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Debates about the racial categorization of Dominicans have been an integral part of the state-building process of the eastern majority of the island Ayíti, or Hispaniola, since the 18th century. From its conception as a free nation, the question of whether Dominicans should be considered Black, "Colored," or White has been of crucial importance for the Dominican Republic's legitimacy as a sovereign state (Torres-Saillant 1998). The Dominican Republic's fight for liberation from the Spanish colonial power was rooted in the conception of Black Liberation - the nation's drive for independence was a collaboration between its neighboring sibling - Haiti, the first successfully freed Black nation - and the creole mixed and Black Dominicans who understood their positionality as Spanish colonial subjects. Yet, as liberation unfolded and the French colonial power forced Haiti to occupy the Dominican Republic to meet the "reparations" "owed" to France, the Haitian-Dominican political, economic, and social dynamic took a turn for the worst (Torres-Saillant 1998). This, coupled with centuries of the questioning and manipulating of Dominicans' ideas of their "race" and the international understanding of the implications of a second successfully liberated Black nation, have left the eastern two-thirds of the island with a complex and contradicting understanding of race that is rooted in the erasure of Dominican *negritud*[1] and its replacement with *mestizaje.*[2]

Beginning in the 1930s, political suppression and economic strife under the nation's infamous dictator Rafael Trujillo made the country unliveable for many (Moya Pons 1998). Once they had the legal freedom to do so, large numbers of Dominicans migrated to the United States,

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[1] Negritud means "Blackness" in Spanish, often used by Dominican scholars of race.
[2] This word comes from mestiza/o/x, which is a person of Spanish and indigenous descent. Mestizaje is a racial construct and project to reimagine the history and contemporary culture of Latin America as one that is rooted in Spanish and indigenous culture, and erasing African heritage.

beginning around 1965, searching for the American Dream. Upon arrival, Dominicans were met

with racist and xenphobic discrimination in housing and employment and the confusing

realization that in the United States, a lot of them were perceived as Black (Simmons and Reiter

2012). This confusion is the result of the racial construction of the Dominican Republic clashing

with that of the United States. While the United States functions on the eugenist one-drop rule,

the Dominican Republic's construction of race is more nuanced, although still rooted in

anti-Blackness.

These opposing racial constructions then leave Dominicans who emigrate from the D.R.

and begin their lives as "Dominican Americans" interrogating their identities and what they

mean for them in the U.S. American context (Simmons and Reiter 2012). This form of racial

self-interrogation, however, is unique to and changes for each generation of Dominicans in the

United States. Contemporary dialogue on open forums and social media show an increasing

trend of Dominican Americans who were raised and socialized in the United States "exploring"

and reclaiming their sense of Blackness or Afro-Latinidad. With this, I have personally noticed

younger generations of Dominicans, second and third generations, slide toward the left in their

politics, past their parents' more centrist and even right-wing ideologies.

The ways Dominicans of the 1.5 generation, second generation, and third generation are

conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing race in the United States is causing a monumental change

in their self-identification, and in turn, affecting other areas of social existence: political ideology

and civic engagement.[3] In this thesis, I will shed light on the historical context that has led to

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[3] For the purposes of this study, 1.5 generation indicates the participant migrated to the United States at a young age and was therefore socialized in the U.S. context, second generation indicates at least one of the participant's parents was born in the Dominican Republic, and third generation indicates that at least one of the participant's grandparents was born in the Dominican Republic.

these changes in self-concept among Dominicans in the United States and how the 1.5, second,

and third generation Dominicans, specifically, are understanding their racialized selves in line

with or in juxtaposition to non-Hispanic Black U.S. Americans.

## Research Questions

As I work through these themes, these questions will be my guide: Are 1.5, second, and

third generation Dominicans assimilating into the U.S. American conceptualization of

"Blackness" or are they building hybrids that incorporate understandings of race from the

Dominican Republic with the U.S. American norms of race (and Blackness in particular)? Are

1.5, second and third generation Dominicans aligning themselves with non-Hispanic Black U.S.

Americans racially? Does the racial-ethnic self-identity claims of 1.5, second, and third

generation Dominicans have an effect on their political ideology and engagement more broadly?

## Literature Review

**Blackness and the History of Nation-Making in the Dominican Republic.** When analyzing

the ways in which Dominicans understand race and identity today, it is necessary to

contextualize the analysis within the history of the nation-making of the Dominican Republic

and the role of race with this process. In their work, Fennema and Troetje (1989) conduct content

analyses of primary sources to examine race and nation making in the Dominican Republic.

They establish that Dominican racial identity flows from mixedness of African and Spanish

blood to overt recognition of Blackness. During the War of Restoration, *campesinos* who were "gente de color" waged war against the Spanish and Spanish sympathizers because they knew that the reinstitution of slavery would mean their own enslavement. Still, the Spanish had left a clear hierarchical understanding on the land that the "indios" had a nobility to them, and were "saveable" and "convertible" to Christianity. Whereas, the African slaves were seen as "barbaros" and "animales" who were made to endure harsh physical labor. This distinction left a mark that is quite significant in Dominican identity today - the term "indio/a" is the popularly used term that most Dominicans use and is on the national identification card. Since the vast majority of Dominicans are of this predominantly African and Spanish descent, the vast majority identify as "indio/a" with qualifiers such as "oscuro" or "claro" to denote skin tone, largely eracing any African ancestry.

Similarly, Torres-Saillant (1998) analyzes and explains the Dominican racial construction as it was influenced by the international racial-political arena and the Dominican people's self-perception of the colonial era. He delineates the ebb and flow of Dominican's racial identity, correctly capturing the contestation of their social location within White supremacy. Torres-Saillant presents the socio-historical conception that has cultivated the anti-Black, mestizaje-oriented Dominican national identity. In particular, Torres-Saillant coined the term "deracialized consciousness," giving language to the process by which Dominicans view race as non-existent yet overtly consequential in everyday and systemic politics. More recently, the dictatorship of Trujillo and his successor Balaguer, have served as the White supremacist blueprint that underlines many Dominicans' racial ideology.

In this foundational work, Moya Pons (1998) surveys primary sources to paint a history of the Dominican Republic. In this section, Moya Pons hones in on Trujillo's anti-Blackness and anti-Haitianism during his reign. Trujillo's rise to power was facilitated via the U.S.-trained military in the Dominican Republic. Using his military power and influence prior to his rule, Trujillo monopolized industries to build his wealth and eventually owned 45% of industries and 60% of the labor force on the land. He built up the nation's economy primarily as a means to more personal wealth and launched successful propaganda campaigns that painted him as the "savior" of the Dominican people. Throughout his reign and that of Balaguer, Trujillo ruled with an iron fist, freely and openly murdering all who uttered opposition to his government. This has left a lasting legacy of fear of politics on the island. In 1937, he ordered the on-sight murder of Haitians settled in the northern Cibao region of the eastern nation. This resulted in the genocide of rougly 18,000 Haitians, now known as the Parsley Massacre.[4] After international protests, investigations, and mediations, the Dominican government was forced to pay $750,000 in "damages and injuries" caused by "frontier conflicts." Trujillo supporters launched a largely successful propaganda campaign erasing the genocide as an instance of Dominican patriotism, wherein Dominicans got upset with Haitians for "robbing" them and eventually fought, and sometimes killed, a few of them.

**Race in the Dominican Republic.** As in other countries previously colonized by Spain, the Dominican Republic's racial construction falls under the broader concept of "mestizaje." During the colonial era, Spain instituted a strict racial caste system in all its territories that placed people

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[4] For more information on the Parsley Massacre and anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic, refer to Monica G. Ayuso's "'How Lucky for You That Your Tongue Can Taste the 'r' in 'Parsley'': Trauma Theory and the Literature of Hispaniola" in the Works Cited section.

of every possible racial combination of indigenous, African and Spanish descent in a different

racial category. For instance, someone who was Spanish and indigenous would be considered a

mestiza/o/x; someone who was African and Spanish would be a mulata/o/x. The legacy of this

complex racial system is what is now referred to as "Latinidad" in academia - an ethno-racial

concept that embraces Latinx identity as a race and culture that came about through the diffusion

of Spanish and indigenous culture, food, language, and phenotypes (Aparicio 2017). The term

mestizaje comes from the term mestiza/o/x, as the re-imagining of race and culture as rooted in

the recognition of only Spanish and indigenous roots (Arrizón 2017). The critical fault of

Latinidad is that it allows room for racial nuance under one ethnic identity or national identity,

but it denies any African heritage, erasing Black history from the nations that once were at the

epicenter of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

In the Dominican Republic, mestizaje and deracialized consciousness are the foundations

for understanding race. In her study of Dominican racial constructs and its clash with the U.S.

American construct, Simmons (2012) conducts qualitative observations, focus groups, and

interviews with Dominicans and Black U.S. Americans who have lived or visited the Dominican

Republic for an extended time to examine how the ideas of the one-drop rule, mestizaje, and

colorization influence their consciousness. She found that the racial construction of the

Dominican Republic is rooted in a notion of mixedness or mestizaje that obscures or aims to

completely erase Blackness in the nation. This racial construction clashes with the U.S.

American construction of race that functions on the Black-White binary. This clash complicates

identity for Dominicans who visit or move to the U.S., or even African Americans who visit the

Dominican Republic. Simmons also finds that  Dominican identity is formed in opposition to

Haitian identity such that, if Haitians are Black, then Dominicans are not. This mestizaje-focused

identity that allows for more variety in identity clashes with the U.S.'s strict Black-White binary.

She notes Dominicans are starting to recognize their Blackness via the "mulato" identity.

In this work, Roth (2012) gathers critical knowledge on modern-day Dominicans' racial

understandings. Through her interviews with non-migrant Dominicans living in Santiago,

Dominican Republic Roth finds that there are differentiated ways Dominicans understand and

name race. With this critical work, Roth was able to establish that the education level played a

critical role in Dominicas' understanding and interpretations of race. Roth added three crucial

vocabulary terms to this niche field: nationality racial schema, continuum racial schema, and

symbolic boundaries. Nationality racial schema describes when Dominicans, typically those with

less formal education, viewed their race as their nationality, therefore assuming all Dominicans

were of the "Dominican race" and racial categories such as blanca/o/x, negra/o/x, india/o/x were

just color descriptors. Continuum racial schema was often used by Dominicans of higher

educational attainment and views Dominican identity as nationality and race as blanca/o/x,

negra/o/x, india/o/x.

In Candelario's (2007) work, participant observation of a Dominican hair salon in

Washington Heights, NYC and interviews with employees of the salon reveals the racial identity

and formation process among Dominicans. Candelario establishes that Dominican national

identity is intricately tied to Dominican women's image and identity. Candelario's work explores

the way racial identity formation via physical attributes of Dominican women coincide with a

national identity that claims to be neither Spanish, African, or Taino, but a mix that produced a

race within itself: a Dominican race. Via hair straightening and other popular contemporary

beauty tactics, Dominican women attempt to embody the racial identity that Dominicans desire to present themselves as to the world.

In her 2013 work, Roth conducts a content analysis of Henry Louis Gates's "Haiti & The Dominican Republic: An Island Divided" and other relevant literature to examine the U.S. 's one drop rule, racial construction and framing. Roth finds that the depictions of Blackness that Gates offers in his episode featuring the dynamic between the Dominican Republic and Haiti are centered in U.S.-American understandings of Blackness. Roth argues that this does not allow for the full consideration and examination of the experiences of Dominicans in regards to race. For instance, Gates makes the claim that everyone in the D.R. would be considered Black in the U.S. First, this is untrue on the basis that White Dominicans exist; it is also untrue in the sense that although most Dominicans have African ancestry, not all present as Black, even in the U.S. context. Second, Roth points out that Blackness in the U.S. is being held a standard for Blackness globally, which can be more damaging than unifying. Gates also does not include social remittances in his analysis of the conception of race in the D.R. - how the U.S. has affected Dominican racial understandings.

**Dominicans Navigating the U.S. American Racial Terrain.** When Dominicans migrate to the United States, they encounter the Black-White racial binary and are quickly placed in racial categories they might have never considered for themselves, namely Blackness. Bailey (2001) conducts ethnographic research as well as qualitative interviews of second generation Dominican high school students in Washington Heights, NYC. He finds that Dominican American students tend to self-identify in linguistic or national terms rather than racial terms, following the patterns

found on the island in Roth's (2013) work. However, in contrast to their first generation parents, they tended to recognize their Blackness and felt a strong affinity to Black U.S.-Americans. Bailey later (2007) conducted more ethnographic research on the politics of identity and immigration in Dominican communities. Bailey (2007) observed and interviewed members of Dominican enclaves in New York City's Washington Heights and the Dominican Republic's Santiago, finding that second and 1.5 generation Dominicans in high school as well as adults have developed a complex understanding of their racial identities that captures Dominican and U.S. American racial constructs. Many of the subjects were able to recognize their Blackness or at least recognize that U.S. Americans often assumed they were Black. Despite this, the subjects often still clung to their ethno-linguistic identities such as Dominican or Spanish, allowing them to flow in and out of Blackness.

As Dominicans navigate race in the U.S., regardless of whether or not they claim a Black identity, like other people of color, their racial-ethnic identities are the result of politics. Golash-Boza (2006) uses the 1989 Latino National Political Survey and 2002 National Survey of Latinos to examine the concepts of racialized assimilation and panethnicity among Latinxs in the United States. Golash-Boza's study establishes Whiteness as a construct and Europeans' assimilation into it as a juxtaposition to the racializing experience that Latinx people undergo in the United States. Respondents who experienced discrimination were 29% more likely to identify as Hispanic or Latinx over American and 45% more likely to adopt a hyphenated American label. The study found that the Latinx label emerges as a political identity that is more likely to be chosen by those who experience discrimination.

As Dominicans maneuver race in their everyday lives, there are some U.S. American racial schemas that they traverse, whether they are conscious of it or not. In her 2005 work, Roth uses data from IPUMS (5% Integrated Public Use Microdata Series) and the 1990 U.S. Census to examine the prevalence of the one-drop rule, Black singular identity, interracial identity, transcendet identity in the United States. The U.S. functions on the one-drop rule to determine racial identity on the Black-White binary. However, a dramatic increase in interracial marriage and interacial children is changing the racial landscape of the U.S. Their presence disrupts the racial binary and is forcing the U.S. to grapple with more nuanced identities. The study shows that interacial children are granted three types of racial identities: singular identity, interracial identity, or transcendent identity. In Black-White interracial marriages the children tend to take on the Black singular identity or the interracial identity. However, some still tend to mark "Other" on the Census, an indicator of a transcendent identity where they are raised as "race neutral." The study also found that interracial children do not have much flexibility in their racial identity in the South - if one of their parents is Black, especially if the other parent is White, they are automatically given the Black singular racial identity. This is because of the legacy of slavery and anti-miscegantion laws - the prevelence of the one-drop rule is strongest in the region from where racial construction was firmly established.

**Prospects of Linked Fate as a Political Tool for Engagement.** Social scientists have looked to concepts of group commonality, linked fate, and social distance as tools for people of color to build coalitions within politics. There is a wealth of literature on these "political tools" and the ways in which they facilitate political participation and civic action. The literature follows in the

steps of Dawson's (1994) work on the "Black utility heuristic," which asserts that Black U.S.

Americans politically behave as a collective. Essentially, Black U.S. Americans view their racial

identity as the defining marker of their fate in the United States, making any other social identity,

such as economic class, less relevant in their political decisions.

In her work on the concepts of acculturation and assimilation, ethnic conflict hypothesis,

pan-Latino affinity, and the "Black utility heuristic," Kaufmann (2003) found that although

Latinos as a collective did not have a stronger affinity to Black U.S. Americans than they did to

White U.S. Americans, Puerto Ricans had the strongest affinity to Black U.S. Americans and

Dominicans had a strong affinity to Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and Cubans had a

stronger affinity for each other and seemed to have a pan-Latino identity that is less connected to

Central and South Americans. She proposes that others look at surveys that focus on particular

Latinx sub-groups and look at race, and blackness specifically, as a "utility heuristic."

Sanchez's (2008) study on group consciousness of Latinxs in the United States and their

perceived commonality with Black U.S. Americans found that Latinx group consciousness and

perceived discrimination have a positive relationship with Latinx perceived commonality with

Black U.S. Americans. The study also found that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans showed the

highest levels of perceived commonality with African Americans (49% and 43%, respectively)

while Central and South Americans had the lowest perceived commonality (23%). They also

found that Dominicans are the most likely group to perceive commonality with African

Americans out of Puerto Ricans and Cubans, with Mexicans as the reference group. Sanchez also

noted other factors that increase perceived commonality with Black U.S. Americans: younger

age, nativity, and shared educational background all led to increases in perceived commonality

with African Americans. This work will be useful in framing a key distinction I am attempting to make in my study: Dominicans' assimilation and acculturation process is different from that of predominantly non-Black Latinxs because of their perceived racial identity in the United States.

Valdez (2011) uses statistical analysis of the 2007 Latino National Survey to examine group consciousness, linked fate, political and electoral behavior, and racial/ethnic/American Latinx identity. Valdez finds that perception of discrimination among ethnic-identified Latinxs leads to dramatically increased electoral action, such as registration and voting. However, in a report on the trends observed in the Latinx population and electorate from 1992 to 2016 collected from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey November Voter Supplements data, Bergad (2016) finds what was termed the "Latino Voter Registration Dilemma." As the Latino electorate grows, so does the count of Latino registered voters and actual voters, however, in exact proportion: the same percentage of registered Latinx voters are voting as they did in 1992. In particular, the study has found that the least registered Latinxs are in the younger generations: 18 year olds to 44 year olds. However, the study also found that once registered, Latinxs do vote, at higher rates than non-Hispanic Black and White people. The dilemma seems to be registering more Latinxs to vote, and young Latinxs in particular.

Valdez (2011) also found that race-identified and American-identified Latinxs do not differ on their electoral behavior, but if they perceive a linked fate with other Latinxs, they are significantly less likely to vote. This is explained by feelings of disillusionment and disenfranchisement. My study will add to this work through exploring whether Dominicans are also experiencing political disillusionment and if it appears to be tied to their understandings of race.

In his study of Black Nationalism, Block (2010) uses Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to analyze the 1993-1994 National Black Politics Survey (NBPS) and logisitic regression to analyze the 2004-2005 National Political Survey (NPS) to study the relationships among linked fate, Black disillusionment, and Black nationalism in the United States. The study finds that there is a distinct relationship between linked fate, disillusionment, and Black nationalism. When disillusionment is at its highest point, linked fate starts to matter less in terms of attracting the respondents to Black nationalism. On the other hand, when disillusionment is at its lowest, linked fate rises as the strongest indicator for support of Black nationalism. Block establishes a distinction between Black people's use of the Black utility heuristic versus personal disillusionment with racial progress in the U.S. as a distinct pathway toward Black nationalism. Block also recommends delving into the effects and uses of linked fate and disillusionment for coalition building between racial groups, which my study will partially attempt.

Abrajano and Alvarez (2010) conduct qualitative analysis of past literature on prospects for intergroup coalition building and perceived social distance or commonality among different racial-ethnic groups in the United States. They find that all racial-ethnic groups feel the most distance from Asian Americans and that all of the non-Black people of color perceive themselves as closer to White U.S. Americans than Black U.S. Americans. However, Black U.S. Americans perceived more commonality with Hispanic/Latinx people and White U.S. Americans in comparison to Asian Americans. In the LNS survey, Hispanic/Latinxs perceived the most commonality with Black U.S. Americans. They also find that Latinxs do not perceive economic competition (finding a job, getting a government job) with Black U.S. Americans. They found that some Latinxs do not perceive competition with Black U.S. Americans for government

representation, but an equal amount do, while Latinxs also perceive a linked fate to Black U.S.

Americans in terms of politics.

However, Krupnikov and Piston (2016) use statistical analysis of the 2008 and 2012

ANES survey data to examine the self-interest model versus the racial prejudice model in Latinx

anti-Blackness, blanqueamiento, and U.S. American racial politics. They find that on measures

regarding racial prejudice against Black U.S. Americans, such as perceptions of un/intelligence,

work ethic, and sympathy, Latinxs ranked in between non-Hispanic White people and Black U.S.

Americans, but were statistically indistinguishable from Whites. There was a strong correlation

between Latinxs who had strong racial prejudice against Black U.S. Americans and their lack of

support for policies that explicitly aid Black U.S. Americans, which was statistically similar to

that of Whites. There was also a weak correlation between anti-Black attitudes and lack of

support for policies that implicitly aid Black U.S. Americans for both Latinxs and Whites.

However, the authors acknowledge that this information is only robust with the exclusion of

Latinxs that identify as Black or White, which is a critical limitation. My work will add more

nuance to the anti-Blackness that exists within Latinx communities, which Dominicans must

encounter and also reproduce as part of the mestizaje project.

In this work, Jones-Correa, Wallace, and Zepeda-Millan (2016) use ordered logistic

regression models of Latino National Survey data combined with protest event data to examine

Latinx's perceived commonality and competition with African Americans in relation to a 2006

protest movement for immigrant rights. They find that protest exposure increases Latinxs'

perceived commonality with African Americans. Latinxs that identify as Republicans had a

decreased perception of commonality with African Americans in terms of politics. Length of

time spent in the United States results in a large increase in perceived commonality with African

Americans in terms of politics. They also found that perceptions of a Latino-linked fate increases

the perception of commonality with African Americans. Exposure to protests did not have an

effect on perceptions of competition with African Americans. Dominicans and Salvadorans,

specifically, perceived competition in political representation with African Americans. Overall,

perceptions of intergroup commonality can change over time depending on cultural/political

contexts.

Schildkraut (2013) uses the 2006 Latino National Survey data to examine the

relationships between linked fate, acculturation, American identity, and descriptive

representation among Latinxs and Asian Americans in the United States. She finds that Latinx

people have a strong support for descriptive representation in local and national government. The

study found that an increase in acculturation, a feeling of linked fate, and a decrease in Latinx

people identifying more closely with being American all result in significant increases in support

for descriptive representation in government. In particular, linked fate and whether the

respondent's dominant language was Spanish or not had the most dramatic effects on support for

descriptive representation.

**Black U.S. American Political Behavior and Ideology.** It has been long known that race and

group consciousness play a key role in the political behavior of Black U.S. Americans, largely

because the United States' social, political, and economic system was founded on anti-Blackness

(Dawson 1994; Block 2010; Mangum 2013). As previously mentioned, evidence of Dawson's

(1994) Black utility heuristic has been observed in many studies that examine the impact of

racial identification, group consciousness, and linked fate on Black U.S. Americans' political

ideology and behavior. Still, there is some nuance that can be identified within the Black U.S.

American electorate.

In their 2005 re-examination of the 1984 National Black Election Study, qualitative

analysis of previous literature on racial identification, consciousness, solidarity and political

participation, Chong and Rogers provided a more nuanced and specific definition of racial

identification and consciousness that debunked much of the prior work that had established a

diminishing importance of racial solidarity as a booster for political participation. This study

shows that racial identification and consciousness increases political participation, especially in

areas other than voting like raising money for a Black candidate, registering voters, or working

on a candidate's political campaign. Black identification and consciousness do affect political

participation, especially beyond voting in elections.

In Lerman and Sadin's (2016) study on the Black utility heuristic, group affinity,

ideological projection, racial stereotyping, it was found that White U.S. American voters rely on

racial stereotyping when considering Black U.S. American political candidates. For instance,

they rely on the assumption that Black U.S. American candidates are more likely to be liberal

and use this as a basis for their voting process. On the other hand, Black U.S. American voters

project their own political ideology onto Black U.S. American candidates. Black U.S. American

liberals assume that Black candidates are more liberal than their White counterparts. Black U.S.

American conservatives, more so than Black U.S. American liberals, project their conservative

ideological standing onto Black U.S. American candidates in comparison to a White U.S.

American candidate. This study establishes that for Black conservatives in particular, the Black

heuristic in voting is more about their projection of their own beliefs than about Black affinity

and solidarity. The study suggests that this model of analyzing voter behavior be observed for

other affinity groups, such as Latinxs, because the study found that Latinxs do not use projection

and are less likely to use affinity in their voting decisions. However, they highlight that the

Latinx group is less cohesive in terms of race, socioeconomic class and political ideology than

Black U.S. Americans.

In a study on group consciousness, political participation, and Black linked fate among

African descendants in Miami-Dade County, Florida, Austin, Middleton, and Yon (2012) found

that there is group consciousness among African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Cubans, and

Haitians in this region. The political participation of Black U.S. Americans in this region is most

influenced by group consciousness while socioeconomic status influences the political

participants of the Black ethnic groups more. It's also found that there is anti-U.S. American

Blackness among the Black ethnic groups in the study, which can at least partly explain why

group consciousness most strongly affects Black U.S. Americans and not the Black ethnic

groups.

Still, racial group consciousness plays a key role in political ideology and participation,

as Mangum (2013) finds in his study on political orientation and racial psychological

attachments. For instance, Mangum found that White U.S. Americans, Hispanics, and Asians are

less likely to identify as Democrats than Black U.S. Americans and Caribbeans are. He found

that racial identification also shaped party identification. People whose ideas, interests, and

feelings align with White U.S. Americans are more likely to identify as Republican, those who

align with Black U.S. Americans, Caribbeans, and Hispanics are more likely to identify as

Democrats. Racial identification also shaped political ideology. Those who are aligned with

Black U.S. Americans are less likely to label themselves as conservatives and more likely to

label themselves as liberals. "Supporters of affirmative action and immigration identify

themselves as liberals and opponents of affirmative action and immigration identify themselves

as conservatives (and as moderates)" (Mangum 2013). Mangum notes that the findings indicate

that political terms such as Democrat, Republican, Conservative, and Liberal are racial terms

themselves.

**Gaps in the Literature.** It is undeniable that there is a rich body of literature that provides

context for the social, racial and political experiences of Dominicans in the United States.

However, it is also clear that the literature is lacking critical focus on Dominicans' social and

political lives in the U.S. For instance, a vast majority of the literature on group consciousness

and linked fate centers on Latinxs as a whole, rather than on Dominicans specifically. This

distinction is crucial for studying race and politics in Dominicans' lives because the racialized

experiences of Central and South Americans, who are typically overrepresented in these studies,

are quite different from that of Dominicans. This means that most of the literature does not

accurately represent the experiences of Dominicans. This misrepresentation is particularly

important for this thesis, wherein there is a clear claim that Dominicans are racialized differently

than their Latinx counterparts, and are being racialized, or even assimilated, into Blackness. This

is also seen in literature that focused on political ideology and behavior of Latinxs in the United

States - there is a lack of focus on the ways Dominicans navigate and behave within politics. My

study will not only add to this work, but it will bridge a gap that was completely absent from all

the literature: it will examine the ways Dominicans process and conceptualize their racial

identities, and how this process mediates their political behavior and engagement.

## Methodology

My research questions require multi-dimensional data collection and analysis. To address

these questions, historical contexts about Dominican nation-making and the key role of racial

conceptions in this are crucial. Rich literature capturing the immigrant experiences of

Dominicans and the process of assimilation in the United States already exist, too. To

supplement the vast literature that already exists, a survey and interviews with 1.5, second and

third generation Dominicans were conducted. The survey focuses on how the participants

racially identify, how race was talked about and therefore conceptualized in their upbringing,

where and if they fit into the trend of reclaiming Afro-Latinx identities, where they place

themselves on the political ideological spectrum, and their participation in political organizing

and voting. The survey was spread via snowball sampling on social media: Facebook, Instagram,

and Twitter were used and friends of friends shared the survey link on their socials. This survey

asked participants if they were willing to participate in the interview, via phone or in person, to

elaborate and explore their survey answers more.

One hundred and seventy-eight survey responses were collected. Forty-four cases were

missing in the data set once transported to SPSS. However, this does not make a difference in the

statistical significance of the relationships observed (Figures 1-3). Of the total cases, 69

respondents indicated that they would like to be interviewed and provided contact information.

All sixty-nine respondents were contacted to verify interest in participating further. Of these, 20 respondents expressed continued interest. To limit the size of my data, due to time constraints, I randomly selected 15 respondents to be interviewed. Two of the respondents did not make their interview times and did not maintain contact, and were therefore not included in this study. Of the thirteen interviews conducted, 10 were conducted over FaceTime and three were conducted in person in a controlled, private space. All of the interviews were recorded on a Zoom Recorder and saved onto a USB drive as well as the cell phone of the Principal Investigator. All thirteen interviews were transcribed using the online transcription service Temi.com and reviewed for accuracy. The interviews were inductively coded by themes that emerged across all 13 transcripts.

For the quantitative data, IBM SPSS Statistics was used for analysis to determine whether there were relationships within participants' racial identity, political ideology, and civic engagement. In particular, the variables RACE_INT, RACE_EXT, BLKRCSM, POLID, and VOTMTRS were used to produce crosstabulations and linear regressions (Appendix A).

**Qualitative Results**

As was described in the Methods section, the thirteen qualitative interviews were transcribed and inductively coded to create a theme coding scheme that captured trends across this set of data. These themes were then condensed into larger, overarching themes with sub-themes that allow for more nuanced insight into the responses of the participants. Below are the findings from the interviews, organized into these larger themes.

**Self-ascribed racial identity.** Although there were clear distinctions in the content and manner

in which participants responded to the question "How do you identify in terms of race?," the

answer to this question was not an unambiguous, concise response in any single interview. It was

evident that the question of race was complicated for all the participants and could not be

answered in one swift word or sentence. Throughout the data collection process, two larger

groups arose from this race question: 1) those who were confused on their racial identity and

what race is, and 2) those who had a clear grasp on race and firmly identified as Black

Dominicans or Afro-Latinxs.

For those in the former group, race is a source of confusion, and for some, even anxiety.

For this participant, who is a college-aged student in the Northeast, race is understood as a

Black-White binary that does not accommodate her own identity:

> "Still, this is something that I've struggled with ever since I took standardized tests, especially the
>
> SAT or even applying to college. I was like, okay, well I don't consider myself White, but I don't
>
> know if I can consider myself Black."

For this participant and a few others who were also confused about their racial identity,

the confusion did not stem from misunderstanding the concept of race, but rather from coming to

the realization that they exist outside of the United State's racial colorlines. For this particular

individual and a few others, this resulted in an increased attachment or claim to their ethnic

identity as Dominican, Latinx, or Hispanic:

"As, I mean, I always describe myself as a Latino, Hispanic, you know, as a Dominican, you

know. Even if I don't look like it, I still define myself as it 'cause, it just makes me – that's what I

like to say."

For those in the latter group mentioned earlier, although there was still nuance and

complexity in their responses, race was more defined. Members of this group used two distinct

terms to describe their racial identity: Black Dominican and/or Afro-Latinx. Some of the

respondents used these terms interchangeably, while others were more intentional about their use

of one or the other. Several of these participants explained that the distinction is rooted in the

language and understanding of the word "Afro-Latinxs" within their families and within social

media. For instance, this participant uses the word Afro-Latina to describe herself because her

family is more comfortable with this term over the word "Black":

"But they're getting more comfortable with the word Afro-Latina. They get really comfortable

once you say Afro-Latina so I don't know if like 'Afro-Latinos' is a word that comforts people.

Like it was created to comfort. Can I say it comforts me? Yes. But not in a way, like in an ignorant

way … I feel like I fit in somewhere. I still say Black, but a Black Latina is what I am …"

However, some view that the word "Afro-Latinx" has been ridiculed and attacked as

some Latinx celebrities who have been accused of anti-Black racism or who were simply not

viewed as "Black" by the U.S. American media claimed the word for themselves. This

participant explains her dilemma with claiming the word:

"I feel like, you know the whole situation with Gina Rodriguez and how she was saying she was

Afro-Latina and she was saying like, that her dad is dark-skinned meanwhile her dad is a little bit

darker than me … People just don't take it seriously. Like, they see it as a sort of 'oh, you're trying

to be cool or like be part of something that you're not.' I feel like there's a lot of people who are

just using the word or like the phrase to their advantage. And I think that's why people aren't

taking it as seriously as it should be taken. 'Cause of situations like Gina Rodriguez and others."

Not only does this quote capture the uncertain terrain Dominicans are navigating as they

explore the U.S. American racial schema, but it also captures the ways in which Blackness is

gate-kept in the United States.

Of the thirteen respondents, two self-identified as multiracial, though they still

recognized the effect of their phenotypic features on the ways they are perceived and, therefore,

navigate the world. When asked to describe what he meant by multiracial, this participant

explained:

"Well that encompasses, I'm guessing, um, do you know Dominican history, all of that? You

know, the big three … White, Black and indigenous blood."

For this participant in particular, identifying as multiracial allows him to claim his racial

identities while also honoring his family and heritage:

"When I was younger, I didn't claim my indigenous and Blackness … I wasn't knowledgeable

about it. But now I certainly do. I claim it and even in family spaces, how could I not? Because if I

were not to, you know, I would be erasing like a big portion of my family. Even if they do have a

deracialized consciousness, you know, in D.R., even here. So for me not to claim those identities,

the marginalized ones, the Black and indigenous, is for me to just completely erase my ancestry in

my immediate – and then the darkest person in the household, my dad, that's just, it's messed up."

For this participant, identifying as multiracial is not only an acknowledgement of how he

is perceived and treated in the world, but also a tool to reclaim, honor, and empower himself and

his family.

Although there is no consistency in terms of racial identification across the participants of

this study, there are distinguished patterns that emerged in the literature. Namely, the uncertainty

in racial identity for participants who were light-skinned and racially ambiguous highlights their

encounter with the U.S. American Black-White racial binary. For those who claimed Blackness,

their darker skin color and other physical features, such as hair texture, were noted as markers of

their Blackness. Essentially, those who claimed a Black identity fit the U.S. American mold for

what Blackness is, and were therefore affirmed in this identity.

**Dissociation from U.S. American Blackness.** Regardless of their self-ascribed racial identity,

all of the participants, to different extents, dissociated themselves from U.S. American

Blackness. For participants who did not identify as Black or Afro-Latinx, or primarily identified

with an ethnic identity, dissociation from U.S. American Blackness was rooted in simply not

seeing themselves as Black. For these participants, the language used when discussing Blackness

or Black politics, such as Black Lives Matter, distinguishes an "us" from "them."

For the five participants who self-identify as Black or Afro-Latinx, the dissociation or

distinction was rooted in a recognition of Blackness as a racial identity that is distinct from

ethnic identity, such as being a Black U.S. American. This presented itself as participants

distinguishing Black U.S. Americans' connection to slavery, Black culture, and heritage in the

United States from Dominicans' culture and heritage that is tied to the island and the immigrant

experience. Within this perceived distinction came the questioning of what Blackness is and

means. For all five participants, their Blackness was not only questioned by Dominican family

and friends, but also by Black U.S. Americans, who are described as "gatekeepers" of Blackness.

For instance, this participant stated:

> "I don't know how relevant [this question is] to the research that you're doing, the 'Who is 'Black
>
> enough'?' question. And that question is often proposed and implemented by U.S. Black
>
> Americans, because you know, they're the 'true' Black people … There's tension between these
>
> groups of Black people and like where your ancestry comes from and what your nationality is.
>
> That's where I think my Black identity feels so solid to me because I get that validation from
>
> African Americans who I think are undoubtedly Black. So it's like if I think I'm Black, and Black
>
> people also tell me I'm Black, and White supremacists also think I'm Black, then I'm Black 'cause
>
> nobody's going to tell me that I'm not Black."

Here, this participant captures the process that Black Dominicans face when exploring

race and where they fit within it. She underlines Blackness as a racial identity that can be

claimed by individuals of different ethnic or national backgrounds that makeup the "pan-African

diaspora." However, this understanding of race, and Blackness in particular, was not present for

some participants who shared that they are labeled as Black in their everyday lives but do not

claim this identity. For these two participants, Blackness was seen as an ethnic identity that was

intricately tied to being a Black U.S. American. These participants saw their being labeled as

"Black" to be a mistake, but did not know how to articulate this distinction when questioned about the race of other non-U.S. American Black people, such as Jamaicans. When this participant was asked why she believes she is not Black, she responded:

> "It's not that I don't believe that we cannot be Black, but our skin complexion can be Black. Now. The only thing about that is that I understand that we come from African descent, but we also come from Spaniard descent, even if we may be the darker shade, some Dominicans, not all Dominicans … I have my mom, she can, if she dyes her hair a little bit blonder and stuff, she could pass as a White woman. A lot of people in my family can pass as White. So if you're going to sit there and say, you know, can Dominicans be Black? Well yeah. Dominicans can be Spaniard also … That's the way I was taught: that we're Black and Spaniard. And if we're going to say one, either say both or say none. Dominicans could be Black, but Black skin complexion."

This participant's response exemplifies Torres-Saillant's (1998) concept of deracialized consciousness and Roth's (2012) concept of nationality racial schema. The participant views race and Blackness as both an ethnicity and a physical descriptor. When the term "Black" is ascribed to a U.S. American, it is perceived as an ethnic identity that she does not personally identify with. However, when Blackness is ascribed to herself or other Dominicans, it is perceived more prominently as a color description rather than a racial or political identity. This participant's understanding of her identity is rooted in her ethno-linguistic identity as a Spanish-speaking Dominican, not on being a dark-skinned woman who is perceived as Black in the United States. This is also seen with this participant, who does have an affinity to Blackness, but does not see it as an identity she can claim:

"I pretty much always say I'm Dominican, I think that people will make their assumptions, but I

don't change. You know, I think that if I'm with my group of Black friends, I will probably,

definitely feel more with them. You know, I could still identify with them even though I'm not

exactly part of them. But I can really feel connected, you know what I mean? Connected in more

ways. No matter what. We're still gonna have the same struggles no matter if I'm Dominican

because of my color, no matter what it's going to be. The way I'm going to be seen, you know, like

my Black friends."

Although she did not comfortably claim Blackness, this participant felt a linked fate to

that of her Black U.S. American friends. This theme arose in different forms for each participant,

albeit the perceived linked fate did not always indicate identification with Blackness or Black

U.S. Americans.

**Racial-ethnic identity, group consciousness, and linked fate.** For all of the participants, their

racial-ethnic identity mediated their group consciousness and therefore, whether or not they felt

their fate was linked to that of Black U.S. Americans. For the participants who identified as

Black or Afro-Latinx, their reclamation of Blackness solidified that they were part of a Black

collective in the United States, making their fates undoubtedly linked to that of Black U.S.

Americans. Every member of this group emphasized that the way they are perceived and Black

U.S. Americans are perceived is indistinguishable:

"But perceived race will always matter more than self-identified [race], which is why we get into

these issues of colorism and who passes as what and who wants to be considered what. Right? At

the end of the day, if I get pulled over by the police, they're not going to ask me if my parents are

from the Dominican Republic, right? Like, I'm Black."

These participants not only saw their individual selves as part of the Black collective in

the United States, but Dominicans as a whole. Within this group, there was a consensus that not

all Dominicans are Black, but that the vast majority are, and therefore are part of the Black

collective of the United States. These two participants explain:

"I've never felt that Black Lives Matter means that Dominican lives don't matter because

Dominicans are Black. Like, that includes my life."

"Black Americans, of course, are facing police brutality and stuff. And that's something that is a

lot of times a part of the Dominican experience … They can't be divorced from each other."

These sentiments wrung true for the five participants who readily claimed Blackness, but

not for the two participants who are labeled as Black in their everyday lives but do not claim it

for themselves. These two participants were very aware of their perceived Blackness, however,

this did not translate into Black group consciousness and a feeling of linked fate. Instead, these

participants, along with the rest, perceived a linked fate with Black U.S. Americans that was

rooted in being non-White. This participant explains:

"I feel like Black U.S. Americans, Dominicans, you know, Spanish people as a whole, whether

you're coming from Colombia, Puerto Rico, wherever, we need to unite. Like, at the end of the day

we are the minority in this country."

This sense of unity under the broad "person of color" identity not only facilitates an understanding of power dynamics that exists within U.S. American White supremacy, but it also creates bridges for coalition building within socio-political activism. For example, when discussing the Black Lives Matter movement, all but one participant made clear that although they understood that the movement is centered on social justice for Black people, they view it as a movement for all people of color because of the coalitions it has built with other groups for immigration reform and indigenous rights. This participant explains his perspective:

> "What we've seen historically and currently is that any movements that are trying to better the lives of Black people, anywhere, that's going to positively affect all people, of all marginalized backgrounds because, given the circumstances of Blackness in the United States specifically, right? Being at the bottom of the totem pole … But in general, that's just like the Civil Rights Movement helped immigration rights. Even if that's not the first thing we think of, that's just naturally what happens."

In this response, the participant perfectly captured not only the ways in which being non-White is a politicized identity, but also the fact that the United States was founded on anti-Black White supremacy. Despite this sense of a linked fate, not all participants were invested in politics or political engagement and this, like group consciousness and linked fate, seemed to be mediated by racial-ethnic identity.

**Racial-ethnic identity, political ideology, and engagement.** Regardless of their levels of

political engagement, all of the participants identified as "left-leaning" in terms of their political

ideology. For all of the participants, this political identity was rooted in their understanding of

their social positioning in the United States. Leaning to the left represented social justice,

equality, and "being for the people," as a few participants put it. Although there was clear

consistency in this matter, the participants were all spread across this spectrum of political

engagement: 1) being "a-political," which defines individuals who are not interested in politics

and do not engage in political activity or conversation, 2) "political" individuals who are

interested in politics and try to remain engaged with it and 3) "radical" individuals who feel

invested in politics beyond voting and use their knowledge of systems of oppression to critique

government and institutions in society.[5] Within this spectrum, the degree to which their politics

leaned left correlated with their level of political engagement and this, correlated with whether

they claimed an ethnic identity or a racial identity. To see a visual representation of this

spectrum, refer to Appendix B.

There were four participants who fell on the "a-political" end of the political engagement

spectrum. Of these four participants, one is perceived as Black in her daily life but does not

claim this identity, while the other three are racially ambiguous and confused about their racial

identities. However, all four of these participants primarily identified with an ethnic identity:

Dominican, Latinx, or Hispanic. In their interviews, these participants could not provide

---

[5] It should be noted that the choice to use the terms "a-political" and "radical" is only to create a
clear dichotomy for analysis and not an opinion on what or who qualifies as "a-political" or
"radical."

substantial explanations for their left-leaning ideological positions and overtly expressed apathy

toward politics. When asked about her knowledge of politics, this participant stated:

"I don't know too much about it. I never had an interest in it … I feel like it's a very complex topic

and thing to learn. It's just so much and I just never really saw it as important as it is … It didn't

ever really catch my attention to [want to] learn more about it or to get a clear understanding of it."

While this group seemed to be generally indifferent to politics beyond voting, the

"political" group actively tried to remain engaged with politics, both electoral and social. In this

group, identification with a racial or ethnic social identity was not a signifier of this positioning,

but rather a feeling of responsibility to partake in politics to advocate for their community.

Members of this group were clearer in their defense of their left-leaning ideology and often

named politicians, policies, or hot-topic issues pertaining to the left. When discussing the

unfairness of the U.S. American political system, this participant addressed what she believes is

"our" role in politics:

"We have to do our part too, but some people don't have the education, so I understand some

people don't have the resources. Like, I could look at my Instagram and read about these politics

and all this other stuff. We have to do our part in that … How are we going to get these people to

know that they have this type of power?"

And while she and others in the group viewed political engagement as a responsibility,

those in the "radical" group were more inclined to critique U.S. American politics and

government through a racial lens. The three members of this group all socially identified with racial terms: two identified as Black, one as multiracial. In this group, all participants discussed White supremacy, systemic racism, and liberation while explaining their left-leaning ideological position. To the participants, it's not so much electoral politics that they are focused on, but rather critiquing how the entire foundation of the United States, its government, and its institutions were built on White supremacy while also combating these same structures. Below, a participant explains why he believes the U.S. American political system is unfair:

"Definitely not fair and there are so many reasons for that. There's so many levels to it: racial, gender, you know, sexuality … The U.S. is just built on a foundation of so many of these terrible things that have happened and genocide and enslavement and all of this stuff, right? And these things have never been grappled with in the ways that I believe that they should. There hasn't been enough, like, political movements towards them. There hasn't been enough support for these disenfranchised communities and stuff. So, in my opinion, there's no way this can be fair unless we have really grappled with our histories and also our current day circumstances. These systems very much use the disenfranchised people to their own benefit."

This quote perfectly exemplifies what political engagement looks like and is about for this group: it is not only about voting in elections, but also questioning why their communities are severely disenfranchised in the first place. This group still advocates for civic responsibility, such as communicating with representatives and voting, they just also interrogate the circumstances of their world and are disillusioned by how much change can realistically come from participating in the system alone.

This said, voting in elections was generally seen as worthwhile by all participants in the study. In all but one interview, disillusionment with government and politics arose as a hot topic, particularly as it pertains to voting and the Electoral College. In almost all interviews, Donald Trump's election to presidency despite Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote was central to their lack of trust in voting. Still, all of the participants saw some worth in participating in elections.

What is clear is this: whether the participant identified with an ethnic identity or a racial identity had an impact on their political ideology, which then affected their level of political engagement. For those who identified with an ethnic identity, their ideological position was not fully developed, which resulted in less interest in political activity. For those who identified with racial identities, their ideological position was more developed and pushed them to engage in politics further, some landing on the radical end as they process and deconstruct the systems of oppression they see disenfranchising those of their racial group. For those who identified with an ethnic identity but were classified as "political" individuals, a sense of linked fate with people of color and a responsibility to advocate for them kept them invested in politics. It seems that once Dominicans claim a racial identity or perceive a certain degree of linked fate with people of color in the United States, their political ideology leans further left, resulting in an increased interest in politics and political activity.

**Quantitative Results**

Although this study looked at fourteen variables within the survey, the following six aligned most with the findings explained in the Qualitative Results section and therefore supplemented what was found in the interviews with the participants.



Figure 1: Participants' Self-Identified Race by External Perceived Blackness
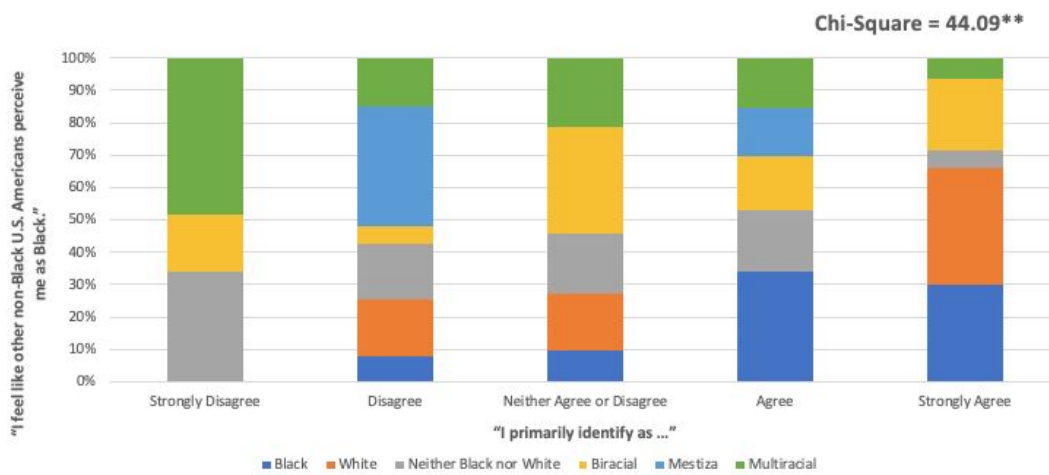
As can be seen in Figure 1, there is a statistically significant correlation (p < .01) between whether the survey respondents felt like they were perceived as Black by non-Black U.S. Americans and how they racially identify themselves. In particular, we can see that about three quarters of those participants who self-identified as Black also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "other non-Black U.S. Americans perceive [them] as Black." When the RACE_EXT variable is the dependent variable, the value of Eta is 0.457, making RACE_INT a moderate predictor of RACE_EXT. This means that if we know how participants perceive their

own race, we can moderately predict their response to whether or not they feel like non-Black

U.S. Americans perceive them as Black. More specifically, if we square and multiply the Eta by

100, we observe that 20.85% of the variation in responses to whether or not a respondent feels

that other non-Black U.S. Americans perceive them as Black can be explained by the variation in

responses to their self-identified racial identity. In all, participants' self-identified race

moderately mediates how participants feel they are racially perceived by non-Black U.S.

Americans.



Figure 2: Participants' Belief That Racism Against Black People in the U.S. is Racism Against Them by External Perceived Blackness
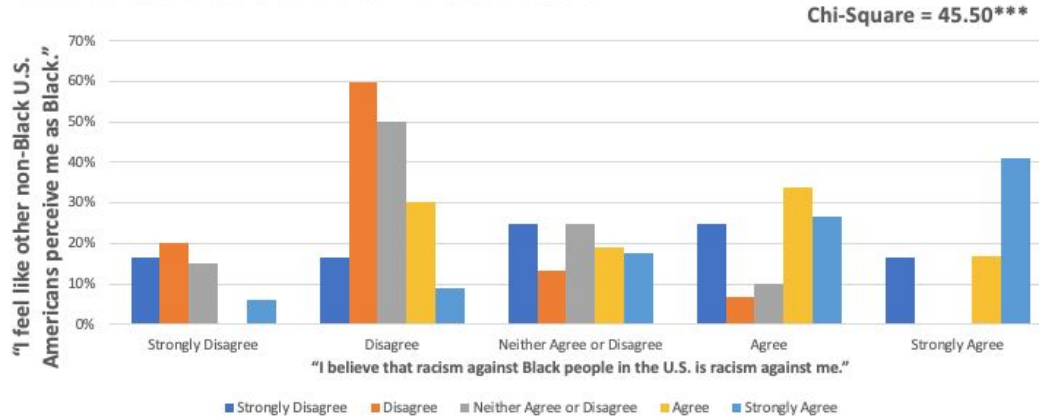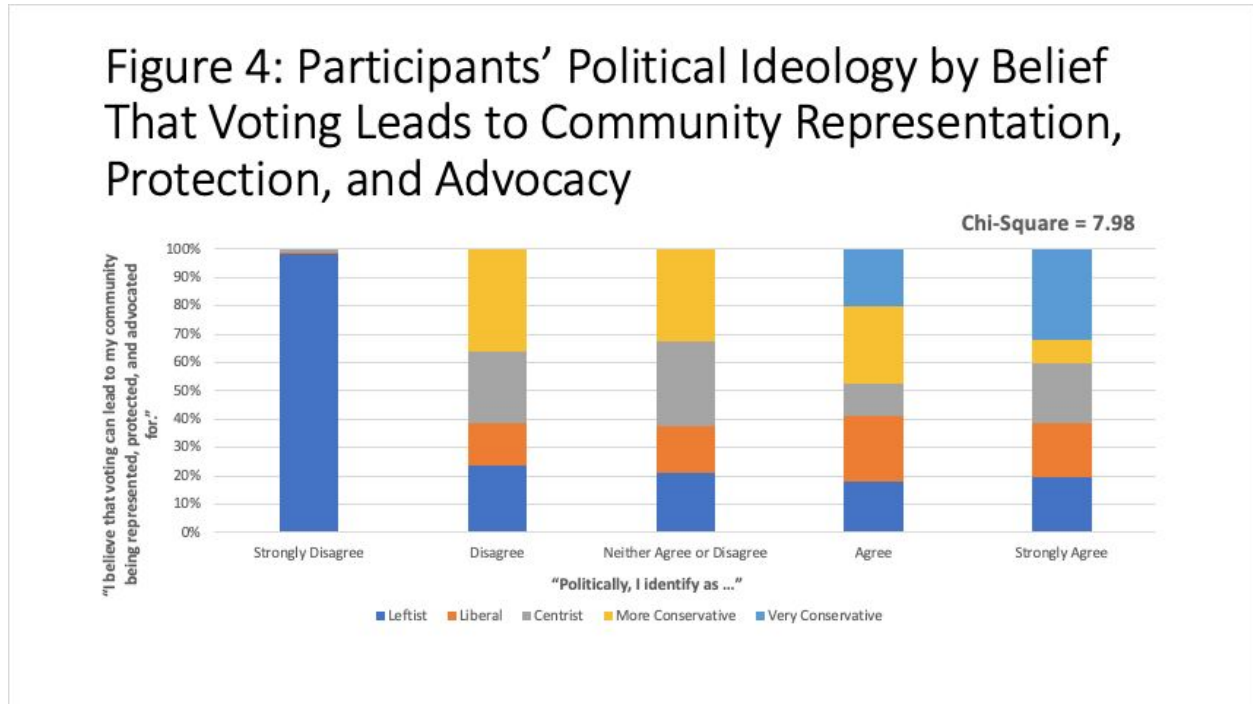
In Figure 2, we can see that there is a statistically significant (p < .001) relationship

between participants' responses to whether they believe that racism against Black people in

the United States is racism against them and whether they feel like non-Black U.S. Americans

perceive them as Black. Specifically, we can see that two-thirds of the participants who strongly agreed that "racism against Black people in the United States is racism against [them]" were those who agreed or strongly agreed that non-Black U.S. Americans perceive them as Black. When RACE_EXT is the dependent variable, the Eta value is 0.504, indicating a moderate to strong correlation between these variables. If we square and multiply the Eta value by 100, we see that 25.36% of the variation in responses to whether or not respondents feel that non-Black U.S. Americans perceive them as Black can be explained by the variation observed in their responses to whether they believe "racism against Black people in the United States is racism against [them]." This correlation was also observed in the interviews with participants, where those who agreed that policies and politics that affect Black U.S. Americans would affect them were also the participants who identified as Black or had been identified as Black by others.



Figure 3: Participants' Self-Identified Race by Belief That Racism Against Black People in the U.S. is Racism Against Them
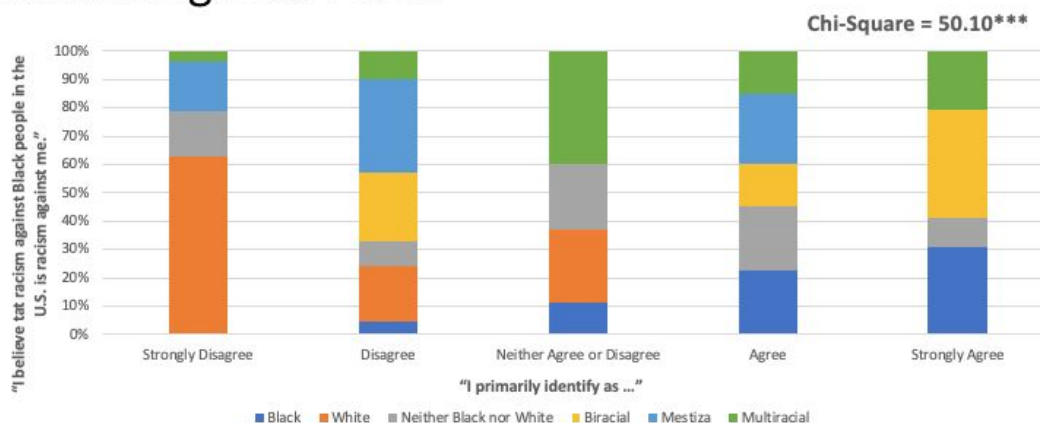
In Figure 3, we see that there is a statistically significant ($p < .001$) relationship between participants' self-identified race and their response to whether they believe racism against Black people in the United States is racism against them. Specifically, we see that over three-quarters of respondents who self-identified as Black agreed or strongly agreed that racism against Black people in the United States is racism against them. Interestingly, other groups who also agreed that racism against Black people in the United States is racism against them identified as multiracial or "Neither Black or White," though they were 31% and 45.5% of their respective groups. This nuance can potentially be explained by the general "Person of Color linked fate" that was persistent within the interviews, regardless of the interviewee's self-identified race. When BLKRCSM is the dependent variable, the value of Eta is 0.423, making this a moderate correlation. If we square and multiply the Eta by 100, we see that the variation observed in participants' self-identified race can explain 18.4% of the variation observed in participants' responses to whether they believe racism against Black people in the United States is racism against them. This establishes self-identified race as a key variable in participants' perceptions of linked fate with Black U.S. Americans, and particularly, that those who self-identify as Black do perceive a linked fate, as well as others who don't quite claim Blackness but seem to be outside of the "colorlines."

Figure 4: Participants' Political Ideology by Belief That Voting Leads to Community Representation, Protection, and Advocacy
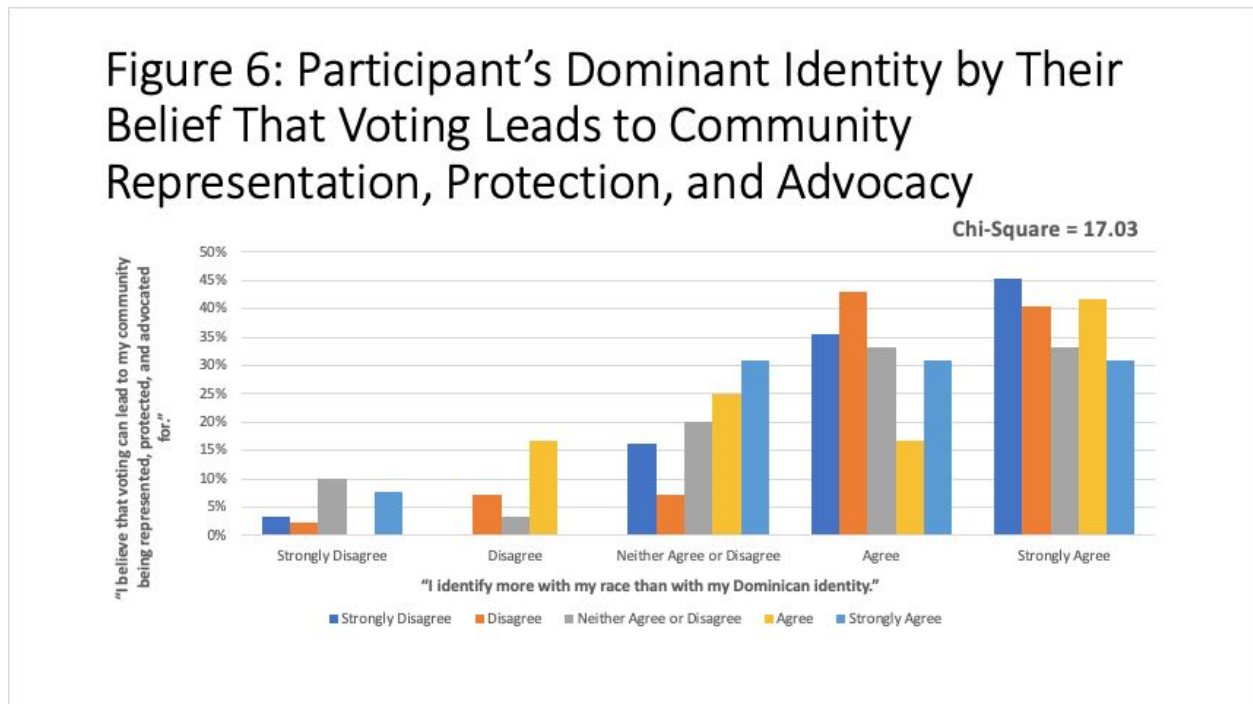
In Figure 4, we see that over three-quarters of participants who identified as Liberal, who were the largest group in the data, agreed or strongly agreed that voting can lead to their community being represented, protected, and advocated for. However, this correlation is not strong, as the Eta for both VOTMTRS or POLID as the dependent variable are lower than .20, indicating a very weak correlation. Additionally, this correlation is not statistically significant, as the p-value is greater than .05. Interestingly, this data does not align well with the qualitative results, wherein there seemed to be a correlation between participants' confidence in voting and government and their political ideology that is not present in these quantitative data.

Figure 5: Participants' Dominant Identity by Their Political Ideology
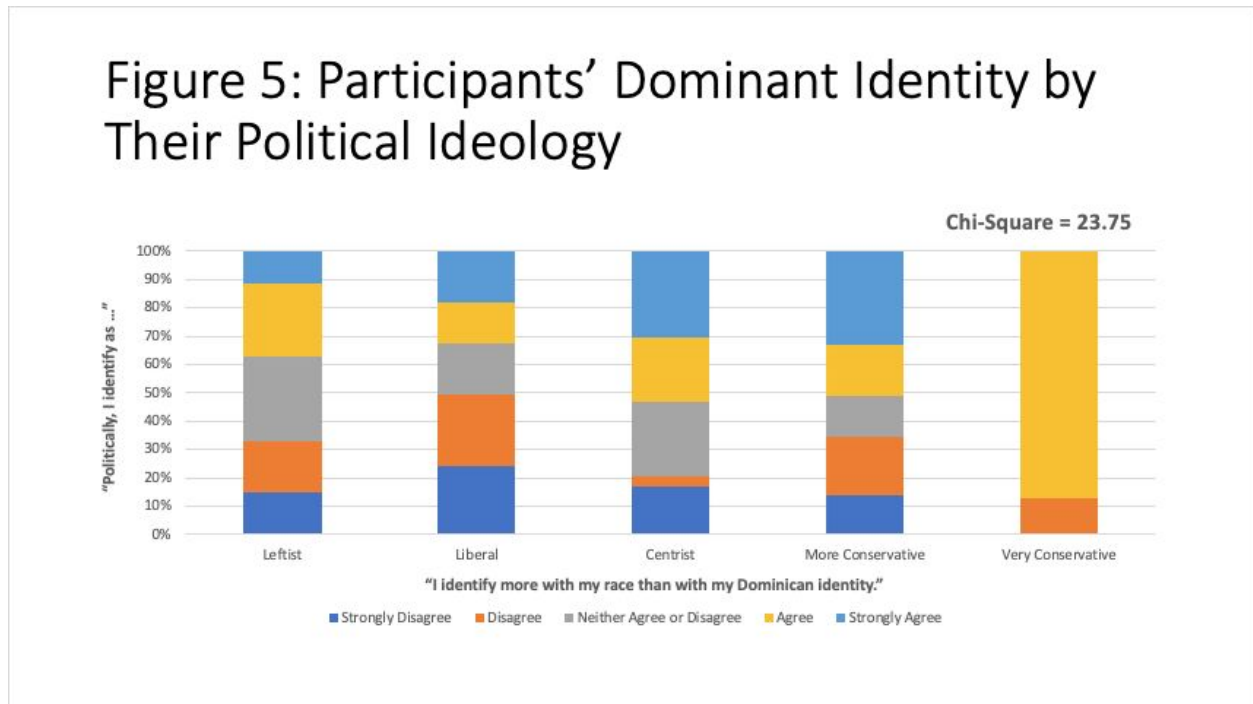
In Figure 5, we see a statistically insignificant relationship (p > .05) between whether participants identify more with their race than with their Dominican identity and how they identify in terms of political ideology. The Eta value for either variable standing as the dependent variable is lower than .30, indicating a weak correlation regardless. This suggests that the participants' political ideology was not correlated with whether they identified more strongly with their race over their Dominican identity. However, in the qualitative data, there seemed to be a relationship between whether participants actually identified with a race or with an ethnicity and their political ideology and engagement. Still, it is noteworthy that the vast majority of those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement "I identify more with my race than with my Dominican identity" identified as Liberal, which was the majority of the participants in the data.

Figure 6: Participant's Dominant Identity by Their Belief That Voting Leads to Community Representation, Protection, and Advocacy

And finally, in Figure 6 we see that there is no statistically significant (p > .05) relationship between whether participants identify more with their race than with their Dominican identity and their belief that voting can lead to their community being represented, protected, and advocated for. The majority of the participants responded disagree and strongly disagree for DOM_ID while also responding agree and strongly agree for VOTMRTS. Although this is statistically insignificant, it still highlights a pattern that was observed in the qualitative data: participants who only identified with ethnic terms, such as Dominican or Latinx, were also more likely to feel confidence in voting and government.

**Discussion**

It is evident from the findings that Dominicans' racial identity is still highly contested and complex and that, to a degree, it bears importance on their political ideology and behavior.

**The complexity of Dominican racial identity.** The effects of the U.S. American one-drop rule and Latin American and Caribbean mestizaje is clearly present in the racial understandings of the participants in this study, namely the interviews. As Roth (2012) explained in her book chapter on Dominican racial identity on the island, Dominicans understand their racial identity through either the national racial scheme or the continuum racial schema. The former partly explains why so many of the participants, about half, were confused by the notion of race and often presented their ethnic or panethnic identities as racial classification. These participants understand their racial identity as their national identity - Dominican - but also as the most politicized identities they can easily identify for themselves: Hispanic or Latinx. The participants differ from those who were able to identify their racial identities as separate from their ethnic identities. For these participants, the continuum racial schema, similar to the one-drop rule in its specification of race, allows them to understand their racial identity as separate and distinct from their ethnic or pan-ethnic identity. This was exemplified by the participants who identified as Black or multiracial when asked about their race rather than as Hispanic or Latinx. Still, a key distinction needs to be made by these groups as most of those who were confused about their racial identity were also light-skinned or racially ambiguous.

The difference in racial identification between light-skinned and dark-skinned Dominicans was glaring. For all of the participants that self-identified as Black or Afro-Latinx,

external validation of their Blackness was integral to their self-concept as Black people. This was

also evident in the survey, wherein there was a statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) relationship

between participants' self-identified race and whether or not they believed non-Black U.S.

Americans perceived them as Black. It is evident from the findings that part of the

self-conception of race for Dominicans in the United States is the way they are racialized in the

U.S. American public. Essentially, the notion is that if others think you are Black, especially

Black U.S. Americans, then you are Black. In this way, Black U.S. Americans are seen as the

gatekeepers and epicenter of Blackness in the United States. So while dark-skinned Dominicans

with Afro-features are being racialized as Black, light-skinned and racially ambiguous

Dominicans are being profiled as Hispanic and Latinx, therefore causing them to adopt these as

their politicized, racial identities. These identities then affect their perception of social distance

from other racially marginalized groups in the United States (Abrajano and Alvarez 2010).

**Group consciousness and linked fate.** These politicized identities that Dominicans are ascribed

lead to a perception of linked fate to all people of color in the United States. Particularly in the

interviews, all participants emphasized the universal marginalization of all non-White people in

the United States and highlighted the need for coalition building (Valdez 2011; Abrajano and

Alvarez 2010; Block 2010; Dawson 1994). In terms of a perception of linked fate with Black

U.S. Americans, responses varied in a similar fashion to racial identity. Those who identified

with an ethnic or panethnic social identity when asked about race felt a linked fate to people of

color, with Black U.S. Americans being a part of that group. Their perception of linked fate with

Black U.S. Americans was rooted in the marginalization of non-White people. Those who

identified with racial terms, especially those who identified as Black or Afro-Latinx, perceived a

strong linked fate to Black U.S. Americans on the basis that they were also Black and therefore

intricately connected. This relationship was also observed in the quantitative data, wherein

respondents who felt they were perceived as Black by non-Black U.S. Americans also believed

that racism against Black U.S. Americans in the United States is racism against them.

Essentially, it was firmly established that Dominicans use a POC utility heuristic when forming

their political opinions, while those who identify and are identified as Black use a direct Black

utility heuristic when making their political opinions (Kaufmann 2003; Block 2010; Dawson

1994).

**Political ideology and engagement.** Across all data, the participants of this study were

predominantly Liberal or left-leaning. In the interviews in particular, all interviewees identified

as politically left-leaning or Democrats. As was discussed in the Qualitative Results section,

there seemed to be a correlation between whether participants identified with a racial or ethnic

identity and their political ideology and engagement (Appendix B). For those participants who

used a national racial schema, political disinterest and vague liberal political ideology were

common. For those who identified on a continuum racial schema, politics were more personal,

which resulted in an increased investment and engagement with politics. Although these

relationships were not reflected in the quantitative data, the correlation between Liberal ideology,

rather than Lefitist ideology, and trust in voting and government was evident but not significant

in Figure 6 ($p > .05$). Despite this, it was clear from the qualitative data that all participants have

an overall disillusionment with electoral politics, and more specifically, social and political

change that is halted due to the Electoral College. Although not all statistically significant, these relationships indicate that Dominicans' conceptualization of race may have a mediating role in their political ideology and engagement.

## Conclusion

This study has brought increased clarity to the role that racial conceptualizations play in the lives of 1.5, second, and third generation Dominicans' social and political lives. The U.S. American one-drop rule and Latin American and Caribbean mestizaje have a profound impact on the ways Dominicans understand their social and political identities. More specifically, Dominicans navigate a racial terrain that is quite distinct from other Latin American immigrant communities in the United States, as they must parse through the confounding and conflicting racial constructs and political identities that are ascribed on this side of the Atlantic Ocean to African-descended Hispanic people. This study hardly scratches the surface of the unique experiences and rich knowledge that Dominicans hold about the state of White supremacy today. Still, there are some noteworthy limitations in this study that merit recognition.

First, it is undeniable that human error is present in all studies, but especially in those where qualitative methods use members of the population being studied as an instrument of research. I must acknowledge that as a second generation Dominican myself, I hold certain fruitful knowledge on the racial, social, and cultural understandings of Dominican life in the United States. Still, my positionality as a member of this group renders me susceptible to bias when deciding on themes, relationships, and specific data to highlight. It is also important to note

that I am a light-skinned, racially ambiguous Dominican and that this certainly had an effect on the ways participants responded during their interviews. Aside from myself, I also recognize that some of my survey data was lost due to technical difficulties. Specifically, 44 responses from the survey were missing and therefore not counted, although this would not affect those relationships with high statistical significance (Figures 1-3). Additionally, there were not sufficient nor substantial questions on political ideology and engagement on the quantitative survey, which made it difficult to have this data and the interviews in conversation with one another. Lastly, it is also possible that respondents taking the survey misunderstood terms, such as the difference between race and ethnicity or "Black U.S. Americans."

For further research in this niche academic area, I would push scholars to probe into the thought-process behind Dominicans' decisions to identify as Dominican, Dominican American, Hispanic, Latinx, and/or Spanish, as some of these terms may be rooted in more than Roth's (2012) racial concepts. I would also suggest that research into political disinterest and disengagement among Dominicans communities in the United States be explored, as it can provide rich information for coalition building and political empowerment. Lastly, I think further research into how Dominicans navigate self-identified versus ascribed identity in the U.S. is severely lacking, especially for those who are perceived as Black but do not claim a Black identity, a common phenomenon among Dominicans in the United States.

**Appendix**

Appendix A: Variable Information

| Variable | Variable Label | Values | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| RACE_INT | Finish this sentene: I mostly think of myself as ... / Termina esta oracion: Mayormente me siento como una persona ... | Nominal | |
| | Black - Negra/o/x | 1 | 45 |
| | White - Blanca/o/x | 2 | 5 |
| | Neither Black nor White - Ni Negra/o/x ni Blanca/o/x | 3 | 33 |
| | Biracial - Mulata/o/x | 4 | 16 |
| | Mestiza/o/x | 5 | 6 |
| | Multiracial - Mexclada/o/x | 7 | 29 |
| | Missing in system | | 44 |
| | | Total= | 178 |
| RACE_EXT | I feel like other non-Black U.S. Americans perceive me as Black. / Yo siento que otros Estadounidenses que no son negros me perciben como negra/o/x. | Ordinal | |
| | Strongly Agree - Estoy totalmente de acuerdo | 5 | 25 |
| | Agree - Estoy de acuerdo | 4 | 33 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree - No stoy ni de acuerdo o desacuerdo | 3 | 26 |
| | Disagree - Estoy en desacuerdo | 2 | 40 |
| | Strongly Disagree - Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo | 1 | 10 |
| | Missing in system | | 44 |
| | | Total= | 178 |
| DOM_ID | I identify more with my race than with my Dominican identity. / Me identifico mas con mi raza que con mi identidad Dominicana. | Ordinal | |
| | Strongly Agree - Estoy totalmente de acuerdo | 5 | 13 |
| | Agree - Estoy de acuerdo | 4 | 12 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree - No stoy ni de acuerdo o desacuerdo | 3 | 32 |
| | Disagree - Estoy en desacuerdo | 2 | 44 |
| | Strongly Disagree - Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo | 1 | 33 |
| | Missing in system | | 44 |
| | | Total= | 178 |

| BLKRCSM | I believe that racism against Black people in the United States is racism against me. / Yo siento que el racismo contra la gente Afro-Americana en los Estados Unidos es racismo contra mi. | Ordinal | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Strongly Agree - Estoy totalmente de acuerdo | 5 | 34 |
| | Agree - Estoy de acuerdo | 4 | 53 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree - No stoy ni de acuerdo o desacuerdo | 3 | 20 |
| | Disagree - Estoy en desacuerdo | 2 | 15 |
| | Strongly Disagree - Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo | 1 | 12 |
| | Missing in system | | 44 |
| | | Total= | 178 |
| POLID | Politically, I identify as ... / Politicamente, me identifico como ... | Ordinal | |
| | Leftist - Al lado izquierdo | 1 | 17 |
| | Liberal - Progressista | 6 | 81 |
| | Centrist - En el centro | 2 | 16 |
| | More conservative - Mas conservativo | 3 | 11 |
| | Very conservative - Muy conservativo | 4 | 3 |
| | Missing in system | | 50 |
| | | Total= | 178 |
| VOTMTRS | I believe that voting can lead to my community being represented, protected, and advocated for. / Yo siento que votar puede causar que mi comunidad sea representada, protegida, y defendida. | Ordinal | |
| | Strongly Agree - Estoy totalmente de acuerdo | 5 | 50 |
| | Agree - Estoy de acuerdo | 4 | 45 |
| | Neither Agree or Disagree - No stoy ni de acuerdo o desacuerdo | 3 | 31 |
| | Disagree - Estoy en desacuerdo | 2 | 6 |
| | Strongly Disagree - Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo | 1 | 6 |
| | Missing in system | | 50 |
| | | Total= | 178 |

Appendix B: Political Ideology/Engagement and Racial/Ethnic Identity Spectrum



Political Ideology/Engagement and Racial/Ethnic Identity Spectrum
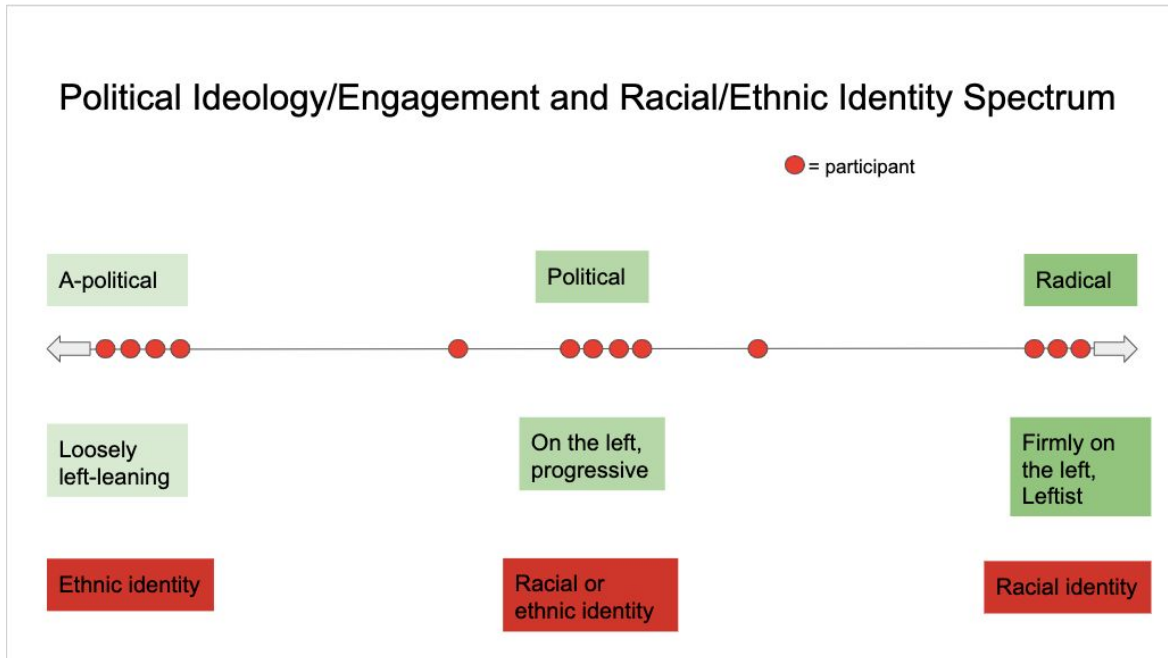
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