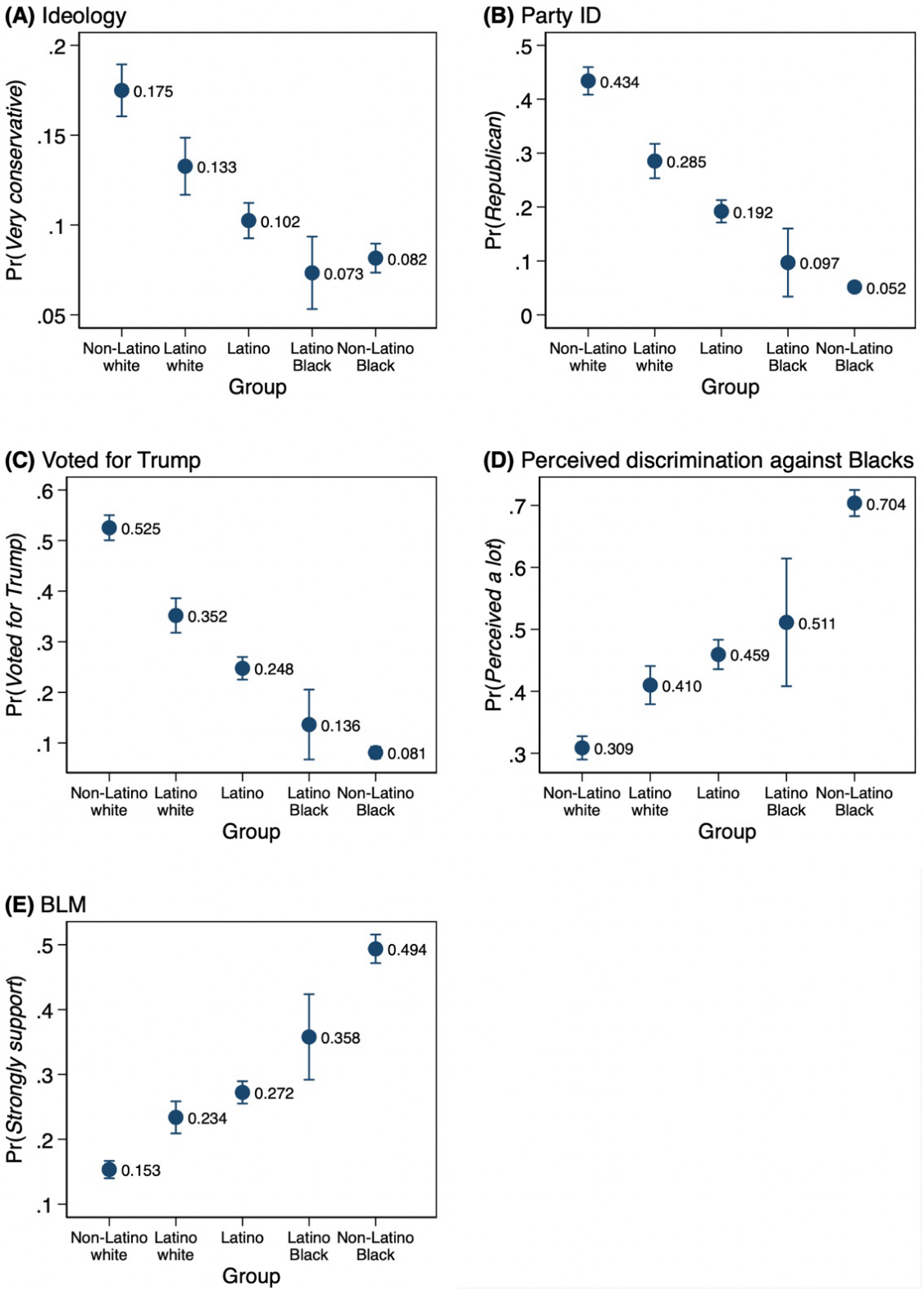
[12] Latinos without a racial classification are used as the reference category because they occupy a racially ambiguous and ideologically intermediate position between Latino whites and Latino Blacks within the American racial and attitudinal hierarchy, providing a substantively meaningful benchmark for comparison.

Fig 4. Odds Ratios of Political Attitudes and Behaviors by Race and Ethnicity



***Note*:** Figure developed with models from Table 1A. The reference category is Latinos without racial classification. Dots denote odds ratios. Horizontal lines denote the 95% confidence intervals. Control variables omitted from the Figure.
***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

Fig 5. Predicted Probabilities of Political Attitudes and Behaviors by Race and Ethnicity



***Note*:** Figure developed with models from Table 1A.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

Panels B and C of Figure 5 present predicted probabilities from logit models for Republican identification and voting for Trump in 2020, respectively. For Republican identification (Panel B), the probabilities are 43.4% for non-Latino whites, 28.5% for Latino whites, 19.2% for Latinos without racial classification, 9.7% for Latino Blacks, and 5.2% for non-Latino Blacks. For Trump voting (Panel C), the corresponding probabilities are 52.5%, 35.2%, 24.8%, 13.6%, and 8.1%, respectively. Among Latinos, Latino whites are closest to non-Latino whites in both outcomes, followed by Latinos without racial classification. Latino Blacks have the lowest probabilities of Republican identification and Trump voting among Latinos. These significant differences place Latino whites between Latinos without racial classification and non-Latino whites in partisan alignment and presidential vote choice, confirming H1a.

Panel D of Figure 5 presents predicted probabilities of perceiving a great deal of discrimination against Blacks: 30.9% for non-Latino whites, 41% for Latino whites, 45.9% for Latinos without racial classification, 51.1% for Latino Blacks, and 70.4% for non-Latino Blacks. Latino whites are significantly less likely than Latino non-whites to perceive discrimination against Blacks. While Latino Blacks' probability (51.1%) is higher than that of Latino whites (41%), the difference relative to Latinos without reported racial classification is not significant.

Panel E of Figure 5 shows predicted probabilities of supporting BLM. Latino Blacks have the highest probability among Latinos (35.8%), followed by Latinos without racial classification (27.2%) and Latino whites (23.4%). Non-Latino whites have a probability of 15.3%, while non-Latino Blacks have 49.4%. Latino whites' probability of supporting BLM is significantly lower than that of Latinos without racial classification. Together, Panels D and E validate H2a and provide some support for H2b. As discussed, confirming differences in political attitudes among Latinos by race.

Overall, the results support H1 and H2: Latinos disaggregated by racial self-classification occupy distinct positions in the white-(Latino)-Black American attitudinal scale. Latino political

attitudes are logically situated along this scale as follows: Latino whites align more closely with non-Latino whites, Latino Blacks with Blacks, and Latinos without racial classification fall in between. This finding empirically supports the proposed placement of Latinos by race in the American Attitudinal Scale in Figure 1.

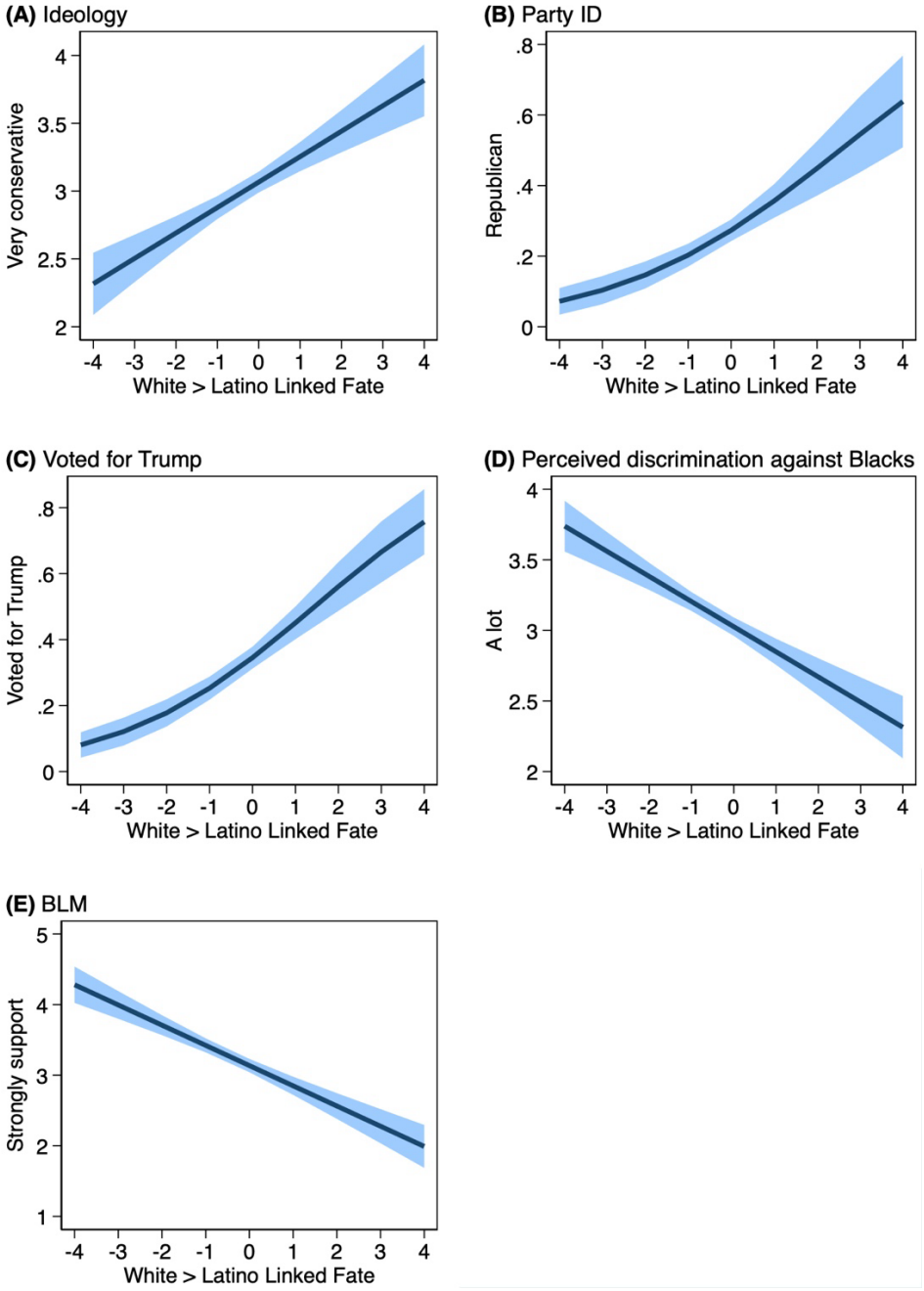
Across all models in Table 1A, skin color is significant, indicating a consistent association with Latino political attitudes. This suggests that phenotype and racial classification each independently shape Latino political attitudes. Notably, lighter-skinned Latinos' greater support for Trump aligns with Ostfeld and Yadon's findings (2022), situating these results within broader evidence that skin tone consistently influences Latino political behavior.

Second Analysis: White Versus Latino Linked Fate Among Latino Whites

A central argument of this paper is that Latino whites are less likely to perceive politics through the lens of Latino group interests and more likely to adopt an individualistic perspective similar to whites. My initial analyses confirm that Latino whites often align their political behavior and attitudes with whites. I now examine a potential mechanism; whether prioritizing white linked fate amplifies this effect. Specifically, I examine how Latino and white linked fate prioritization among Latino whites relates to the five political behaviors and attitudes analyzed earlier.

Table 2A reports the odds ratios from models. Figure 6 displays predicted probabilities with 95% CIs for each outcome across the full −4 to +4 white over Latino linked-fate prioritization scale used to test H3 and H4. These models include the same control variables from previous models. All individuals in these models are Latino whites, which allows control for origin. Thus, I have added Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origins as control variables.

Fig 6. Predicted Probabilities of Political Attitudes by white over Latino Linked Fate Prioritization.



Note: The estimates are derived from OLS regression models for ideology, perceived discrimination against Blacks, and support for BLM, and from logistic regression models for Republican identification and voting for Trump in 2020. All models control for skin color, age, education, income, gender, Protestant identification, nativity, and national origin (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban). Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals. Positive values of linked fate prioritization indicate a higher prioritization of linked fate with whites over Latinos, while negative values indicate a higher prioritization of linked fate with Latinos over whites.
Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.

I begin by examining the role of linked fate prioritization among Latino whites on racialized political attitudes. Consistent with H3, prioritizing white linked fate over Latino linked fate is positively and significantly associated with conservatism, Republican identification, and voting for Trump. The probability of identifying as *very conservative* rises sharply along the linked-fate spectrum, from 4.9% at −4 to 14.6% at 0 and 35.2% at +4. Moving from the strongest Latino-over-White prioritization (−4) to the strongest white over Latino prioritization (+4) increases the probability by 30.3 percentage points (p<0.001), and even the shift from 0 to +4 is +20.6 points (p<0.001). Predicted Republican identification climbs from 7.2% (−4) to 27.3% (0) and 63.8% (+4), a +56.6 point change from −4 to +4 (p<0.001), and +36.5 from 0 to +4 (p<0.001). The probability of reporting a 2020 Trump vote increases from 8.1% (−4) to 34.5% (0) and 75.7% (+4), a +67.6 point change from −4 to +4 (p<0.001) and +41.2 from 0 to +4 (p<0.001).

Prioritizing white linked fate over Latino linked fate is negatively associated with perceiving discrimination against Blacks and supporting BLM, confirming H4. Although nearly half of Latino whites (49.1%) do not express a preference between their Latino and white linked fates, findings show that among Latino whites, stronger prioritization of white linked fate over Latino linked fate is associated with conservative racialized political stances. The probability of saying that Blacks face "*a lot*" of discrimination moves in the opposite direction: from 76.9% at −4 to 38.5% at 0 and 10.4% at +4. This is a −66.4-point drop from −4 to +4 (p<0.001); even 0 to +4 yields −28.1 points (p<0.001). The probability of *strongly supporting* BLM declines from 57.0% (−4) to 21.9% (0) and 5.4% (+4). The change from −4 to +4 is −51.7 points (p<0.001) and from 0 to +4 is −16.5 points (p<0.001).

In sum, the analyses presented yield two core findings. First, racial self-classification among Latinos is strongly associated with both general and race-related political attitudes and behaviors, aligning them ideologically according to the position of their racial self-classification in the American Attitudinal Scale. Given the possibility that some Latino whites may assimilate as whites (Bonilla-Silva

2004; Haney-López 2005), this finding has important implications for understanding the future of American racial politics. Second, although Latino whites are the most conservative Latino racial group, their level of conservatism is amplified by white linked fate prioritization. Put differently, *linked fate prioritization* differentiates those Latino whites who most closely align with whites (and thus fit Bonilla-Silva's "honorary white" stratum) from those who remain ideologically closer to Latinos or the "collective black." These findings extend Bonilla-Silva's model by identifying an internal mechanism that helps sort Latinos within the tri-racial hierarchy.

Discussion and Limitations

This study uses data from CMPS 2020, which offers the advantage, like most similar surveys, that asked respondents about race and ethnicity in a single question similar to the format recently adopted by the U.S. Census. This study offers exploratory analyses but advances the conversation on the role of racial classifications and prioritizations in Latino politics. Future work should build on this foundation to deepen our understanding of these dynamics.

A key limitation of this study is that it cannot adjudicate causal direction between racial self-classification and linked fate prioritization with political attitudes. The evidence is consistent with Latino whites adopting conservative attitudes as part of an aspiration toward whiteness, but it is also plausible that pre-existing conservative attitudes lead some Latinos to identify as white to signal proximity to whiteness and distance from Blackness. Jardina (2019) makes a similar point with respect to white identity politics, noting that it is difficult to disentangle whether racial identity shapes ideology or whether ideological commitments reinforce racial identification. This parallel underscores that the challenge of causal direction is not unique to Latinos but extends to the broader study of race and politics in the United States. Given the cross-sectional nature of CMPS, this study cannot disentangle these possibilities. Future research using longitudinal or experimental designs is needed to address this endogeneity.

While this study relies on CMPS 2020, future research should use multiple waves to track changes over time. These waves offer an opportunity to examine how the boundaries of whiteness and Latino identity shift across political and demographic contexts. The 2020 results reflect not only structural trends but also the rhetoric-driven effects of Trump's racial appeals. Alamillo (2019) demonstrates that Trump's explicit racial rhetoric mobilized support among Latinos who denied racism, suggesting that the political context of 2020 may have amplified patterns of racial identification and conservatism among Latino whites. Comparing across waves is thus essential to separate long-term dynamics from the effects of specific political moments.

The measure of linked fate prioritization developed here should not be understood as a direct operationalization of aspirational or multiracial whiteness. Rather, it captures a comparative orientation in which Latino whites weigh whether their interests align more with Latinos or with whites. This measure is an empirical contribution, offering evidence that incorporation into whiteness operates not only through self-classification but also through linked fate prioritization. Such orientation can be consistent with aspirational whiteness, as Latinos proximate to whiteness may perceive greater benefits from prioritizing linked fate with whites rather than with Latinos, or with Beltrán's (2021) multiracial whiteness, where nonwhite groups adopt ideologies historically associated with whiteness and thus contribute to sustaining white democracy. I therefore interpret linked fate prioritization as a political expression of either social identity decisions tied to proximity and mobility or racial-ideological commitments to whiteness as hierarchy. Distinguishing between these mechanisms requires further empirical work, but the evidence presented here suggests that both are plausible.

Another limitation of this study is that the data do not allow for analogous tests of linked fate prioritization among Latinos with other racial identities. For instance, examining whether Latino Blacks prioritize Black linked fate over Latino linked fate would provide a valuable falsification test.

However, because a small share of Latinos self-classifies as Black, the sample is too limited to produce reliable estimates. Future research using oversamples is needed to explore alternative patterns.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that racial self-classification and linked fate prioritization are central to understanding political attitudes and behaviors among Latinos. Rather than forming a politically homogeneous group, Latinos are sorted along racial lines in ways that closely mirror the broader American racial hierarchy. Latino whites tend to align politically with non-Latino whites, Latino Blacks align more closely with non-Latino Black progressive orientations rooted in recognition of racial inequality and racial justice, and Latinos without racial classification occupy an intermediate position within the American Attitudinal Scale.

Importantly, this study shows that closeness to whiteness and proximity to blackness operate as distinct but interconnected political orientations. Among Latino whites, prioritizing white over Latino linked fate is strongly associated with conservative ideology, Republican identification, support for Donald Trump, reduced recognition of anti-Black discrimination, and lower support for Black Lives Matter. By contrast, Latino Blacks' political attitudes reflect closer alignment with Black political traditions shaped by experiences of racialization and exposure to anti-Black discrimination. Together, these patterns indicate that Among Latinos, whiteness and blackness function not merely as identities or racial categories, but as opposing political orientations that structure how Latinos interpret American politics, group interests, inequality, and racial solidarity.

Taken together, these findings challenge the assumption that Latinos constitute a unified political bloc. As racial self-classification and linked fate prioritization continue to organize political alignment within the Latino population, partisan and ideological cleavages are likely to increasingly map onto racial boundaries defined by proximity to whiteness and blackness. Recognizing this internal

diversity is essential for understanding contemporary U.S. racial politics and the evolving role of Latinos within it.

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Online Appendix

Calculation of the Delta Measure Reported in Table 1

To estimate the overrepresentation of Latino whites, Latinos, and Latino Blacks within specific variables, I calculate the difference between a group's share within a given category and its overall share in the sample. Formally, for a group G and category C, I compute:

$$\Delta_{G|C} = \frac{n_{G \cap C}}{n_C} - \frac{n_G}{N}$$

where $n_{G \cap C}$ is the number of individuals who belong to both group G and category C, n_C is the number of individuals in category C, n_G is the total number of individuals in group G, and N is the total sample of Latinos by racial classification. The resulting quantity ($\Delta_{G|C)}$ captures the difference between the proportion of category C comprised by group G, and the overall proportion of group G in the full sample. A positive value of ($\Delta_{G|C)}$ indicates that group $G$is overrepresented in category C relative to its overall share in the population. Conversely, a negative value implies underrepresentation.

Models

Table 1A: Models on Political Behavior and Attitudes					
	Dependent variable				
	Ordinal Logit Odds Ratios	Logit Odds Ratios	Logit Odds Ratios	Ordinal Logit Odds Ratios	Ordinal Logit Odds Ratios
	Conservative Ideology	Republican	Voted for Trump	Discrimination against Blacks	BLM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race / Ethnicity					
Non-Latino White	1.875***	3.399***	3.497***	0.518***	0.479***
	(0.12)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Latino White	1.346***	1.715***	1.676***	0.813*	0.813**
	(0.10)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Latino Black	0.691*	0.442*	0.472*	1.237	1.501**
	(0.11)	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.27)	(0.23)
Non-Latino Black	0.776***	0.222***	0.262***	2.867***	2.660***
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.23)	(0.18)
Skin Color	0.975*	1.043*	1.041*	0.952***	1.025*
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	1.012***	1.008***	1.005**	1.004**	0.987***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	0.918***	0.924***	0.886***	1.069***	1.077***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Income	1.016*	1.057***	1.034***	1.006	0.994
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender *(Male = 1)*	1.189***	1.287***	1.441***	0.627***	0.690***
	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Protestant	1.618***	2.009***	1.625***	0.886*	0.835***
	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Foreign born	1.174**	0.866	0.830*	0.872*	0.919
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Constant		0.105***	0.237***		
		(0.01)	(0.03)		
N	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225
Note*:** Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights included. Latinos who did not select any racial categories are the reference group. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$. ***Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.					

Table 2A: Models on Political Behavior and Attitudes Among Latino Whites					
	Dependent variable				
	Ordinal Logit	Logit	Logit	Ordinal Logit	Ordinal Logit
	Conservative Ideology	Republican	Voted for Trump	Discrimination against Blacks	BLM
	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
White > Latino LF	1.357***	1.509***	1.590***	0.649***	0.664***
	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Skin Color	1.057	1.062	1.125*	0.857**	0.934
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Age	1.016***	1.006	1.010*	1.001	0.978***
	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	0.870**	0.932	0.910	1.042	1.111*
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Income	1.032	1.082**	1.041	1.027	1.013
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Gender *(Male = 1)*	1.257	1.136	1.258	0.618***	0.754*
	(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.09)	(0.10)
Protestant	2.371***	2.468***	2.067***	0.597**	0.694*
	(0.45)	(0.50)	(0.40)	(0.10)	(0.12)
Foreign born	1.276	1.310	0.929	0.802	0.892
	(0.20)	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Mexican	1.055	1.270	0.986	1.159	1.140
	(0.16)	(0.26)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.16)
Puerto Rican	1.244	1.278	0.978	1.274	1.286
	(0.24)	(0.36)	(0.25)	(0.27)	(0.24)
Cuban	1.352	2.051*	1.477	1.001	0.741
	(0.32)	(0.62)	(0.45)	(0.25)	(0.21)
Constant		0.120***	0.221***		
		(0.05)	(0.08)		
N	1,162	1,162	1,162	1,162	1,162
Notes*:** Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights included. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$. ***Source: Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey 2020.					

Robustness Check

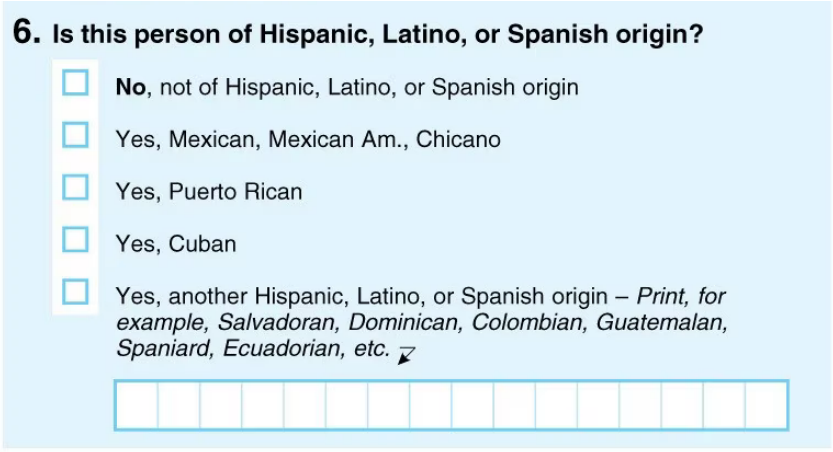
CMPS provides parentage data. A small share of respondents (n = 340) reported at least one Latino parent but did not self-identify as Latino. Among them, 83 identified as white and 126 as Black. As a robustness check, I reclassified them as Latino whites and Latino Blacks. Results remain consistent with the main findings.

Table 3A: Models on Political Behavior and Attitudes Including Individuals With at Least one Latino Parent who do not self-classify as Latino.

	Dependent variable				
	Ordinal Logit Odds Ratios	Logit Odds Ratios	Logit Odds Ratios	Ordinal Logit Odds Ratios	OLS Coefficients
	Conservative Ideology	Republican	Voted for Trump	Discrimination against Blacks	BLM
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Race / Ethnicity					
Non-Latino White	1.955***	3.171***	3.328***	0.567***	0.457***
	(0.12)	(0.27)	(0.26)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Latino White	1.376***	1.716***	1.626***	0.812**	0.795**
	(0.10)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Latino Black	0.721*	0.749	0.692	0.981	1.620***
	(0.10)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.20)
Non-Latino Black	0.725***	0.225***	0.273***	2.671***	2.893***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Age	1.013***	1.008***	1.004*	1.004**	0.987***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Education	0.917***	0.925***	0.887***	1.065***	1.077***
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Income	1.015*	1.057***	1.034***	1.006	0.995
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender *(Male = 1)*	1.175***	1.309***	1.466***	0.617***	0.701***
	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Protestant	1.619***	2.031***	1.637***	0.876**	0.832***
	(0.08)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Foreign born	1.176**	0.850	0.821*	0.890	0.914
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Constant		0.123***	0.276***		
		(0.02)	(0.03)		
N	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225	10,225

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights included. Latinos who did not select any racial categories are the reference group. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

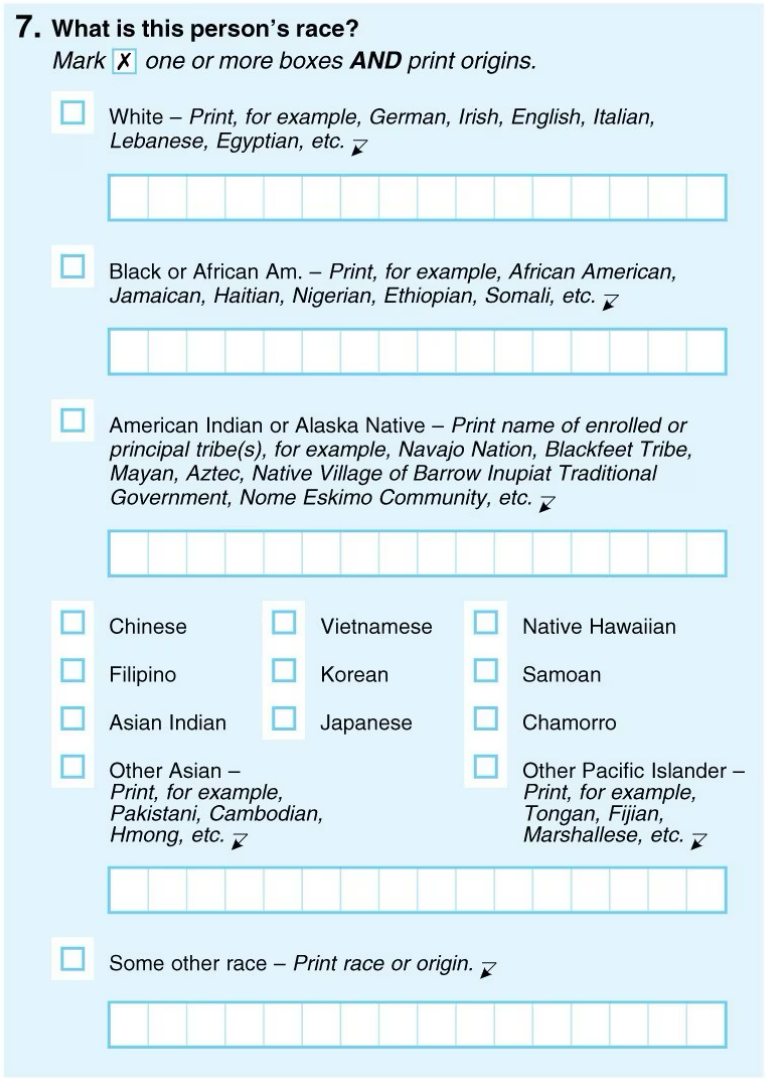
Latino or Hispanic Ethnic Question Used Until the 2020 U.S. Census



6. Is this person of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- ☐ **No**, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- ☐ Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- ☐ Yes, Puerto Rican
- ☐ Yes, Cuban
- ☐ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin – *Print, for example, Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc.*

Racial Question Used Until the 2020 U.S. Census



7. What is this person's race?

*Mark ☒ one or more boxes **AND** print origins.*

- ☐ White – *Print, for example, German, Irish, English, Italian, Lebanese, Egyptian, etc.*
- ☐ Black or African Am. – *Print, for example, African American, Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.*
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native – *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe(s), for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe, Mayan, Aztec, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, etc.*

☐ Chinese	☐ Vietnamese	☐ Native Hawaiian
☐ Filipino	☐ Korean	☐ Samoan
☐ Asian Indian	☐ Japanese	☐ Chamorro
☐ Other Asian – *Print, for example, Pakistani, Cambodian, Hmong, etc.*		☐ Other Pacific Islander – *Print, for example, Tongan, Fijian, Marshallese, etc.*

- ☐ Some other race – *Print race or origin.*

New Racial and Ethnic Question for the 2030 U.S. Census

What is your race and/or ethnicity?

Select all that apply and enter additional details in the spaces below.

☐ **American Indian or Alaska Native –** *Enter, for example, Navajo Nation, Blackfeet Tribe of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation of Montana, Native Village of Barrow Inupiat Traditional Government, Nome Eskimo Community, Aztec, Maya, etc.*

☐ **Asian –** *Provide details below.*

☐ Chinese ☐ Asian Indian ☐ Filipino
☐ Vietnamese ☐ Korean ☐ Japanese

Enter, for example, Pakistani, Hmong, Afghan, etc.

☐ **Black or African American –** *Provide details below.*

☐ African American ☐ Jamaican ☐ Haitian
☐ Nigerian ☐ Ethiopian ☐ Somali

Enter, for example, Trinidadian and Tobagonian, Ghanaian, Congolese, etc.

☐ **Hispanic or Latino –** *Provide details below.*

☐ Mexican ☐ Puerto Rican ☐ Salvadoran
☐ Cuban ☐ Dominican ☐ Guatemalan

Enter, for example, Colombian, Honduran, Spaniard, etc.

☐ **Middle Eastern or North African –** *Provide details below.*

☐ Lebanese ☐ Iranian ☐ Egyptian
☐ Syrian ☐ Iraqi ☐ Israeli

Enter, for example, Moroccan, Yemeni, Kurdish, etc.

☐ **Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander –** *Provide details below.*

☐ Native Hawaiian ☐ Samoan ☐ Chamorro
☐ Tongan ☐ Fijian ☐ Marshallese

Enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc.

☐ **White –** *Provide details below.*

☐ English ☐ German ☐ Irish
☐ Italian ☐ Polish ☐ Scottish

Enter, for example, French, Swedish, Norwegian, etc.

Racial Question in CMPS 2020

S2_RACE What do you consider your race or ethnicity? Mark one or more boxes

White.....1
Hispanic or Latino 2
Black or African American.....3
Asian American 4
American Indian/Native American 5
Arab, Middle Eastern or North African.....6
Native Hawaiian 7
Not Hawaiian, but other Pacific Islander 8

White and Latino Linked Fate Questions in CMPS 2020

How much do you think what happens to the following groups here in the U.S. will have something to do with what happens in YOUR life? [Grid] [Randomize]

552. What happens to Hispanic people will have…

554. What happens to White people will have…

Nothing to do with what happens in my life.....1
Only a little to do with what happens in my life 2
Something to do with what happens in my life 3
A lot to do with what happens in my life 4
A huge amount to do with what happens in my life.....5