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Afro-Latinos and the Black-Hispanic Identity: Evaluating the Potential for Intra-Group Conflict and Cohesion

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Abstract

With ethnic and racial minorities projected to comprise a majority of the U.S. population by 2042, current trends in political science scholarship have begun to assess the ways in which intra-group diversity can create opportunities for cooperation, but also contribute to conflict within the context of domestic politics and policy preferences. Research on the diversity of the Latino population in the United States has been predominate. Thus, it is widely regarded that the Latin American identity is not monolithic, and as a consequence, neither is Latino political behavior, as evidenced by the divergent political trajectories of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans in U.S. politics (Desipio 1996; Claassen 2004; Newton 2000; de la Garza and Yetim 2003). Yet, despite the existing research, which highlights the diversity of the Latino ethnic identity, contemporary societal norms have led to the erroneous conflation of race and ethnicity, resulting in the explicit racialization of the Hispanic-Latino ethnic identity. As a result, Afro-Latinos are either forced to choose between their two member groups or identify themselves according to ambiguous alternatives, which, has resulted in Afro-Latino invisibility, and the subsequent underreporting of this group in national statistics.¹ It is this orientation that provides the framework for this study, which indicates that in comparison to other Latin origin groups, Afro-Latinos face unique challenges with respect to the formation of their personal and social identity given the demarcations of race and ethnicity in the United States. The findings of this research explore the political implications of this dynamic.

Keywords: Afro-Latino, Black-Hispanic, Identity, Politics, Group Conflict

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Introduction

With ethnic and racial minorities projected to comprise a majority of the U.S. population by 2042, current trends in political science scholarship have begun to assess the ways in which intra-group diversity can create opportunities for cooperation but also contribute to conflict within the context of domestic politics and policy preferences. Research on the diversity of the Latino population in the United States has been predominate; thus, it is widely regarded that the Latin American identity is not monolithic, and as a consequence, neither is Latino political behavior, as evidenced by the divergent political trajectories of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans in U.S. politics (de la Garza 1992; Desipio 1996; Hill and Moreno 1996; Claassen 2004; Newton 2000; de la Garza and Yetim 2003; Stokes-Brown 2006). Additionally, contemporary research on Asian Americans reveals similar trends with respect to the diversity of political opinion and behavior despite a (perceived) shared national origin identity or ancestry. For instance, with regard to party acquisition and voting patterns, there are notable differences between Asian Indians and Vietnamese Americans. Therefore, despite having the highest median household incomes among Asian Americans, the majority of Asian Indians are affiliated with the Democratic Party, while Vietnamese Americans, who reportedly have the lowest median household income levels, are predominately Republican (Lee 2004; Christoff 2012; Lee 2014; Waring 2014).

In comparison to Latino and Asian Americans, the African American identity has largely remained resistant to stratification. For some time, the African American identity could be articulated as one that was rooted in slavery, the South, and the Baptist tradition—and for the most part that identity is salient to the majority of African Americans in the U.S. today (Greer 2013). However, with the arrival of a sizeable number of African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the 1980s, the African American identity had to be re-examined (Gibson and Lennon 1999; McCabe 2011; Terrazas 2010; Capps et al. 2012).

The contribution this vein of research has made to the scholarship on race, identity politics and immigration cannot be understated. Yet, the marginal presence of the Afro-Latino in political science discourse offers up a unique set of questions surrounding identity formation, and intra-group cohesion and conflict that have not been fully explored in the literature. Consequently, using data from the Latino National Survey (2006, 2009, and 2011) and multinomial logit analysis, this study evaluates those factors, which I assert are most relevant to the racial-identification process for Afro-Latinos in the United States. The objective of this research is to determine if Afro-Latinos who racially self-identify as “black” do so at the expense of their Latino ethnic identity. To elaborate, do Afro-Latinos who racially self-identify as “black” report that they feel a sense of ethnic unity with other Latinos, or do they feel divided from other Latinos? This study evaluates these research questions with the goal of identifying the implications for Latino politics and political mobilization if Afro-Latinos view themselves as black, and not Latino, in America.

Afro-Latinos' Invisibility

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, of the 38.9 million African Americans living in the United States, the vast majority descended from ancestors who were brought from Africa to North America between 1619 and 1859 during the Atlantic slave trade (Greer 2013). However, 3.3 million or 8.5% of that figure are comprised of individuals who were identified as “foreign blacks”—which represent first and second generation immigrants of African ancestry (Capp et

al. 2011; Greer 2013; Arthur 2014; Waters et al. 2014). This figure includes a diverse array of immigrants (and their children), primarily from Africa and the English speaking Caribbean, but a sizeable number are also from Europe, Canada and Latin America. Individuals from Latin America of African ancestry are grossly underrepresented in these statistics because “many of the migrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, who are also of African ancestry, [often do not] describe themselves as ‘Black’ on the U.S. Census. [Instead], most select ‘Other’ on the race question and choose a specific nationality on the Hispanic origin question” (Waters et al. 2014, 371).² While the official census data estimates that 0.5% of the U.S population is Afro-Latino, other sources suggest this figure is closer to 6%, which would make this group comparable in size to the Asian American population, which is also the fastest growing minority group in the United States (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Pew Research Center 2013; Hernandez 2012; Schwede and Terry 2013; Guadalupe and Gamboa 2014; Telles 2014).³

That implication alone—that Afro-Latinos are underrepresented by U.S. Census data—has important socio-political ramifications that have been overlooked as a result of the innate desire to ascribe individuals to discrete and exclusive categories, despite the amorphous identities inherent to persons living in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial nation. In addition, black immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries tend to be poorer than black immigrants from English-speaking nations (Waldinger 2001; Newby and Dowling 2007; Stokes-Brown 2009; Hamilton 2014). They also settle in homogenous neighborhoods that are not only segregated from other black immigrants, but Latino immigrants as well (Massey and Denton 1988, 1993; Argeros 2013; Scopilliti and Iceland, 2008). Because of this, it becomes increasingly evident that Afro-Latinos are quite distinct from their racial and ethnic member groups, and yet there has been a tendency to classify them as either black *or* Latino, thus, ignoring the significance of their dual identity and the role it plays in how they are acculturated and politically socialized into U.S. society (Benson 2006; Scopilliti and Iceland 2008; Araujo Dawson and Quiros 2014; Hernandez 2012; Jensen et al. 2006).

Black-Hispanic Identity, Afro-Latino Politics

Suarez-Orozco et al. (2004) best articulate the concept of identity, describing it as a subjective feeling that is shared amongst members of a certain group given their perceptions of a common origin, as well as a sense of shared values, beliefs, and goals. Similarly, Dawson’s “black utility heuristic” is equally salient within this context, as it demonstrates that intra-group cohesion is driven by the concept of “linked fate” (1994). Collectively, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2004) and Dawson (1994) illustrate that the sense of unity within a given group is shaped by two primary tenets—the external factor of racial prejudice and discrimination, which is an extension of how society views the individual and is defined as *social identity*; as well as the internal factor that is constructed around the desire for belonging which is an extension of how the individual views him or herself, and is defined as *personal identity*.

Ultimately an individual’s identity is formed out of the intersection of one’s personal and social identity, but this process is not always fluid or harmonious, and this is especially true for new immigrants to the highly racialized United States. Recent studies on Latino self-identification indicate that there is increasing tension between these two facets of identity for members of the Latino/Hispanic ethnic group (Itzigsohn 2004; Araujo-Dawson 2015; Golash and Darity 2008; Frank et. al. 2010; Rodriguez 2000; Rodriguez et al. 2013; Stokes-Brown 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Wilkinson and Earle 2013). In 1980, 63.7% of Latinos identified their

race as “White” only, while 33.7% identified themselves as “Some other race” (Logan, 2003; US Census Data, 1980). Compare that to 2010 Census data, where 53% identified their race as “White” only, and 42.7% identified themselves as “Some other race” or “Two or more races,” (US Census Data, 2010). Wiley (2013) attributes this decrease in the number of Latinos who self-identify their race as “White” to what he describes as “disidentification” with the majority national group. He argues that “disidentification” occurs “when people are rejected because of a group they belong to, [therefore] identification with that group can increase, [which is referred to] as rejection-identification” (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey 1999; Wiley 2013). He argues that rejection of the group serves to heighten inter-group conflict and social cleavages, and is the catalyst for intra-group identification and solidarity (Wiley 2013).

Similarly, Stokes-Brown finds that there have been discernable shifts in the racial self-identification of Latinos over the past decade (2009). And, while she does not echo Wiley’s sentiment of rejection-identification, she does point out “that Latinos often describe their race as equivalent to their nationality, culture, familial socialization, birthplace, skin color, ethnicity, or a combination of these” (Stokes-Brown 2009, 1284). That is because, for Latinos, racial boundaries are fluid given the interracial composition of Latin American nations (Montalvo and Codina 2001; Rodriguez 2000; Marrow 2003). Consequently, upon migrating to the U.S., Latinos are confronted with a bi-polar racial structure, thus forcing them to modify their racial and ethnic identity (personal identity) according to how others perceive and treat them, given their phenotype (social identity) (Itzigsohn, Giorguli, and Vazquez 2005).

As a sub-group within the pan-Latino/Hispanic identity, one would expect the experiences of Afro-Latinos to mirror that of their non-black counterparts; however, the extant literature reveals that for Afro-Latinos, racial self-identification is a complex and intricate exercise in balancing their personal and social identities. To fully appreciate the conflictual process of Afro-Latinos’ racial self-identification, one need only examine the mutable, arbitrary and ambiguous classifications of race and ethnicity in American society.

There is no biological definition of race or ethnicity, instead these terms and classifications are defined by society and social interaction. There is nothing within the category and classification of race that is immutable. Furthermore, beyond “certain morphological similarities, there is no gene or organization of genes that determines race,” (Oshige-McGowan 1996, 130; See also Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994). Consequently, the categorical definition of race is simply a manifestation of the artificial and constructed biases influenced by the evolution of society and the passing of time. Also, given that racial categories are socially constructed, they are left up to interpretation, which means some disagreement will always remain regarding where and how to draw the *proper* racial lines.

Defining ethnicity fares no better than defining race. Classifications constructed according to ethnicity are typically viewed as “divisions among groupings of people within a given race, based more on cultural similarities among people than on perceived physical differences between the groups and others” (Oshige-McGowan 1996, 130). By definition, ethnicity is tied to culture; and culture is not inherited but rather constructed as a combination of rituals, language, practices, and traditions that are learned and interpreted with each generation. As a consequence, there remains confusion regarding the definition of ethnicity, even for the sole government body responsible for ethnic and racial classification—the U.S. Census. To illustrate, the 2010 United States Census establishes a racial category for Asians but an ethnic category for Hispanics, despite that both categories define a group of people

according to the geographic origins of themselves or their ancestors. In this case, it is easy to see why the nature of these categories provides no meaningful distinction between race and ethnicity; which typically leads to the erroneous conflation of race and ethnicity, ultimately forcing Afro-Latinos to choose between the two.

In the Portes and Rumbaut study of second-generation immigrants living in the United States, the authors find that “there was an obvious convergence of race and ethnicity in the way they [second generation immigrants] define their [own] identities” (2001, 177). Of those second generation immigrants who identified ethnically as Asian, 92% identified Asian as their race; of those second generation immigrants, who ethnically identified as black, 85% identified black as their race; and finally of those second generation immigrants who ethnically identified as Hispanic or Latino, 58% identified Hispanic or Latino as their race (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The findings of the authors indicate that the majority of second generation immigrants in their sample view ethnicity and race as synonymous identities; and “the explicit racialization of the Hispanic-Latino category, as well as the substantial proportion of [second generation immigrants] who conceived of their nationality of origin as a fixed racial category illustrates the arbitrariness of racial constructions” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 177).

Undoubtedly, every immigrant experience is different. Consequently, it is not surprising that in contrast to the experiences of Latinos in Portes and Rumbaut’s study (2001), research on black immigrants to the United States, reveals that for this group, race and ethnicity are not synonymous. This is logical given the phenotypic similarities between black immigrants and African Americans, and the racial labeling indicative of the U.S. Subsequently, Waters finds that for second generation black immigrants living in New York City, those who assumed a racial identity viewed themselves as blacks in the United States (1999). Yet, those second generation Haitian and West Indian immigrants who assumed an ethnic and/or immigrant identity viewed themselves as distinct from blacks in the United States and identified themselves as Haitian-American and West Indian-American (ethnic identity), or as Haitian and West Indian (immigrant identity) (Waters 1999).

More recent work on Afro-Latinos indicates that this group ascribes to labels similar to those noted by Waters (1999), or more frequently “they use a number of skin color categories that are also dependent on an individual’s social class” (Newby and Dowling 2007, 346). Therefore, because the U.S. process of racial labeling is incongruent with the historic origins and racial designations most familiar to Afro-Latino immigrants, this group often rejects the singular label “black” (Benson 2006; Bailey 2001; Itzigsohn, Giorguli, and Vazquez 2005; Rodriguez 2000; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral 2000). At the same time, there are indications that while Afro-Latinos may reject the labeling of “black” because it is not a sufficient descriptive of their identity they do not appear to reject the substance of their racial identity (Araujo-Dawson and Quiros 2014; Araujo-Dawson 2015). Benson (2006) and Araujo-Dawson and Quiros (2014) find that Afro-Latinos form a black racial consciousness given their experiences with discrimination in the U.S. In addition, Stokes-Brown’s work suggests Afro-Latinos are potentially more likely to identify with African Americans as opposed to Latino Americans (2009). Although Stokes-Brown does not test the strength of intra-group unity among African Americans and Afro-Latinos in her study, she does find that Latinos who racially self-identified as black were less likely to trust the government, when compared to other Latinos. She argues that this face could support “claims that with respect to political attitudes black Latinos are more closely aligned to African Americans” (Stokes-Brown 2009, 1298; Logan 2003).⁴ Some

studies have even gone so far as to argue that the commonalities between Afro-Latinos and African Americans provide a justifiable basis to singularly label Afro-Latinos as “black” (Gans 1999; Logan 2003; Gomez 2000). Despite the fact that Afro-Latinos have higher levels of education than other Latino racial groups, lower incomes, and higher rates of poverty, Afro-Latinos and African Americans have comparable socio-economic outcomes; and it is for that reason alone that Gans (1999), Gomez (2000), and Logan (2003) affirm that the grouping of Afro-Latinos and African Americans into a single racial identity is both permissible and pragmatic.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who challenge the assertions of Gans (1999), Gomez (2000), and Logan (2003) by noting the potential for intra-group conflicts between Afro-Latinos and African Americans; as such they argue against conflating the two groups (Davis 1991; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Whitten and Torres 1998; Hunt 2002; Greenbaum 2002; Poe 2003; Sansone 2003; Jackson and Cothran 2003; Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005; Sawyer and Paschel 2007; Johnson 2008; Greer 2013). These scholars maintain that Afro-Latinos and African Americans are not indistinguishable, and to claim otherwise would not only be problematic, but it would also be based upon the erroneous assumption that shared conditions presuppose a shared identity. When interacting with African Americans, Afro-Latinos often find themselves having to defend their “blackness,” since there is the absence of a shared history, culture and even language (Waters 1999; Newby and Dowling 2007). Consequently, Afro-Latinos “face both a biological definition (personal identity) and a cultural association (social identity) linked with blackness that may seem contradictory. [Thus, while the United States] defines them [Afro-Latinos] as black, this categorization may be rejected by African Americans” (Newby and Dowling 2007, 346; Davis 1991; Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Whitten and Torres 1998; Hunt 2002; Greenbaum 2002; Poe 2003; Sansone 2003; Jackson and Cothran 2003; Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005; Sawyer and Paschel 2007; Johnson 2008; Greer 2013).

Afro-Latino Partisanship and Political Behavior

Although certain studies reveal there are some consistencies between Afro-Latinos and other black immigrants as far as also utilizing their ethnic and national origin identities to distinguish themselves from African Americans (Itzigsohn 2000, 2004; Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005; Sawyer and Paschel 2007; Jackson and Cothran 2003; Lopez 2012); a contending body of empirical research notes that Afro-Latinos appear to have stronger and closer ties to African Americans than any other black immigrant group (Stokes-Brown 2006, 2009, 2012a, 2012b). In addition, Afro-Latinos appear to have closer and stronger ties to African Americans than they do to other Latin origin immigrant groups, suggesting that in comparison to other Latinos, Afro-Latinos may face additional challenges with respect to the formation of their personal and social identity given the demarcations of race and ethnicity in the United States (Stokes-Brown 2012a, 2012b; Massey and Denton 1988, 1993; Argeros 2013; Scopilliti and Iceland 2008).

In this study, I examine the factors that influence the racial self-identification of Afro-Latinos, and then evaluate the impact of these factors on the racial self-identification of other Latino Americans (i.e. those who racially self-identify as white, multiracial, or some other race). This is important because it has been demonstrated that Latino racial identity does have an influence on the political attitudes and voting behavior of Latinos (File 2013; Stokes-Brown 2012a, 2012b; Howard 2011; Claassen 2004). An investigation of the factors that are most

salient to the racial self-identification of Afro-Latinos is essential in order to better understand the process of racial identity assumption among Afro-Latinos, and the implications of this process for Afro-Latino political choices. More importantly, however, it is crucial to this analysis to closely examine the context in which Afro-Latinos racially self-identify as “black” and if they do so from a position where they reject ethnic commonalities with other Latinos, which would suggest Afro-Latinos in this group frame their political choices and public opinion around their black racial identity, and not their Latino ethnic identity.

Table 1
Racial Self-Identification Distribution of Afro-Latinos and Latinos/Hispanics

	Black	Latino
<u>2006</u>		
Sample %	9%	59%
Sample N	109	1066
<u>2009</u>		
Sample %	3%	74%
Sample N	41	1356
<u>2011</u>		
Sample %	3%	52%
Sample N	38	634

Source: National Survey of Latinos, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2011***; Compiled by Author.

Note: *Black category includes respondents who identified Latino/Hispanic as their ethnicity and Black as their race. **Latino category includes respondents who self-identified as either Latino/Hispanic or according to their national origin identity which was coded as “Some Other Race.” *** 2006, 2009, 2011 are the only years for which respondents report on “Race” and “Ethnicity” allowing for the observation of black Hispanics in the National Survey of Latinos.

Data, Measures and Methodology

To evaluate the racial self-identification process of Afro-Latinos in relation to other Latinos, I utilize data from the National Survey of Latinos (NSL) for the years, 2006, 2009, and 2011 (See Table 1). The National Survey of Latinos is an annual survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. The sample design utilizes a stratified, disproportionate random digit-dialing sample of the forty-eight contiguous states. The National Survey of Latinos collects data on the social, economic, and political conditions and experiences of Latinos living in the United States. The selected NSL datasets for the years 2006, 2009, and 2011 are used in this study because unlike other NSL versions (i.e. 2012 and 2013) they feature questions regarding race and phenotype. In addition, the selected NSL data contain questions regarding ethnic unity, ethnic tensions and experiences of discrimination, as well as a measure of immigrant generation. Finally, the use

of multi-year, independent samples, allows me to observe substantive variations and patterns related to racial identification and group attitudes over time.

The 2006 National Survey of Latinos (NSL) was conducted by telephone from June 5, 2006 to July 3, 2006 and yielded data from a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Latino Americans, of which 896 were registered voters. The 2009 NSL was conducted by telephone from August 5, 2009 to September 16, 2009 and yielded data from a nationally representative sample of 2,228 Latino Americans. While the 2009 NSL questionnaire includes a measure of partisanship, it does not include a question indicating if the respondent is registered to vote. Finally, the 2011 NSL was conducted by telephone from November 9, 2011 to December 7, 2011 and yielded responses from a nationally representative sample of 1,220 Latino Americans, of which 615 were registered voters. The analyses are based upon weighted data to control for the unequal probability of selection and survey nonresponse.

The dependent variable operationalized in the model measures racial self-identification among Latino Americans, specifically focusing on distinctions between Afro-Latinos and other Latin origin groups. The NSL survey questionnaires feature a measure of individual racial self-identification that is based upon the question: “What race do you consider yourself to be? White, Black or African-American, Asian, Multiracial or Some Other Race?” Because this study is most interested in the attitudes of those Latinos who self-identify as black in relation to Latinos who self-identify as white, Latino/Hispanic (as their race), multiracial, or some other race, the racial categories are transformed into a categorical variable, where 1=Black, 2=Hispanic/Latino, 3=Some Other Race, 4=Multiracial, and “0” reflects the reference category, which is White Latino. All other values are coded as missing.

The independent variables are organized into three categories: 1) Acculturation Factors; 2) Immigrant Generation; and 3) Demographic Factors. The measurement of the variables is discussed below.

The variables in the acculturation category are included in the analysis given the assertion that certain factors such as English language fluency, Spanish language fluency, and strength of racial/ethnic group identity all influence an immigrant’s ability to successfully acculturate into society. To measure English language fluency, I utilize the following question from the NSL questionnaire: “Indicate your language proficiency?”⁵ The response categories are 1=English dominant, 2=bilingual, and 3=Spanish dominant. For the purposes of this analysis, the responses are recoded to indicate the level of English proficiency in comparison to Spanish proficiency. Therefore, two binary variables are constructed where 1=English dominant and 0=Spanish dominant to measure English proficiency. The second dichotomous variable is constructed where 1=Bilingual and 0=Spanish dominant to measure proficiency in both languages.⁶ The third measure of acculturation is an ordinal measure that asks respondents the following: “Would you say you can carry on a conversation in English, both understanding and speaking, very well, pretty well, just a little, or not at all?”⁷ The response categories are recoded to reflect an increasing level of proficiency in English so 1=not at all, 2=just a little, 3=pretty well, 4=very well. All other values are coded as missing. With respect to English language fluency, as earlier studies note, Afro-Latinos have higher levels of English proficiency when compared to other Latin origin groups. Therefore, the belief is that Afro-Latinos with English proficiency are more likely to self-identify as black.

The fourth measure of acculturation is a variable that represents group identity; and it is designed to capture the strength of intra-group cohesion for Afro-Latinos in relation to other

Latino racial groups. I argue that Afro-Latinos who report weak levels of Latino group unity, are more likely to racially self-identify as black. This variable is based upon the NSL question (for all selected years), which asks respondents to indicate whether or not they believe Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. share a common culture or do they believe Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. have many different cultures. “1” reflects the belief that Latinos share a common culture, while “0” reflects the belief that Latinos have many different cultures. The remaining categories are coded as missing.

The fifth measure of acculturation captures Afro-Latinos’ opinions regarding intra-group conflict in relation to other Latinos. This variable is based upon the following question from the NSL questionnaire (all selected years): “How well do Latinos from different countries of origin get along?” The response categories are 1=well, 2=pretty well, 3=not too well, and 4=Not at all well. For the purpose of this analysis the ordinal measure is transformed into a binary variable where response categories “1” and “2” are recoded as “1” to reflect a generally positive view while “3” and “4” are recoded as “0” to reflect a generally negative view. The expectation is that Afro-Latinos who believe intra-group conflict is prevalent among Latinos, possibly due to race and class divisions, are more likely to racially self-identify as black.

Given that we wish to know the impact the racial structure in the U.S. has on Afro-Latinos in particular, this study includes a sixth acculturation measure, that is taken from the 2009 NSL questionnaire, where, respondents are asked: “Have you experienced discrimination in the past five years?” Responses are reflected in a binary variable where 1=yes and 0=no. All other values are reported as missing. I include this variable in the analysis because of the belief that Afro-Latinos who report experiences of discrimination, especially when controlling for income, education, and English proficiency, are more likely to self-identify as black.

A measure of immigrant generation is included in the analysis given the literature which finds that generational effects are salient among Latino immigrants and can explain variations in political participation as well as identity construction between first and second generation immigrants (Nahirny and Fishman, 1965; Kellstedt, 1974; Lamare, 1982; Chui, et al., 1991, 2001). More specifically, I argue that second generation Afro-Latinos are more likely to self-identify as black, than first generation Afro-Latinos. To capture first generation immigrants, a binary variable coded as “1” is included in the analysis if a respondent indicates they were born in another country or in Puerto Rico, and “0” if they were born in the United States. All other values are reported as missing. To measure second-generation immigrants a binary variable coded as “1” is included in the analysis if a respondent indicates that both parents were born outside the U.S. or in Puerto Rico, and “0” if the respondent indicates that both parents were not born outside the U.S. or in Puerto Rico. All other values are then coded as missing.

The demographic variables operationalized in the analysis, include highest level of education, income, age, gender, marital status and religiosity. These measures are included in the analysis to control for their influence on the relationship between racial self-identification and the explanatory variables of interest. Education and income are measured according to a rising ordinal scale, where lower values correspond to low levels of income and education and higher values correspond to high levels of income and education. Age is a continuous variable, beginning at age 18. Gender is a binary variable, where 0=male and 1=female. Similarly, marital status is a binary variable, where 0=Single, never married, divorced, or widowed, and 1=Married or separated. Religiosity is also a dichotomous variable where 1=religion is important and attends services regularly, and 0=religion is not important and/or does not attend services regularly.

The 2006 NSL offers a unique opportunity to focus specifically on important measures of discrimination among Latinos, because of the belief that Afro-Latinos who report discrimination based upon their skin color are more likely to self-identify as black, as well as report lower levels of Latino unity and higher levels of intra-(ethnic) group conflict. The questionnaire asks respondents to indicate whether one's skin color, socio-economic class, immigration status, or English language proficiency are a major, minor, or no cause for discrimination. The variable responses are coded as follows: 1=no cause, 2=minor cause, 3=major cause. These variables are included in the estimation of the 2006 equation.

This study examines several factors to determine the predictors of racial self-identification for Afro-Latinos in comparison to other Latinos. Multinomial logistic regression is used to estimate the model given that the dependent variable is comprised of multiple discrete categories. Multinomial logit is most appropriate for unordered categorical response dependent variables, where each category is unique in comparison to the other categories (Powers and Xie 2008). In this case, each racial category is distinct, and the ordering between the categories is equivalent, indicating the dependent variable is not based upon an ordinal scale; therefore, ordinal logit is not applicable. Further, because there are more than two distinct categories binary logistic regression or logit is not suitable to this analysis. Tests for multicollinearity among the independent variables reveal weak correlations between the explanatory measures included in the models.

Empirical Findings

Tables 2 and 3 report the multinomial logit results for the predictors of racial self-identification among Latinos for the survey years of 2006, 2009, and 2012. For the ease of interpretation, the main explanatory variables of interest are presented in Table 2, while the demographic controls are presented in Table 3.

Group Unity—For Afro-Latinos, the expectation is that lower levels of Latino group cohesion would contribute to the racial identification of Afro-Latinos as black; however, the findings do not support this assertion. Instead, the results indicate that Afro-Latinos who report that there is a shared sense of unity among Latinos, are more likely to self-identify as black. Where this variable is significant, the same holds true for the comparison groups. Individuals who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino and multi-racial, respectively are more likely to indicate there is a sense of unity among Latinos

Group Conflict—The findings for group conflict are consistent with our expectations for Afro-Latinos, meaning, those Afro-Latinos who report intra-group conflict among Latinos are more likely to racially identify as black. In the case where this measure is significant, the results are consistent with our expectations for the comparison groups. Those individuals who believe relations between Latinos are good are more likely to racially self-identify as white as opposed to Hispanic/Latino.

Discrimination (2009 Only)—The findings for the measure of discrimination are consistent with our expectations for Afro-Latinos, meaning, those Afro-Latinos who report having experienced discrimination within the past year are more likely to racially self-identify as black. In the case where this measure is significant, the results are consistent with our expectations for the comparison groups. Those individuals who report having experienced discrimination within the past year, are more likely to self-identify as Hispanic/Latino and Some Other Race, respectively, as opposed to white.

English Proficiency—The findings for the variable, English proficiency support our

argument that Afro-Latinos who possess English fluency are more likely to self-identify as black. Where this variable is significant, the results are inconsistent for the comparison groups Hispanic/Latinos and Some Other Race. In 2009, individuals who possess English proficiency are more likely to self-identify as their selected racial group and not white, which is counter to our expectations. Whereas, in 2011, those who report English proficiency are more likely to identify as white, a finding that is consistent with our expectations.

Immigrant Generation—Consistent with our hypotheses for Afro-Latinos, second-generation immigrants are more likely to self-identify as black. The results for second-generation immigrants are inconsistent across survey years for the comparison groups, Some Other Race and Multiracial, and the variable is only significant in 2006. However, it is important to note that the findings for first-generation immigrants (Some other race and multi-racial) indicate these two groups are more likely to self-identify as white than their second-generation immigrant counterparts, which is consistent with earlier research on race selection and generational differences (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Afro-Latino Demographic Factors—Turning now to the results for the demographic control variables presented in Table 3. With respect to Afro-Latinos, the results for the variables education, income, religiosity, and marital status are consistent across the survey years, for which the variables are significant. In sum, the findings suggest that Afro-Latinos who racially self-identify as black, are of low income, possess low education levels, low levels of religiosity, and they are married. The coefficient results for gender and age are either not consistent across the survey years for Afro-Latinos (age) or fails to achieve statistical significance in any of the Afro-Latino equations (gender).

Hispanic/Latino Demographic Factors—With respect to the first comparison group, for those individuals who racially self-identify as Hispanic/Latino, the results when significant across survey years indicate this group is of low income, low education, young and not religious. The coefficient results for gender and marital status fail to achieve significance for this group in any of the equations.

SOR and Multiracial Demographic Factors—I discuss the findings of the remaining two groups, Some Other Race and Multiracial together because the results are weak and inconsistent, which is likely the result of the composition of the two groups, meaning there are multiple ethnicities and identities represented under the umbrella of these two categories. Therefore, salient patterns fail to emerge, to the extent that I would not reliably say the findings observed would also be observed in future studies.

2006 Discrimination Variables—As mentioned in the previous section, the 2006 NSL includes measures that indicate whether respondents feel they have been discriminated against on the basis of their skin color, socioeconomic class, English language proficiency, or their immigration status. In my discussion of the results, I am specifically focusing on these four variables, and the two main groups for comparison, which are Afro-Latinos and Hispanics/Latinos. The findings reported in Table 4 support my assertion that for Afro-Latinos who self-identify as black, discrimination based upon their skin color is a major issue, whereas socioeconomic class is not an issue upon which they feel they have experienced discrimination. The variables English proficiency and immigration status are not significant for this group. In contrast, individuals who racially self-identify as Hispanic/Latino report that discrimination based upon their socio-economic class and immigration status is a major issue. The variables skin color and English proficiency are not significant for this group.

			AL	HL	SOR	MR
		2006				
Group Unity			1.65* (.89)	.61 (.54)	-.02 (.42)	.25 (.37)
Group Conflict			1.15 (.95)	.45 (.41)	.09 (.33)	.19 (.30)
English Prof			.61 (.47)	.80** (.35)	.14 (.24)	.30 (.22)
2 nd Gen			.28 (1.04)	1.4** (.60)	.17 (.44)	.44 (.41)
Color			1.25** (.53)	.28 (.35)	.11 (.22)	.15 (.20)
Class			-1.32** (.52)	.63* (.36)	-.14 (.26)	-.27 (.23)
Language			.98 (.81)	.24 (.35)	.08 (.26)	.09 (.23)
Immig Status			-.56 (.61)	.67* (.36)	.01 (.25)	.16 (.24)
Educ			-.14* (.08)	-.04 (.08)	.11 (.12)	-.21 (.21)
Income			.05 (.23)	-.14 (.20)	-.37 (.29)	-.70 (.52)
Gender			.23 (.33)	.36 (.29)	.98** (.47)	-.15 (.81)
Marital Status			.01 (.15)	.01 (.13)	-.08 (.17)	-.38 (.37)
Age			-.02* (.01)	-.03** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.004 (.03)
Religion			-1.1** (.50)	-.92** (.47)	-.50 (.65)	-2.05** (.95)
N=325 Pseudo R ² =.171 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood= -78.92						

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

*Significant at .10 level, **Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.

Discussion

The main objective of this study has been to examine the factors that influence the racial self-identification of Afro-Latinos and evaluate these findings in relation to those observed for other Latin origin ethnic groups who self-identify as Hispanic/Latino, as well as Some Other Race and Multiracial. Beyond that, this research specifically focuses on those individuals who racially self-identify as black to determine which factors are important to the racial identity assumption process for Afro-Latinos.

The findings in the preceding section provide support for the arguments posed at the onset of this study—that Afro-Latinos who racially self-identify as black report feelings of intra-group conflict with other Latin origin groups, and indicate recent⁸ experiences of discrimination in the U.S. based upon their race. At the same time; however, despite the presence of feelings of intra-group conflict, Afro-Latinos still believe that there is a shared sense of identity among Latin Americans. The latter finding runs counter to the arguments made in this study, but given the actual survey question, which more accurately captures Latino group identity than group unity, the results echo the positions advanced by Suarez-Orozco et al. (2004) and Dawson (1994) regarding linked fate.

Apparently, Afro-Latinos believe their ethnic identity as a Latino American is embodied within a common culture shared by all Latinos. Additionally, second-generation Afro-Latinos and those with English language proficiency are also more likely to racially-self-identify as black. These collective findings suggest that while Afro-Latinos who racially self-identify as black may feel they share a common culture with other Latin origin groups, their experiences with racism and conflicts with other Latinos indicate that they feel more closely aligned with their racial group (African Americans) than their ethnic group (Latino Americans).

To further deconstruct the empirical results, the inferences emerging from this study support the findings of earlier work (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Stokes-Brown 2012a, 2012b) with respect to the influence of discrimination on Latino racial choice. However, the Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) study was specifically interested in the racial choices of Latinos within the context of ‘Latino social whitening’. The authors were not, however, focused on those individuals who identify their ethnicity as Latino/Hispanic, but then make specific racial choices, whether they be black, white or Hispanic/Latino. Similarly, this study extends the work of Stokes-Brown (2012a, 2012b), but not by making further contributions to research that highlights the various motivations as to why Afro-Latinos reject the racial labeling of black, but instead it examines the motivations behind why Afro-Latinos embrace a black racial identity, beyond that of prior experiences of racial discrimination.

Thus, the main contribution this study makes to the literature is that it explores those factors that influence the process of black racial self-identification among Afro-Latinos and finds that while these individuals believe in a shared ethnic Latino identity, intra-group conflicts with other Latinos is equally salient to Afro-Latinos. The take away from that is Afro-Latinos who racially identify as black, do not reject their Latino identity and cultural ties, but they do not feel their Latino racial identity unifies them with other Latinos on issues of social experiences in the United States. I would argue this dynamic translates into political behavior and attitudes as well. Further, this assertion is supported by the findings among the comparison groups—individuals who view intra-group relations as positive are more likely to racially self-identify as white. With the inclusion of the discrimination factors in the 2006 model, the findings reveal a similar trend. Afro-Latinos who self-identify as black believe skin color is the cause for

personal discrimination, while those individuals who racially self-identify as Hispanic/Latino attribute discrimination, not to color, but to socioeconomic status and immigrant status, which they view as the two barriers to upward social mobility (Gabbacia 2003).

To conclude this discussion, I argue that this study challenges scholars to reframe their theoretical orientation in future research on Afro-Latinos. Instead of identifying why Afro-Latinos decide *not* to racially identify as black, a more substantive perspective would be to focus on why Afro-Latinos who racially identify as black choose to do so. More specifically, as politics become increasingly racialized, how does this dynamic translate into political efficacy and voter mobilization? Beyond the impact on politics and policymaking, what other factors play a role in the process of racial identity assumption for Afro-Latinos who self-identify as black? And are there better ways to capture racial intra-group identity and unity, as I did here with Latino identity, that more accurately reflect this unique relationship than what has been done in previous studies and surveys? Consequently, regardless of ethnic identity (Latino, African, Caribbean, etc.), the goal for future research is to more closely examine the unifying factors for those individuals of immigrant background who racially identify as black, in an effort to develop strategies for improving relations both within and between groups in what has become an increasingly diverse society.

Conclusion

Given that nationwide population increases have primarily been driven by foreign-born residents of Latin origin, which has also correlated with the rise in inter-ethnic tensions between blacks and Latinos, and co-ethnic citizens in states with growing immigrant populations, a better understanding of the social position of Afro-Latinos is especially timely and relevant (Buchanan 2005; Kaufmann 2003; Meier et al. 2004; Gay 2006; McClain et al. 2006). Latino Americans and African Americans represent the two largest minority groups in the United States, and while their policy and political preferences at times coalesce (Howard 2011; Hajnal and Baldassare 2001; Hero and Preuhs 2010; Lenoir 2010), there are several instances where they diverge, and even conflict (Howard 2011; Kaufmann 2003; Gay 2006; McClain et al. 2006). Within this context, the invisibility of the Afro-Latino identity in the United States challenges scholars to re-evaluate how we consider race, ethnicity, and identity in society, as well as the impact these factors have on group relations and domestic politics.

Table 2
Predictors of Racial Self-Identification-Acculturation and Immigration Factors

		AL	HL	SOR	MR		AL	HL	SOR	MR		AL	HL	SOR	MR		
	2006					2009					2011						
Group Unity		.42* (.22)	.78** (.40)	.22 (.29)	.67** (.32)		-.38 (.77)	.63** (.26)	.02 (.27)	-.17 (.60)		2.5** (1.17)	1.2** (.64)	-.69 (.61)	.09 (.36)		
Group Conflict		-.33** (.03)	.50** (.04)	-.02 (.23)	.06 (.20)		-.90** (.40)	.30* (.16)	.20 (.16)	-.12 (.38)		-.74** (.33)	2.6** (1.17)	-.70 (.67)	-.14 (.35)		
English Prof		.128*** (.75)	.29 (.23)	.01 (.14)	.03 (.10)		2.6*** (.93)	1.1* (.66)	1.4** (.52)	-.22 (.64)		2.7** (1.2)	-1.07** (.55)	-4.4* (2.4)	.47 (.72)		
2 nd Gen		.81** (.39)	-.04*** (.01)	-.023** (.01)	-.38* (.23)		2.2** (1.1)	.25 (.52)	.77* (.47)	2.1** (.90)		.19 (1.1)	-.177 (.50)	1.7* (1.0)	-.21 (.67)		
Discrim		—	—	—	—		1.7** (.79)	.48* (.25)	.51** (.27)	.31 (.59)		—	—	—	—		
N=690 Pseudo R ² =.1358 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-809.11						N=584 Pseudo R ² =.1587 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-263.6						N=695 Pseudo R ² =.2139 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-893.5					

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

*Significant at .10 level, **Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.

Table 3
Predictors of Racial Self-Identification-Demographic Factors

	AL	HL	SOR	MR		AL	HL	SOR	MR		AL	HL	SOR	MR
	<u>2006</u>					<u>2009</u>					<u>2011</u>			
Educ	-14** (.05)	-.22** (.10)	-.01 (.06)	-.11 (.07)		-.09 (.28)	-.18** (.08)	-.14 (.09)	.18 (.19)		-.36*** (.09)	-.46** (.17)	-.04 (.24)	2.2*** (.58)
Income	-.22** (.09)	-.03 (.24)	-.11 (.15)	.15 (.19)		-.88** (.18)	-.35* (.20)	-.42** (.19)	.57 (.43)		-.89** (.43)	.009 (.11)	.44* (.24)	.05 (.09)
Gender	-.28 (.19)	-.34 (.35)	-.38* (.23)	.08 (.28)		-.90 (.88)	-.15 (.24)	-.27 (.24)	-.25 (.50)		.89 (1.2)	.28 (.32)	-.09 (.21)	.04* (.02)
Marital Status	27** (.13)	-.04 (.16)	.01 (.11)	-.08 (.13)		1.7** (.93)	-.30 (.32)	-.03 (.29)	-2.2** (.89)		2.4** (1.3)	.04 (.38)	-.11 (.68)	-.11 (.33)
Age	-.03*** (.006)	-.03** (.01)	-.02** (.008)	-.02** (.009)		.15 (.17)	-.04 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	-.12 (.08)		.06* (.04)	-.02** (.01)	.04** (.02)	-.03** (.01)
Religion	-1.53* (.91)	-1.4** (.78)	.31 (.44)	-.71* (.43)		.22 (.26)	-.02 (.08)	-.07 (.08)	.12 (.17)		-1.6*** (.54)	.09 (.10)	.02 (.18)	.21** (.10)
N=690 Pseudo R ² =.1358 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-809.11					N=584 Pseudo R ² =.1587 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-263.6					N=695 Pseudo R ² =.2139 Prob >χ ² =0.000 Log Pseudo Likelihood=-893.5				

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.

*Significant at .10 level, **Significant at .05 level, ***Significant at .01 level.

Notes

1. If Afro-Latinos do not select the Black racial category, research indicates that when available they select 'Two or More Races' or the 'Other' category on surveys.
2. 6.0% of the U.S. population report that they are 'Some other race'. 6.2% of the U.S. population report that they are 'Some other Hispanic'. See Mary C. Waters, Philip Kasinitz, and Asad L. Asad. (2014). "Immigrants and African Americans." *The Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 369–90.
3. Asian Americans constitute approximately 6% of the U.S. Population. See <http://www.pew-socialtrends.org/files/2013/04/Asian-Americans-new-full-report-04-2013.pdf>.
4. Regarding African American distrust in government, See Howell and Fagan 1988; Smith and Seltzer 1992; and Gay 2002.
5. NSL 2009 and 2011.
6. The bilingual variable is not estimated in the models due to collinearity.
7. NSL 2006.
8. Within the timeframe of at least one year prior to the administration of the survey.

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