

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: “LIBERATING MY MIND...
DECOLONIZING MY PHYSICAL BODY”:
EXPLORING AFROLATINE/A/O
ACTIVISTS’ CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
USING PLÁTICA METHODOLOGY

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My dissertation, “Liberating my mind...decolonizing my physical body”: Exploring AfroLatine/a/o activists’ critical consciousness using plática methodology, aimed to understand the experiences of 11 AfroLatine/a/o activists in the United States. Scholars have studied AfroLatine/a/os racial/ethnic identity development and activism separately, but this dissertation highlighted the critical consciousness that both these identities possess. Through a “me-search” process, a form of critical consciousness, AfroLatine/a/os assert agency and resilience to make meaning and reflect upon their Blackness and Latinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Additionally, those who identify as activists also engage with critical consciousness in understanding social inequities and oppression (Freire, 1970a). My dissertation explored the critical consciousness that AfroLatine/a/os activists possess using plática methodology.

Using a *plática* methodology, I cocreated knowledge, fostered healing and vulnerability, offered collaborators validation, and incorporated life experiences and community building. *Pláticas* also “constitute a method that recognizes and values familial and cultural knowledge, and *platicando* becomes the process of drawing on that knowledge and making meaning across experiences” (González Ybarra, 2018, p. 511). Through *pláticas*, *cuentos*, *chismes*, *charlas*, *regaños*, and *consejos* are shared (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018; M. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2007). To accomplish this work, I developed a conceptual framework titled, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o activists critical consciousness,” that brings together (a) Latino critical race theory, (b) Daché et al.’s (2019) *Black-imiento*, and (c) Freire’s (1970a) conscientization to illuminate the experiences of AfroLatine/a/o activists in a way that highlights their embraced Blackness, heightened knowledge and critical action, and lived experiences. Data were collected via a survey (46 participants), a one-on-one *plática* (11 collaborators), and a community *plática* (11 collaborators). Data were analyzed first by collaborators during the community *plática*. Afterward, I conducted initial/open coding and focused coding strategies.

The findings of this study showed that AfroLatine/a/o activists asserted agency and engaged in critical reflection through a continuous process of learning and unlearning to understand their own AfroLatine/a/o identity, country of origin history, colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and internalized racism. The second finding described the racial ideologies that AfroLatine/a/o activists created, which included (a) embracing Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group. Additionally, this study found that AfroLatine/a/o activists defined their activism as community,

advocacy, and compassion. Lastly, the collaborators shared how their AfroLatine/a/o identity was a form of existence as resistance, a form of activism.

This study presents various contributions to higher education theory, praxis, research, policy, and AfroLatine/a/o activists. My dissertation makes the following contributions: (a) understanding how marginalized communities navigate and resist oppressive systems, (b) validating the experiences and knowledge of AfroLatine/a/o activists, and (c) challenging a monolithic perspective of Latinidad by showcasing how AfroLatine/a/os embrace their Blackness.

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AFROLATINE/A/O ACTIVISTS’ CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS USING PLÁTICA
METHODOLOGY

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Dedication

A mis padres,

Mi madre, Antonia, y mi padre, Nelson, cuyo amor, sacrificios y trabajo siempre me han permitido ser la mejor versión de mí misma y lograr la metas con la que sueño. Ustedes son la personificación de la perseverancia y este título también es de ustedes.

To my husband, Anthony

Your belief in me has always shined a light through this journey. Thank you for your love, faith, positivity, partnership, and support.

To my Luna,

I love you to the moon and back. You are my inspiration and purpose.

To my family and friends,

My sisters Pamela and Esther, whose encouragement, motivation, and flexibility have held me down and lifted me up. My comadre Clarivel, primas, Alpha moms, sorority sisters, in-laws, Mama Norma, aunts, uncles, and friends—your community and love has meant the world to me, and I couldn't do life without you.

To those no longer with me on this earth but I feel their presence everyday, protecting me, guiding me, and giving me strength: Mama Nana, Papa Pingo, mother-in-law Yvonne Benyarko, and our ancestors.

To my collaborators,

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“I feel like our main motivation is our constant pain that we have been suffering . . . over years, decades. The past is not the past. Our ancestors are here. Still are crying. The constant pain and abuses and violence... our ancestors tell us to fight for our freedom. Activism is the way to continue with this legacy and the best way is through a collective mechanism with friends, with sisters, with other communities.” (Rio)

During times of inequity and social injustice in the United States, college campuses serve as a microcosm of the national climate. Student activists have been and continue to be leaders in innovative social movements on their campuses and communities to demand change. Students gain many valuable and transferable skills through activism (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Morsillo & Prilleltensky; 2007; Nguyen & Gasman, 2015; Taines, 2012; Winston, 2013). Particularly of interest for this study is the critical consciousness that AfroLatine/a/o activists possess (Cisneros, 2019; George Mwangi et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, higher education institutions do a disservice to student activists, especially students of color, by not supporting or fostering their activist and identity development. Interestingly, universities and college campuses are often spaces where social responsibility and action are encouraged. In fact, democratic citizenship is a pillar and purpose of higher education (Hamrick, 1998; Hartley & Hollander, 2005). But activism, which is a form of civic engagement, social responsibility, and democratic citizenship, is not generally supported by campus leaders. Students “who engage in principled dissent and active protest on campus are participating in a different, yet equally valuable, democratic citizenship experience that is worthy of our attention and appreciation” (Hamrick, 1998, p. 450). Unfortunately, faculty, administrators, and practitioners have yet to welcome and support student activists, which can hinder students’ sense of belonging (Biddix et al., 2009).

Identity-based activism involves engaging in resistance related to one's oppression and identity, such as race (Linder et al., 2020). For Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) students, "racial/ethnic disparities in educational achievement and attainment are partially explained by the effects of race-based stressors, such as stereotype threat and perceived discrimination, on psychological and biological responses to stress, which, in turn, impact cognitive functioning and academic performance" (Levy et al., 2016, p. 455). As a result, Black and Latine/a/o students' motivations and concentration for learning are hindered (Levy et al., 2016). To further compound the problem, higher education does not provide student activists with the tools to avoid burnout, emotional and physical labor, racial battle fatigue, or disconnection from campus (Gorski & Chen, 2015; Harrison & Mather, 2017; Linder et al., 2019). These experiences are especially true for activists whose identities are connected to the activism in which they are involved, such as AfroLatine/a/o activists (Gorski & Chen, 2015; Linder et al., 2020). Although there is no widely accepted definition of the term *AfroLatine/a/o*,¹ *AfroLatine/a/os* refers to "African-descendant peoples in [from] Latin America and the Caribbean" (Flores & Jiménez Róman, 2009, p. 319).

AfroLatine/a/os

AfroLatine/a/os are a subset of the *Latine/a/o* population. *AfroLatinidad* has been a term that some *Latine/a/o* scholars, activists, and communities have embraced. The prefix *Afro* highlights a connection to Africa, both historically and culturally (Fields, 2020; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). *AfroLatine/a/os* are most likely from Caribbean countries such as Puerto Rico

¹ Like García-Louis and Cortes (2020), I do not hyphenate *AfroLatine/a/o* to "ensure it is understood and accepted as a holistic term, not a hyphenated identity" (p. 3) and acknowledge both: having African descent and *Latine/a/o* origins. The addition of the "e" in *Latine* (pronounced La-TEEN-e, Latin-e) has signified a gender-inclusive term that challenges the gender binaries in the Spanish language (Méendez, 2023). To be inclusive in this dissertation and capture the identities of the collaborators accurately, I chose to use the unhyphenated "AfroLatin" and gender-inclusive "e."

or the Dominican Republic (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). AfroLatine/a/os are likely to be concentrated on the east coast of the United States (G. López & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2016). Additionally, “Afro-Latino adults are considerably younger and less likely to have attended college than the overall U.S. adult population” (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022, para. 5). A Pew Research Center study stated that the two-step race question format (i.e., those who identified as both Hispanic and Black) on the U.S. 2020 Census severely underestimated the AfroLatine/a/o population at only 1.2 million people (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). As a result, a Pew Research Center March 2021 survey, using random sampling, estimated that there were 6 million AfroLatine/a/os living in the United States, which was only 2% of U.S. adult population (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). According to this study, of people identifying as AfroLatine/a/o, 30% selected white as their race, 25% chose Black, and 23% selected some other race. These data are somewhat unsurprising due to the historical and current implications of mestizaje and blanqueamiento. For example, mestizaje, so-called the perfect mixed race, promotes colorism and is highly hierarchical, where white is privileged and Blackness is seen as undesirable (García-Louis, 2020; Norwood & Foreman, 2014; Salas Pujols, 2020; Wade, 1993). Blanqueamiento was conceptualized as bettering the race with allegiance to whiteness (Cruz-Janzen, 2007). Interestingly, the Pew Research Center study found that AfroLatine/a/os, who identified as Hispanic or Latino, indicated they were perceived on the street as multiracial or mixed race or Black (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). The same March 2021 survey of Hispanics found that AfroLatine/a/os, who identified as Hispanic or Latino, were more likely described having darker skin color than other Latine/a/os, reported unfair treatment by police, and were criticized for speaking Spanish (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2022). It is evident that the Latine community are a multihued ethnic group and have varied lived experiences (Hernández, 2022).

AfroLatine/a/os encounter challenging experiences because of their race, phenotype, skin tone, and hair texture, in addition to experiencing anti-Black sentiments (Daché et al., 2019). AfroLatine/a/o students experience a hostile campus racial climate through intragroup colorism, social exclusion, microaggressions, and discrimination (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020; Haywood, 2017a). Comas-Díaz (2021) argued “the intersection of coloniality of power, skin color, knowledge, and gender increase AfroLatine/a/o’s racial oppression” (p. 65). Thus, Latine/a/os, especially AfroLatine/a/os, are racialized based on appearance, and historically categorized as nonwhite, which could be a motivating factor for being engaged in activism. Furthermore, Vera and Pineda (2021) cited Mark Hugo Lopez, director of race and ethnicity research at the Pew Research Center, in stating that years of “protests, anger, and political polarization” (para. 10) could be the cause of an increase seen between the 2010 and 2020 Census for more Hispanic/Latine/a/os choosing Black as a race (i.e., 1.2 million and 1.3 million, respectively). The current study included AfroLatine/a/o activists who were attending at the time of the study, attended but did not graduate, or graduated from a 4-year higher education institution.

Problem Statement

The first problem this study addresses is that AfroLatine/a/o student activists’ retention and persistence must matter! Student persistence is measured by a student’s sense of belonging on campus, among other factors (Strayhorn, 2019). To no surprise, students who engage in activism-related behaviors/actions often experience hostile environments, leading to a lack of connection on campus (Harrison & Mather, 2017). And for BIPOC students, especially Black and Latine/a/o students, baccalaureate degree completion is disproportionate to their white counterparts and demonstrates the reality of educational outcomes that have not met parity (Krogstad & Fry, 2014; Torres et al., 2019). Black and Latine/a/o students are already dealing

with difficulties just in being students. Those who are also engaging in activism are potentially at greater risk for not being retained. Higher education needs to be intentional about supporting and developing students who identify as student activists of color because they are likely very vulnerable on their campuses.

The second problem that this study identified is that the literature on Latine/a/o students is often Mexican-centric, treats Latine/a/os as a monolithic group, or is scant. Although research on Latine/a/o students has become more widely available, many of those studies center on Mexican/Chicanx/a/o students or have a majority sample of Mexican/Chicanx/a/o students. When studies center Mexican/Chicanx/a/o American communities, it erases the AfroLatine/a/o experience because Mexican-identifying individuals are least likely to identify with African ancestry (J. R. Logan, 2003; Torres, 2004). Additionally, under a pan-ethnic term, *Latine/a/os* or *Hispanics*, treated as a monolithic group, obscuring the significant differences in race, culture, history, language, and immigration patterns among subpopulations like AfroLatine/a/os (McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004). Pan-ethnicity can lead to generalizations about the Latine/a/o population that ignore their racial diversity and myriad experiences. Furthermore, literature on Latine/a/o students is critiqued for being race-less or lacking racial markers (Haywood, 2017b).

There is very little educational research that has focused on AfroLatine/a/o students (Daché et al., 2019; Garcia-Louis & Cortes, 2020; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Jiménez Róman & Flores, 2010). Even fewer studies have focused on AfroLatine/a/o activists (Denis-Rosario, 2012; G. Logan et al., 2017; Opie, 2018). For example, Denis-Rosario (2012) took a historical look at Black Puerto Rican's sociopolitical activism in New York using an Afro-centric perspective. Findings suggested that Black Nuyoricans, who were involved in the United

Bronx Parents or The Young Lords, expressed a Black consciousness by (a) creating Afro-centric cultural and economic spaces, (b) articulating a racially diverse Puerto Rican identity, and (c) centering Afro-centric discourse within their social movements. Similarly, Opie (2018) found that coalition-building in New York by African American and Latine/a/o students worked together to address institutional racism on campus and in their communities.

What if higher education reframed their perspectives on student activism and embraced and learned from student activists? A wide range of researchers continue to call attention for student affairs professionals to reframe student activism as a learning opportunity, by supporting and developing student activists and their motivation for equity and justice and moving from disciplinarians to partners (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Holeman, 2007; Kezar, 2010; Martin et al., 2019; T. J. Stewart & Quaye, 2019). What if higher education and governmental institutions updated how they collected demographic data so that organizations could disaggregate communities based on their racial identities and Latine/a/o ethnic identities? Not capturing race and ethnicity in separate questions is an oversight that neglects, dismisses, and erases Black identity in Latinidad (N. López, 2023). What if higher education used a strengths-based approach by centering critical consciousness in the support and development of AfroLatine/a/o activists? Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to address retention and sense of belonging among AfroLatine/a/os and support, develop, and help AfroLatine/a/o student activists thrive on persistently oppressive and racist campuses.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative exploratory study used *plática* methodology to explore the experiences of 11 AfroLatine/a/o activists in the United States. This study's aims were two-fold: (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogate the

relationship between these two identities. This study allows campus educators and administrators to learn more about the critical consciousness that AfroLatine/a/o activists already possess. In addition, this study calls for higher education professionals to reframe their perspectives on activism and look beyond Latinidad as monolithic and homogenous.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What racial ideologies are present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad?

Research Question 2: How do AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their activism?

Research Question 3: What, if at all, is the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism?

Significance of the Study

This exploratory study on AfroLatine/a/o activists' critical consciousness added to educational research and scholarship by (a) expanding educational research on an understudied and often-invisible subpopulation in the Latine/a/o diaspora; (b) extending the growing body of literature on *plática* as a methodological approach; (c) interrogating how institutions collect data on Latine/a/os without disaggregating by racial identity and Latine/a/o ethnic identity (N. López, 2023); (d) changing perspectives and policies on activism that is overpoliced and criminalized, especially for students of color (Divine & Norris Blackson, 2021); and (e) providing educators with insights on how to support and develop the ethnic, racial, and activist identities through a lens of critical consciousness for AfroLatine/a/o activists.

Expanding the literature on AfroLatine/a/os is essential because it (a) challenges generalizations made of the Latine/a/o population in research (Haywood, 2017b), (b) validates AfroLatine/a/os lived experiences and realities, and (c) strengthens the notion that Blackness and

Indigeneity exist in Latinidad (Daché et al., 2019). This study expanded the literature on AfroLatine/a/os, sometimes invisible in race studies (e.g., Black and Latine/a/os studies) and educational research. Although literature has been scarce on AfroLatine/a/os students, a plethora of literature exists on Latine/a/os; mostly Mexican-and mestizaje-centric (Haywood, 2017b). The lack of representation of AfroLatine/a/os and lack of consideration for race in the Latine/a/o literature further demonstrates white supremacy and anti-Blackness. This study attempted to disrupt anti-Blackness and white supremacy in educational research.

Current Status of Student Activism in Higher Education

In the wake of social injustice in the United States, student activism has increased due to a divisive national political climate and local campus inequities. The Education Advisory Board has tracked over 500 activism data points related to protests, petitions, and demands on college campuses (Cudé, 2020). Between 2015 and 2020, the most common social issue involving activism on college campuses involved racial justice (Cudé, 2020). In addition, data gathered from the 2018 and 2021 Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership showed a significant increase in the proportion of students engaging in activism-related behaviors related to racial injustice (i.e., 36% vs. 69%, respectively; Martinez-Benyarko et al., 2023). Examples include social movements such as the Racism Lives Here and football players' protests at the University of Missouri, Michael Brown rallies at St. Louis University, the Take Back Our Campus movement resisting white supremacy at the University of Wisconsin, #ITooAmHarvard photo campaign at Harvard University, and #FearTheTurtle movement where students shared experiences with hate and racism at the University of Maryland (Best Degree Programs, 2017; Butler, 2014; Cwieka, 2017; Ferguson & Davis, 2019).

Student activists face numerous barriers and even consequences on campus as a result of being engaged in activism behaviors such as protests, letter writing, sit-ins, and hashtag activism (Biddix, 2010; Johansson & Vinthagen, 2014; Kezar, 2010). First, the contributions and labor of student activists to improve higher education are uncompensated, which results in student activists investing limited time and energy into something for which they may not see the fruits of their labor (Linder et al., 2019). Second, this exhausting labor and energy can create unequal learning environments, meaning their involvement in activism can impact their grades or result in dropping classes (Linder et al., 2019; Renn, 2007). Third, student activists experience “symptoms of racial battle fatigue that are both physiological and psychological” (W. A. Smith et al., 2007, p. 556). Racial battle fatigue includes experiencing gaslighting by administrators (Linder et al., 2019) and struggles with mental health (Gorski & Chen, 2015; Linder et al., 2019). Fourth, student activists also face burnout because of this additional labor and deteriorating emotional, physical, and mental well-being (Gorski & Chen, 2015; Stokes & Miller, 2019; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011). Students with marginalized identities “contend with additional layers of anxiety, stress, and emotional exhaustion related not only to the oppressions their activism is targeting but also to the oppressions they are experiencing, sometimes even in activist communities and organizations” (Gorski & Chen, 2015, p. 390). As a result, Black and Latine/a/o students’ motivation and concentration for learning are hindered (Levy et al., 2016). These stressors may contribute to the unequal educational outcomes for Black and Latine/a/o students, let alone AfroLatine/a/o students and/or activists. Colleges and universities typically do not provide spaces for activists of color to be in the community, have a sense of belonging, heal, or formally develop their skills.

Research has shown that students can develop socially, professionally, and academically by engaging in student activism. Student activists gain critical thinking, self-awareness, communication, teamwork, academic resilience, leadership, and social responsibility skills, to name a few (Astin et al., 1975; Biddix, 2014; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Ollis, 2011; Renn, 2007; Tsui, 2000). However, very few studies have focused on student activists' critical consciousness. Although a few studies have highlighted the connection between activism and critical consciousness (Bañales et al., 2020; Chovanec & Lange, 2007; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; George Mwangi et al., 2019; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011), most U.S. higher education institutions have not been intentional about developing this student population. They have also not made connections between social identity, Blackness, and activism experiences crucial for the learning and development of AfroLatine/a/o student activists. By building connections between racial and ethnic identity and activism, higher education will be better equipped to support and foster critical consciousness skills in AfroLatine/a/o student activists.

Higher education's core is the hope of instilling a sense of civic, social, and political responsibility in students to create change (Biddix, 2014; Hamrick, 1998; Martin, 2014). This civic engagement includes forms of activism (Martin et al., 2019). Although some literature has encouraged student affairs to be brokers with/for student activists, these same institutions dread having to manage student activism on campus (Barnhardt, 2019; Broadhurst, 2014; Cho, 2020; Martin, 2014). Institutions create educational initiatives, new curricula, and policy reform as responses to activism. Still, they also have pressures and competing goals that cause the institution to also, at times, "minimize student's concerns, criminalize activism, co-opt initiatives, and only claim diversity through empty dialogues" (Cho, 2020, p. iii).

Background Context

Since the inception of the colonial colleges in the United States, higher education has historically been for the wealthy, white,² and male population, excluding those of lower economic status; Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC); and women. Some progressive milestones that have expanded access to higher education include (a) Oberlin College enrolling African Americans in 1833; (b) the founding of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like Fisk, Morehouse, Hampton, and Howard; (c) the passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act; and (d) the *Brown v. Board of Education* victory (Harper et al., 2009). However, settler colonialism³ remains as an ongoing structure that permeates the formation of race and gender (Glenn, 2015). Today, settler colonialism is present in how racialized organizations, like higher education institutions, interact with marginalized communities. Racialized organizations impact racial groups' agency, legitimize inequitable distribution of resources, and institutionalize interests in whiteness above all (Ray, 2019). Although much has changed since the start of higher education in the United States, exclusionary practices and hostile campus climates still exist today, especially for people with marginalized identities. To no surprise, students have and continue to engage in activism that demands institutional change to occur that aligns with social justice and equity.

² In this dissertation, I chose to forgo the recommendation by the American Psychological Association (2019) in capitalizing white and instead follow Pérez-Huber (2010) and Stewart et al. (2017) in not capitalizing white but capitalizing Black, Latinx, AfroLatine/a/o, and other racial and ethnic minoritized groups. Stewart et al. (2017) declared that writing is a tool of power. Thus, I chose to enact this power in a manner that devalues whiteness, while centering racially and ethnically minoritized groups and redistribute the power within my writing.

³ Glenn (2015) stated that “the settler goal of seizing and establishing property rights over land and resources required the removal of indigenes, which was accomplished by various forms of direct and indirect violence, including militarized genocide. Settlers sought to control space, resources, and people not only by occupying land but also by establishing an exclusionary private property regime and coercive labor systems, including chattel slavery to work the land, extract resources, and build infrastructure” (p. 52).

The concept of *social justice*⁴ has evolved since its introduction by John Rawls in 1971. Social justice, different from diversity, “conveys a broader conceptualization beyond numerical representation toward quality of interactions and cross-cultural engagement” (Harris et al., 2015, p. 26). Harris et al. (2015) described social justice as “a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (p. 27). Social justice and equity, in the context of education, mean more than just infusing the term “social justice” into mission statements or job announcements. Social justice and equity in education mean creating an educational space where all can thrive; providing students with the resources needed for success; and incorporating a culturally responsive lens to educational policies, practice, and teaching. Practically speaking, social justice in education should be infused through administrative actions, policies, and classroom practices that address forms of “isms,” like sexism and racism. Particularly interesting for this study is the call to action for institutions to dismantle anti-Blackness in their spaces, which directly impacts the experiences of Black, Latine/a/o, and AfroLatine/a/o⁵ students. Anti-Blackness is a component of racism in the United States, which invalidates and erases Black experiences, denies humanity to Black people, and causes harm or violence to Black people (Dumas, 2016; Ohito & Brown, 2021; D. L. Stewart, 2019; Wynter, 1979). An anti-Black society prevents Black people from getting quality healthcare, equitable education, good jobs, fair housing, and loans. Higher education is not exempt from how pervasive anti-Blackness is in the United States. As a result,

⁴ In this dissertation, I included this lens into my research design and conceptual framework in a manner that redistributes power in the research process because individuals are not merely participants but also collaborators in theorizing about their lived experiences.

⁵ Similar to García-Louis and Cortes (2020), I will not hyphenate AfroLatine/a/o to “ensure it is understood and accepted as a holistic term, not a hyphenated identity” (p. 3) and thus acknowledge both: having African descent and Latinx/a/o origins.

AfroLatine/a/os have engaged in rejecting anti-Black racism and have used activism as an avenue for demanding change and social justice in the United States and across Latin America.

One way to dismantle anti-Blackness in higher education is by researching, supporting, and developing AfroLatine/a/o student activists. AfroLatine/a/os, who identify with their African ancestry and Latinidad origins, are often rendered invisible by the pan-ethnic label *Latine/a/o*⁶ (Daché et al., 2019; García-Louis & Cortes, 2020; McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004). Higher education cannot continue to ignore the complexity and Blackness of Latinidad, the violent climate facing BIPOC communities, and the disproportionate graduation rates on college campuses today. BIPOC students have described their experiences on college campuses as hostile and different from their white peers (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Some of the real and valid experiences of BIPOC students, especially Black students, include microaggressions, lack of belonging, feelings of alienation and exclusion, and being seen as “native informants” (hooks, 1994, p. 43) for their racial group (Quaye et al. 2015; Strayhorn, 2019). As a result, students’ “concentration, motivation, and ultimately learning is impaired by the unintended and overt racism” (Anderson, 2016, p. 3). This study and the support of higher education administrators and faculty have great potential to influence AfroLatine/a/o activists’ sense of belonging, persistence, psychological well-being, and identity development through campus programming, praxis, and policy initiatives.

Institutions that view campus activism as an “educational opportunity or a step toward engaged citizenship” (Martin, 2014, p. 88) can be proactive and increase a sense of belonging to this disenfranchised group. Higher education faculty, staff, and administrators must be in

⁶ I use the term *Latine/a/o* as an abbreviation of *Latine/Latina/Latino*; which in this study includes *Latinx*. Like *Latinx*, the addition of the “e” has signified a gender-inclusive term to refer to people of Latin American origin. *Latine*, is a community-centered term that challenges the gender binaries within the Spanish language (Méndez, 2023).

relationship with student activists in the same way they engage other students, including fostering their identity development, persistence, and sense of belonging (Evans & Lange, 2019; Keeling, 2004; Martin, 2014). Once activism is treated as a valuable learning opportunity and coupled with identity development (e.g., race, ethnicity), higher education can reimagine opportunities to support AfroLatine/a/o student activism. It is imperative to change perspectives and policies on activism, which is overpoliced and criminalized, especially for people of color (i.e., Black Lives Matter [BLM] Movement; Divine & Norris Blackson, 2021). Reframing student activism is just one way higher education institutions can take intentional action toward dismantling anti-Blackness.

Context on Latine/a/o Population in the United States

To understand the significance of this study, I provide the below background context on Latine/a/o population in the United States, including Latine/a/os students at 2- and 4-year colleges and universities. Latine/a/os are diverse, vibrant, and resilient people whose cultural traditions, ancestry, histories, music, food, immigration stories, beliefs, values, and phenotypes vary. According to the Pew Research Center, Latine/a/os are estimated to be the second-largest racial or ethnic group in the United States, following white non-Hispanics (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). Regardless of race, the Hispanic or Latino population was estimated to be 62.1 million in 2020 (N. Jones et al., 2021). According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the Hispanic/Latino population has grown 23% since 2010 (N. Jones et al., 2021).

The U.S. government has designated various terms to describe this ethnic population, such as *Hispanic*, *Latino*, or *Spanish*. In 1980, the U.S. Census Bureau implemented a two-question format that separated Hispanic as an ethnicity instead of race (Telles, 2018). Then, in 2010, the U.S. Census added a line that read, “for this Census, Hispanic origins are not

racess“(Telles, 2018, p. 160). This approach forced Hispanic individuals to choose any race category on the Census, resulting in less than 5% choosing Black in 2010 (Telles, 2018). In 2020, Hispanic/Latinos who selected Black/African American as their race decreased by 6.4%, noting the small percentage since this two-question approach started (N. Jones et al., 2021). In 2020, Hispanic/Latinos who selected their race as white alone decreased by 52.9%, the difference of 25.7 million to 12.6 million over the prior 10 years (N. Jones et al., 2021). In addition, Hispanic/Latinos who chose “some other race alone” and “two or more races” increased by 41.7% (i.e., estimated 26.2 million people) and 567.2% (i.e., estimated 20.3 million people), respectively (N. Jones et al., 2021). Based on the data, it is evident that Latine/a/os do not view themselves racially as Black or white, leading to the increase in stating that they are of another race or two or more races in the 2020 U.S. Census results.

A 2020 study by the Pew Research Center surveyed 3,535 United States adults through random sampling and explored how they self-identify (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). The authors concluded that people knowledgeable about their family’s origins were more likely to feel connected to their roots and view their origins as a core part of their identity (Cohn et al., 2021). Furthermore, Black (i.e., those who selected single-race Black) and Hispanic origin adults felt more connected to their family’s cultural roots than white adults (Cohn et al., 2021), further highlighting the importance of familial and cultural contexts that are relevant to Black and Latine/a/o communities.

Latine/a/os Students at 2- and 4-Year Colleges and Universities. Demographic data show an increase of Latine/a/o people in the U.S. population, which mirrors the shift of Latine/a/o enrollment increasing in higher education [National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2022; Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020]. For many, including Latine/a/os, attending college

has been seen as part of *el sueño Americano*. Student demographics on college and university campuses are increasingly becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Between 2010 and 2020, college enrollment rates for 18- to 24-year-olds increased for Hispanic students from 32% to 36% (NCES, 2022). In Fall 2019, 3.5 million Hispanic students were enrolled in postsecondary education in the United States (NCES, 2021c). In Fall 2019, the highest percentage of Hispanic-identifying undergraduate students who attended 4-year colleges and universities was at public institutions at 20%, compared to private for-profit and nonprofit institutions at 18% and 13%, respectively (NCES, 2021a). In Fall 2019, the highest percentage of Hispanic-identifying undergraduate students at 2-year colleges and universities was at public institutions at 28%, compared to private for-profit and nonprofit institutions at 29% and 10%, respectively (NCES, 2021a).

Of those Latine/a/o students who attended 4-year colleges and universities, an estimated 54% graduated (NCES, 2019). For Latine/a/o students who attended 4-year institutions, 31% graduated in 4 years, 17% in 5 years, and 6% in 6 years (NCES, 2019). Regarding 2-year postsecondary institutions, Latine/a/o students' graduation rate was 30% (NCES, 2019). The rate of Latine/a/o baccalaureate degree completion was still disproportionate to their white counterparts, which demonstrates the reality of educational outcomes that have not met parity (Krogstad & Fry, 2014; Torres et al., 2019). Unequal educational outcomes could be because higher education lacks an understanding of Latine/a/o students and treats them as a monolith (Torres et al., 2019). Unequal educational effects and attainment further compound the consequences for Latine/a/os because it impacts their upward mobility. Because race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity, it is difficult to determine the number of AfroLatine/a/os

in higher education (i.e., individuals who selected Latino/Hispanic as their ethnicity and Black as their race).

It is noteworthy to mention that the COVID-19 global pandemic, which spread globally at the start of 2020, disproportionately affected the Latine/a/o population resulting in Latine/a/o people being four times more likely to be hospitalized than white people (Calo et al., 2020). The coronavirus pandemic's global impact on the Latine/a/o population also includes Latine/a/o students. The U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau's household pulse survey showed that the pandemic deeply impacted Fall 2020 plans for Hispanic students. For example, 34% of Hispanic students planned to take Fall 2020 postsecondary classes but had to cancel courses instead (NCES, 2021b). This survey also indicated that "[the] two most frequently cited reasons they reported for the cancellations were having coronavirus or having concerns about getting coronavirus (46%) and not being able to pay for classes/educational expenses because of changes to income from the pandemic (42%)" (NCES, 2021b, para. 1). As such, it is difficult to measure or estimate the impact of the pandemic on AfroLatine/a/o students because higher education does not track this population.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, created for this dissertation centers on Blackness in the context of AfroLatine/a/o activists. A framework like this is more important than ever because of the state of racial injustice, greater interest in collective action toward social change, interest in focusing on learning outcomes, and the increasingly diverse U.S. society and college campuses. To understand the critical consciousness AfroLatine/a/o activists possess, this conceptual framework brings together (a) Latino critical race theory (LatCrit), (b) Daché et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento, and (c) Freire's (1970a) conscientization. I developed the conceptual framework

by integrating critical components of each theory relevant to my study. This conceptual framework provided a lens to understand the experiences of AfroLatine/a/o activists in a way that highlights their embraced Blackness, heightened knowledge, and critical action.

The center of this framework helped guide this study to understand how to research AfroLatine/a/o activists, meaning the values to hold when exploring AfroLatinidad and activism. LatCrit, Black-imiento, and critical consciousness theories align with social justice validated experiential knowledge and take a transdisciplinary approach (Daché et al., 2019; Freire, 1970a; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Specifically, the center of this framework impacted how I (a) organized the pláticas, (b) framed my positionality, and (c) connected the framework in the plática questions and purpose of this study. LatCrit is necessary for this framework because it acknowledges the factors specific to Latine/a/os such as immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, skin tone, and accent that are situated in larger racist institutional structures that perpetuate oppression and inequity (LatCrit Inc., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black-imiento and LatCrit capture the importance of recognizing race is interwoven in U.S. society and culture, and scholars must reject a pan-ethnic label such as Latine/a/o (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black-imiento and LatCrit challenge dominant white culture and ideologies similar to AfroLatine/a/os, who reject the Latine/a/o label and anti-Blackness (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In addition, Black-imiento and critical consciousness incorporate critical reflection. AfroLatine/a/os reflect, learn, and unlearn critically and actively to reject anti-Blackness and assert agency in embracing their AfroLatinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Critical reflection also highlights how AfroLatine/a/os root themselves in history and interrogate their own internalized racism (Daché et al., 2019).

Summary of Research Design

This study aimed to understand how AfroLatine/a/o activists (a) conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogated the relationship between these two identities. To accomplish this aim, I used *plática* as a methodological approach. Through a *plática* methodology, I cocreated knowledge, fostered critical consciousness and community, and offered collaborators validation on their lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores Carmona et al., 2021; F. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013; Valle & Mendoza, 1978). Because I studied AfroLatine/a/o activists, I was intentional about using *plática* methodology because it is not only an asset-based approach but also a more culturally appropriate way to understand the experiences of Latine/a/o communities (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

Data were collected via a 5-minute survey, a 60-minute one-on-one *plática*, and a 90-minute community *plática* (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The one-on-one *plática* asked collaborators to express their racial and ethnic socialization and how they conceptualized their AfroLatine/a/o identity. The one-on-one *plática* also asked collaborators to reflect upon their activism and how their activism could relate to their AfroLatine/a/o identity. The community *plática* was intended to be a space for collaborators to collectively conduct their own analysis by finding the similarities and differences in each others' narratives. By aligning my conceptual framework with *plática* methodology, I centered Blackness in my data collection methods. I accomplished this by having collaborators (a) theorize about their lived experiences, (b) reject dominant narratives, (c) embrace and honor their Blackness, and (d) exercise their critical consciousness and reflection skills in their "me-search" journey (Delgado, 1995; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Freire, 1970a; García-Louis, 2020; LatCrit Inc., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Summary of Findings

The first research question asked about the racial ideologies present for AfroLatine/a/o activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad. The first finding in this dissertation highlighted the critical reflection journey of AfroLatine/a/o activists, which spanned from childhood through college and, for many collaborators, after college. The AfroLatine/a/o activists asserted agency and critical reflection in claiming AfroLatinidad as part of their racial and ethnic identity development. The collaborators displayed critical reflection by navigating and unlearning how they have been impacted by oppressive, white supremacist, and anti-Black structures and norms. First, AfroLatine/a/o activists reflected critically and learned more about their own AfroLatine/a/o identity, country of origin history, colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and internalized racism. Second, the AfroLatine/a/o activists took initiative to understand, navigate, and challenge white supremacy and anti-Blackness within themselves.

The second finding, connected to the first research question, emphasized how AfroLatine/a/o activists created racial ideologies that centered Afro/Blackness in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad. By AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies, I mean the world views, beliefs, and perspectives that AfroLatine/a/o activists created in conceptualizing their racial and ethnic identities (i.e., as Black or Afro). AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies included (a) embracing Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group.

This study examined how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualized their activism. The third finding demonstrated how the AfroLatine/a/o activists defined their activism. The AfroLatine/a/o activists defined their activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. First,

the collaborators discussed how their activism was community oriented, involved community power and strength, was intergenerational, and collectively strived for a higher purpose or goal. Second, the AfroLatine/a/o activists noted that advocacy was also a big part of their activism and the change for which they strived. Advocacy was displayed through talking about the issues, identifying solutions, educating others, and working together to achieve their goals. And third, the collaborators mentioned compassion as crucial to their activism. Unlike empathy and sympathy, compassion fueled the collaborators to act through their activism.

My last research question challenged this study to explore the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism. The last and fourth finding discussed the intersection of Blackness, Latinidad, and activism. The collaborators shared how their AfroLatine/a/o identity was a form of existence as resistance, a form of activism. The AfroLatine/a/o activists described existence as resistance as a movement, part of their activism, to embrace their race and ethnicity as AfroLatine/a/os. Simply put, by understanding and identifying as AfroLatine/a/o, the collaborators felt this was a statement, part of a larger movement of people globally embracing their African roots/ancestry—their Black identity within Latinidad. The collaborators deeply resonated with existence as resistance, as part of their activism, when identifying with AfroLatinidad, despite their socialization. Hence, the connection between AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities for the collaborators.

Outline of Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 focuses on two areas of literature: AfroLatinidad and activism. First, I highlight AfroLatine/a/os in the United States in a historical context, including the impacts of race-making. I share the many meanings of AfroLatinidad in the literature. I delve into foundational ethnic identity development models and racial identity development models, then

detail the unique experiences and racial/ethnic identity development of Latine/a/os and AfroLatine/a/os. Afterward, I catalog how scholars have defined student activism, provide a historical overview of activism in U.S. higher education institutions, described the differences between traditional and contemporary activism, and highlight developmental outcomes student activists' gain. Then, I share how African American/Black, Latine/a/o, and AfroLatine/a/o individuals engage in identity-based activism. I also share critiques of the activism literature, which has failed to center on students of color and has not considered the intersections of race and ethnicity when examining students who engage in activism. Chapter 2 concludes with a conceptual framework that guides this study's exploration of AfroLatine/a/o activists' critical consciousness.

Chapter 3 describes the principles of *plática* methodology and why I chose this methodology for my study. Then, I identified the strategies I used for sampling and recruitment, site selection, and data collection methods. This chapter articulates how I conducted my data analysis and implemented trustworthiness. Afterward, I share how beneficence, respect, and justice guided this study (Glesne, 2016; Terrell, 2016). Then, I identify ethical issues that came up in the research process and how I proceeded in each case. Next, I share my positionality statement to demonstrate how I became immersed in my conceptual framework, methodology, and connection to the research topic as well as the collaborators of this study.

Chapter 4 introduces and humanizes each collaborator by detailing their lived experiences in narrative form. I organize each narrative chronologically by describing the collaborators' socialization, including information about their families, upbringing, and messages/instances regarding race and ethnicity. I then share details on the collaborators' educational experiences from early childhood to college with a special focus on their

conceptualization of AfroLatinidad and activism. I end the narratives with each collaborators' experiences and perceptions about their AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities, and any connections they have made between these two identities. I conclude Chapter 4 with a reflection on my insider positionality.

Chapter 5 contains the findings of this study. The first finding highlighted the critical reflection journey of AfroLatine/a/o activists, which consisted of a continuous cycle of learning and unlearning. AfroLatine/a/o activists critically reflected and learned more about their own AfroLatine/a/o identity, country of origin's history, colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and interrogated their own internalized racism. The second finding emphasized the AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies the collaborators created which included (a) embracing Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group. The third finding demonstrated how the collaborators defined their activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. The fourth finding showed the intersection of Blackness, Latinidad, and activism by sharing how participants' AfroLatine/a/o identity was a form of existence as resistance and activism.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the study. Afterward, the chapter shares discussion points on AfroLatine/a/o activists' critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Based on the literature review, conceptual framework, and findings, I then offered several implications for theory, praxis, research, policy, and AfroLatine/a/o activists. The implications are important to (a) understanding how marginalized communities navigate and resist oppressive systems, (b) validating the experiences and knowledge of AfroLatine/a/o activists, and (c) challenging a

monolithic perspective of Latinidad by showcasing how AfroLatine/a/os embrace their Blackness.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I first dive into the historical context of AfroLatine/a/os in Latin America and the United States. Then, I share the literature on AfroLatinidad by defining the identity, foundations, and variations of the term, and describe the multiple uses of the prefix *Afro*. Next, I highlight the literature on AfroLatine/a/os experiences and racial and ethnic identity development. This section highlights ethnic and racial identity development frameworks, specifically for Latine/a/o students. I synthesize the literature on the racial and ethnic identity development process of AfroLatine/a/os through a self-discovery journey that emphasizes the strength of experiential knowledge. I demonstrate the connections between anti-Blackness, racism, and the erasure of AfroLatine/a/o students in higher education to provide context toward the significance of studying this population. The second section of this literature review (a) defines student activism, (b) details a thorough history of student activism in U.S. higher education, (c) outlines traditional versus contemporary forms of activism, and (d) discusses developmental outcomes gained by activism. Then, I discuss Black, Latine/a/o, and AfroLatine/a/o student activism. Finally, I present a conceptual framework, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Activists Critical Consciousness” that guided this exploratory study on AfroLatine/a/o activists.

AfroLatinidad

This section describes the literature on AfroLatinidad identity and experiences of AfroLatine/a/os. This section begins with a historical overview of AfroLatine/a/o peoples in the Americas. I also explain how race-making has occurred in Latin America and the United States. Although this study and the collaborators were situated in the United States, they were influenced by the countries and cultures in Latin America; thus, context is shared across both

continents. Then, I discuss foundational ethnic identity development models, focusing on models for Latine/a/o students specifically. Those models provide the context for understanding racial and ethnic identity development of AfroLatine/a/o students.

Additionally, I share scholarship on the diverse and unique experiences of AfroLatine/a/o students. The last part of this section demonstrates how anti-Blackness and racism affect AfroLatine/a/os. First, I explain how the United States and higher education were founded on violence, racism, and anti-Blackness. This section recounts how higher education renders AfroLatine/a/o students invisible by how they use the Hispanic category; aggregate data for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students; and how Latine/a/o students are studied (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009; García-Louis, 2015; García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Second, I focus on how Latine/a/os perpetuate anti-Blackness and the influence anti-Blackness has on people identifying as AfroLatine/a/os (Haywood, 2017a; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Wade, 1993).

Historical Context: AfroLatine/a/os in the Americas

AfroLatine/a/os have a long history of living in the present-day United States and Latin America, beginning with people from the Spanish conquest (J. B. Forbes, 2010; Reid Andrews, 2004). During slavery, an estimated 5.7 million Africans were forcibly transported and enslaved to Spanish and Portuguese America (i.e., present-day Latin America), in contrast to an estimated 560,000 Africans who were brought to present-day North America (Reid Andrews, 2004). White Christian colonizers justified slavery using the stories of Ham and Cain⁷ in the Bible, which fostered connections between Black bodies and sin (Brown, 2017; García-Louis, 2021). Spanish

⁷ In the book of Genesis, the Curse of Ham references to the curse placed upon his son, Canaan, after Ham saw his father, Noah, naked. This curse is sometimes referred as justification of white Christians who enslaved people of African ancestry, believed to be descendants of Ham.

explorers, Africans, and AfroSpaniards came to the Caribbean in the early 1500s and by the 1530s, Spanish and Italians expanded to present-day Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Peru (J. B. Forbes, 2010; Reid Andrews, 2004; Wood, 2010). During this time, Indigenous peoples provided most of the labor (Wood, 2010). Still, through diseases like smallpox and measles brought by Europeans, many Indigenous people died, creating a need for enslaved Africans to labor in the sugar, tobacco, cacao, and cotton plantations (Reid Andrews, 2004). By the 1600s, through predominantly African slave labor, Brazil became one of the world's biggest sugar producers, and the necessity for labor increased in the 1700s due to mining (Reid Andrews, 2004). During this time in the Americas, "national independence and chattel slavery were mutually exclusive concepts" (Reid Andrews, 2004, p. 55). By 1800, most of AfroLatin America (e.g., Venezuela, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Panama, Ecuador) had free Brown and Black populations that outnumbered the people enslaved (Reid Andrews, 2004). The enslavement of African people and their descendants persisted in Latin America and the United States until the mid-1800s (Reid Andrews, 2004; Wade, 2008).

Understanding settler colonialism and its ongoing impacts on racialized groups was crucial for the framing of this study and the recognition of racial inequality in the Americas. Glenn (2015) shared, "Settlers sought to control space, resources, and people not only by occupying land but also by establishing an exclusionary private property regime and coercive labor systems, including chattel slavery to work the land, extract resources, and build infrastructure" (p. 52). Settler colonialism is accomplished through genocide, forced displacement, as well as biological (i.e., ethnic cleansing) and/or cultural (i.e., enforcing settler culture) assimilation (Glenn, 2015). When settler colonialism is acknowledged as a structure, one can understand how it persists today and its impact on AfroLatine/a/o communities! For

example, an outcome of settler colonialism is a racial ideology, that the dominant group projects, in which creates “a racialized and gendered national identity that normalized male whiteness” (Glenn, 2015, p. 58). This racial ideology promoted the notion that Black and Indigenous communities were less than and expendable and that settlers were enlightened and valuable.

Race-Making in the Americas: Defining Race, Racial Structure, and Racial Ideology

To conceptualize the racial ideologies of AfroLatine/a/os activists, it is crucial to define and understand race, racial structure, and racial ideology. Race is “a concept, a representation or signification of identity that refers to different types of human bodies, to the perceived corporeal and phenotypic markers of difference and the meaning and social practices ascribed to these differences” (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 111). Race is “not scientific but a social, cultural, and ideological construction- a set of ideas- through which societies have sought to organize, structure, and understand themselves” (Reid Andrews, 2004, p. 6). Although race is seen as a concept or idea, real privileges, power, and challenges exist depending on one’s race. Race-making was “a way to rationalize global inequalities” (Mullings, 2004, p. 1). Thus, racial categories have a historical context, are fluid, and change over time (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

Race, skin tone, gender, and class played a role in codifying peoples into social distinctions and racial and ethnic hierarchies, which caused and continues to cause massive inequality due to white supremacy. The purpose of settler colonialism, and as a result, a white supremacist system is straightforward; predominantly white men are the top of the hierarchy, and Indigenous, followed by African peoples, especially Indigenous and African women (Telles, 2014; Wade, 2010). Pigmentocracy created hierarchies based on racial and ethnic categorization and skin color (Telles, 2014; Wade, 2010). As a result, a racialized social system and structure was created, where people who were white or European were given systemic advantages and

people who were non-european or nonwhite did not receive the same material privileges (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). For example, terms to describe non-white people included *mestizo*, *mulato*, *zambo*, and *Indio* (Wade, 2010). Between the 17th and 19th centuries, “Spanish colonial authorities established a system of castas, literally castes, which defined the proportion of Spanish blood that people carried” (Telles, 2014, p. 15). Furthermore, this casta system, which eventually became raza or race, often relied on phenotypic markers as tracing one’s ancestry was reserved for elites (Telles, 2014). Being a Spaniard of pure blood was an asset that afforded whites immense privilege, rights, honor, and superiority (Telles, 2014). The casta system was not sustainable because of the extensive race-mixing in the western hemisphere (Telles, 2014).

Although race is a social construction, it has and continues to produce real impacts in society. As such, white supremacy, and settler colonialism, continue to “exist because they benefit members of the dominant race” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 19); thus, the racial status must be maintained to support the racialized social system that benefits people assigned white. Because white supremacy must be maintained to defend the interests of the dominant (i.e., white) group, the dominant group creates rationalizations for this racial hierarchy. These rationalizations, or racial ideologies, are “used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 20). Racial ideologies or racially based frameworks are created by the dominant group and become the main framework/narrative as a result. According to Bonilla-Silva (2013), dominant racial ideologies comprise of three elements: common frames, style, and racial stories. First, common frames, or “set paths for interpreting information” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 68), are used as road map to maintain dominance. For example, “whites can claim ‘segregation’ is natural because people from all backgrounds gravitate toward likeness” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 70). Second, the style of

an ideology “refers to its peculiar linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies” (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 88). For example, the language of color blindness demonstrates a neutral tone when discussing race. And third, racial stories, a central component to color-blind racism, expresses and reinforces the status, biases, and perspectives about the social order (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

Throughout Latin America, the extent to which these racial ideologies were institutionally embedded in society through the Census and the construction of racial and ethnic categories is evident. Although *slave* was a major Census category for African or Black people, countries like Colombia, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico had additional categories for mixed peoples. Mixed peoples were referred to as *free people*, *pardos*, *morenos*, *mulatos*, *mestizos*, or *casta* (Wade, 2010). In Latin America, there is a clear delineation between Indigenous and African descendants. Indigenous and mestizaje became national symbols of countries like Mexico and Peru, where they officially instituted structures like Indigenous Affairs into their governments. However, Black people were not recognized in a similar manner (Wade, 2010). Indigenous peoples had more fluidity to move between racial categories than did Afrodescendientes (Telles, 2014). It is evident that racial classification in Latin American countries share some commonalities: “a focus on appearance rather than origin as the primary criterion, the common use of intermediate or mixed-race categories, and thus classification on a color continuum” (Telles & Paschel, 2014, p. 865).

Furthermore, these racial classifications are impacted by the racial ideologies that have been created by the dominant white group. An example includes the notion of blanqueamiento, a European strategy to assert superiority and eliminate Black and Indigenous communities through genocide by reproduction (Norwood & Foreman, 2014). Another example of racial ideologies,

specifically in the Dominican Republic, includes the narrative that Black and African culture is foreign and prevents people from success (Candelario, 2007). Telles and Paschel (2014) found:

While phenotype, particularly skin color, is the major determinant of racial identification in all four countries [Brazil, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Colombia] ... country variations also reflect distinct racial schemas such as the importance of color and status as well as the relative prominence of mixed-race categories and the extent of fluidity. (p. 893)

Specifically, in the Dominican Republic, “Blacks and mulattoes make up nearly 90% of the contemporary Dominican population. Yet no other country in the hemisphere exhibits greater indeterminacy regarding the population's sense of racial identity” (Torres-Saillant, 2000, p. 1086). Denying Blackness within oneself, anti-Haitian discourse, dehumanization of Haitians, and negrophobia are racial ideologies that can be connected to the historical clashes with Haiti (Torres-Saillant, 2000). Consequently, white Dominicans refused “to be governed by the Black Haitian... the cause of the partition of Hispaniola into two countries” (Torres-Saillant, 2000, p. 1087). To no surprise, these racial ideologies persist until today between the Dominican Republic and Haiti; for example, Dominican president Luis Abinader closed all borders with Haiti “prohibiting the passage of goods and people and denying all visas to Haitian citizens” as a retaliation method for Haiti constructing an irrigation canal on communal Rio Massacre (García Peña, 2023, para. 3).

In the United States, racial and ethnic markers were similarly based on skin color, hair texture, surname, and language (Hall, 1990). Additionally, race-making in the United States has been directly impacted by race-making and racial ideologies in Latin America because people who immigrated from Latin American countries into the United States brought these internalized and conflicting messages about Latinidad, mestizaje, and desired whiteness with them. Race-making in the United States was interwoven into the fabric of U.S. society and culture through eugenics, which influenced the creation of anti-interracial marriage laws, the Immigration Act of

1924, which limited migration from certain countries (e.g., southern and eastern Europe); and legislation restricting who were legal citizens (e.g., excluding people from Asia and the Indian subcontinent; Fergus, 2016; Yuill, 2014). Based on physical appearance and skin tone, these policies used race to signal social status and privilege (Omi & Winant, 2014). For example, the racial ideology of Blackness as condemnation is still prevalent today, as demonstrated by the connection between race and crime (Muhammad, 2019). Since the 1890 U.S. Census, social scientists claiming to be color-blind have captured data about the prison population, which catapulted the narrative about “Blacks as a distinct and dangerous criminal population” (Muhammad, 2019, p. 3). According to Muhammad (2019), “violent crime rates in the nation’s biggest cities are generally understood as a reflection of the presence and behavior of Black men, women, and children who live there” (p. 1).

Mestizaje ideologies also have a connection to whiteness (Haywood, 2017b). Mestizaje ideology excludes individuals who fall outside the norm of mestizo or mixed, claiming that skin color and phenotypical characteristics are unnecessary and do not make a difference (Adames et al., 2021; Dulitzky, 2005). Mestizaje ideologies often view Blackness as separate from the pan-ethnicity of Latinidad. Although, when immigrants from Latin America arrive to the U.S., they are expected to consolidate under the pan-ethnic label *Hispanic* or *Latine/a/o*, despite the diversity of their origin countries, lived experiences, race, culture/customs, or immigration status. Additionally, many Latine/a/o people in the United States experience not only a sense of “foreignness” but also discrimination because of their nonwhite categorization, which is a result of their “race, color, national origin, language, culture, or citizenship status” (Trucios-Haynes, 2000, p. 3). Generally, fair-skinned and dark-skinned Latine/a/os in the United States are categorized into the Hispanic category, which often is attributed as nonwhite and non-Black

(Candelario, 2007). However, Caribbean Latine/a/os are typically racialized as Black in the United States (Roth, 2012). How Latine/a/os self-identify racially and ethnically may not be how they are perceived and subsequently treated by other Americans in the United States (N. López et al., 2018).

AfroLatinidad or AfroLatine/a/o Identity

AfroLatinidad is not a new concept, but an identity Latine/a/o people have increasingly embraced first in Latin America and then in the United States. Historically, J. B. Forbes (2010) cataloged the term *AfroLatin@s* as a gender-inclusive term referring to people who were “Spaniards of part-African ancestry, Spanish-Negros, and Indian-Negro hybrids” (p. 27). The prefix *Afro* also includes Black Latine/a/os (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009). Latin American scholars like Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Anani Dzidzienyo, Fernando Ortiz, Roger Bastide, and Carlos Rama have long used the prefix *Afro* “when referring to individuals of African ancestry as AfroBrazilians, AfroCubans, AfroVenezuelans, and so on” (Reid Andrews, 2004, p. 3). The prefix *Afro* highlights Africa’s historical and cultural connection (Fields, 2020; Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009). AfroLatinidad highlights the “cultural and socioeconomic diversity within the overly vague idea of ‘Latino’ and of calling attention to the anti-Black racism in the Latino communities themselves” (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009, p. 320). Furthermore, the prefix *Afro* fosters a connection between the struggles, experiences, self-affirmations, and interests of Black Latine/a/os (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009).

AfroLatinidad comes from the colonial period in Latin America in countries like Brazil, where the concept of race-making was promoted (Mullings, 2004; Reid Andrews, 2004). The term *AfroLatinidad* emerged in the late 19th century and the early 20th century in Pan-Africanism, where African descendants explicitly and collectively started to embrace their

African ancestry and culture (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). Some people even describe AfroLatinidad as a revolutionary identity that can “develop a racial sociopolitical consciousness” (Comas-Díaz, 2021, p. 68) within individuals, interrogate racism, and center resistance.

Latinegros, a term born from the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, increased racial consciousness (Cruz-Janzen, 2001). *Latinegros* was an empowering, affirmative, legitimate, celebratory, and reclaimed term used to describe the African ancestry of Latino people (Cruz-Janzen, 2001). In the 1990s, the term *Afro-Latin@* was used to describe some Black Latine/a/o people in the United States (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). Since 2010, more and more scholars have studied AfroLatinidad, and an increasing number of activists and individuals have embraced AfroLatine/a/o or variations such as AfroDominican, AfroPeruvian, Afrodescendiente or AfroLatino Americano, to name a few racial and ethnic identities.

AfroLatine/a/o Experiences and Racial and Ethnic Identity Development

AfroLatine/a/os are simultaneously ethnically Latino and racially Black and have visible or self-identified African ancestry (Daché et al., 2019; Haywood, 2017b; Hernández, 2022; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020; Vega et al., 2012). AfroLatine/a/os are “forced to negotiate multiple cultures, pan-ethnicity, and the U.S. social construction of race and ethnicity” (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020, p. 2). Understanding ethnic and racial identity development theories and models is crucial to piece together how AfroLatine/a/os develop their identity.

Ethnic Identity Development. To understand the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/os first and their experiences second, I briefly detail the scholarship on ethnic identity development. Ethnic identity is based on a groups’ culture, language, traditions, behaviors, and values (Phinney, 1993). Across the social sciences, ethnicity has been

conceptualized as multidimensional. Ethnicity and ethnic identity consist of how individuals self-identify in shared group dynamics relating to customs, culture, language, traditions, behaviors, values, beliefs, and traits (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Phinney, 1993; Tajfel, 1981). Historically, ethnicity has been used “to refer to groups of people seen as minorities within larger nation-states” (Wade, 2010, p. 15). The foundational literature on ethnic identity development stems from Erikson’s (1968) theory of adolescent development and Marcia’s (1966) ego identity development. A common thread among ethnic identity models is that in the first stages, for example, unexamined ethnic identity and conformity, an individual resonates more with the dominant culture; in the United States context, white is dominant and the norm. Ethnic identity models also signal that identity is achieved only after the individual is confronted by a crisis that they then overcome, resulting in an awakening of identity (Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1966). This awakening results in an individual exploring and committing to an ethnic identity (Erickson, 1968; Marcia, 1966). Phinney’s (1993) 3-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescence incorporated the foundational scholarship and aimed to be applicable across ethnic groups. Phinney (1993) found participants followed several stages in their ethnic identity development journey: (a) unexamined ethnic identity (i.e., lack of exploration), (b) ethnic identity search/moratorium (i.e., encountering a situation that initiates exploration), and (c) ethnic identity achievement (i.e., a confident sense of ethnic identity).

Models and frameworks for ethnic identity present several limitations. First, many of these models place identity stages as markers of achievement, which makes said models seem linear when identity development may not be a linear process in reality. Second, earlier models of ethnic identity development were created with a lack of diversity in the samples. For example, Erikson’s (1968) theory of adolescent development was a majority white male sample and

Marcia's (1966) ego-identity theory was centered on occupation and ideology (e.g., religious and political) as the basis of identity and had little reference to BIPOC communities. Lastly, although Phinney's (1993) study focused on the ethnic identity development of a more diverse sample, U.S.-born Asian-American, Black, and Mexican American high school and college students, the theory may not be applicable to the rest of the Latine/a/o student population. When scholars center Mexican and Mexican American voices and generalize them to all Latine/a/os, it (a) does not capture the nuances of the diverse Latine/a/o population, (b) rejects impacts of race and colorism, and (c) further perpetuates white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

Latine/a/o Identity Development. Latine/a/o ethnic identity is complex, continuous, and dynamic. Because Latine/a/os are not a monolithic group, the research described in this chapter should not be generalized to describe all Latine/a/os. Researchers in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education have studied ethnic identity development among Latine/a/os. Broadly, acculturation, biculturalism, racial identity, socialization, and influential factors impacting ethnic identity (e.g., family) are all concepts especially important when discussing Latine/a/o identity development (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Rotheram-Borus, 1989; Torres, 1999, 2003, 2004; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004). Studies centered on Latine/a/o ethnic identities and acculturation levels have explored how individuals assimilate to the majority culture, usually white (Quintana & Vera, 1999; Torres, 1999). For example, Torres's (1999) bicultural orientation model explored the connection between acculturation and ethnic identity development. Findings in this 1990s study indicated Latine/a/o college students either identified as Hispanic or anglo (Torres, 1999). The results of this study validated the construct of biculturalism, meaning the coexistence of two cultures (Torres, 1999). Additionally, Torres

(1999) concluded practitioners could use this model in “differentiating the individual differences among the Hispanic students they serve” (p. 295).

Some studies have sought to find what factors influence Latine/a/o identity development (Araujo Dawson & Quiros, 2014; Torres, 2003, 2004; Torres et al., 2019). Findings indicated that the contextual factors that influence Latine/a/o identity development include upbringing, family, racial socialization, generational status, social class perception, and college environment (Araujo Dawson & Quiros, 2014; Martinez et al., 2012; Torres, 2003, 2004). For example, Araujo Dawson and Quiros (2014) found that Latinas’ racial identity development was stunted because of the “lack of knowledge regarding their race in their upbringing” (p. 208). As a result, Latinas in this study were not prepared for situations of bias and discrimination (Araujo Dawson & Quiros, 2014). Another study explored how the racial climate at three institutions influenced Latine/a/o students’ ethnic and racial identities, finding institutional type impacted their self-awareness, collective action behaviors, and understanding of inequality in the United States (D. V. Reyes, 2017).

Other studies have described the impact of skin color and physical characteristics on Latine/a/os’ ethnic identity (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008; Gonzales-Backen & Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Ono, 2002; Zanolini Morrison, 2010). Findings indicated Latine/a/os’ self-awareness in regard to ethnic and racial identity depended on whether they had lighter or darker skin color. For example, Latine/a/os with darker skin color were more aware of their ethnic and racial identity and identified instances of racism (Ono, 2002; Zanolini Morrison, 2010). Additionally, Latine/a/os with darker skin color were more likely to racially identify as Black (Golash-Boza & Darity, 2008). Although some studies have considered skin color, physical characteristics, and

racial identity separately, no known studies have incorporated these three aspects, especially to a population of students like AfroLatine/a/os whose ethnic and racial identity is closely connected.

Racial Identity Development. Research on ethnic identity has progressed to consider factors such as group experiences/culture, familial background, and racial identity (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990; Kim, 1981). Racial identity development models have been created for various populations such as Latine/a/os (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001), Black/African Americans (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001; B. Jackson, 2001), Asian Americans (Kim, 1981), bi/multiracial (Kich, 1992; Poston, 1990; Renn, 2004; Wijeyesinghe, 2001), and white (Hardiman & Keehn, 2012; Helms, 1990). Scholars have examined how Latine/a/os self-identify both racially and ethnically (Araujo Dawson & Quiros, 2014; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Weisskirch, 2005). These studies have indicated early socialization and environment play a part in how Latine/a/os develop their racial identity (Araujo Dawson & Quiros, 2014; D. V. Reyes, 2017).

Particularly interesting for this study are Black and Latine/a/o racial identity models. Black racial identity development theories address racial issues influencing the psychotherapy process; efforts of assimilation to majority culture; the linear processes to achieve a healthy Black identity; and the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes related to Black identity development (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; G. G. Jackson & Kirschner, 1973). For example, Cross's (1971) theory of psychological Nigrescence sought to explain the process of becoming Black. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) later conceptualized a life span model of Black identity that aimed to achieve a healthy Black identity. Cross and Fhagen-Smith's model of Black identity development started with childhood racial socialization. This model led toward Nigrescence recycling, which detailed a critical encounter in an individual's life where they question their authenticity and Blackness and, as a result, demonstrate wisdom (Cross & Fhagen-

Smith, 2001). However, racial identity development models do not account for ethnic variables such as cultural traditions, ancestry, histories, behaviors, and values/beliefs. For example, Cross (1971) and Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) Black identity models were intended for U.S.-born African Americans and did not account for ethnic variables that are meaningful when studying AfroLatine/a/os.

One model that specifically pertains to Latine/a/os is Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) study on Latino and Latina racial identity orientation, which details the six ways this population experiences race in the United States. Using a nonlinear approach, Latine/a/os may relate to several orientations or remain in one throughout their life span (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). The stages include (a) Latine/a/o integrated, (b) Latine/a/o identified, (c) subgroup identified, (d) Latine/a/o as other, (e) undifferentiated, and (f) white identified (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Study findings stated Latine/a/os go through a racial negotiation process "based on commonalities, treatment by others, and utilitarian reasons" (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001, p. 38). To reach an understanding of Latine/a/o identity, factors including but not limited to (a) national origin, (b) skin color and physical appearance, (c) gender, (d) socialization, (e) socioeconomic status, (f) language patterns, and (g) acculturation level are significant to racial identity development (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001).

According to Johnston-Guerrero (2016), "Focusing on only racial identity or ethnic identity (or conflating them) fails to capture students' experiences within societies and campuses structured by both racism and ethnocentrism" (p. 52). Hence, these racial and ethnic identity development models would not fit for AfroLatine/a/os. Based on strengths and limitations of these racial and ethnic identity development models, there is still a need to consider both race and ethnicity, especially for people identifying as AfroLatine/a/os. Not including both race *and*

ethnicity in these models displays an oversight that neglects, dismisses, and erases Black identity within Latinidad.

AfroLatine/a/os Navigating “Three-ness”: Racial and Ethnic Identity Development.

This section describes (a) how Latine/a/os have been socialized and indoctrinated by white supremacist ideologies and anti-Blackness, (b) how AfroLatine/a/os navigate U.S. society and discrimination, and (c) how AfroLatine/a/os formulate a consciousness that helps them navigate multiple worlds. First, it is key to understand how Latine/a/os have been socialized and indoctrinated by white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Familial settings and school socialization are two spaces U.S. Latine/a/os learn to internalize racism and perpetuate anti-Blackness. Latine/a/o families informally or overtly socialize youth in ways that perpetuate anti-Blackness by instilling mestiza ideology/identity, sharing societal and historical messages of bettering the race with allegiance to whiteness (e.g., blanqueamiento), using problematic terms of endearment (e.g., negro, moreno, prieto), racializing other Latine/a/os of darker complexion as inferior, and saying racist jokes/racial microaggressions (Cruz-Janzen, 2001; Haywood, 2017b; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Rodriguez, 1974; Telles, 2018; Wade, 1993). Additionally, schools are spaces where whiteness is engrained in students, such as through school curriculums, standards of professionalism, communication, dress codes, and conduct policies (Lynch, 2018). Furthermore, schools foster internalized racism in BIPOC students, which negatively impacts their racial identity development (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Internalized racism causes lowered self-esteem and internalized negative messages that cycle through generations. How Latine/a/os are indoctrinated with white supremacy ideals and anti-Blackness perspectives directly impact how they perpetuate these ideologies on AfroLatine/a/os.

Second, though Latine/a/os can identify with any race, many Latine/a/os of darker skin tone are undoubtedly discriminated against and racialized as nonwhite (Newby & Dowling, 2007). AfroLatine/a/os, in particular, occupy a unique space and share experiences of intragroup colorism, social exclusion, microaggressions, discrimination, and intolerance (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020; Haywood, 2017b). These negative experiences in their communities, society, and schools are due to their darker skin, phenotype, hair texture, and physical features (Cruz-Janzen, 2007; Daché et al., 2019; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Yvette Modestin (2010) detailed her experiences, sharing:

In my quest for inclusion here in the United States, I have learned the negative meaning that is associated with “Blackness.” I have learned that you drop a class rank because of the color of your skin; that the assumptions made of you may weigh more heavily on the negative. . . . I have learned that when I walk into a room full of White people, no matter what my behavior or credentials, I am immediately placed at a disadvantage because of the color of my skin. (p. 419)

AfroLatine/a/os not only have to navigate white supremacist ideologies, racism, and anti-Blackness from a society intent on just labeling them as Black, but also then have to defend their Latine/a/o authenticity in Latine/a/o communities and Blackness within Black/African American communities (Fields, 2020; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; García-Louis, 2018; Haywood, 2017b; Romo, 2011). For example, Romo’s (2011) study on 12 Blaxican individuals in California found participants shared narratives about not being Black enough nor Mexican enough because they did not fit in physically, behaviorally, or culturally.

Third, AfroLatine/a/os actively reject anti-Black sentiments and assert agency by embracing AfroLatinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). By virtue of exclusion and rejection, AfroLatine/a/os formulate a consciousness that helps them navigate multiple worlds. Some

scholars call it Afro-consciousness; some call it triple-consciousness,⁸ or a politicized identity; and still others call it Black-imiento (Daché et al., 2019; Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009; García-Louis, 2016; Salas Pujols, 2020). AfroLatine/as/os defy boundaries of Black and Latine/a/o identities by engaging in ethnoracial dissonance, “a feeling of disidentification with, and from, racial schemas made available to them. More specifically, the inconsistency between an ostensibly colorblind Latine identity and Afro-Latines’ negative experiences of embodied Blackness” (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019, p. 147). The reconciliation of this dissonance, or this “me-search” journey is “fueled with the desire to answer questions about their intersecting identities” (García-Louis, 2020, p. 13).

Through a me-search process or self-discovery journey, AfroLatine/a/os assert agency and resilience to make meaning and reflect upon their Blackness and Latinidad (García-Louis, 2020, 2021). AfroLatine/a/os’ me-search journeys involve undergoing a psychosocial awakening in which they “unlearn colorist, prejudiced, and demeaning messaging about Blackness while simultaneously learning how to embrace their AfroLatinidad” (García-Louis, 2021, p. 101). People identifying as AfroLatine/a/os engage in an identity negotiation process that interrogates and challenges the monolithic prescription of race in the United States, especially within the Black–white binary (García-Louis, 2016; Higgins, 2007; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). In fact, identifying as AfroLatine/a/o, at times viewed as a politicized identity, could help AfroLatine/a/os connect with Black non-Latine peers and strengthen their AfroLatinidad (Salas Pujols, 2020). Ultimately, the development of consciousness is critical if AfroLatine/a/os are to

³ The concept of triple consciousness from Flores and Jiménez Román (2009) stems from W. E. B. Du Bois’s (1903) collection of essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*, where he details double consciousness, a feeling of two-ness: an American and a Negro. Triple consciousness means “one ever feels his [*sic*] three-ness - a Latino, a Negro, an American” (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009, p. 327).

claim the complexities of their identity and survive the discrimination they experience from within Latine/a/o and Black communities and from society in general.

Erasure of AfroLatine/a/o Students in Higher Education

Before the United States' inception, racist ideology justified colonization, stealing land, the genocide of Indigenous populations, and the enslavement of African people (la paperson, 2017). This violence is connected directly to the creation of higher education in the United States and the connection to settler colonialism. The first colleges helped preserve the slave economy through slavery-invested partnerships and are today situated on Indigenous lands (la paperson, 2017; Mustaffa, 2017; Wilder, 2013). Racism and anti-Black oppression in higher education have influenced various disciplines such as anthropology, which have perpetrated the idea of Black inferiority and the study of eugenics (Mustaffa, 2017). In addition, settler colonialism has influenced policies related to education, including 1880s federal Indian policies that aimed to Americanize Indigenous peoples by removing children from their households and placing them in boarding schools (Glenn, 2015). Similar assimilation policies have continued to persist throughout the United States, including a 1956 Indian Relocation Act that incentivized relocation and vocational training. Not surprisingly, racism and anti-Blackness still exist in higher education institutions, which are racialized organizations, or racial structures that “connect organizational rules to social and materials resources” (Ray, 2019, p. 26).

The erasure of AfroLatine/a/o students in higher education is caused by white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and limiting definitions of Latinidad (Garcia Reyes, 2021). AfroLatine/a/o students are rendered invisible by how institutions lack accounting for AfroLatine/a/os in their data. In the 1970s, the U.S. government provided standard classifications for data on race and ethnicity for federal reporting, or “governmental manipulation of ethnic identity” (J. D. Forbes,

1992, p. 59). The U.S. government came up with five racial and ethnic categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, and white (J. D. Forbes, 1992). Ethnicity was defined as “Hispanic origin and not of Hispanic origin; thus, it was limited to the distinction between Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking” (J. D. Forbes, 1992, p. 62). It essentially made the category *Hispanic/Latino* a pan-ethnic group because of the consolidation of communities based on ethnic and national identities (McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004).

In 2010, the U.S. Census added a line that read, “for this Census, Hispanic origins are not races” (Telles, 2018, p. 160). This change to the form forced Latine/a/os to mark “other” or pick from any of the established races listed. This resulted in many Latine/a/os choosing “other” or “white,” which whitened the data and did not reflect the reality and diversity of the Latine/a/o population (Telles, 2018). Both Hispanics in the United States and Latin America have been found to have an implicit preference for light-complexed individuals (Uhlmann et al., 2002). This is a prime example of how the Hispanic construct is anti-Black (Flores & Jiménez Román, 2009). The terminology ignores the vibrant diversity of the Latine/a/o community in such a manner that demographic information on forms, including higher education, rarely accounts for AfroLatine/a/os in educational research. Simply put, Hispanic and Latine/a/o categories used by institutions and society systematically exclude the experiences of AfroLatine/a/os.

The second issue is how institutions aggregate all BIPOC students. Grouping together BIPOC students causes the erasure of within-group differences, views Latine/a/os as a monolithic ethnic group, and ignores the complexity of identity (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020; N. López et al., 2018). By “neglecting to gather Latina/o student subgroup data, institutions have limited knowledge about their actual student demographics” (García-Louis, 2015, p. 23).

Grouping together BIPOC students in data is significant because higher education institutions use demographic data to decide the services they provide to students. As a result, higher education educators, especially practitioners working in multicultural and Latine/a/o centers, cannot make intentional efforts to foster identity development for AfroLatine/a/o students.

The third issue is how educational research compares Latine/a/o and Black students such as by enrollment and graduation rates (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). This comparison results in the erasure of AfroLatine/a/o students because it eliminates the opportunity of being both Black and Latine/a/o, severely impacting their racial and ethnic identity development and understanding of self (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Finally, higher education erases AfroLatine/a/o students by using a deficit approach for BIPOC students, impacting AfroLatine/a/o students. Deficit thinking of BIPOC students stems from initially associating Blackness with inferiority and limited intellectual capabilities (Curran, 2011). In other words, deficit thinking is rooted in white supremacy. Research has been heavily influenced by Eurocentric and western methodological and epistemological approaches, which causes the erasure of AfroLatine/a/o students (L. T. Smith, 2012).

Defining Student Activism, Historical Context, and Developmental Outcomes

In response to local, national, and global issues, student activists have mobilized to demand transformational change in higher education. The literature describes activism as mobilizing others, forming consensus, and actions toward collective liberation and social change (Hamrick, 1998; Linder et al., 2020; Mendes & Chang, 2019). Not surprisingly, identity and social issues motivate activism (Crossley, 2008; Linder et al., 2020; Ruiz-Junco, 2011). Student activists want to transform their local, regional, and national society for the better. This section details a historical overview of activism in U.S. higher education institutions, describes the

differences between traditional and contemporary activism, highlights developmental outcomes student activists gain, and shares how African Americans, Latinx/a/os, and AfroLatine/a/os engage in activism.

History of Activism in U.S. Higher Education

The expression of students' voices through collaboration, mobilization, and advocacy has been a critical purpose of higher education since the colonial colleges (Broadhurst, 2014). In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, student activists rebelled against limiting and restrictive curriculum, living conditions, and doctrines of *in loco parentis* (Burton, 2007; Melear, 2003, Moore, 1976). At Harvard University, where the aim was to educate young and wealthy white men into the ministry, students whose behavior did not align with these principles were severely disciplined (Moore, 1976). These behaviors included dancing, drinking, swearing, and missing worship time (Broadhurst, 2014; Burton, 2007). Students' unfavorable actions and behaviors were considered a severe rebellion against college authorities. In the early 19th century, Princeton University, Brown University, and The College of William and Mary saw violent campus rebellions that demanded change regarding the "disciplinary injustices by the administration and unpopular campus doctrines" (Broadhurst, 2014, p. 4). Students involved in these campus riots were often expelled and labeled troublemakers (Novack, 1977).

Many students were politically inactive in the early 20th century, possibly because of World War I. Particularly noteworthy during this time was the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, which sought to bring about socialism and social reform (Broadhurst, 2014). Then, campus activism shifted to social issues facing U.S. society, like improving the working class, anti-military efforts, and protesting war (Broadhurst, 2014). In the 1930s, student interest in socialism and communism grew (Broadhurst, 2014). In the 1940s and 1950s, campus activism severely

decreased due to World War II and the deployment of U.S. male-identified students (Broadhurst, 2014). In the 1960s, higher education saw an influx of students enrolling. With renewed interest in higher education, students expressed much dissatisfaction about large classroom sizes, decreased opportunities to interact with faculty, lack of student voice on campus governance, and lack of student involvement in campus curriculum building (Broadhurst, 2014). The Civil Rights Movement captured the attention of college students, which resulted in sit-ins, freedom rides, registering Black voters, ending segregation, creating ethnic studies, and promoting equal rights (Bartley, 1995; Broadhurst, 2014; Lawson, 1991; Nguyen & Gasman, 2015). In the 1970s, activism decreased, and volunteerism increased (Rhoads, 2000). A crucial point in campus activism history was the Kent State University, May 4, 1970, shooting. The Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of anti-Vietnam war protesters, resulting in four deaths and the wounding of nine (Lewis & Hensley, 2018). Kent State University faculty marshals pleaded with the National Guard to deescalate the situation and avoid more deaths (Lewis & Hensley, 2018). This tragic event on a college campus led to nationwide student strikes. The 1980s centered around nonviolence and saw an interest in activism around the divestment movement and injustices of apartheid (Altbach & Cohen, 1990; Broadhurst, 2014). The 1990s “centered on issues promoting diversity, group identity, and multiculturalism” (Broadhurst, 2014, p. 11). For example, during the National Week of Action, students at Oregon State University protested the racism they were experiencing on campus (Rhoads, 1998).

In the 21st century, there were parallels between social issues from the past that students advocated for and current social movements. Broadhurst (2014) made an illuminating comparison of the problems of 21st-century student activists to former topics from history. At the University of California, Berkeley, students demanded the administration cut ties with two

companies doing business in the West Bank and Gaza, which echoed the 1980s divestment movement of South Africa during apartheid (Broadhurst, 2014; Hallward & Shaver, 2012). Other contemporary issues student activists have gathered around are working with/for undocumented students and DREAMers, advocating against violence against women and related issues with Title IX, and international issues like the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Rhoads, 2016).

Additionally, student activists are still incorporating similar strategies like marching and writing demands, while using information and communication technologies (ICTs) to expand and share their efforts. The #BlackLivesMatter movement started in 2013 after the murder of Trayvon Martin and is a prime example of organizing efforts that social media have influenced. The #BlackLivesMatter movement, although not a student initiative, has had impacts on college campuses such as University of California, Berkeley, Harvard University, and Dartmouth College (Bohlen, 2014; Dickerson, 2015; Rhoads, 2016; Wen, 2015). Historically, campus activists have been labeled as radicals but it is clear that no matter the issues, strategies, or time in history, student activists are trying to transform the world for the better.

Traditional Versus Contemporary Forms of Activism-Related Behaviors

Throughout the literature, activism has been described in different ways. Activism is mobilizing others, forming consensus, and any intentional act or behavior that moves society toward social change (Hamrick, 1998; Linder et al., 2020; Mendes & Chang, 2019). For this section, I label the different forms of activism-related behaviors as traditional and contemporary. Often, traditional activism is what people see in the media, such as acts that interrupt power and social order through visual forms of disruption like protesting and marching (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2014). Traditional activism-related behaviors include organizing protests or writing demands for institutional leaders to act upon (Kezar, 2010). Traditional activism, in the context

of U.S.-based racism and anti-Blackness, is evident in racial justice movements that address segregation, voting rights, and equitable campus resources through sit-ins, protests, and boycotts (Broadhurst, 2014; Lawson, 1991; Linder et al., 2020; Rhoads, 2016). For example, students across the United States in the 1960s took part in freedom rides to protest segregation (Lawson, 1991).

Although contemporary activism shares similar characteristics with traditional activism, it has expanded to include activism-related behaviors/actions such as existence as resistance, technology, and social media. First, scholars and students have expanded the description of what activism entails to include existence as resistance (Dixson, 2018; G. Logan et al., 2017; Mendes & Chang, 2019; T. J. Stewart & Williams, 2019). Existence as resistance means that “being who you are, living and breathing in your skin, and living in your identities is enough, especially when frequenting spaces that, by design, deny your right to exist” (T. J. Stewart & Williams, 2019, p. 203), such as a student of color attending a predominantly white college campus. Another example of existence as resistance is how undocumented students collect hyperdocumentation, which is seen as not only an agentic act of survival but also a form of silent activism (Mendes & Chang, 2019).

The other critical component of contemporary activism is information and communication technologies (ICT) such as computers, cell phones, text messaging, and social networking sites (Biddix, 2010). ICTs have become a powerful tool to learn, gather information, and challenge issues (Biddix, 2010). ICTs have allowed activists to connect, garner support like worldwide solidarity, and organize like no other time in history (Biddix, 2010). ICTs have also allowed activists to amplify stories of campus racism and embrace citizen journalism (Davis, 2019). However, ICTs have also created what is now called social media activism, hashtag

activism, or slacktivism (Cabrera et al., 2017). Critics of social media activism argue that individuals are not taking intentional time and effort to research an issue, and formulate an opinion, and only mobilize digitally via sharing on social media (Cabrera et al., 2017).

Alternatively, social media activism or hashtag activism, like the #FearTheTurtle⁹ social media movement, enabled students who were already organizing in person to use social media to widen their movement, engaging in counterstorytelling as a strategy, and avoiding violent interactions with authorities (Byrne et al., 2021). ICTs are mainly of interest to BIPOC students because anti-Blackness and racism are reasons for the mislabeling by the media and overpolicing of Black and Brown in-person activism (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Most importantly, contemporary activists use ICTs to enhance activism while incorporating strategies from the past like protests and sit-ins (Biddix et al., 2009; Broadhurst, 2014).

Gaudio (2008) cataloged several observations of contemporary activism. First, contemporary activism is anti-authoritarian, meaning there is no hierarchy or power structure, and multiple histories exist. Second, this type of activism values diversity, promotes social justice, seeks a better world/future, and advocates for marginalized groups to represent and voice their concerns. Third, contemporary activism is prefigurative, meaning that they demand relations, policies, and practices that do not currently exist. Fourth, contemporary activism involves consensus and informed analysis to create change. Another characteristic of contemporary activism emphasizes the “symbolic force of that action” (Gaudio, 2008, p. 184) alongside the physical disruption/action because the message might transcend that one moment

⁹ In Spring 2017, a University of Maryland student fatally stabbed a visiting Black student, Lt. Richard Collins III, which sparked outrage on Twitter and students taking over the university athletics’ hashtag, #FearTheTurtle, to share their experiences with racism on campus (Byrne et al., 2021).

in time. And lastly, it “is about speaking truth to power and confronting and eradicating all forms of oppression” (Gaudio, 2008, p. 185).

Generation Z and Activism

Although this study did not solely focus on Generation Z, the current average age for full- and part-time undergraduate students is 21.8 and 27.2 years old, respectively (Hanson, 2021). In fact, 92.0% of college students are under the age of 24, putting them in the Generation Z category, and their generational characteristics should be considered. Generation Z is described as “digital natives” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 6) who made up a third of the U.S. population in 2020 and are the most diverse generation yet. Generation Z is passionate about world issues and innovative and vocal about social issues. Generation Z has a “strong work ethic similar to Baby Boomers, and the responsibility and resiliency of their Generation X parents, and they may be even more technologically savvy than the Millennials” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 7). Generation Z self-identify as “loyal, thoughtful, compassionate, open-minded, and responsible” (Seemiller & Grace, 2016, p. 8). Along those lines, Generation Z students are civically engaged, including forms of activism such as the students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where a mass shooting occurred in 2018 (Rue, 2018). The students used news and social media to advocate for gun control, coordinated a 17-minute school walkout, and organized a nationwide protest in Washington, DC (Rue, 2018). This generation is filled with well-known Generation Z activists such as Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, and Amariyanna Copeny, who are genuinely seeking to change the world for the better (Biederman et al., 2020; Cohen, 2020).

Identity-Based Activism

Identity-based activism “is organizing, resisting, and engaging with issues directly tied to oppression and identity” (Linder et al., 2020, p. 4), especially oppression and identity related to the individual activist. Examples of identity-based activism include racial justice, disability justice, and LGBT justice activism. Historically, identity-based activism has been influential in creating curricular and cocurricular changes such as women and ethnic studies programs, diversity requirements, and additions of cultural centers and student organizations (Arthur, 2011; Patton, 2010; Rhoads, 2016; D. L. Stewart, 2011). Some of the motivations for identity-based activism include (a) contributing to a larger cause related to their social/personal identities, (b) challenging stereotypes, (c) creating community, (d) responding to oppression experiences, and (e) reacting to local or national events (Linder et al., 2020).

It is concerning that the literature on identity-based activism has been minimal. Studies on student activism often center students with dominant identities (e.g., white, middle- or upper-class, cisgender) or do not reference participants’ racial and ethnic backgrounds. It is a disservice to ignore students whose identities intersect with the oppression they challenge through their activism. For instance, Astin et al.’s (1975) and Rhoads’s (1998) research featured the general student population instead of specific subgroups populations, like BIPOC students, which may have different experiences than white students. Additionally, it is important to consider race in this analysis because the lived experiences of BIPOC students and white students are vastly different. For example, race and other social identities could provide a more comprehensive analysis and findings in research, especially when studying AfroLatine/a/o activists.

Black, Latine/a/o, and AfroLatine/a/o Student Activism. Although AfroLatine/a/os can certainly engage in identity-based activism, they can also be motivated by other social issues

such as environmental justice, labor laws, or sexual assault/violence awareness. Unfortunately, there are no known studies on how AfroLatine/a/o undergraduate students define activism in the United States. Throughout Latin America, AfroLatine/a/os have rejected anti-Black racism for a long time through pro-Black campaigns and social movements (Paschel, 2016). The 1980s were a transformative period in Latin America, specifically in Colombia and Brazil, where Black activists demanded racial and ethnic legislation (Paschel, 2016). The legislation included acknowledgments of Indigenous and Black populations and several positive reforms on equitable land, health, education, and development policies (Paschel, 2016). Research on AfroLatin American activism has shed light on movements in Cuba and Brazil. AfroCuban social movements rallied to “denounce racism and racial inequality and demand more education and economic opportunities” (Johnson, 2012, p. 309). AfroCubans and AfroBrazilians, viewed their “activism as part of a national and transnational human rights struggle” (Johnson, 2012, p. 310). As a result, government initiatives, legislation, and public policy have improved, such as (a) the creation of affirmative action in Brazil with the educational and labor sectors, (b) Black councils of government agencies, and (c) the mandatory teaching in schools of African and AfroBrazilian history/culture (Johnson, 2012). Additionally, Fusté’s (2012) dissertation highlighted three Afrodescendiente journalists and literary authors: Rafael Serra, Tomás Carrión Maduro, and Luis Felipe Dessus, all “activist leaders who were active in various anti-colonial movements and political parties in Puerto Rico and Cuba between the 1890s and the 1910s” (p. 9). This historical narrative examined how Afrodescendientes activists engaged with and attempted to rearticulate ideas of race and nationhood. AfroLatinidad is an “internally contested, historically situated identity” (Fusté, 2012, p. 240) and these activists achieved reframing traditional/Eurocentric notions of nationhood.

Black students in the United States have a long history of activism, fighting for equal rights, and facing violence at times in response to their activism (Mustaffa, 2017). Black students have advocated against anti-Black campus climates, fought for civil rights, preached Black power ideals, registered Black voters, challenged segregation, and promoted equal rights (Bartley, 1995; Broadhurst, 2014; Lawson, 1991; Solórzano et al., 2000). For example, Black students at South Carolina State University protested institutional racism and segregation in 1968 (Biondi, 2012). These Black students exercised their free speech and right to protest and faced violence by authorities firing live ammunition into their demonstration, resulting in the killing of three Black students (Biondi, 2012). Similar instances have occurred on the campuses of Kent State University, Jackson State College, and University of California, Los Angeles (Astin et al., 1997; Kendi, 2012; Lewis & Hensley, 2018). Various themes are present in Black social movements like wanting to take control of their communities, equal rights, Black power, and rejecting white cultural values. More recently, in 2020, Black student activism was fueled by the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (Weissman, 2020). Black student activists advocated for police reform, renaming campus buildings, enhanced faculty diversity training, and addressing the overwhelming impact the COVID-19 global pandemic has had on communities of color (Weissman, 2020).

Latine/a/o students have fought for quality education, specifically a more inclusive and diverse curriculum, equitable access, and eradication of hostile campus environments (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Hernandez, 2013; Revilla, 2004). These studies spanned from the Chicano blowouts/school strikes in 1968 to Latino rallies and cultural awareness events at Indiana University in the 1990s to nationwide Raza womyn movements. For example, the Chicano blowouts were demanding bilingual and bicultural training for teachers, dismantling tracking

based on standardized tests, and improving the physical facilities of their schools (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Latine/a/o students have rallied against campus discrimination, cultural insensitivity, racism, classism, and sexism (Hernandez, 2013; Revilla, 2004). Additional issues impacting Latine/a/o students are immigration and citizenship, anti-Blackness/racism, white supremacy, and homophobia (Hope et al., 2016; Revilla, 2004; Santillana, 2011). For example, Hope et al.'s (2016) study of Black and Latino college students measured political activism using the Youth Involvement Inventory, which centers on activism and racial justice. Findings indicated that people heavily involved in organizing in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals were more likely to be politically active (Hope et al., 2016). Another example is Santillana's (2011) thesis study, which analyzed nine queer Latina/o and Chicana/o student activists involved in Jotería activism and consciousness at University of California, Los Angeles. Experiences with homophobia, patriarchal structures, and white supremacy were significant motivators for their activism (Santillana, 2011).

AfroLatine/a/os have been and continue to be part of social movements in the United States and Latin America. For example, Hordge-Freeman and Loblack (2021) studied 115 AfroLatine/a/o participants in Florida and their relationship between AfroLatine/a/os' identity formation and participation in the BLM movement. Hordge-Freeman and Loblack (2021) aimed to examine how these AfroLatine/a/o participants connected the antiracist movement to their own lives. All AfroLatine/a/o participants in this study displayed a high level of Black racial consciousness and most shared support for movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, but not all necessarily participated (Hordge-Freeman & Loblack, 2021). The participants' reasons for supporting #BlackLivesMatter differed. People "who most explicitly convey their diasporic consciousness with assertive phrases such as 'we are Black' and 'we are just Black people in

different locations,' these respondents justify their support for BLM to reaffirm their racial identities" (Hordge-Freeman & Loblack, 2021, p. 530). Although participants were aware of ethnic differences in the movement, the collective Black experience was more significant to them.

Based on Black and Latine/a/o student activism literature, I have formulated how AfroLatine/a/o students could define and engage in activism. AfroLatine/a/o student activism could be motivated by their race, phenotype, national social issues, and anti-Blackness in U.S. society and Latinidad. AfroLatine/a/o student activists are resilient, intellectually curious about their identity, and have tremendous agency and critical consciousness. Based on their intersectional identities and positionality, they can build connections between Black and Latine/a/o social movements to form greater solidarity and collective action. Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to support AfroLatine/a/o students as they engage in developmental learning opportunities like activism. Understanding the developmental outcomes that arise from activism and connecting it to identity development can be an important step.

Developmental Outcomes from Activism

This section describes the literature on the developmental outcomes from participation in activism. I categorize these developmental outcomes into four areas: intrinsic, academic, social and community oriented, and career outcomes. Intrinsic outcomes reflect the skills student activists gain in self-awareness, and academic outcomes include strengths and skills student activists gained relating to their academic success. Social and community-oriented outcomes consist of student activists' skills and strengths in engaging with others and impacting change. Career outcomes describe student activists' professional skills and strengths directly tied to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career readiness competencies.

Intrinsic Outcomes. Student activists may gain several intrinsic outcomes through their activism experiences. Intrinsic outcomes include self-reflection and awareness and expression, sense of belonging, self-efficacy, integrity, and resilience (Harré, 2007; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Nguyen & Gasman, 2015; Taines, 2012; Winston, 2013). Linder and Rodriguez (2012) found that self-identified women of color activists could reflect and bring awareness to what led them to activism, how they experienced marginalization, and the importance of needing safe spaces. Furthermore, DREAMers self-represent and express themselves by organizing and self-labeling as DREAMers, becoming living counternarratives (Anguiano, 2011). Activism provides a space for students to find shared histories and hopefulness and even critical navigation of predominantly white spaces without assimilating (Harré, 2007; Nguyen & Gasman, 2015; Taines, 2012).

Academic Outcomes. Student activism is an invaluable learning opportunity, and some academic outcomes result from this experience. The literature has described how student activism leads to academic achievement, leadership development, and planning/motivation for advanced degrees (Astin et al., 1975; Perez et al., 2009). Renn's (2007) qualitative study of LGBT student leaders and queer activists found that students' narratives of being part of the LGBT group influenced their future political aspirations, graduate education choices, career goals, and engagement in community development. This study also showed how participation in activism influenced students' majors to align with their activism and identities, increasing their motivation to do well academically (Renn, 2007). Although participating in activism provides many academic outcomes, there could be some negative academic performance/grades, dropping classes, and extreme stress (Linder et al., 2019; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011).

Social and Community Oriented Outcomes. Through collective action, student activists learn valuable skills like civic learning or political and social consciousness, leadership, and networking (Astin, 1975; Biddix, 2014; Biddix et al., 2009; Corrunker, 2012; Hamrick, 1998; Revilla, 2004). Leadership as a developmental outcome of student activism has been at the center of several research studies (Astin, 1975; Biddix, 2014; Kezar, 2010). Kezar and Maxey (2014) noted that when students partner with faculty and staff to take collective action toward student development and democratic engagement, they can learn how to strategize and organize better, navigate political scenarios, develop critical consciousness, and develop mediation skills. Moreover, Revilla (2004) conducted a 5-year longitudinal study of Latina members of an undergraduate student organization called Raza Womyn. By engaging in Raza Womyn, these undergraduate student activists gained political and social consciousness through what Revilla (2004) called *Muxerista pedagogy*. Muxerista pedagogy is grounded in Chicana/Latina feminist theory and activism. It includes dialogue, reflection, friendship building, commitment to social change, rejection of patriarchal and heteronormative forms of power, and building knowledge production, to name a few (Revilla, 2004).

Career Outcomes. According to NACE (n.d.), career readiness is “a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college-educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management” (para. 1). Career readiness consists of eight competencies: career and self-development, communication, critical thinking, diversity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, teamwork, and technology (NACE, n.d.). Researchers have used the NACE competencies to study federal work–study students’ career readiness (Akos et al., 2021) and connect student employment and leadership development, to name a few (Peck & Callahan, 2019). For this literature review, I use the NACE competencies to categorize the

career outcomes students benefit from when engaging in activism, namely critical consciousness, critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork, leadership, social responsibility/agency, and radical hope, which is associated with diversity and inclusion (Astin, 1993; Biddix, 2014; George Mwangi et al., 2019; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007; Ollis, 2011; Quaye, 2007; Tsui, 2000).

Critical consciousness and critical thinking are two career readiness outcomes associated with involvement with student activism. Student activism provides a space for students to teach, learn, and develop intersectional consciousness and promote self-awareness (George Mwangi et al., 2019). For example, George Mwangi et al. (2019) explored how “Black immigrant college students in PWI environments learn, develop, and situate themselves within issues of race, racism, and race-based activism in the U.S.” (p. 402). The scholars created a conceptual framework of critical consciousness based on five stages of sociopolitical development to analyze how college experiences foster consciousness and involvement in race-based activism. In reflecting upon their critical consciousness, participants witnessed how these issues are structural and institutionalized (George Mwangi et al., 2019). When institutions foster a strong sense of social and political awareness in students, they develop necessary critical-thinking skills, leading to a rise in student activism (Tsui, 2000).

Communication skills and teamwork are two fundamental skills needed in academia and the workforce (NACE, n.d.). In a study involving circumstantial activists and life-long activists, the researchers found activism strengthened activists’ communication skills, such as improvement in public speaking, argument and persuasion strategies, and media use (Ollis, 2011). This study concluded that “both groups of activists’ learning is critically cognitive, driven by the emotions, and is both social and informal” (Ollis, 2011, p. 252). Teamwork was another developmental outcome that youth activists gained (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007). Morsillo

and Prilleltensky (2007) studied “two interventions designed to encourage community action with youth in a school and a community service setting” (p. 725). By using participatory action research, both groups were tasked to create a community wellness series. Youth participants gained self-expression, teamwork, and assertiveness skills (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007). Student activists can also create bonds because of their shared history and activism (Harré, 2007).

It is critical to acknowledge student activism as a form of leadership. Researchers have called for administrators to reimagine leadership to entail activism behavior and thought (Astin, 1993; Chambers & Phelps, 1993; Kezar, 2010; Linder et al., 2019). For students who “garnered information on community, national, or global issues, it is clear that the process of paying attention to these issues positively contributed to their capacity for socially responsible leadership” (Page, 2010, p. 113). Thus, there is a need to redefine activism in a leadership context.

In addition to leadership, diversity and inclusion are also outcomes that student activists gain. Activists gain critical hope, associated with “three learning outcomes that are valued in higher education: appreciation of differences, cultivation of students’ voices, and connection to global society” (Quaye, 2007, p. 3). Quaye (2007) shared three cases that exemplify these learning outcomes: (a) Raza Womyn de UCLA engaging in the appreciation of differences through storytelling and creating ties across cultural diversity, (b) Pakistani students boldly cultivating each other’s voices to highlight their “dissatisfaction with politics in their country and uncertainty about their future,” (p. 5) and (c) Harvard students organizing and implementing a 3-week sit-in on campus to shed light on the inequitable pay of predominantly immigrant nonfaculty workers. Sit-ins like the one at Harvard University fueled similar actions worldwide,

including in Japan, South Africa, Israel, and Sweden, demonstrating the interconnectedness and reach of their plight, values, and goals globally (Quaye, 2007). And lastly, students who engage in activism are more likely to participate in ethnic studies courses, dialogues around race or ethnicity, and engagement with diverse peers (Astin, 1993).

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of my study was to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogated the relationship between these two identities. Based on the literature on AfroLatinidad, the racialization and lived experiences of AfroLatine/a/os, and activism, this conceptual framework centers Blackness in the context of AfroLatine/a/o student activists. It is more important than ever to study AfroLatine/a/o student activists because of the current state of racial injustice, greater interest in collective action toward social change, increased interest in learning outcomes from activism, and the increasingly diverse college campuses and general U.S. society.

Three theories guided this conceptual framework and the lens I used to understand the heightened knowledge and critical reflection of AfroLatine/a/o student activists: (a) Latino critical race theory (LatCrit), (b) Daché et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento, and (c) Freire's (1970a) conscientization. This conceptual framework provided a lens to understand the experiences of AfroLatine/a/o student activists in a way that highlighted their embraced Blackness via the use of Black-imiento, heightened knowledge via critical consciousness, critical action via critical consciousness, and everyday lived experience via LatCrit.

LatCrit

LatCrit stems from the foundational scholarship of critical race theory (CRT) in the legal sector (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Matsuda, 1991) and the broad literature of

critical theory (Fay, 1987; Tierney, 1993). Latine/a/o critical scholars have used critical theory to study Latine/a/os and storytelling/counterstorytelling, intersectionality, gender discrimination, immigration and citizenship, educational issues, and Latino/a stereotypes (Acuña, 1996; Córdova et al., 1993; San Juan, 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). CRT considers the role of racism in U.S. law and attempts to eliminate it (Matsuda, 1991). CRT was then adapted into the educational research field (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tate, 1994).

CRT in education consists of five tenets and (a) acknowledges race is a central part of U.S. society, (b) challenges dominant ideology, (c) aligns with social justice, (d) validates the experiential knowledge of BIPOC students, and (e) uses a transdisciplinary perspective (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1994). LatCrit has emerged as a crucial concept to understand the lived experiences and realities of Latine/a/o people with racism, sexism, colonialism, immigration, and classism (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Pérez Huber, 2010; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Although the social categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality are social constructs, they have real-life effects on people in U.S. society, which merit further investigation. LatCrit also acknowledges the role of immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, skin tone, national origin, and accent have on Latine/a/os (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). I have come across no studies that used LatCrit to study AfroLatine/a/os. However, Busey (2017) used Black critical theory to examine how AfroLatine/a/os were portrayed in U.S. world history textbooks. Busey uniquely used Black critical theory to highlight the fluidity of race and Blackness in Latinidad to make meaning of this complex lived experience.

Conscientization (Critical Consciousness)

Critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, is rooted in Freire's (1970b) seminal work with marginalized Brazilians facing poverty. Freire (1974/2005) believed that once marginalized Brazilians understood the inequities and oppressive structures they were facing, they could begin to resist and demand change regarding their circumstances. Scholars have identified three components of critical consciousness: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Watts et al., 2011). Critical reflection acknowledges that individuals are active participants in transforming the world by understanding oppressive structures and their own lived realities in those oppressive structures (Freire, 1970a). Political efficacy emphasizes that individuals and collectives have the power to change their conditions via activism (Watts et al., 2011). And lastly, critical action "occurs when individuals actively seek to change their unjust conditions through policy reform, practices, or programs" (Christens et al., 2016, p. 17). Individuals can understand and acknowledge their social, political, and economic circumstances by building their consciousness and taking action (Freire, 1970b).

Critical consciousness brings together critical theory, a philosophy of education, pedagogy, and social change (Watts et al., 2011). Researchers have connected critical consciousness to activism (Bañales et al., 2020; Chovanec & Lange, 2007; Diemer & Blustein, 2006; George Mwangi et al., 2019; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011). In higher education, George Mwangi et al.'s (2019) study on Black immigrant college students found institutions that engaged students on race and racism resulted in increased critical consciousness and race-based activism. Thus, institutions have extraordinary potential to reject anti-Blackness and racism and intentionally develop AfroLatine/a/o student activists by providing supportive opportunities for them to reflect on their leadership and identities. Mathews et al.'s (2020) study

sought to find connections between adolescents' ethnic-racial identity and critical consciousness. The researchers concluded (a) critical reflection may be a result of ethnic- and race-based experiences and ethnic and racial identity exploration, (b) individuals with a greater sense of ethnic and racial identity could lead to increased critical action, and (c) there is a link between one's positive feeling toward their ethnic and racial group and engagement in political efficacy (Mathews et al., 2020).

Black-imiento Theory

Black-imiento stems from the scholarship of three AfroLatina scholars who used life notes to share narratives of their Black and Latina racialized identities. The tenets of Black-imiento are “(a) Black anti-racist aesthetics’ (b) Afro-Latinx/a/o historical consciousness, and (c) the rejection of a racialized pan-ethnic Latinx label” (Daché et al., 2019, p. 139). The first tenet advocates for the authenticity of AfroLatine/a/os by challenging Eurocentric beauty ideals that alter the Black body. This tenet sheds light on internalized racism that exists and can be overcome by AfroLatine/a/os (Daché et al., 2019). The second tenet of Black-imiento is AfroLatine/a/o historical consciousness, which requires one to engage with the work of “Black intellectuals directly and reclaims the history and resistance of our ancestors” (Daché et al., 2019, p. 140). The recognition of AfroLatine/a/o history allows individuals to acknowledge the United States’ current colonial and racial conditions (Daché et al., 2019). The third tenet of Black-imiento is rejecting a pan-ethnic racialized Latine/a/o label. The Latine/a/o pan-ethnic label “conceals the tensions, inequities, and injustices in our midst, contributing to a conceptual ambiance that legitimizes the absence of Black and Indian faces and voices from Latino fora” (Torres-Saillant, 2002, p. 444). Black-imiento requires individuals to call out white supremacy and how the United States racializes and homogenizes race and ethnicity (Daché et al., 2019). In

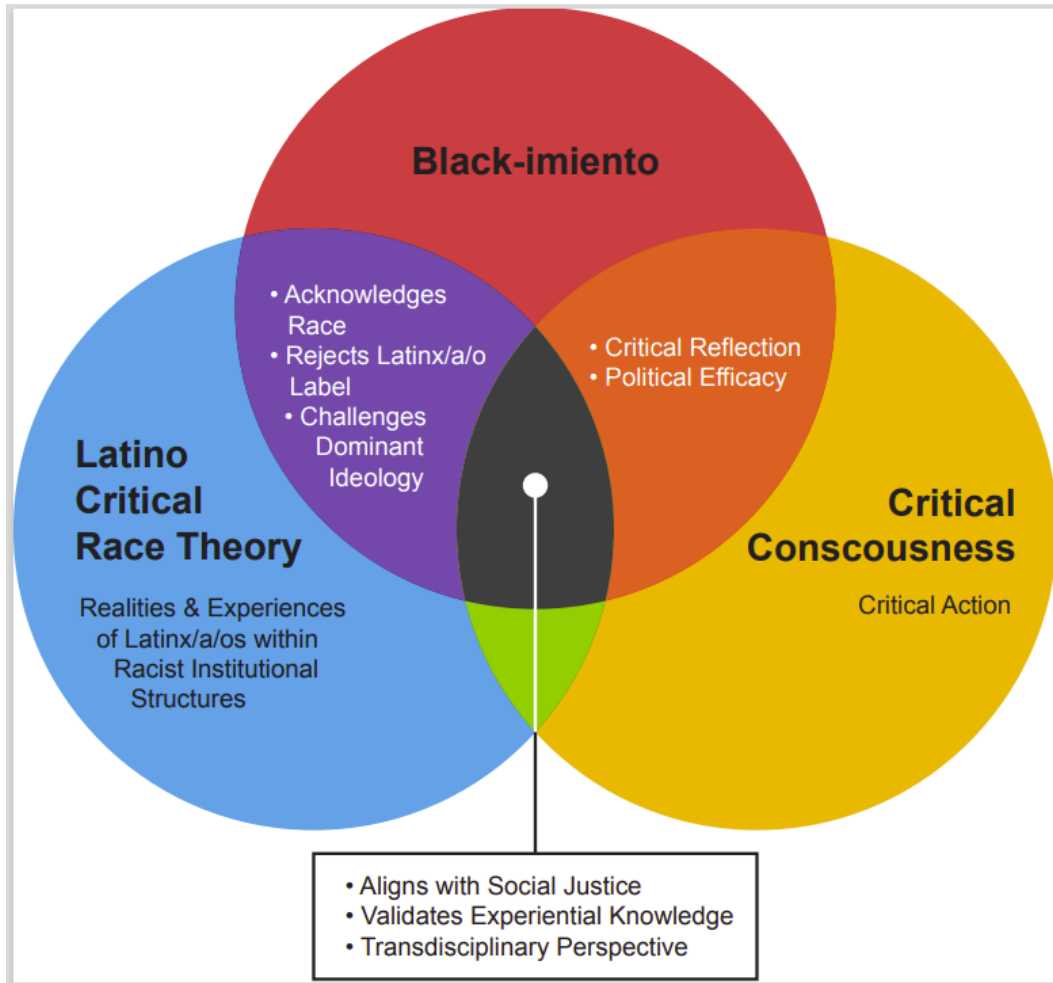
this tenet, individuals must “reject the collapsing of Latinx ethnicity alone, without the nuance of how U.S. Black–White binaries position AfroLatine/a/os as Black based on phenotype” (Daché et al., 2019, p. 140). Due to how recent Black-imiento was created, not many studies have adapted or used this theory yet. One example is García Reyes’s (2021) analysis of the literature, where they used Black-imiento as a theoretical lens to synthesize the literature on AfroLatine/a/os. The author used Black-imiento to reject anti-Blackness and center AfroLatine/a/o students (García Reyes, 2021).

Conceptual Framework: Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Student Activists’ Critical Consciousness

To explore how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualize AfroLatinidad and activism and the relationship between these two identities, this conceptual framework brings together (a) LatCrit, (b) Daché et al.’s (2019) Black-imiento, and (c) Freire’s (1970a) conscientization. The conceptual framework was developed by integrating critical components of each theory that were relevant to my proposed study (see Figure 1). LatCrit, Black-imiento, and critical consciousness theories align with social justice, validate experiential knowledge, and take a transdisciplinary approach (Daché et al., 2019; Freire, 1970a; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The center of this framework helped guide this study in determining the values I should hold as I research AfroLatine/a/o student activists. The center of this framework guided my methodology, research design, and interview protocol. Specifically, the center of this framework impacted (a) how I organized the setting for the pláticas, (b) the views I had that framed my positionality, and (c) how I connected the framework to the interview questions and purpose of this study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



LatCrit is necessary for this framework because it acknowledges the factors specific to Latine/a/os, such as immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, skin tone, and accent that are situated in larger racist institutional structures that perpetuate oppression and inequity (LatCrit Inc., 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These factors are essential because they are distinctive to the Latine/a/o experience in the U.S context. Additionally, critical consciousness uniquely captures the process in which AfroLatine/a/o student activists critically reflect and become aware of the inequities in their lives and then act through activism to create change, for example. The literature describes activism as mobilizing

others, forming consensus, and leading toward collective liberation and social change (Hamrick, 1998; Linder et al., 2020; Mendes & Chang, 2019). Not surprisingly, identity and social issues motivate activism, referred to as *identity-based activism* (Crossley, 2008; Linder et al., 2020; Ruiz-Junco, 2011). This conceptual framework considers the unique experiences and knowledge of AfroLatine/a/os while also being attentive to the collective and critical action of people identifying as AfroLatine/a/o student activists.

Furthermore, Black-imiento serves to connect LatCrit and critical consciousness in this conceptual framework. Black-imiento and LatCrit capture the importance of recognizing that race is interwoven in U.S. society and culture, and scholars must reject a pan-ethnic label such as Latine/a/o (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black-imiento and LatCrit challenge dominant white culture and ideologies, similarly to AfroLatine/a/os who reject the Latine/a/o label and anti-Blackness (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In addition, Black-imiento and critical consciousness incorporate critical reflection. AfroLatine/a/os critically and actively engage in reflection, learning, and unlearning to reject anti-Blackness and assert agency in embracing their AfroLatinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Critical reflection also highlights how AfroLatine/a/os root themselves in history and interrogate their own internalized racism (Daché et al., 2019). Black-imiento and critical consciousness can also explain the political efficacy of AfroLatine/a/os (Daché et al., 2019; Freire, 1970a). Because AfroLatine/a/os actively reject white supremacy and embrace AfroLatinidad and Afro-consciousness, some could say that this decision is political (García-Louis, 2016). This conceptual framework captures Blackness, agency, self-awareness, and resistance that AfroLatine/a/o student activists possess.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework Summary

Based on the increased Latine/a/o population in the United States, this study attempted to better understand a subset population in the complex and diverse Latine/a/o community. By focusing this study on AfroLatine/a/o student activists, I hoped to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism and (b) interrogated the relationship between these two identities. This research was intended to challenge practitioners and faculty to consider ways to better support, develop, retain, and research AfroLatine/a/o student activists. By centering racial and ethnic identity development in initiatives, making intentional efforts to understand the complexity of AfroLatinidad, and including activism as a valuable leadership and learning opportunity, practitioners can support AfroLatine/a/o student activists from a social justice perspective.

This literature review focused on two areas: AfroLatinidad and activism. First, I highlighted AfroLatine/a/os in the Americas in a historical context, including the impacts of race-making. I shared the many meanings of AfroLatinidad in the literature. I delved into ethnic and racial identity development models with a particular interest in the unique experiences and racial and ethnic identity development of AfroLatine/a/os. I demonstrated the connections between anti-Blackness, racism, and the erasure of AfroLatine/a/o students in higher education. Afterward, I cataloged how scholars have defined student activism; provided a historical overview of activism in U.S. higher education institutions; described the differences between traditional and contemporary activism; highlighted developmental outcomes student activists gain; and shared how African Americans, Latine/a/os, and AfroLatine/a/os engaged in activism.

This chapter concluded with a conceptual framework that guided the ways I (a) explored how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism and (b)

interrogated the relationship between these two identities. I hope this study motivates scholars and practitioners to center the narratives of AfroLatine/a/o student activists and explore how their experiences and social identities influence their identity development and activism. The agency and critical consciousness AfroLatine/a/o student activists possess allows the collaborators in this study to reflect on their socialization, AfroLatinidad identity, activism experiences, motivation, and the relationship between their racial and ethnic identity and activism.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism and (b) interrogated the relationship between these two identities. The following research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1: What racial ideologies are present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad?
- Research Question 2: How do AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their activism?
- Research Question 3: What, if at all, is the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/os and their activism?

Overview of Methodology

This chapter details the qualitative methodological approach I used for this study, namely plática methodology. In this study, plática methodology allowed for cocreating knowledge, validating Latine/a/o lived experiences, fostering healing and vulnerability, and incorporating life experiences as an avenue to bring about change through critical consciousness and community building (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores Carmona et al., 2021; F. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013; Valle & Mendoza, 1978). I was intentional about using plática methodology because it is an assets-based methodological approach that is culturally appropriate to understanding the experiences of Latine/a/o communities in general and AfroLatine/a/o communities by extension (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Valle & Mendoza, 1978). I also chose plática methodology because I wanted to foster a sense of meaning making and knowledge creation among participants to theorize about their lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). I refer to participants as *collaborators* to highlight their integral role in knowledge creation and theorizing. The term *collaborator* signals the agency and value that these individuals had in sharing their experiences and knowledge. This chapter details the research

methods, including collaborator description, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. I also share ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and my positionality statement.

Plática, as methodology and method, emerged as a culturally relevant way to study and theorize about the lived experiences of Latine/a/os (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Valle & Mendoza, 1978). Plática as methodology and method interrogates white, western, and positivist ways of conducting research in a way that places participants in the center as collaborators and knowledge creators (Delgado Bernal & Elenes, 2011; González Ybarra, 2018). Pláticas have also been described as a form of resistance, in which scholars strengthen their research by incorporating their authentic selves and positionalities to challenge the academy and their traditional/valued western ways of knowledge creation (G. Reyes et al., 2021). Pláticas also “constitute a method that recognizes and values familial and cultural knowledge, and platicando becomes the process of drawing on that knowledge and making meaning across experiences” (González Ybarra, 2018, p. 511). Plática methodology and method have been used to study Latinas’ trauma, coalition-building among womyn of color faculty/educators, Chicana college choice processes, Mexican identity development, and resistance displayed among Latine/a/o undocumented youth (de la Torre, 2008; Espino & Croom, 2022; Garcia & Mireles-Rios, 2020; González, 1998; G. Reyes et al., 2021).

Principles of Plática Methodology

Pláticas are a “collaborative process consisting of sharing stories, building community, and acknowledging multiple realities and vulnerabilities to enforce strong bonds among the members of that social network” (Burciaga & Tavares, 2006, p. 805). The five principles in plática methodology include (a) centering Chicana/Latina feminist theory; (b) valuing collaborators as knowledge creators; (c) viewing research as relational and grounded in everyday

lived experiences; (d) offering potential space for healing; and (e) centering reciprocity, vulnerability, and researcher reflexivity (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The first principle states that plática methodology has foundations in Chicana/Latina feminist theory, which critically centers the voices and experiences of marginalized individuals and sheds light on how structural and societal oppression affects those individuals. The second principle details how participants should be reimagined as collaborators and coconstructors when making meaning of their lived experiences. The third principle notes that contextual and environmental factors matter in the research process, including family, language, sex, and gender (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The fourth principle indicates that pláticas are heartfelt conversations that provide spiritual service, healing opportunities, or space for reflection (Avila, 1999). And lastly, the fifth principle describes a two-way conversation that allows both researcher and collaborators to build trust and vulnerability in the interaction (Avila, 1999; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Through pláticas, researchers and collaborators create new knowledge and care to understand “the unheard, the unthought, the unspoken” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 101). The unheard in this study refers to the AfroLatine/a/o community, which has been rendered invisible in data, research, and under the pan-ethnic Latine/a/o and Hispanic categories.

Pláticas as Method

Pláticas occur both informally and formally, and one-on-one or in community settings (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Pláticas occur informally like in a “family gathering reminiscent of our Latinx home cultures, there are overlapping voices, joking, laughter, food, and family” (G. Reyes et al., 2021, p. 288). Pláticas can offer an avenue for physical and spiritual healing and joy through reciprocal dialogic exchanges that foster trust and relationship building (de la Torre, 2008; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018; G. Reyes et al.,

2021). Through pláticas, cuentos, chismes, charlas, regaños, and consejos are shared (de la Torre, 2008; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018; M. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2007). Pláticas sometimes “result in arguments, crying, laughing- but always in something learned” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 98).

Pláticas have also been used in formal settings as a more culturally appropriate manner of interacting, engaging, and researching Latine/a/o people because it incorporates cultural aspects into the interview process (Valle & Mendoza, 1978). Cultural formalities in plática methodology procedures include (a) la entrada, which is the part of the conversation that discusses the relationship between the researcher and collaborator; (b) an amistad interview, which includes formal and informal communication in the interview; and (c) la despedida, which is a gesture of appreciation by both parties (Valle & Mendoza, 1978). Valle (1982) broadened plática as a social mapping technique that assisted health promoters in expanding networks and community through confianza building. Valle continued this work with Bensussen in 1985, when they identified a social network paradigm for the plática process that described socially supportive outcomes where the researcher and collaborator build rapport (Valle & Bensussen, 1985). Valle and Bensussen (1985) argued that pláticas are “crucial to developing Hispanic social network intimacy and cohesion” (p. 154) to foster social support and mental health.

Aligning Plática Methodology and Conceptual Framework: Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Activists’ Critical Consciousness

Plática methodology and my conceptual framework (i.e., Latino critical race theory [LatCrit], Black-imiento, and conscientization) complement one another because they center the heighten knowledge of AfroLatine/a/o activists, Blackness in Latinidad, and the lived experiences of AfroLatine/as/os. I connected my conceptual framework and plática methodology

in the several ways. First, both connected through a critical paradigm and under the umbrella of critical methodology. My conceptual framework and plática methodology challenge Eurocentric and western ways of thinking and knowing and place the collaborators at the center of the research process as they theorize and critically reflect on their own lived experiences through pláticas (Daché et al., 2019; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Freire, 1970a). Together, plática methodology and my conceptual framework allowed collaborators from marginalized identities to share their own stories, reject dominant narratives, and share ownership in knowledge creation through pláticas (Delgado, 1995; LatCrit Primer, 2001; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Second, my conceptual framework was crucial in the formation of the pláticas in this study. I was intentional about Blackness in Latinidad being at the forefront of this study in a way that validated AfroLatine/a/o activists' critical consciousness (Daché et al., 2019; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Freire, 1970a). Aligning my conceptual framework with plática methodology allowed me to understand how AfroLatine/a/os observe, know, and understand their lived experiences, racial ideologies, and the social injustices in world around them. And lastly, both had the possibility to foster a space for healing in a way that promotes joy, unlearning, and critical reflection (Daché et al., 2019; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Freire, 1970a; García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). This is essential for AfroLatine/a/os as they go through their me-search and critical reflection journeys (García-Louis, 2020).

Research Methods

In this section, I share the research methods that guided this study. I begin with the study's criteria followed by sampling and recruitment strategies. This section concludes with a description of the site for this study.

Study Criteria

I sought 10–15 collaborators who currently attended, attended but did not graduate, or graduated from either a 2- or 4-year accredited higher education institution in the United States. I chose to expand my study to not only include current students, but also students who attended but did not graduate or graduated from a higher education institution because part of this study sought to explore the impacts on AfroLatinidad and activist identities, even beyond college.

The collaborators must have identified as AfroLatine/a/o or a variation of this term, such as AfroDominican, at the time of this study. People from the African diaspora in Latin America, Central America, and the Caribbean who were presently living in the United States were included in this study as AfroLatine/a/os. This study followed Torres-Saillant's (2007) understanding of AfroLatinidad, which "combines Blackness (Afro), as a racial designation that stretches across numerous ethnicities, and Hispanicity (Latine/a/o), as an ethnic category that encompasses multiple races" (p. 363). Therefore, AfroLatine/a/os are ethnically Latine and racially Black and have visible or self-identified African ancestry (Daché et al., 2019; Haywood, 2017b; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020; Vega et al., 2012).

Collaborators must have self-identified as activists, which was defined as mobilizing others, forming consensus, or moving toward collective liberation and social change (Hamrick, 1998; Linder et al., 2020; Mendes & Chang, 2019). Collaborators must have engaged in traditional activism (e.g., organizing protests, writing demands) and/or in contemporary activism (e.g., existence as resistance, leveraging of information and communication technologies [ICTs], signing online petitions) whether on campus or in the community (Biddix, 2010; G. Logan et al., 2017; Mendes & Chang, 2019; T. J. Stewart & Williams, 2019). Activists who engaged in any

type of social issues (e.g., racial justice, police reform, women's rights, education access and equity) were welcomed.

Sampling and Recruitment

The first recruitment flyers (see Appendix A) included a QR code linked to a survey (see Appendix B) via my University of Maryland account using the Qualtrics platform. The survey served as a contact log and verified that potential collaborators met the study's criteria. Additionally, the survey provided me with the big picture on AfroLatine/a/o activism across the United States. Once a potential collaborator submitted a survey response, I verified that they met the criteria, and emailed them a formal invitation to participate in Part 2 of my study (see Appendix C) alongside an electronic consent form (see Appendix D). I believe that student activists are often doing the work of administrators and faculty; therefore, providing compensation for their time was essential. After each plática, I compensated collaborators with \$20 per data collection method completed, which was a possible total of \$40 for their time, even if they chose to withdraw from the study at any point.

In this study, I used both criterion and snowball sampling (Terrell, 2016). I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in July of 2022. Afterward, I shared my recruitment flyer and criteria widely across social media networks like Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Aside from sharing on social media, I direct messaged over 500 accounts of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) student organizations; Latine or AfroLatine/a/o affiliated clubs/ community organizations; and fraternities and sororities. I was also intentional about emailing historically African American (i.e., Black) and Latine/a/o fraternity and sorority listservs. Through my social and professional networks, I identified one undergraduate AfroLatine/a/o student activist, and this collaborator helped me recruit one more collaborator

who was also an undergraduate student. During the recruitment process, I strategically emailed (see Appendix E) an estimated 125 gatekeepers at various higher education institutions (e.g., New York University, Columbia University, Pratt Institute, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University of Connecticut, Princeton University, University at Albany) and community organizations (e.g., Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,¹⁰ League of United Latin American Citizens) in the tri-state region that includes New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

My original intent was to focus on undergraduate students in the northeast region of the U.S. where there are large populations of AfroLatine/a/os. After 2 months of recruiting, I had over 35 potential participants in the study, but many were not current undergraduate students and few undergraduate students for responded to my invitation to participate in Part 2 of my study (i.e., one-on-one plática and community plática). I then submitted an amendment, through IRB, to extend my study to include AfroLatine/a/o activists who currently attended, attended but did not graduate, or graduated with an undergraduate degree from a 2- or 4-year college or university. Because one of my goals was to understand AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities in and beyond college, I changed the criteria. In addition, this amendment allowed me to expand my study to include individuals around the entire United States and not just the tri-state region as initially proposed. After I received IRB approval for this amendment, I revised my recruitment flyer (see Appendix F) and continued both criterion and snowball sampling. I also emailed the survey participants who responded from the first round of recruitment and met the new criteria for Part 2 to see if they were interested (see Appendix G). This amendment also allowed me to expand my study's criteria and invite many of the survey participants to engage in Part 2 of my

10 The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, New York is “a world-leading cultural institution devoted to the research, preservation, and exhibition of materials focused on African American, African Diaspora, and African experiences” (Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, n.d., para. 1).

study. This process yielded much more interest for the study. I received a total of 46 participants, 11 of which became collaborators.

Participant and Collaborator Demographics

The 46 survey respondents, or participants, geographically lived in 11 states within the U.S. Most of the participants identified their gender identity as woman/female/femme ($n = 35$). Additionally, 14 of the 46 participants articulated being currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program. Ethnically, the participants comprised of Dominican ($n = 15$), Hispanic/Latine/a/o ($n = 13$), and multi-ethnic ($n = 7$). Regarding self-identified racial identity, 34 of the participants identified as Black. Of the 46 survey participants, 11 were interested in moving forward with the one-on-one plática and community pláticas. Table 1 displays the demographic information for each of the 11 collaborators. More information is addressed in Chapter 4 regarding the collaborators.

Site

In a national study, the Pew Research Center asked people identifying as Latine/a/o about AfroLatinidad, in which 24% answered that they resonated with this term, and 73% stated that they did not identify as AfroLatine/a/o (G. López & González-Barrera, 2016). Of people identifying as AfroLatine/a/os, they then chose their race as 39% white, 24% Hispanic, 18% Black, and 9% mixed race (G. López & González-Barrera, 2016). Additionally, most AfroLatine/a/o participants were concentrated on the east coast and south, had Caribbean roots, and were born outside the United States (G. López & González-Barrera, 2016). Although my study criteria were open to any AfroLatine/a/o activist throughout the United States, many of my survey participants and plática collaborators lived in New York (54% and 73%, respectively). As a result, I offer the following historical context on activism in New York.

Historically, toward the end of the 18th century, New York’s economic successes were partially due to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, leading New York to “[possess] the largest Black population north of Maryland” (Lydon, 1978, p. 375). These Afrodescendientes still live in the area today. There is rich AfroLatine/a/o culture and history in New York, specifically New York City (NYC). NYC is home to Black Latine/a/o businesses such as the Dominican-owned plant-based food service cooperative Woke Foods, Crown Heights’ feminist book shop Cafe con Libros, and the historic Nuyorican Poets Cafe (Reichard, 2019). NYC has also been the home of the Afro-Latino Festival for 10 years. Influential AfroLatine/a/os in New York include poet and writer Piri Thomas, late television news anchor Gwen Ifill, actress and dancer Sylvia del Villard, Young Lords founder Felipe Luciano, and historian Arturo Schomburg (J. Wright, 2018).

New York also has a rich historical and current engagement in activism. NYC has historically been a hub for marginalized communities to organize for equal rights, civil rights, immigration, housing reform, Black lives, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA rights (Mirabal, 2005; Wiley, 2020). Some of the biggest protests have included the Silent Protest Parade of 1971 for racial equality and the Women’s March in 2017 advocating for women and human rights following the inauguration of former President Donald Trump (Wiley, 2020). Latine/a/os, in particular, have cultivated campaigns and movements in NYC to address their needs in the United States and advocate for the struggles of their origin countries. For example, Cubans living in NYC between the 1820s–1890s created newspapers and publications such as *El Habanero*, *La Independencia*, and *La Revolucion* as a way to show dissent, activism, and political organization (Mirabal, 2005). These publications called for “racial unity and total independence at all costs”

(Mirabal, 2005, p. 192) during a time when Cubans desired independence from Spain and the abolition of slavery.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this section, I first detail the various stages in my data collection process. The first part of my study included a survey. I then share how I prepared the setting for the pláticas to provide context of my interpretation and personalization of this research method. Following, I share the second part of my study: a one-on-one plática followed by a community plática. And lastly, I share the analytic process I used for this study.

Part 1: Survey

The first point of data that I collected was a survey. Questions on the survey included demographic information like gender identity, state in which they resided/studied, and ethnicity. In addition, the survey asked participants to identify what Afro term they resonated with. This was an open-ended field because I imagined there would be a diversity of responses. The survey also used N. López et al.'s (2018) multidimensional measures of race that provided further insights into the AfroLatine/a/o activists' street race,¹¹ socially assigned race,¹² and self-perceived race.¹³ In addition, the survey included questions about their entry point to activism, the activism-related behaviors they engaged in, and the social issues their activism addressed.¹⁴

¹¹ According to N. López et al.'s (2018) street race is how you believe others, who do not know you personally, would identify your race if you were walking down the street. In their procedures, the drop-down options include: Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic, Black or African American, White, Middle Eastern/Arab, Mexican, Asian American, Native American/American Indian, and some other race.

¹² Socially assigned race or ascribed race describes how you believe other Americans in the United States would identify your race (N. López et al., 2018).

¹³ Self-perceived race is how one personally identifies on forms or questionnaires on a daily basis (N. López et al., 2018).

¹⁴ Survey options for activism-related behaviors and activism social issues have been adapted from the 2018 Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership survey.

Once I received a survey response, I ensured the individual met the study criteria for Part 2. Then, I messaged the potential collaborator with an email invitation (see Appendix C) that had the consent form (see Appendix D). I received eleven participants who then became my collaborators throughout the rest of the study. Next, I emailed the collaborators instructions for scheduling the one-on-one plática (see Appendix H). After signing up on Calendly for a one-on-one plática, I emailed the collaborator a follow-up email reminder before their chosen date (see Appendix I).

Part 2a: One-on-One Pláticas

Pláticas are different from qualitative interviews or focus groups because the reciprocal nature of pláticas allows the researcher to engage in the dialogue exchange with collaborators and collaborators having the power in the research process to theorize about their lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). As mentioned previously, Valle and Mendoza (1978) used pláticas to introduce cultural formalities into the interview process using *la entrada*, an *amistad* interview, and *la despedida* as a preinterview protocol which is not enough when using it as a form of data collection (Huante-Tzintzun, 2016). Although I used Valle and Mendoza's (1978) phases, I sought to take it a step further and prepared a warmhearted virtual space that honored cultural traditions and humanized the research process.

Preparing for the one-on-one pláticas included being thoughtful about how I would interact and engage the collaborators in an intentional manner using Valle and Mendoza's (1978) process. Therefore, during *la entrada*, I began with informal exchanges and a welcome. I found it crucial to understand the global context in which this study occurred, which was under the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic and racial injustices throughout the United States. As a result, I asked collaborators how they and their loved ones were dealing with the pandemic,

which was still present and impacting communities in 2022–2023 when the pláticas occurred. I also chose to do a land acknowledgment to pay respects to the Indigenous lands we inhabited. Following, I detailed the purpose of the study, followed by a description of pláticas.

For the amistad interview I shared my appreciation for the collaborator's presence and participation. Then, I shared my positionality through a visual collage (see Appendix J), and shared some common agreements (i.e., the exchange of reciprocal dialogue and support the interchange of language such as English, Spanish, or Spanglish). I then asked collaborators questions from the interview protocol which were related to the research questions that guided this study.

The one-on-one pláticas prompted collaborators to reflect on their racial and ethnic identity development, socialization, the conceptualization of AfroLatinidad identity, journey to AfroLatine/a/o identity, how they conceptualized their activism, what motivated and sustained their activism, and what social issues their activism involved (see Appendix K). Additionally, the one-on-one plática asked collaborators to consider whether their AfroLatine/a/o identity is connected to their activism. The last phase, *la despedida*, reiterated my appreciation for collaborators, asked for any closing thoughts, provided an opportunity for them to ask any questions about me, instructed them on how I would provide compensation, and shared next steps of the dissertation process.

Each one-on-one plática ranged from 60–75 minutes. Because pláticas are intended to be informal and casual, I employed a semistructured interview protocol to find a middle ground between IRB standards and pláticas (Creswell, 2013; Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Glesne, 2016). Although the one-on-one plática was semistructured, pláticas are distinct from qualitative interviews because of the reciprocal and vulnerable relationship between the researcher and

collaborator (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). The one-on-one pláticas were recorded via Zoom video conferencing platform and files stored on Box, the online secure drive hosted by the University of Maryland.

After completing the one-on-one plática, I sent out each recording to be transcribed via a transcription service. Then, I listened to each recording to validate and ensured the transcripts were correct verbatim. I followed McLellan et al. (2003) data preparation and transcription protocol for formatting and validating the accuracy of my transcript. McLellan et al.'s protocol included entering the information onto the transcript like inaudible segments, moments of laughter, other emotions, and other noise.

Preliminary Analysis and Narrative Creation

I conducted a preliminary analysis of each collaborator transcript, which organized their stories in chronological order about their socialization, upbringing, schooling experiences, college journey, and postcollege conceptualizations of their race, ethnicity, and activism. Then, I created a written narrative for each collaborator. Using plática, as methodology and method, I (a) viewed collaborators as knowledge creators, (b) identified research as relational, and (c) understood that research is grounded in everyday lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). In alignment with pláticas, these narratives were intended to provide a snapshot of who each collaborator was and what they shared throughout this study. The goal of these narratives was to describe the collaborators as whole beings. I used direct quotes, especially in Spanish, because I wanted to remain true with the culture and the collaborator's manner of speaking. In addition, when there was sufficient context surrounding the Spanish words used, I did not offer a translation. I sent collaborators their personal narratives to review for the purposes of member

checking (see Appendix L). Five of the collaborators reviewed and provided feedback on their personal narrative.

After member checking, I updated each narrative based on the feedback provided by the collaborator. Then, I intentionally created and assigned community plática groups based on the demographic information each collaborator expressed in the survey and one-on-one pláticas. Several collaborators had personal connections to each other, so I ensured they were not in groups with these individuals. Next, I scheduled the third data collection method: a community plática (see Appendix M). Although I hosted three community pláticas, collaborators had to only attend one. Before the community plática, I emailed each collaborator three or four narratives of their fellow peers, with pseudonyms, to thoroughly review and take notes on (see Appendix N).

Part 2b: Community Pláticas

Preparing for the community plática was intended to be in person in a space that invoked meaning for the Latine/a/o community and a space that had a special place in my heart, my parent's Brooklyn bodega (see Appendix O). Because of the expansion of my study, I was able to include AfroLatine/a/o activists throughout the United States and the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, I decided to do the community plática virtually. As such, I welcomed collaborators into the community plática with memories from my childhood, music from an AfroCuban band *Buena Vista Social Club*, and my virtual background as a picture of the front of my parents' bodega. Then, I explained to collaborators the significance of the virtual background and music. In the community pláticas, I shared some community agreements and asked the collaborators to add new ones to the list of agreements. I shared my positionality in regard to what it has meant for me to learn from my collaborators, what I learned about my own AfroDominicana identity, instances where I felt really connected as an insider, and times when I

realized I was an outsider. After the community plática, I sent the collaborators their compensation and emailed all collaborators, sharing my appreciation and gratitude for their collaboration on this study.

Each community plática comprised of two to four collaborators based on the attendance. Nine of the eleven collaborators attend a community plática. Additionally, typically in focus groups, as with the community pláticas, internal confidentiality was limited. Internal confidentiality relies on collaborators following the ground rules, which were established at the beginning of the community plática (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Each community plática was scheduled for 90 minutes but were about 2 hours each. The community pláticas were conducted via the University of Maryland's Zoom video conferencing platform and were video recorded with the consent of the collaborators. I used (a) la entrada, (b) an amistad interview, and (c) la despedida in the community plática. Collaborators engaged in reflection, critical thinking, and meaning making while also cocreating knowledge and theorizing about their collective lived experiences. Meaning making, knowledge creation, and theorizing occurred through (a) reviewing all narratives, (b) taking notes on the narratives, (c) discussing similarities and differences, and (d) engaging in making connections between AfroLatinidad and activism (see Appendix P). At the end of each community plática, I shared some preliminary observations with the collaborators and next steps in my research process. After the community plática, I sent all collaborators a thank you email for participating in my dissertation study (see Appendix Q) and shared a document I created with information and resources on second-hand trauma (see Appendix R).

Data Analysis

After the community pláticas, I sent the recordings to a transcription service. Once the transcriptions were completed, I compared the transcripts to the video recording of the community pláticas for accuracy. I then conducted my formal data analysis, which included initial/open coding and focused coding strategies (Basis, 2003). Data analysis in pláticas is not intended to take from the data but instead offer a space to assess and theorize about these lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). By keeping in mind, the conceptual framework of this study, my goals were to understand the contexts that impacted the experiences and identity development of AfroLatine/a/o activists.

During the coding process, I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Dedoose. These types of programs have the advantages of coding, categorizing, and memo writing, which are all beneficial to researchers using initial and focused coding (Saldaña, 2016). The first coding cycle in the data analysis process was initial coding which allowed me to analyze the data and its nuances in a “quick” and “spontaneous” manner (Saldaña, 2016, p. 83). Initial coding is an open-ended approach to coding while remaining open to all possible interpretations that arise. Additionally, part of the first phase of my analysis involved initial coding via a line-by-line method for my transcripts (Charmaz, 2006). Line-by-line, initial coding allowed me to attentively reread and review the transcripts to create a detailed and more comprehensive list of codes. Afterward, I engaged in memo writing and peer debriefed the codes with my advisor.

The second coding cycle during the data analysis process focused on creating a codebook, combining codes into categories, and theming the data (Saldaña, 2016). During this phase of the coding cycle, I first created a codebook of a priori codes from the literature and

conceptual framework. A priori codes included critical reflection, activism-related behaviors, and challenging eurocentric beliefs. Then, I used focused coding, which “categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 151). Focused coding is very appropriate after first completing initial coding because I could compare codes across all collaborators’ transcripts for comparability and transferability (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). Through the two rounds of coding, 43 parent codes and 73 child codes emerged that reflected the pláticas, survey data, conceptual framework, and literature. Examples of parent codes included *activism-related behaviors, challenging dominant racial ideologies, conceptualizing Afro identity, and racialized experiences*. Child codes included *natural hair journey, social and community-oriented learning outcomes, demonstrates critical action, and community*. Afterward, I *themed the data* by coding, categorizing, and writing reflective memos (Saldaña, 2016). Reflective memos occurred (a) after creating and editing the interview protocol, (b) after each data collection step, and (c) during the data analysis process. After themeing the data, I organized the themes according to the research questions to develop and create the findings of this study.

Trustworthiness

I employed various strategies for trustworthiness to maintain the obligations of high-quality inquiry. In this study, I did my best to ensure trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. S. R. Jones et al. (2014) stated the importance of demonstrating multiple perspectives through triangulation by confirming findings through several data collection methods. I collected data from collaborators via three different methods: a survey, one-on-one plática, and community plática, which all provided varying details and perspectives. During the community plática, the collaborators and I engaged in theorizing about the collective lived experiences as AfroLatine/a/o activists. Second, I peer

debriefed with my dissertation chair, Dr. Espino, after creating my codes, categories, and themes. Peer debriefing provided me with external reflection throughout the analysis process and feedback (Glesne, 2016). Third, I practiced reflexivity to ensure trustworthiness by clearly stating my positionality to collaborators to ensure my biases, identities/experiences, role as an insider/outsider researcher, and subjectivity were known. Reflexivity also occurred by taking intentional time to create 16 reflective and analytic memos during the following instances: (a) after creating and editing the interview protocol, (b) after each data collection step, and (c) during the data analysis process (Saldaña, 2016). Throughout the research process, reflective, analytic memos challenged me to think critically about what I did and why (Saldaña, 2016). For example, after each one-on-one plática, I reflected about the biggest takeaways, my positionality, interesting comments/quotes, and thoughts comparing the collaborators stories for themes.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this study, I handled all data with care and integrity. Haywood (2017b) believed that as researchers, we do not give voice to participants because participants already have a voice; we are just receiving their stories as gifts to be shared with the academic community. This section addresses how I handled data with care, integrity, and high ethical standards. According to The Belmont Report (Office for Human Research Protections, 1979) and subsequent reinforcement from many scholars, including Terrell (2016) and Glesne (2016), the following three ethical principles apply when researching human collaborators: beneficence, respect, and justice. Ethical issues that can arise include role of the researcher and power, confidentiality, second-hand trauma, and any possible risks associated with participating in the study. And lastly, I discuss the benefits that collaborators could have gained from engaging in this study.

Beneficence, respect, and justice were the cornerstone of my ethical care in this study. The principle of beneficence states that researchers must treat collaborators ethically, which means valuing their decisions, avoiding harm, and having good intentions for their well-being (Terrell, 2016). Furthermore, researchers must assess the possibility of physical and emotional harm, confidentiality, and anonymity (Glesne, 2016). Respect for persons ensures that I, as the researcher, understand that collaborators are capable human beings and can make decisions about their actions and well-being (Terrell, 2016). Thus, collaborators had informed consent throughout the data collection process (Glesne, 2016). And lastly, including justice in this study meant that collaborators had the right to benefit from this study whenever possible (Terrell, 2016). Reciprocity in *pláticas* centers mutuality, relationship building, researcher reflexivity and vulnerability (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). By participating in my study, the AfroLatine/a/o activists had the opportunity to benefit, even if indirectly, by reflecting, growing their network and community, and having a dialogue around their identities and activism. As a result, this opportunity could have enhanced collaborators' abilities to articulate the skills activists gained from activism, interrogate their positionalities, strengthen critical-thinking skills, and foster unlearning behaviors. I also include a letter to AfroLatine/a/o activists in Chapter 6, which could foster additional support and insights.

Beneficence, respect, and justice play an important role when considering informed consent and risks/benefits (Terrell, 2016). The first ethical issue I recognize is the unequal power dynamics in this qualitative study. I could have been perceived as possessing power over collaborators because of my researcher/practitioner role, age, affiliations, and compensation. Collaborators could perceive compensation as wanting or requiring them to share what they think I wanted to hear instead of their truth. I attempted to mitigate this concern by sharing my

positionality, displaying vulnerability with my collaborators. Regarding compensation, I aimed to mitigate this possible issue by reiterating that I intentionally chose my conceptual framework, methodology, and research methods for the purpose of knowing their truth and lived experiences. I also validated the collaborators throughout the research process, often sharing that their lived experiences and truths were valued and appreciated.

The second ethical issue I acknowledge is confidentiality. Adhering to confidentiality means that data gathered will not be shared with external parties without the knowledge and consent of the collaborators (S. R. Jones et al., 2014). Thus, I asked collaborators on the survey to create their preferred pseudonyms to protect their identities. Collaborators' names and identities were protected by creating a researcher identification key, so their names would not be included in the data. Only I had access to this key via the University of Maryland's Box platform. One of my collaborators did not want to choose a pseudonym and I respected their agency to use whatever name they wanted. In addition to pseudonyms, any potential loss of confidentiality was minimized by storing audio recordings, videos, transcripts, and data in a password-protected computer and the University of Maryland's Box platform, which required dual authentication. Confidentiality and anonymity were operationalized through the informed consent waiver to ensure collaborators understood these two concepts thoroughly. Additionally, typically in focus groups, as with the community pláticas, internal confidentiality was limited. Internal confidentiality relies on collaborators following the ground rules, which were established at the beginning of the community plática (Sim & Waterfield, 2019).

The third ethical issue I addressed was the possibility of experiencing secondary trauma, also referred to as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, for collaborators and/or researchers (Connolly & Reilly, 2007; Figley, 1995). Secondary trauma happens when a caring professional

hears a traumatized narrative and is then “left to hold or bear their stories” alone (Connolly & Reilly, 2007, p. 529). To be as prepared as possible, I shared a list of resources and information to promote mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and some information addressing second-hand trauma as part of the thank you email, following the community plática (see Appendix R). Second-hand trauma is not only an isolated outcome for collaborators but also for myself as the researcher (Connolly & Reilly, 2007). During the research process, I did not experience any second-hand trauma. If I did, I would have shared my own experiences and feelings with my therapist and continued to practice established self-care actions and behaviors.

Positionality Statement and Paradigm

In using a plática methodology rooted in Chicana/Latina feminist theory, the most appropriate paradigm for this study was critical theory. Critical theory is shaped by a historical realism ontology that recognizes that an individual’s lived experiences and realities are shaped in social, political, cultural, economic, and gender contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Through a critical paradigm, my conceptual framework, and methodology, I focused on dialogue and critical reflection (Glesne, 2016). In this study, discourse and critical reflection come in plática as a method. Additionally, by using a plática methodology with a critical lens, this study centered on the voices of marginalized students and their needs in higher education, and acknowledged their lived experiences, as knowledge and data. The collaborators offered valuable insights in the analysis they conducted during the community plática. As a result, this study critically challenged my collaborators, higher education educators, and academic scholars to consider the role of agency and critical consciousness that AfroLatine/a/o activists already possess. Using plática methodology allowed me to hold space for AfroLatine/a/o activists’ lived trauma,

oppression, survival, and accomplishments (Flores Carmona et al., 2021; Trinidad Galván, 2015).

Understanding My Me-Search Journey

My positionality is guided by Patel's (2016) decolonial approach to conducting research. Research is situated in cultural, sociopolitical, and material conditions, challenging the notion that researchers must be objective and neutral (Patel, 2016). Patel (2016) challenged researchers like myself to reimagine the role of researchers to instead be in relationship to social and cultural contexts of the research. As a result, I am not separated from these contexts because, as the researcher, I am human with identities, histories, and experiences that influence my perspective, even in the research process (Patel, 2016). Additionally, by employing *plática* methodology, which has roots in Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology and critical theory, I had to not only appreciate alternative ways of knowing but also “confront those aspects of [myself] that render [me] the colonized or the perpetrator, particularly if [I am] working with marginalized communities” (Calderón et al., 2012, p. 534). I presented my positionality to the collaborators through a visual collage to shed light on my relationship with this research topic and model vulnerability.

In a large Dominican household and family, I grew up *platicando* with my *mamas*, *tias*, *primas*, and *hermanas*. These familial *pláticas*, usually in the kitchen, offered stories of our family and advice about anything and everything. I resonated with Fierros about *pláticas* sometimes resulting “in arguments, crying, laughing- but always in something learned” (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 98). Through these informal conversations, I saw the strong and resilient women in my family nurture and care for their families while sharing wisdom down generational lines. I heard stories of their childhood, our homeland, music, and the vibrant

cultural and familial traditions we possessed. And on occasion, I overheard or was given advice that I would consider anti-Black today (e.g., promotion of blanqueamiento ideologies). We touched and embraced each other in support, love, and warmth that felt like home. I tasted the ingredients of food that made up our rich cultural heritage and connected to our ancestry. I smelled the jengibre tea during Christmas time and the warm sancocho in the winter. These pláticas were essential to the women in my family because most of us were immigrants in a land away from home.

A huge motivation for my family to immigrate to the United States was for a better education in “el sueño Americano.” Upon arrival, I was immediately enrolled into kindergarten in our majority-white neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. I spent a lot of time in English as a second language classes because I did not know any English. There was a clear white and Black binary in this community and school, with few Latine/a/os in sight, making it harder to navigate and negotiate my own racial and ethnic identities (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). As an immigrant student, I was subconsciously determined to be like my majority-white peers, which meant many things, including losing my Spanish accent.

I give a lot of credit to my parents for making sure we spoke Spanish to our loved ones, never forgetting the language, and somehow affording to send us in the summer months to the Dominican Republic to be immersed in our homeland. Although we lived in the United States and were systematically categorized as Latino/Hispanic, my parents ingrained in us that above anything else, we were Dominican, ignoring any mention of race. My earliest memories of needing to decide about race were when I filled out the Census for my family after arriving in the United States. I remember feeling confused and uncomfortable about selecting “other,” which I was instructed to do. Moving forward, that is what I chose on my doctor’s forms, college

applications, and other formal documents, not understanding then that race is a social construct and race is also fluid worldwide (Onwuachi-Willig, 2016).

Higher education was a true catalyst for my racial and ethnic identity development. As a first-generation college student, college meant exploration, freedom, growth, diverse perspectives, and the first step toward our family's collective "sueño Americano." College was also a complete culture shock for me because my middle and high school were majority Black and Latine/a/o. I took refuge in the salsa club, Fuerza Latina, and my residence hall. I joined a Latina sorority, which became my safe haven and validated my Latina and Dominican identities. These women empowered me to learn, explore, and celebrate my heritage, history, and culture. They taught me how to love and embrace my naturally curly hair, a huge turning point in my racial and ethnic identity development. As I continued onto graduate school and this doctoral journey, I gained the words to describe how I felt and how others possibly perceived me racially: being Black. AfroLatinidad is not only about visual perception from others, but more importantly, self-identification. I finally understand that although I did not see it at the time, I have been treated racially Black my entire life in white and Black binary institutions in the United States. I also understand and recognize that there may be some privileges my lighter complexion affords me, but I believe there remain some real consequences and fears of being AfroDominicana. For example, during my pregnancy, I had extreme fears of dying during childbirth because I knew that in this society, this majority white culture, there are racial and ethnic disparities in pregnancy-related deaths and that I, as a woman of color, possibly perceived as Black, could be one of these deaths (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Now, identifying as AfroDominicana means reclaiming my Blackness. It means rejecting this white/Black binary; global colorism perspectives; assimilation; white supremacist/racist

ideologies; and our collective Dominican socialization, trauma, and fear caused under Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship, which murdered more than 20,000 Haitians because of the color of their skin (Zinn Education Project, n.d.). During this dictatorship and many decades after that, Dominicans, including me, were socialized to remain in close proximity to whiteness and reject Blackness. I finally have embraced my Blackness.

In my student affairs career, I am consistently challenged to think about my social identities, how I show up in predominantly white spaces, and how I engage and advocate for marginalized students. A particular turning point in my career was the summer of 2016. As the 2016 presidential election peaked, the nation grappled with racial injustices. In July 2016, police murdered Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, which caused a lot of civil unrest (Donnella, 2016). At the time, I worked at a small, predominantly white private institution, where I advised multicultural organizations. These murders and the racial injustices we witnessed and experienced were a breaking point for my students, who demanded the institution denounce these actions, start equitable initiatives for students of color, and help them feel like they mattered and belonged. I witnessed their resilience, courage, and commitment to create change on a campus they loved for future generations of Black and Latinx/a/o students. I was blessed to work alongside them, advocate with and for them, and challenge the institution to do better. Their agency inspired me to apply to a doctoral program, become a senior student affairs leader, and advocate for equitable change on college campuses for marginalized students.

Throughout this doctoral program, I committed myself to learning more about student activists. I felt blessed and honored to do this research on AfroLatine/a/o activists in particular. As an outside researcher, I did not consider myself to be part of the activist community and at times during the research process I reflected on whether I was the right person to conduct this

research based on this positionality. As an outsider researcher, I hoped that I conveyed a sense of vulnerability, honesty, and care. And in a sense, I also felt like an insider researcher throughout this journey because I shared similar social and cultural experiences as the collaborators such as being from the Caribbean, raised in New York, and earned a public-school education. In Chapter 4, I offered a more detailed explanation of my experience with the collaborators and my personal reflections.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter described the principles of *plática* methodology and why this methodology was chosen for my study. Then, I identified my plan for sampling and recruitment, site selection, and data collection methods. This chapter articulated how I conducted my data analysis and demonstrated trustworthiness. Afterward, I shared how beneficence, respect, and justice guided this study (Glesne, 2016; Terrell, 2016). Then, I identified possible ethical issues and how I mitigated those concerns. I shared my positionality statement to demonstrate how I became immersed in this methodology, conceptual framework, and my connection to the research topic.

CHAPTER 4: COLLABORATOR NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I introduce each collaborator and their lived experiences using the data I gathered from the survey, one-on-one pláticas, and community pláticas. I organized each narrative chronologically by describing the collaborators' socialization, including information about their families, upbringing, and messages or instances regarding race and ethnicity. I then share details on the collaborators' educational experiences from early childhood to college, with a special focus on their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad and activism. I also included mentions of how their collegiate experiences influenced their AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities. I end the narratives with each collaborators' experiences at the time of the study, perceptions about their AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities, and any connections they made between these two identities. I complete Chapter 4 with a reflection on my insider positionality.

Of the 46 survey respondents, 11 were interested in moving forward with the one-on-one plática and community pláticas. Table 1 displays the demographic information for each of the 11 collaborators. Eight of the collaborators lived in New York, two lived in the Washington, D.C./Maryland/Virginia area, and one lived in California. The collaborators attended six unique colleges and universities; thus, some of the collaborators attended the same schools. Collaborators attended either 4-year private ($n = 3$) or 4-year public ($n = 3$) institutions. Two individuals were current students at the time of the study and nine individuals had already graduated from a higher education institution. Notably, two of the collaborators attended historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and one collaborator graduated from a college outside of the United States.

Table 1 displays each collaborator by their pseudonym and includes their gender identity, academic classification or standing, the Afro term with which the collaborators identified,

ethnicity, self-perceived race, socially assigned race, and street race. Nine of the collaborators self-identified their gender as “female.” It is noteworthy to mention that this term is used in the scientific community to refer to sex, not gender identity. Five of the collaborators chose Afro terms that highlighted their nationalities such as *AfroDominican*. Six collaborators chose Afro terms that indicated their ethnicity such as *AfroLatina* or *Afro-Latine*. I also asked collaborators to identify their ethnicity. Eight chose terms that were connected to their nationalities such as *Puerto Rican* or *Salvadorian-American*. During the pláticas, at least four collaborators mentioned they immigrated to the United States. Three others identified they were second generation, meaning one or both of their parents immigrated to the United States.

I used N. López et al.’s (2018) multidimensional measures of race in the survey. This process included employing three ways of measuring race: self-perceived race, socially assigned race, and street race. Self-perceived race and socially assigned race were open-ended questions unlike street race, which was a drop-down option. With regard to self-perceived race, the collaborators identified mainly with terms associated with their Black identities, such as *Black*, *Black Latina*, or *AfroLatina*. Then, I asked the collaborators to identify their socially assigned race, meaning how they believed people would classify their race in the United States (N. López et al., 2018). Some collaborators wrote one or two answers in the open-ended field. Others chose their socially assigned race with a term that connected to their Black identity ($n = 7$). Lastly, I asked collaborators to identify their street race, which describes how they believed other “Americans” would identify their race if they were walking down the street (N. López et al., 2018). The options were Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic; Black or African American; White; Middle Eastern/Arab; Mexican; Asian American; Native American/American Indian; and some

other race. Six collaborators indicated their street race as Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic. Five collaborators identified their street race as Black or African American.

In addition to demographic information, I gathered information about the collaborators' engagement regarding their activism-related behaviors (see Table 2) and the social issues in which they were involved with their activism (see Table 3). All of the collaborators ($n = 11$) identified as activists in the initial survey. During the pláticas, I learned some preferred the term *leader* or *organizer* instead of *activist*. For example, Nini stated that *organizer* captured her political values and impact. For Mercedes, *leader* resonated more with her because it more accurately signaled her impact, intentions, and role in social movements. The collaborators entered into activism in various ways. The most popular entry point into activism was during college. During the pláticas, collaborators ($n = 4$) elaborated on how their college involvement in an identity-based student organization, fraternity, or sorority was life-changing for them. In addition, some family members ($n = 2$) or high schools ($n = 2$) exposed them to activism at a young age.

The collaborators engaged in similar activism-related behaviors (see Table 2). Based on their responses on the initial survey, participants' most popular activism-related behavior was social media activism and signing online or in-person petitions ($n = 11$). Social media activism focuses on sharing information and advocating for a particular issue through social media (Biddix, 2010). The collaborators also engaged heavily in protests, marches or demonstrations, and existence as resistance ($n = 9$). Existence as resistance is defined as being in spaces where Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOCs) were previously excluded. Through the pláticas, the collaborators discussed being the only one or one of few BIPOC individuals in their classes or in their workplaces. They also identified existence as resistance because they were

thriving despite the circumstances. Eight collaborators engaged in contacting elected officials and voting. During the plática, some collaborators articulated how the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement, divisive political climate, and the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted their engagement in specific types of activism-related behaviors. For example, during the height of the pandemic, Liz and Angela were weary of getting sick and engaged in activism-related behaviors that could be done virtually like participating in social media activism, contacting elected officials, signing online or in-person petitions, and voting. During this same time period, there was an increase in racial injustice, which fueled some collaborators like Bori, Mercedes, and Quisqueya into engaging in activism-related behaviors such as protesting, organizing, and marching along with some of the activism-related behaviors that could be done virtually.

Many of the most popular social issues that sparked their activism were identity-based (see Table 3). All 11 collaborators identified racial justice as being one of the social issues in which they engaged. In addition, nine collaborators, mainly those who identified as women/female, also selected women's rights. Although five of the AfroLatine/a/o activist collaborators had careers in the education field, nine of the collaborators identified education access and equity as important to their activism. To examine their experiences deeply, I now turn to the narratives I wrote for each collaborator.

Angela's Narrative

I've always obviously identified as being a Latina. I think my entire life that's been true. Being that I'm Dominican, I was born there and very much have always identified with the culture despite growing up in New York. I think the term *Afro-Latina* probably came up a lot when I was in college and post college, I feel like when it really started to like become more widely used. Honestly, I associate it around the same time where like my curly hair started to matter a lot more to my identity, and I was looking for people who look like me in that community. What it means to me is an acknowledgement of my proximity to Blackness in the African diaspora and knowing that there are certain privileges that I wasn't necessarily afforded in the Latinx community.

Angela (she/her) was born in the Dominican Republic. She and her family immigrated to the United States when she was only 1 year old. She lived in predominantly white neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York until she left for college. She recalled having just enough money growing up. Angela spoke about how she felt like an “outsider” or “different” because she was perceived as Latinx based on the texture of her hair and her skin complexion. Angela shared, “I will never forget this. It was like fourth grade, this girl making fun of my mom’s accent because my mom picked up the phone when she called my house.” Angela shared, “I knew we were different, looked different, spoke a different language, different food, different upbringing, and had different customs.” She wanted to belong in the educational spaces she occupied and have community, especially because her peers were whiter and wealthier than her.

On the survey, Angela identified her ethnicity as Dominican and racially as Latina; during the pláticas, she also identified as Black. Growing up, Angela discussed race with her immediate family rarely. However, she remembered messages about not spending too much time in the sun, dating men who were “not too Black,” and making sure her “greña”¹⁵ was straight for family celebratory events. Angela also noted how her extended family talked about Haitian people in the Dominican Republic, where she spent summers. She shared:

There’s, obviously, the anti-Haitian sentiment that was everywhere growing up. I spent a lot of summers in [the Dominican Republic]. I spent a lot of time hearing really negative things about Haitian people and that driving a message of they are Black and so somehow, they are less than. Which is obviously layered and complicated because we were Black, and somehow, there was not a connection in people’s brains that like, actually, we’re way more similar than you think.

We discussed the historical context of white supremacy, racial violence, and racism in the Dominican Republic, especially in the time of Rafael Trujillo’s¹⁶ dictatorship. For Angela,

¹⁵ Literally translated as “tangled hair.”

¹⁶In 1930, Rafael Trujillo began a 31-year dictatorship in the Dominican Republic where he ordered the execution of more than 20,000 Haitians during the Parsley Massacre (Zinn Education Project, n.d.).

“AfroLatinidad is kind of like that middle ground that, like, I feel very much a part of [AfroLatinidad] because it allows me to acknowledge my Black ancestry and also, in the context that I live as a Latina in the U.S.” Angela described her AfroLatinidad as resilient and the resilience of the AfroLatine/a/o community in historical and current contexts. Angela shared how, looking back at her childhood, she identified her resilience in managing anti-Black messages from her peers in school and family. She stated:

I think that forces you as a child to be a little bit more resilient or have slightly thicker skin just so that you could brush these things off unfortunately. I think it was like a forced resilience that we did not necessarily ask for.

Angela’s identity as Afro-Latina was as much about resilience as it was about resistance. Angela shared in the community plática how this identity was a way for her to reclaim and resist the erasure and assimilation that white supremacy espouses.

After high school, Angela left Brooklyn to attend a private 4-year university where she felt the need to find community. Fortunately, Angela found a sense of belonging when joining a historically Latina sorority. Angela’s face lit up talking about her sorority and her collegiate experience, which seemed transformative. Angela shared how this experience impacted her Afro-Latina identity:

I definitely think [the sorority] had a huge influence on my identifying as an Afro-Latina, I think it was the first space in which the people around me were identifying in that way . . . Greek Life definitely shed a light on our proximity to Blackness and the way that that influenced our culture and even in attending events that people were holding or that we held. We did an event on anti-Blackness in the Latino community at the time. I feel like that was early on when people were not necessarily talking about it as much as they are now . . . like 2014, which at least for me, in the communities that I was in, it wasn’t common practice to be having these conversations. We had a guest speaker because we were probably not equipped to lead that conversation. I think getting to be there and getting to participate and share my own experiences had a huge influence on embracing that identity.

An example of how Angela was intentional about her Afro-Latina identity was through her hair. As a child, Angela was in the salon every weekend “thinking [she] needed to [straighten

her hair] to be beautiful.” In college, Angela accepted and flourished in her curly hair. When we discussed her college experiences, her identity as Afro-Latina, and her activism, she described it as “just scratching the surface” or “the beginning of it all.” There were protests happening on campus at the time and she remembered feeling too scared to get involved. Her collegiate experience was more about discovering what the world was truly like and how she fit into it all.

After college, Angela became adamant about being an Afro-Latina activist. She explained this self-awareness and learning, sharing:

I think that the biggest change was like, as time went on, there was a lot more confidence in being an Afro-Latina and embracing Blackness and also learning about what my Blackness is and how that’s relevant to being Black in America . . . Now, what I do is I just bubble in Black, and like Hispanic, Latina for my ethnicity. And I’m very intentional about doing both of those things.

Angela found opportunities to learn more about the history of the Dominican Republic and the historical and current contexts of colonialism, anti-Blackness, and colorism. This history shed light on her own anti-Blackness, the messages she received, and how she may have internalized them over the years. She shared this action was influential to being an activist:

I think if I hadn’t come to a place of being comfortable enough identifying or aware enough to identify as an Afro-Latina, I wonder whether I would care as deeply about being an activist. I think part of my motivation is being aware of how my community and how the people that I love are affected by the unjust things in the world. What’s the world that I want young people to grow up in? And feeling very connected to those movements, trying to make a better world, because young people. I’m obviously not a parent, but I think about that in terms of the students that I taught, or if I do have a child one day, what can I do to make their world a little bit better or last a little bit longer, you know?

Angela elaborated that her activism was about love, visibility, and education. She proceeded by summarizing a quote by bell hooks¹⁷, stating that “you cannot effect change without love.” After the 2016 election of Donald Trump, Angela was motivated more than ever to engage with her community, especially through politics and her career in education. To no surprise, Angela’s

¹⁷ Angela summarized a quote from something she read from bell hooks’s (2001) *All about love: New visions* book.

activism and career centered on racial justice and education access. She taught predominantly Black students and took responsibility to advocate for them and their needs. She shared:

In a school where most of their teachers were white, it felt irresponsible as the teacher who looked like them, to not address those issues. To not address them and to not be a fierce advocate, and to not be afraid.

Her advocacy and actions resulted in her taking initiative to talk with her students about the divisive political climate, racist rhetoric in the media, violence against Black people, and their communities. She recalled after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, the students led a March for Our Lives protest, which spread through the United States. Her middle school students wanted to join the school walkouts in solidarity and to advocate for gun control legislation. She and her fellow teachers helped facilitate the walkout in their middle school.

Although Angela did not consider her activism “life-changing,” like writing laws, she prided herself on consciously making a choice each day to do something to better humanity. This meant signing petitions, voting, protesting, boycotting, and participating in social media activism; yet she expressed it did not seem like enough. Angela shared, “I think I’m really self-critical about my activism. While I’m very confident in my Afro-Latina identity, I’m less confident in my identity as an activist. I think it’s because I am always thinking about, how can I do more?” The COVID-19 global pandemic and violence against BIPOC communities from police impacted her activism. As a result, she focused more on phone banking, writing to elected officials, social media activism, and using her platform as an educator to change the lives of youth. She also attempted to change minds and hearts in her family. She highlighted this step as part of her activism: to educate and challenge her family when they say anti-Black or homophobic statements. Angela described herself as the “loud mouth” that “checks” her family, which was more in her comfort zone.

Bori's Narrative

So, I definitely started to identify as AfroBoricua, especially before the 2020 Black Lives Matter [Movement]. So, I think that when that opportunity to march on Washington came about, you know, with already identifying as AfroBoricua, that just propelled me, even more, saying that this does affect me, I do recognize my Afro, you know, side to it. Let me be part of this, it does affect me . . . I think that just pushed me even further. I think my protest of Puerto Rico is more about mi cultura and everything. But this was more about, you know, my race, you know, race, ethnicity, everything, my identification . . . And that pushed me to be a part of that.

Bori (he/him) was born in the United States in a predominantly white neighborhood and attended predominantly white schools in Manhattan. Bori described wanting to find students who shared similar cultures and language in school. Despite his surroundings, his parents raised him to have an overwhelming sense of pride in his Puerto Rican ethnicity, so much so that he spent summer breaks in their home country. Bori's enthusiastic tone and smile expressed how grateful he was for his parents and how they raised him to love the African influences in his Puerto Rican identity. He also noted that his experiences in predominantly white schools and his family's culture and education caused an internal battle with understanding his racial and ethnic identity as AfroBoricua. This internal battle was further compounded by messages from his extended family about migrating to the United States, which emphasized el sueño Americano in relation to whiteness. The following exchange was our discussion:

Bori: Especially in the older family members that I have, you know, creates this idea of how you should speak, how you should look, how you should dress, to make sure that you're on the equivalent level of what success is in the United States. That means changing your language, changing your accent, changing, you know—

Marinel: To be what?

Bori: Yeah, to be this kind of like, socially accepted Latino.

Bori shared that many of his extended family would say things like, "We need to imitate a lot of successful people, [like] Caucasians or whatever the case is in the U.S. and try to minimize Boricuaness for when you're on the island." His grandmother told him to put white as his race on his college applications to "get a better chance of getting into the school." Bori did not explicitly

think about his race growing up other than when he was called racial slurs. He mentioned feeling forced to consider race when filling out documentation like the U.S. Census or medical forms.

In the early 2000s, Bori attended a 4-year public institution in New York, where he felt the need to find others who shared similar cultures and language. He found refuge in a Latino dance team, the Latin American Student Organization, and, later, a historically Latino fraternity. There were no opportunities to learn about the African diaspora in Latin America, so AfroLatinidad was not something he learned about in college at the time; college was a formative experience in his activism. One of the first times Bori remembered being involved in activism was during his freshman or sophomore year. He had made deep connections with the lunch ladies, as he called them, of the dining center. He loved connecting with them in Spanish and getting the extra arroz they provided. Bori mentioned a time when the lunch ladies told him about a new departmental policy where they could not speak Spanish in the workplace. Bori felt “distracted” and outraged. Bori rallied the Latino community behind these women to protest the workplace policies, although he did not mention the outcome of the protest. Later in his collegiate years, he joined a historically Latino fraternity and was able to exercise his activism through not only protesting and demands, but also through educational programs. He described these as “opportunities for people to learn about injustices that are in the community.”

It was much later after college that Bori’s activism fully blossomed, much like his identity as AfroBoricua and identifying his race as Black. Bori appreciated how his parents showcased their connections and ancestry to Africa, like through music. Bori said:

It developed over the years, you know, until I started separating the two [Black and Boricua], I started appreciating more the music. I was listening to the salsa; I was then

appreciating more the instruments the rhythms, you know, the Bomba y Plena.¹⁸ And I started seeing it from a different lens.

Understanding how his culture connected to Africa led him down a journey of understanding more about the African diaspora in Latin America such as food and religions. Then, he started to identify, recognize, acknowledge, and love this aspect of being Boricua, toward an identity as AfroBoricua. It was after college when he started to embrace AfroBoricua in how he self-identified. AfroLatinidad, to Bori, meant “recognizing the cultural, historical influence and apparentness of [the] African diaspora in your culture as a Latino as well.”

Bori passionately shared the impact that the BLM Movement had on his racial, ethnic, and activist identities. Bori shared how difficult it was to watch videos every day of such violence against Black people. He was compelled to take part in the resistance because he understood racial injustice had been around for too long. He also saw himself in the BLM Movement, which influenced how he racially identified as Black moving forward. He said:

I didn't consider myself an activist. I just make sure I was a part of things that I believe were unfair and had to make a statement and had to make a standing. And the more I started doing, started being a part of things that I believed in or I wanted to speak out against, once it hit the 2020 [BLM] march, you know. I started to consider myself an activist because I started, uh, uh, participating in a lot of dialogue . . . I do what I have to do to make sure that I'm a part of this movement to make a difference for the lives of a lot of us 'cause remember Black Lives Matter isn't just meaning, you know, African American—it's differences and race and skin color and AfroBoricua and AfroLatinidad and dark skin Latinos. And it's affecting us all.

After joining the BLM Movement, he realized, “Maybe I am an activist.” He exclaimed that his activism stemmed from a deep feeling inside him to advocate and help others. Bori shared, “My protest of Puerto Rico is more about mi cultura and everything. But this was more about my race,

¹⁸ Percussion-driven musical traditions that have their foundations within the African heritage of Puerto Rico. Bomba was brought to the island and used as an expression of political and spiritual expression. Plena is an extension of bomba music and highlights narratives of protest movements, satire, and political messages (Smithsonian Folk Ways Recording, n.d.).

ethnicity, everything, my identification. And that pushed me, yep, to be a part of that.” Bori expressed emotion and passion to his core, moving him to travel to Puerto Rico to protest in favor of getting the governor out of power.

Bori was involved in protesting, marching or demonstrating, participating in social media activism, contacting elected officials, signing petitions, voting, organizing or canvassing, and engaging in existence as resistance. His activism extended to his loved ones. He stated, “The other half is that I’m invested in making sure that I am standing up and educating friends and family about such injustices.” Racial justice, education access, police reform, immigration, and women’s rights were especially important to him. Bori defined his activism in a few words: passion, empathy, resilience, education, and love. Bori described why he chose these particular words. He shared that he wanted to be in solidarity with others, even when it did not really affect him, and fight for equal rights. He spoke about his work in education and ensuring his students had the resources, tools, and language to advocate for themselves and marginalized communities. In addition, Bori challenged the Eurocentric curriculum in his Spanish department. The following discussion was our conversation:

Bori: I really try to challenge dominant Eurocentric ideologies at my job, at work. You know, I teach at a very predominantly white university. You know, I teach at the Spanish department, and that Spanish department, except for myself, is all Spaniard, right? So you can see it in the curriculum, you can see it in the lessons, the lesson planning. You can see it in everything, the development of the student. You can see it in the readings, you can see it in everything. And I—and I always try to challenge it off the bat by changing a lot of the stuff in the curriculum. You know, um, if we’re gonna speak about music one week, then I’m gonna talk about, you know, Caribbean artists, I’m gonna talk about salsa, merengue, bachata, bomba, and plena, all those different things they wouldn’t come across, you know?

Marinel: Yeah. Wow, that’s awesome!

Bori: I'm gonna talk about bomba and plena, I'm gonna talk about that African influence, I'm gonna talk about Puerto Rico and, you know, um, uh, Luis Saldaña,¹⁹ and I'm gonna talk about African influence in the food and the words in Spanish, you know?

Bori strived to incorporate the Africana diaspora in Latin America in his courses. It was evident that his activism was connected to his career in education. During the plática, Bori carefully articulated these connections between his AfroBoricua and activist identities. For example, he created a book club during the COVID-19 global pandemic at the local middle school to dialogue and study the work of Latinx authors, in which he placed a special emphasis on AfroLatinidad. Books they read included *Daughters of the Stone* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2009), *A Woman of Endurance* (Llanos-Figueroa, 2022) and *Dear Haiti, Love Alaine* (Moulite, 2019). Bori and I finished the plática discussing his book club and the impact it had on his community.

Christy's Narrative

Even before I was having those conversations about my Black identity, 'cause there was always a part of me that didn't feel like I had a rightful place because of my misunderstandings of color and because of the lack of education about race and ethnicity and nationalism, I never felt like I had a place to talk about being Black in the way that I looked, the way that I presented, because, you know, my hair was straightened for most of my young life. And it was when I did the big chop and you know, I started noticing my curls coming in and I started getting the resistance from my family that I was like, there's something here . . . So, it got deep for me because in those days, going to college, liberating myself in that way, liberating my mind and . . . decolonizing my physical body.

Christy (she/her) was born and raised in Harlem, New York. She identified herself as AfroDominicana, highlighting her pride in the Dominican Republic. Both her mother and father immigrated to the United States. She credited her family, who instilled a powerful sense of national pride in her. Christy described her mother as "morenita, like she's chocolate," and her father as having a lighter skin tone. When I asked Christy about the messages she received

¹⁹ Luis Saldaña was a Mexican American professional mixed martial artist in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC, 2020).

growing up about her race and ethnicity, she shared that she resonated with shows like *Family Matters* as a child and not Mexican novellas she watched with her mother like *Luz Clarita*²⁰.

Because of the various shades of skin color that ranged in her immediate family, Christy was always curious about understanding differences in skin color. She described herself as having a lighter skin tone than her mother and siblings. She claimed she was “the light skin unicorn.” Based on her appearance, she believed she was perceived as Hispanic in U.S. society. Christy believed she was “fetishized for [her] physical appearance, which created a lot of shame and guilt.” Christy shared:

I didn't understand it. So, I think it started the conversation about how we're Dominican. We don't see ourselves as Black, we don't see ourselves as white. Somos Dominicanos. But, we're from Harlem. So, it's also like we were raised in Harlem around Black people, Black Americans. Went to school with Black Americans. Right? People will see your mom, at least in my case, and be like, But your mom is. You know? So, I think the conversation was really Black and white when we were kids. It's like somos Dominicanos, somos negros, somos blancos, somos de todo.

She received messages about Dominicans being a mix of it all: Spanish, Indigenous, and African.

Christy was raised predominantly by her mother. Christy's family hardly discussed skin color.

Christy believed her mother dealt with some self-hatred and anti-Blackness. She elaborated:

You know, it's even hard for me to say it. Right? Like dragging yourself through the mud or because of where you're from or because of your skin color. Like, I got with your dad because I wanted to progress the race.²¹ And it's like, well, that's confusing and it's wrong, but I can't judge you because you grew up thinking that—that you were not okay for how you looked.

²⁰ *Luz Clarita* was a 1996 Mexican novella that featured an orphan little girl in search for her mother, where along her journey she gets adopted into a wealthy family. Due to colorism and the power associated with whiteness, many of these novellas feature protagonists who are white, oftentimes excluding AfroLatine/a/os roles or given minimum screentime.

²¹ Literally translated as “improve/better the race.” This phrase is used across Latin America and implies that marrying and having children with a lighter/whiter person is not only beneficial but also advantageous for the next generation in hopes that they have lighter/whiter skin and features (Casale-Hardin, 2015).

Because her family hardly discussed race at home, Christy was unsure if she had a place to discuss it at all, especially as someone who felt and looked different than her siblings. A turning point for Christy occurred months before she transferred to a 4-year public higher education institution in New York. She decided to stop using hair relaxers because relaxers are damaging and toxic. Christy also decided she was going to do a “big chop,” which meant cutting a lot of her hair, especially the damaged parts from the relaxers. She felt liberated.

As a transfer student, Christy worked in her residence hall office and then was promoted to a resident assistant. She was a resident assistant in a residence hall that was predominantly international students, which allowed her to be “more socially conscious but on a global scale.” In her campus job, she met a leader of the Students Revolutionary Coalition (SRC), which was her entry point to campus activism and a transformational experience for Christy. She remembered a time when they stormed into the president’s office demanding he change the vendor for campus dining because that organization benefited from unfair prison labor. In college, Christy said her activism was not solely in person through protesting and demonstrating, but also online using social media platforms like Twitter. She had a big online presence and spoke a lot about political issues concerning race, class, and gender. Christy also engaged in boycotting, signing petitions, writing demands, voting, and participating in existence as resistance. According to Christy, her art was also part of her activism. She credited her parents for role modeling activism when growing up. She described how her parents were very critical of the Balaguer²² era and politics on the island and how their political involvement showed her how to be a “woman with an opinion.” In addition, Christy’s experience with SRC led her to change

²² Joaquín Balaguer was a former president of the Dominican Republic whose political reign was plagued with “political violence, assassinations of government opponents, inflation, and alleged electoral fraud” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023, para. 3).

her academic major to women's studies with a minor in Africana studies and criminal justice, which her parents hated.

Christy shared a story about attending a conference where there was a screening of Alicia Anabel Santos's "AfroLatinos: The Untaught Story" documentary. She described it as an "ah ha" moment. Christy shared:

All it took was hearing somebody say it and then take ownership. And, to see who was at that conference, who was at that conversation. I do resonate with you. We do energetically connect, but we didn't never had really the language.

Christy was motivated to learn as much as she could about her own intersecting identities. She explained:

Because I didn't know who I was as a woman either. I was confused all around. I'm like, I don't identify with what it means to be a Dominican woman the way that I see it. I had to figure this out for me.

Watching this documentary, being involved in SRC, working in residence life, and engaging in her coursework all helped her make meaning of social identities.

Christy also shared how her activism shifted after seeing how SRC interacted with the police. She acknowledged that "radical activism can be dangerous." She said:

I literally did not have the privilege to get arrested—I couldn't afford it. I didn't have parents who would understand. I didn't have the mental capacity for it. So, my activism shifted and became more based on my identity and how I can trickle that into my family and nurturing my own backyard.

Christy shared how she fostered conversations with her family about anti-Blackness, such as expressing "anti-Haitian jokes are anti-Black jokes, which are anti-you jokes." Christy was proud of her identity as racially Black, so the family jokes were frustrating for her. This meant educating her family and raising children who understood their Blackness and AfroLatinidad.

At the time of our conversation, Christy identified as AfroDominicana, an identity she was learning more about each day. She mentioned, "Saying AfroLatina felt right. But now that

I'm going into the nitty gritty and saying 'AfroDominicana' and I'm proud of being Dominican. I want to lean into what does it mean to be a Black Dominican." When reflecting on what AfroDominicana meant to her, Christy shared that it was "the ritmo of our music, movement in our bodies, and rhythm from our drums, as well as family and tradition." She also noted learning about her AfroDominicana identity and activism were part of her journey. Christy described a visual of how she connected her activism and AfroLatinidad as two hands coming together to pray. She further explained:

They pray for a return to self. So, I would say that they're different, but they're of the same body, so they coexist and they inform each other, but they're separate in a way . . . I acknowledge that these are two entities that are within me and both outside of me because they're informed by millions and millions of other people's stories, anecdotes, et cetera, but that I have to hone in on what is inside of me. So, they definitely connect.

Christy summed the connection between her AfroDominicana identity and activism as "we will return to ourselves." Christy referred to decolonizing oneself and referenced back to her AfroDominicana identity and what it meant to her. She said it was less about changing and more about a conscious decision to challenge the "insidious nature of colonization" to return to one's truest self. Her activism description tied directly to the social issues her activism engaged: racial justice, women's rights, education access, and spirituality. Her work in domestic violence counseling, social work background, and teaching experiences motivated her activism. She explained, "Being in the world as a woman, people assume that they're entitled to your figure [your body] as a woman. I have to be a women's right activist. That's my daily life." Racial justice, Christy reflected, is different because she recognized colorism exists and she had a lighter complexion, which some may consider "passing privilege." Therefore, she was not the first to raise her hand when discussing Black identity. She shared, "Racial injustice is . . . a layered part of my activism. It's something I'm still unpacking." Education access was significant for Christy, who was an educator and wanted to ensure kids have what they need to

feel protected and nourished with knowledge. Lastly, Christy shared how important spirituality was for her and her activism. She described spirituality as a way to connect and talk to her ancestors, as a way to reflect on the colonization that has occurred, and use it as a lens to view the other social issues that were central to her. She believed that God inspired her activism, sharing:

My soul, the part of me that I know is eternal, that exists beyond my physical body, recognizes that I was born in this time, in the now, with my activism on my back to create a ripple effect, to make a difference, which I have done.

Eva's Narrative

When I was like, "I'm gonna go natural," it was like this "oh my God" reaction. And so, I started showing up to, you know, family functions with curly hair, and it was like the end of the world. It was like, "Ella, no se peina." And so, that is very challenging because that is mainly because I'm a woman, and then, in my culture, you know, it's like women are supposed to look a certain way. And I choose not to always conform to the beauty standards that are mainstream or westernized.

Eva (she/her) was from Washington Heights, a predominantly Dominican neighborhood in New York City (NYC). Eva was born in the United States but spent the early years of her life living in the Dominican Republic, where her parents were from. She visited the United States frequently but returned permanently when she was 9 years old. Growing up, Eva's parents hardly mentioned race and she remembered feeling "othered" because many of her relatives had dark complexions and she did not. She would later feel "othered" again when she was in predominantly white spaces like college. In the one-on-one plática, Eva shared a picture from her phone of her dad, grandma, great-grandma, and great-great-grandma carrying her. She said, "That's my family. When I look at the picture, you see how like literally they stuck to mejorar la raza so much that I look nothing like my great-grandma."

Eva always understood her Dominican ancestry as being a "mix of it all." She shared, when completing the U.S. Census for her family, she was told, "We are other, and we're a mix of

it all,” meaning Dominicans come from African, Indigenous, and European ancestry. Eva experienced an internal battle and confusion in her inconsistent approach to filling out forms about her race, sometimes putting “other” and sometimes putting “two or more races.” However, she always maintained confidence in knowing that her ethnicity was Latina/Hispanic and nationality was Dominican.

Eva grew up watching telenovelas and shared how “the main characters in popular telenovelas are typically played by people with lighter complexions and European physical features.” She did not think about this idea as a child, but she questioned these images as an adult. Eva first heard the term *AfroLatinidad* at her private, historically white, 4-year university. In college, she became aware of her identities and, as a member of the Latin American Association on campus, she began to notice differences in how she self-identified and how others perceived her. Eva said:

And so, that’s when it became a different thing because you could still be like a Latina, you know, of predominantly white descent. That’s when it became obvious, like my identity was not with the white ancestors, I’m more predominantly Black.

Although she enjoyed her time in this organization and educating others about Latinx/a/o issues, she was conflicted and reflective of her experiences and the impact they had on her racial identity. She described learning about different cultures, collaborating with different departments, and learning more about herself as a person. For example, during Eva’s senior year in college, there was a significant political conflict in Venezuela. Eva mentioned this conflict was at a time when people on Facebook changed their profile pictures to support various social issues. She was not satisfied with this approach and created an educational program where she invited one of her Venezuelan friends via Skype to share her experiences, connection to the issue, and knowledge about the situation.

After learning the term *AfroLatina* in college, Eva began to embrace the term. College was a “boiling point” for her and her AfroLatinidad. AfroLatinidad for Eva meant embracing her African ancestry, embracing her curly hair, and embracing her skin color. Through her experiences with the Latin American Association and interactions with majority white students in her classes, Eva became very aware that there is not a one-size fits all for Latinos. Her experiences were somewhat different. For example, in one of her college courses, she remembered being very careful with sharing her story and ensuring her story would not be taken and generalized across the diverse Latino population. In Eva’s me-search journey to understanding her AfroLatina identity, she thought about the telenovelas she watched as a child with her family, and how white the shows appeared. She also thought about how she and other dark-skinned Latinos were often excluded from the mainstream narrative and media. She explained, “I think that was a turning point for me in my understanding of subgroups within Latinos.” Witnessing the experiences of lighter/whiter Latinos and reflecting on her own experiences brought her closer to AfroLatinidad.

Eva was inspired by her uncle, affectionately known in the family as “a rebel.” He engaged in environmental and political activism in the Dominican Republic since he was in high school in the 1980s during the era of Balaguer. He went out and participated in “huelgas and like quemar gomas type of thing” to help make his point. Eva shared how there are ancient Indigenous caves called Guacaras Tainas in her hometown on the island, and when gold mining by private companies threatened those caves, her uncle would literally be “laying in the middle of the road, not trying to let the trucks pass.” He inspired her in college to speak out against injustices. Eva’s entry point into activism was facilitating educational programs with the Latin American Association and through a Latina magazine on campus. She discussed writing an

article on “culture vultures,” which are individuals who profit from using elements of or appropriating other cultures that are not their own. The article received a lot of criticism at the time, but she persisted. Eva’s familial influence and college experiences with the publication and programming were formative learning opportunities that influenced her racial and ethnic identity and her activism.

Eva continued to learn more about her AfroLatina identity after college, which meant understanding how the African diaspora was expressed in her Dominican culture, history, music, and food. She started reading and learning more about the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which awakened a sense of curiosity not only about her own Blackness, but also about Blackness on the island. A pivotal point in Eva’s life was starting her curly hair journey. For Eva, this journey was an act of rebellion, even activism. She stated her curly hair journey was “a change mindset” where she challenged Eurocentric norms.

Although Eva did not think of herself as an activist, she was confident in saying she engaged in activism-related behaviors like voting, signing petitions, boycotting, participating in existence as resistance, social media activism, and marching. She shared:

I don’t identify as an activist because . . . I feel like I would identify as a coward in many ways. I associate the term *activism* as in you are just out there, like very brave, very vocal. Actively doing things, organizing. You have a plan, and you want to put it in motion. And I do not. I am not right now part of any organization that I could engage in like organized activism. . . . But, you know, I would say I have like, passive-activist behaviors for sure. And when I was in college, I was a member of groups where . . . we tried to educate people or we had events to, you know, educate on certain things. And so, I would probably have identified as an activist when I was in college, but not anymore.

Although Eva identified as an activist on the initial survey, she did not consider herself an activist in the one-on-one plática. Her reflective journey changed throughout the plática. During the community plática, she stated, “Okay, I feel better, [laughs], really calling myself an activist because, you’re right, existence is like a form of activism. I realize that like, I partake in activism

a lot more than I actually give myself the credit for.” Eva used the following words to describe her activism: education, hesitancy, rebellion, justice, and responsibility. She remembered her entry point to activism in college through student organizations and feeling the need to educate others through programs and print. She recalled this sense of urgency and responsibility to stand on the right side of justice. She chose *hesitancy* because she was cautious to fully engage in activism that was “very in your face and vocal.” She did not have the headspace or capacity for that level of activism. Eva also mentioned:

I also like to be well-informed before engaging, and when there are issues that I’m not very familiar with, I’d rather read a book or watch a documentary about it before jumping into an action without knowing the elements at play.

Eva repeated she did not want to be part of what is coined *slacktivism*, where people only share curated social media posts discussing the issues and calling for justice, but not putting action behind those words.

Eva’s activism related to a variety of social issues. Eva described her activism as responsibility and justice. She mentioned all of these issues impacted her and the people she loved most directly. She felt strongest about women’s rights and gender equality issues, especially reproductive rights. Eva said, “I want to improve the world we’re living in and that we’ll leave behind for future generations.” She seemed to express a sense of hope, sharing:

I don’t think everybody in the world is ever going to view the world in the same way, but we could all be respectful. And we could all support and we could all be compassionate and those are things that drive me. I feel like if we could just set the bar as let’s all be compassionate and understanding and respectful of each other, we’ve already come a long way. But yeah, it’s hard.

Eva articulated the connection to her AfroLatinidad and activism by expressing she appreciated the “existence as resistance” option on the survey I distributed. She shared how simply identifying as AfroLatina was an act of activism and shared solidarity toward a movement trying to advocate for the existence of Blackness in Latinidad. Eva stated, “[When]

you're in spaces where they do the generalization of what . . . Latinos or Hispanics are, then you have to advocate for AfroLatinos, which have a different experience than from the stereotypical Latino or Hispanic experience." For Eva, making the conscious decision to embrace her curly hair, advocate for others, and educate her immediate family/community all connected her AfroLatinidad and activism.

Larimar's Narrative

Because my career allows me to you know, being an activist, it allows me to spread the awareness. . . . Being in the classroom and trying to teach students about the things that I never got to learn, while I was in high school. And just bringing more awareness to their identity, but pushing more the lens of like, criticality and intellect. . . . Because I was already a teacher, I wanted to like have opened up an [AfroLatine] club in the school and like, you know, inspire the Latinas, but more, you know, Black Latinos in the school to embrace their natural hair, but more like their culture.

Larimar (she/her) was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the United States when she was 6 years old. Because she was born on the island, she always recognized her nationality as Dominican. Larimar lived in the Bronx, New York the majority of her life, which she hated at the time. She shared:

I never wanted to be in the Bronx because there was too many Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Blacks. I wanted to be around the white people. I thought it was gonna be a little better. And I always wanted to be in Manhattan. Like I wanted to be where . . . the tall buildings were. I wanted to take the train, I wanted to do all of that.

Larimar explained her need to be around white people was connected to a belief that white people knew how to be successful and so she wanted to be around them. She said:

Esa son la gente que te van ayudar a superar, esa son las única gente que saben lo que están haciendo. So, you need to be around people like that. And now, realizing that the only people that helped me be where I am now are people that look just like me.

Larimar internalized these messages growing up and considered proximity to whiteness a form of success. Her family did not talk about race in relation to themselves, and Larimar stated that "being Black was nonexistent." However, Larimar's family talked about Black people and her

dark complexion. For example, because she and her family were born in the Dominican Republic, they resonated more with being “100% Dominican.” Growing up, Larimar was told, “No, we not Black. [chuckles] You know, we don’t associate with that.” As immigrants, they identified more with their nationality.

As Larimar reflected on her upbringing, she thought about other ways people mentioned or excluded race from conversations. She talked about receiving messages of blanqueamiento: “We were actually taught to clean our race . . . by marrying someone who’s, you know, lighter.” Larimar’s loved ones told her, “No te case con un prieto.” She received other messages from her family about her own skin color when they used anti-Black and racist nicknames for her like “Haitiana” because she had dark skin. If she was walking down the street, someone might think she was Black. Larimar described other statements her family would say, like, “Tu eres una negra fina” because her nose was not wide. Her family’s emphasis on white standards of beauty were evident because they referred to Larimar as a refined type of Black woman due to her European facial features.

College was a liberating experience for Larimar. In high school, she wanted to be in Manhattan with white people. In college, she attended a private predominantly white institution but readily realized she longed for community with others who looked like her or spoke Spanish. She described it as “Pero coño,” sharing, “I’m the only Black girl in this classroom. I was the only Black Latina, because it wasn’t just Black. I’m AfroLatina, like I speak Spanish. I have a cultura that I need to represent, and I identify with first.” Speaking Spanish played a crucial role in her identity as Latina, but more specifically as AfroLatina. She felt a bond to other Latine individuals through a shared language, which was important to her.

In college, Larimar started to embrace her natural and curly hair. Larimar shared, when growing up, “My mother was not gonna struggle with my curly hair, so she took me to the hair salon. We got a perm, straightened it, and I wore my hair straight for years.” This was how she felt most beautiful and comfortable for a long time. Larimar grew up thinking and conforming to “the idea of curly hair as ‘pelo malo’ as they call it.” But in college, Larimar asserted agency in embracing her curly hair. She described the curly hair movement, specifically Carolina Contreras’s (n.d.) blog “Miss Rizos²³” as a huge inspiration to her own identity as AfroLatina. She deeply appreciated Carolina’s authenticity and the way she embraced her Blackness through her curly hair journey. She was motivated to teach herself and learn more about the Afro side of Latinidad because “Black is not just African Americans.” Larimar added:

I think when I first learned about the term . . . I broke it apart, right? AfroLatina. And when I think of Afro, I think of Black roots, I think of my ancestors, I think about my complexion. And then, Latina goes to my language and my culture. And, you know, so, when I first heard about the term, I was like, “Oh, so that’s definitely me,” you know?

When she thought about her AfroLatina identity, Larimar described her curly hair journey as a critical moment in her life, and a process of unlearning about her hair, dark skin complexion, and dating. For example, she learned to love her kinky curls in their natural state and redefined beauty for herself.

While in college, Larimar joined a historically Latina sorority on campus and her sisters challenged her to think about her roots, culture, and history. These women supported and encouraged her natural hair journey. The Latina sorority played a critical part in her activism journey. For Larimar, joining a Latina sorority was her entry point to her activism through education and service. Larimar learned more about her social identities and how to help others do

²³ Carolina Contreras was a Dominican social entrepreneur and trailblazer who started a blog and opened curly hair salons to “challenge beauty standards, elevating the conversation at the intersection of hair and social impact” (Contreras, n.d., para. 6).

the same through programs and community service that aimed to advance the Latino community. Another influential part of her collegiate experience was taking up a minor in Spanish. Until then, she had not had a Black or Latine professor. Adding a Spanish minor provided a more holistic view of her Latinidad history, ancestry, experiences, and culture. Her minor also helped her reconnect with her native language, which continued to play a part in her AfroLatina identity.

Larimar served as an educational leader in the same predominantly Latino community where she grew up. She shared that her career allowed her to “be an activist” and “spread the awareness.” Although she sometimes engaged in protesting, writing demands, social media activism, voting, participating in existence as resistance, and writing to elected officials, her main mode of activism was through her career as a school administrator at a high school.

Larimar organized an AfroLatine student club and strived to teach a holistic curriculum that catered to the diverse student body. One of her favorites was the Latinx Celebration Month programs and initiatives, which “allow the students to represent something of their AfroLatinidad or their Latinx culture.” She shared, “One day, we had students wear a traditional item from their country.”

There have been a variety of social issues for Larimar’s activism. She identified racial justice, education access, LGBT issues, women’s rights, and sexual assault awareness as important to her. She explained how some of her students were recent immigrants from countries like the Dominican Republic, and she had several conversations with young boys about their behavior and language around young girls, pointing out the cultural differences and norms in the United States. She also deeply cared about labor laws, immigration, and housing reform. Immigration was “obvious” because of her own immigration story but also because she worked closely with undocumented students in her school and tried to stay current on immigration laws

and policies related to college access. For Larimar, “An activist is someone who not only spreads the awareness of a particular theme, topic, or something that interests them. But that person is doing it every day or consistently.” Larimar’s consistent fighting toward a higher purpose, empowering others, and making changes to progress all students forward through education is what Larimar called her “why” or purpose for her activism; it sustained her through her career in education.

Larimar believed her AfroLatinidad and activism connected through the more inclusive Latinx Celebration Month programming and being her most authentic self and role modeling this behavior to her students. Larimar shared, “It’s crazy, how I pronounce my name now than how I did back then, super different.” Larimar said her name in Spanish, the way her parents intended it to be pronounced, and then repeated it again how it could be pronounced in English. She stated:

Something so small, but it really makes a difference because the minute I open my mouth, people like their eyes, you know, como que, they communicating with their eyes like, “Oh, she’s Dominican.” You know? I think . . . it’s important for me to make it aware like, I’m AfroLatina.

Larimar’s AfroLatina and activist identities were deeply connected to her career in education, her goals in supporting educational access, and role modeling her most authentic self with her students. Larimar said, “So, activism for me comes with feeling, with purpose. It starts with working with people who are younger than you, the youth, the community.”

Liz’s Narrative

[School administrators] even put me in [English as a second language classes] because I had a bit of a lisp in certain words I couldn’t say in English. It was because my Spanish accent was so strong at the time, [laughs] but . . . I did always feel a little bit left out. I always felt a little different, and even my mom would send me to [the Dominican Republic] a lot, but I felt like I wasn’t really Dominican enough to be in [the Dominican Republic]. Then in America, not American enough to be American, so I felt in a weird place, but my comfort always laid in the Black community. I felt accepted there, so it was easier for me to identify as Black.

Liz (she/her) was a multiethnic woman who lived in New York. She was born in the Dominican Republic. Her mother was from the Dominican Republic and her father was Puerto Rican and Cuban. At the time of the plática, Liz identified herself as AfroLatina, but this was not always the case. Her identity had been a journey. Liz immigrated to the United States when she was 4 years old. She moved a lot but mostly spent her childhood in Michigan. She attended a predominantly white elementary school and was enrolled in English as a second language classes immediately. Liz expressed how being in these classes made her feel left out.

Growing up, Liz recalled her family not really mentioning race. She remembered the racist jokes she sometimes used to hear. Liz stated, “[Racist jokes were] said so much that it does stick.” She acknowledged there was a culture of anti-Black and anti-Haitian in the Dominican Republic led by the government. She spoke about messages of “pelo malo” but concluded, “My pelo is not malo, it is still beautiful.” These governmental campaigns were part of an effort to “mejorar la raza.” And so, these familial jokes extended to topics like dating darker skinned men. For example, in the Dominican Republic, she was best friends with a Haitian boy whose skin was darker than her and her family. Liz’s family would joke and say, “Tu estas enamorado de ese tipo?” Liz never took the jokes seriously, but the message was clear: she should not date boys with darker skin. She stated:

I feel I wasn’t as affected as others might have been because when it was mentioned, it was jokingly, and it wasn’t taken seriously. If ever had a serious topic about that it’d be like, “You do what makes you happy.” Then at the end, they do a joke, like, “But you do know it’s better to have pelo bueno que pelo malo” . . . or blah, blah, blah. Something like that. It was annoying but it wasn’t serious. It was there but it wasn’t dominating the conversation either.

In high school, Liz continued to experience isolation and being othered. By this point, she had moved to upstate New York. Liz had always been a quiet, hardworking, and dedicated student. She recalled an interaction with one of her advanced placement (AP) teachers. Liz had

earned an A on a 3-page essay for her AP English class and the AP teacher said to Liz, “I loved your essay, but it didn’t sound like you. Did you get help on it? Did you miss citing other sources?” Liz explained:

It wasn’t an expectation she had of me to be able to deliver such quality work. It was like she assumed it wasn’t me. I’m not sure if it was based off . . . my nationality or because I was quiet, but it felt like she was stereotyping me in a way.

Racialized experiences, such as this one, made Liz reflect critically on her race and Blackness.

High school in upstate New York was a monumental time for Liz. Not only did she realize how she was perceived by others, like her AP teacher, but it also became an entry point into her activism. She participated in a “Slut Walk” demonstration and protest during her junior year of high school. Liz recalled this event as the first time she realized she was an activist, sharing:

It was like, my junior year of high school. I also grew up in the church [chuckles]. Sometimes, you can be a little closed off to certain things like that, showing your body and stuff like that. The whole point was that does not giving anybody the right to take control or abuse you because you’re presenting in a certain way. That was the first time of me not caring how this would affect my Christian image, but more so caring for how this affects the victims of those situations.

Liz expressed how the demonstration was outside of her comfort zone but something she participated in because she wanted to be in solidarity with members of her community who were affected by sexual assault and violence. During the plática, Liz mentioned she was conflicted because of her Christianity on whether to participate in this event and spread awareness about sexual assault and violence. She chose to participate because this was an issue bigger than herself and impacted women like her. Her advocacy rose to the occasion in support of women. Liz described her advocacy as standing up for what is right and spreading awareness about issues that impacted her community.

Liz attended a predominately white 4-year private institution in New York. She found refuge in the Black community in college, which was enriching. She shared:

I feel like that was where I was able to discover my love for other Caribbean countries and understanding the Black culture there. That's where I discovered so much love that I have for Jamaicans, all of that because I was able to be integrated with them more. Also, I used to hate getting my hair blow-dried. My skull couldn't take it. I'm tender-headed, so I've always been fake natural, but in college, I learned how to actually take care of my hair because of my friends that were taking care of their hair, and most of the time they're Black. It's always been easier to just go that way, it's where I felt the most welcomed.

Liz rarely straightened her hair, so it was usually in its natural state, which she described as "fake natural." Liz also shared a story of an interaction with police that contributed to her racial and ethnic identity development as Black and AfroLatina. She had a Honda in college with very dark tinted windows. She sometimes lent the car to her Black male friend who had a darker complexion than her. On more than one occasion, the police stopped her friend about the tinted windows or accused him of stealing the car. Liz described one time when the police called her:

I'm like, "It's my car, I told him he could drive." So, it's like I've had experiences where I've been able to understand that yes, I'm Black, I'm Afro-Latina, but there's a privilege to this light skin and being a female as well.

She reflected critically and realized the differences between how others treated her Black male friend and how others treated her as someone who looked Latina in society.

Liz explained she did not identify with the Latino community at her institution until she joined a historically Latina sorority. She shared, "I didn't find an AfroLatina community until I joined [sorority] actually when I had friends that were either in the org or outside of the org. I was able to create community that way." Liz also mentioned her involvement in a campaign during her senior year of college, which students of color led, demanding a multicultural living and learning community on campus, among other demands. She participated in some of the programs and protests on campus. She was overwhelmed with how much support the campaign received. She also mentioned she noticed some racial profiling by campus police during

demonstrations, which further highlighted the criminalization of activism by people of color. Liz shared the campus created the multicultural living and learning community a few years after she graduated. Liz engaged in some of the protests and demonstrations in college and also participated in social media activism, signed petitions, and boycotted.

After college, Liz's activism shifted and her understanding of her racial and ethnic identity as AfroLatina continued to grow. For Liz, AfroLatinidad meant strength and caring for others and embracing her multiethnic identities. She described her father as Puerto Rican and Cuban but she "was never really involved with that." She shared, "I'm real Dominican, real platano." However, she identified as AfroLatina instead of AfroDominicana to recognize the multiple nationalities she held. Liz said:

It is a part of my family history that my father is proud of and did not want us to forget. Identifying as AfroLatina opposed to AfroDominicana stems from this distinction as well. Not wanting to forget what others might consider miniscule due to the most recent generations being Dominican. AfroLatina allows me to embrace all three cultures without the judgement or questions of others.

When discussing her conceptualization of AfroLatinidad, Liz made it clear she understood she held some privilege in being a lighter skin Black or AfroLatina woman. She expressed, "I don't want to take away from the experience of someone who's African American but I know it's different . . . because of other factors like colorism."

Liz defined her activism as support, awareness, and advocacy. In the plática, Liz mentioned how she identified as an activist at the time of the plática but wished she could do more. While in college, she was involved in protesting, boycotting, voting, and contacting elected officials. At the time of the study, she was living in a post-COVID-19 global pandemic world and working from home. Liz mostly used social media and virtual ways to engage in activism. She shared:

I identify as an activist because I do take the proper steps to boycott, to stand up for the rights that I feel are being forgotten about, things that are being paid attention to and brought to light. I'd rather advocate for what's right regardless of how people might look at me and might feel about me. I feel like being an activist is being able to stand up for someone who doesn't have the voice or the power to stand up. Or even just awareness. That's why I do a lot of social media activism.

For example, Liz boycotted Amazon proudly and also emphasized making financial donations to organizations. She used social media to repost awareness campaigns, sign petitions, and stay informed on issues of racial justice, environmental concerns, police reform, immigration, and sexual assault and violence awareness. Liz believed these issues had been normalized in society, sharing, "People [would] rather leave [the status quo] as it is." She further explained how growing up Christian and living in the Dominican Republic around animals and nature helped her become environmentally conscious and played a critical part of her beliefs and identity as an activist. She shared:

I feel like that's what a lot of the Church embodies, like being able to support and be there for others regardless of what their background is, what they do or don't do is just being there . . . lending a helping hand. I feel like growing up with that mentality, it became easier to want to defend and be there for those that didn't have the voice or the resources to do that.

Mercedes's Narrative

I also say I'm Black. Like because sometimes people can't contextualize what it means to be an AfroDominican. I do say Black Latina . . . I prefer AfroDominican 'cause I think it's at the core of Afro, of African, right? Which is where we originate from. Dominicans are not African Americans. We are African Dominican, right, if we wanna kinda use it in that way. And then Dominican specifically, because when you say Latinidad, it's such a big breath. . . . AfroDominican is more kinda centralized, to who we are, especially as Dominicans . . . I think Dominicans are all raised with this like, deep pride for being a Dominican.

Mercedes (she/her) was born and raised in NYC. Both her mother and father were born on the island of the Dominican Republic and immigrated to the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. Mercedes was raised by her mother, although her father was somewhat present. Mercedes's mother worked hard to put her through Catholic school. Mercedes described

her mom as emotionally distant; thus, Mercedes referred to her eldest sister as her “second mom.” Mercedes’s father was politically involved in the Dominican Republic and held some anti-Haitian perspectives and “subtle bigotry.”

Throughout the plática, Mercedes made references to the skin color of her family members: mother (“dark skin”), father (“a little fairer skin”), eldest sister (“more fair-skin with green eyes”), and another sister (“dark skinned” like Mercedes). Mercedes described being perceived as Black or African American, and identified herself racially as a Black Latina. Some of the pet names her family gave her were “negrita” or “morenita.” Her household hardly discussed race but there were messages about being proud to be Dominican no matter what color they were: “Tu eres Dominicana primero.” Mercedes said:

That’s what I knew Dominican to be. So, it was news to me that there was like a, oh wait, what? ‘Cause you’re lighter and oh, you get treated differently, oh, shit, you know, that was a little aha moment that I had kind of growing up.

Attending Catholic schools in NYC fortified Mercedes’s sense of faith and belief in God. This was also an illuminating time for her identity development. Growing up in Harlem, she was surrounded by many African Americans, which influenced her identity and Blackness. In her Catholic middle school, she recalled being around other Dominicans and shared, “They didn’t look like me.” Mercedes described that her hair texture was different; even her “Brownness” was different than theirs. Mercedes reflected about the first time she recognized her race in the fifth grade and one of her good friends told her, “You’re not Dominican, you’re Black.” Mercedes also remembered a time when her mother told her the African American girls in school would play with her but not with Mercedes’s eldest sister who had a lighter skin tone. Mercedes stated, “I think over my lifetime, I disassociated from Latinidad because of that . . . largely because I felt like I was never considered Latina . . . in their eyes.”

Mercedes attended and graduated from a 4-year public institution in New York. In college, Mercedes believed she could “create an image for [herself].” Mercedes said, “Damn, I was so empowered on [campus]. I didn’t even realize, ‘cause everywhere I looked I thought we were the majority, you know, until you saw stats and it felt different.” Mercedes flourished most through her involvement and leadership on campus. In her first year, she joined the leadership of a student-led council for the Educational Opportunity Program. Mercedes also worked in residential life for 4 years, engaged in undergraduate research on students of low socioeconomic backgrounds, and coauthored a book on diversity in higher education with a senior academic leader from the institution years later. She credited her leadership in student government as her entry point into activism.

Mercedes mentioned one of the most transformational cocurricular experiences was joining a historically Black sorority. Because she felt disassociated from Latinidad, she craved a space “to discover this sense of Blackness. Like, where did this come from? Like, what does it mean for Mercedes?” This craving was especially true because she observed a clear disconnect between the Latino and Black student organizations on campus, who never collaborated.

Mercedes was unsure why it was this way, stating:

Damn, you know, and I’m in the crux of both. Right? Like, I love the [Latinx Student Organization] for what they do and then . . . I’m here with all these other [African American, African, and Caribbean] organizations, but why are they split up? I just think it spoke generally of just how our experiences [are] in America.

While Mercedes was in college, her eldest sister was also trying to understand her Blackness. It was through her eldest sister that she first heard of the term *AfroLatinidad*.

After college, Mercedes fully blossomed into her AfroDominican identity and leadership in activism. Mercedes preferred the terms AfroDominican, Black Latina, and Black to describe her race and ethnicity at the time of the study. She commented how growing up in a Dominican

household provided her with this immense sense of pride in her Dominican culture, which she still preserved.

When thinking about her AfroDominican identity, Mercedes shared her natural hair, strength, and resilience came to mind. Mercedes was deeply affected when her eldest sister did a “big chop.” She explained, “Oh yeah, this is our experience . . . Society doesn’t or didn’t at that time embrace natural looks, let alone our mother, right? Looking at us like we crazy for being natural y eso cabellito?” Being AfroDominican to Mercedes also meant strength and resilience. She went on to share that through colonization, white supremacy made them “feel inferior” but in this lifetime she chose to acknowledge how “Black people reign supreme.” Mercedes stated confidently that she felt “most powerful” when she was in her community, sharing, “That’s the part of the Afro for me.” When she thought about her AfroDominican identity, she also thought about herself as “transcending race.” She shared how in this lifetime she chose to be a Black Latina so she “[could] be part of both playing fields” and build greater solidarity among these communities. She used to have an “odio” for white people and the harm they have done in the world, yet she attempted to transcend race to “see beyond it.” She shared:

See beyond it so that I could really see it for what it was. And at the end of the day, what I understood is that [white] supremacy is a functionality of fear. These people are just afraid that if we’re at our omnipotent . . . They feel that we would do to them what they’ve done to us, right? On some James Baldwin²⁴ shit.

In terms of her activism, Mercedes preferred the term *leader*. She believed in collaboration, empathy, and understanding. She described her leadership as understanding and empathizing with others with care. She engaged in organizing, protesting, participating in social

²⁴ In a New Yorker article, James Baldwin (1962) wrote, “and Black has become a beautiful color—not because it is loved but because it is feared. As they watch Black men elsewhere rise, the promise held out, at last, that they may walk the earth with the authority with which white men walk, protected by the power that white men shall have no longer, is enough, and more than enough, to empty prisons and pull God down from Heaven” (para. 40).

media activism, and petitioning. Mercedes also shared, with some hesitation, what she did not want her activism to be. She shared the story of her uncle who was a leftist writer in the Dominican Republic and was killed. She stated, “I won’t be martyred for my truth, if anything, like the world will hear it and that’s how we’re gonna do it differently this time, you know?” This mindset motivated Mercedes, especially recognizing the amazing efforts she had been involved in after college.

Mercedes held various roles that spoke to her commitment to “being activated in a purpose that’s beyond yourself” and understanding “why God put [her] here.” Mercedes went from politics to community organizing to art and culture. All these opportunities centered on some of the social issues that tied directly to her leadership: racial justice, housing reform, immigration, and women’s rights. Immediately after graduating, she joined a training institute centering on political affairs. She was a participant of the *People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond* training and was featured in a public service documentary. She worked as an art and events curator. Mercedes also worked for an apartment management company in their legal department at the time of the study. She aspired to become a lawyer one day and “be a part of the team that rewrites the Constitution or annuls it all completely.”

Nini’s Narrative

It’s my duty to then know what’s going on and care about what’s going on and make sure that that doesn’t get ignore[d]. . . . If I’m gonna claim that those are my people and that’s where my heritage and culture is from, then I gotta be in some way, I think, involved and caring about it, and uplifting the voices of those people. Because I very much associated with being not just AfroSalvadoran, but Salvadoran in general. And I think it becomes doubly important, considering the erasure of Black Salvadorans.

Nini (she/her) identified herself as a cisgender AfroSalvadoran woman. Nini indicated on the survey she was perceived as racially Black or African American. Nini’s family, her racialized experiences, and schooling all played critical roles in her identity as an AfroSalvadoran

organizer. Her mother's family was from El Salvador—a culture in which she was fully immersed growing up. Her mother and grandparents immigrated to the United States when she was just 10 years old because of a civil war in their country. Nini's grandfather was very involved politically. Ethnically, Nini always resonated with being Salvadoran based on her lived experiences with the culture, customs, and traditions, and even the politics her family spoke about. However, she also felt more like second generation because of her Americanized upbringing. She prided herself in speaking Spanish with her grandparents and emphasized her close relationship with her grandfather, whom she called affectionately: “The homie, my ride-or-die.” Nini did not mention her father often but noted he was African American.

Nini reflected back to elementary school when she had a colorblind mindset. As Nini got older, she remembered feeling a rivalry between her and her cousins about who was the “most perfect, the most beautiful.” Nini had darker skin than her cousins and when she thought back at what pet names their family assigned them, she was shocked. Although her cousins were given nicknames like *princesa* and *reina*, Nini shared, “I felt like my nicknames were entirely based on race or my racialized features like *colochita*, which is like curly hair. *Despeinada*, which was like the . . . more mean one.” Nini stated, “I think there was this sensation of like, even amongst . . . people who I'm very close to, there's still that otherness.”

Nini is a Los Angeles native. She claimed belongingness to the entire Los Angeles county because she moved a lot within it. In middle school, Nini lived in a whiter neighborhood where she saw a clear racial binary. She described that experience, sharing, “[It was] really difficult and really odd because I'm AfroLatina by mix, so my dad is African American, and my mom is like *Mestiza Latina*.” She described the few Latinos in her school, saying, “I guess the typical, archetype of American Latinos. . . . Their parents were immigrants from Mexico, first of

all. So, not the Central American experience I knew.” She felt like she was categorized as African American in her schools. Nini and her grandfather had a much darker skin tone than most people in their family. In both instances, she sometimes felt “othered.” This othering made her realize “how nuanced race is and the differences of it.” She recalled an incident when she was about 13 years old where she passed by a street vendor selling machetes and knives, sharing:

These two kids kind of lighter-skinned Latinos . . . were making jokes about how they could use the knives to defend themselves against Black people. And they looked at me and I was like, “Mm, okay.” Clearly uncomfortable cause they were saying in Spanish . . . they thought I didn’t understand Spanish. And so, when I seemed . . . confused and scared, they looked at me like, “Oh,” and they walked away.

Nini reflected on this racialized experience and shared she was “not just Salvadoran anymore, [but] AfroSalvadoran.” She realized the nuances in Latinidad and stated, “I just didn’t feel like we’re . . . in the same group clearly.” Nini realized there was a lack of acceptance by lighter/whiter Latinos. Thus, embracing her AfroSalvadoran identity was where she felt most welcomed and included.

In high school, Nini had a quinceañera and her chamberlain was her boyfriend, who happened to be Black. Nini remembered her extended family making anti-Black jokes or saying Nini would follow in her mother’s footsteps and only date Black men. Nini described high school as a transformational time, not only in her identity as AfroSalvadoran, but also in her activism. She credited her mother and grandfather for role modeling and including her in their activism. For example, Nini remembered going to Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador meetings—an organization dedicated to standing in solidarity with the working class in El Salvador—with her mother. Nini’s mother was also involved in the 1970s feminist movement and, at the time of the study, was a teacher and involved as a union representative for the school district. Nini loved going with her mom to meetings and reading books and educating herself on the issues. She appreciated the debates on the budget, the advocacy about working conditions,

and discussions on whether or not to strike. During her last month of high school, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade* and her school organized speak outs. Nini said:

I made really sure to emphasize that . . . this is going to affect Black and Latinos and you know, people of color very differently than how it's gonna affect more affluent people, maybe more, white people just because of like . . . that's how the world is. Those differences are . . . literally everywhere.

Nini went on to say that she would not have had this level of critical and analytical thinking about social issues if it were not for identifying as AfroSalvadoran, which widened her lens tremendously.

The murder of George Floyd was also a transformational time for Nini. She engaged in protests as a form of grieving and healing. Nini shared:

[It] was just really painful. So then going to protest and . . . being able to be loud and angry in a space that was also supported by other people being loud and angry, was like a good way to process the grief.

This transformational period was during the early time of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which also made her concerned because she did not want to get her family sick by engaging in in-person protests. As a result, she engaged in phone banking and politics. She also joined a political club in high school that advocated for the elimination of police in Los Angeles schools. She attended town halls and council meetings and spoke about the impact of this issue on students of color. She also advocated that the funding could be used for the arts in schools.

As Nini reflected on her predominantly white middle and high school settings, she described it as limiting. Nini, at the time of the study, was a first-year student at an HBCU in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She found refuge in the AfroLatine club on campus and resonated more with the term *organizer*. She described her role as an organizer using the words *love*, *community*, and *ancestors*. She said love was central to her efforts and impact. She quoted Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1968), who said, "All revolutionary acts are guided by great feelings of

love” (p. 398). She emphasized love and care for her community and wanted to better it. She explained she selected the term *ancestors* by noting the historical contexts of key social issues (e.g., racial justice, education access, police reform) and how it grounds her activism-related behaviors. She reminded herself she was continuing the work of giants and her efforts were important.

Nini credited her advocacy for educational access to her mother. She believed racial justice and police reform were closely connected. She remembered hearing stories from her grandfather about police harming working class communities in El Salvador. She mentioned a priest by the name of Father Romero who was very vocal against the Salvadorian government and espoused all are equal under God. Mercenaries murdered Father Romero during one of his masses, which hearing these stories from her grandfather deeply affected her. She remembered thinking, “Maybe police are not our allies . . . if they’re going to actively harm our communities.” These concerns were transferred to educational experiences with police presence on campus, “and they were never a good presence.” She believed the police criminalized and profiled Brown and Black children, which further impacted her feelings toward them. She voiced her concerns to school administrators and demanded change. Her organizing continued at the HBCU she attended. Although Nini was only one semester into her collegiate journey at the time of the study, she was hopeful for the next few years and had a vision for herself. She was already part of a campaign that demanded the institution divest from militarism. Nini explained:

Being AfroSalvadoran has definitely made this work attractive to me just because . . . I feel like I have a personal familial connection to how, you know, the United States’ . . . militarism affects other countries. Because like, that’s how it happened to El Salvador and that’s what happens to countries literally Mexico or Central America, South America, the Caribbean. Like, that’s the story that unites, I think, all of the Latino countries.

For Nini, being AfroSalvadorian meant resilience, confidence, and a form of empowerment and strength. At its foundation, Nini conceptualized her AfroSalvadorian identity

by articulating her race and ethnicity through her parents' racial and ethnic backgrounds. Nini felt an overwhelming feeling of national pride when conceptualizing her AfroSalvadorian identity, highlighting her Blackness in Latinidad and illuminating her national pride in El Salvador. Nini articulated how she rejected the Latine/a/o label and exclaimed the community is not a monolith. Although she recognized a shared language, she highlighted the diversity in food, culture, music, and dialect. She stated how she did not feel like the "archetype of American Latinos" she saw in her community who were mainly immigrants from Mexico and had varying experiences from the Central American experience she knew. She not only understood these cultural nuances, but Nini also recognized the "othering" she felt by having darker skin tone than her Latine/a/o peers. By identifying as AfroSalvadoran, she honored her family's background and also acknowledged her Black identity. Embracing her Afro identity contributed to her perspective for her activism: a motivation to fight for a global community of oppressed peoples.

Quisqueya's Narrative

Everything worthwhile is done together . . . You know, iron sharpens iron, two heads are better than one. And the more people, you know, strengthen in numbers, el pueblo unidos jamas será vencido.

Quisqueya (he/him) was born and raised in Queens, New York. Both of his parents were from the Dominican Republic, a nationality he fully embraced and appreciated. When discussing the messages he received while growing up about his race or ethnicity, Quisqueya recalled, "My family has always brought the Latino parts through the music, through the food, to the culture, but that Afro side wasn't present for me." He then stated:

I feel like I've always lived in this in-between. I felt like I'm not Latino enough, I'm too Black to be Latino. And then when it comes to being Black, I feel like I'm not Black enough because maybe I don't know how to do the electric slide.

Living in the in-between meant being perceived as Black based on his dark skin despite sharing a language and culture with the Latine community.

Quisqueya attended NYC public schools his entire life. For elementary school, he attended his neighborhood school where he estimated that almost 80% of the population was Latine/a/o. In middle school, he traveled 45 minutes each way to a predominantly white school and was one of two Black students, a clear contrast from his elementary school and beloved neighborhood. As one of the only Black kids, Quisqueya believed the way he looked was weaponized against him. For example, he recalled a traumatic experience when being Black rendered him the point person for educating others on slavery. He also shared:

I was reading my middle school yearbook the other day and somebody wrote, “Go back to picking cotton.” And so, like those types of situations and things like that . . . made me hate that identity and not wanna have it . . . I remember even thinking of when I was little, like, why am I dirty? Like, why can’t I wash this off? . . . Middle-schoolers are very mean, and they were on my head, and so I was not trying to be any types of Black like Dominican, Dominican, Dominican, Dominican.

Racist behavior and actions from his peers, like the yearbook incident, made Quisqueya hate being associated with being Black and hate his skin color so much that he wished he could wash it away. He stood more firm on his Dominican identity than identifying as Black.

Quisqueya was an honor student throughout middle school and eventually got accepted into a prestigious specialized high school in NYC. He met many ethnically and racially diverse students at the high school, which excited him. Yet, Quisqueya also heard explicit anti-Black sentiments from his light-skinned Dominican family members. Quisqueya remembered one of his aunts saying things like, “Make sure you don’t bring any Black friends home” or “Haitians shower in the street and have diseases.” Quisqueya could not make sense why his aunt would say such anti-Black sentiments to him as a dark-skinned Dominican man who was perceived as Black or African American. He thought, “Looking at this Black man, telling him not to bring any Black friends’ home.” He chuckled while saying this statement and exclaimed that it did not make any sense.

During his sophomore year of high school, Quisqueya joined a Latino youth program that coordinated several college and career pathway experiences for high school students. This was a transformative program in which he was able to further explore his racial identity as Black. This program also encouraged him to lead a student organization developed for youth leaders to dismantle school segregation in NYC. His activism began by fighting for education access, equity, and racial justice. Quisqueya was also part of a lawsuit against NYC that highlighted the disparities among public-school athletic teams due to racial segregation. In 2018, 17,000 Black and Latine students did not have access to sports in NYC. He acknowledged the privilege of having a flight simulator, more than 40 sports teams, and a pool in his prestigious high school and wanted to advocate for others who did not have similar access. During the 65th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, he and other students created and distributed over 10,000 newspapers around NYC, sharing student stories about hypersegregated schools. He was even a featured speaker at the protest they held at the end of the day.

At the time of the study, Quisqueya was a junior at an HBCU. He intentionally chose an HBCU, sharing:

[I] wanted to be in a Black space because throughout my high schooling, I probably had one Black teacher and she was a gym teacher. I probably saw one Black staff, and they were the people helping after school or the security guards. Never really saw people in the classroom, and never really had those types of aspirations. Like, I knew Black people existed because of Martin Luther King, but like, you know. And so, my idea was I want to be in a Black space surrounded by Black people, and also start to understand that the diaspora is large and big, and that Black people exist all around the world.

His experience at an HBCU afforded him the opportunity to take classes like Latin American politics, which strengthened his Afro identity and empowered his career aspirations. Being at an HBCU allowed him to “accept, embrace, and celebrate [his] AfroLatine identity.” At his institution, he studied political science for his major and Spanish as a minor. As part of his degree, he started a thesis on anti-Blackness in the Dominican Republic. He indicated in the

upcoming year; he would begin a law program with the goal of spreading Black consciousness through Latin America.

Quisqueya's journey to AfroLatinidad led him to identify as Afro-Latine; specifically highlighting the "e" as a gender-neutral stance that respects the linguistics of the Spanish language. He defined AfroLatinidad as a "vibrant" and "colorful" identity that encompasses the cultural, political, and spiritual lived experiences of African descendants in the Americas. To Quisqueya, AfroLatinidad is about trailblazing, love, family, and collaboration. He described his Afro-Latine identity as one of resilience and resistance. He passionately shared:

There are aspects to being AfroLatino that are so likened to that of just being Black across the diaspora that. . . I feel like it's a culture that not only is of resistance, but like you have to be resilient, and you have to be resistant, or else you're not gonna make it.

Quisqueya shared that being Afro-Latine meant widening his lens and his understanding of the intersectional world. He expressed:

And so, in the same way, I'm Afro and Latine, there are so many other intersections that exist between people. And it . . . demystifies and decolonizes and like, disorients the usual, like Black and white. You can be one thing or the other, you know, you can be all the things. I fill out Black as my race and Latino as my ethnicity.

Quisqueya stated he conceptualized his race based on his "phenotype" and "features." He shared, "When a person looks at me, I think they look at me and perceive a Black man. And so, that's how I conceptualize my race."

Quisqueya's activism was not only motivated by his desire to spread empathy in the world but also based in his Afro-Latine experiences as a dark skin man who grew up in a low-income household. He shared:

I know what it looks like to be at the edge, but still know that there's hope, and people to look out for . . . who want to invest in you, and want to believe in you. That's why I do my work. And I do the work that I do because I hope that we can build a better world.

Quisqueya's Afro-Latine and activist identities were deeply intertwined, focusing on education access, raising Black consciousness, and engaging in racial justice. Quisqueya was involved in everything from organizing to boycotting to participating in social media activism. He described how his activism and the social issues he engaged with evolved. For example, he initially started with education access and moved toward abolition. Quisqueya shared:

Oftentimes, when we talk about abolition, we talk about it as just tearing something down, but it's also about creating things anew. . . . We're always in the act of abolishing things in our lives, without even knowing it. And so . . . for me, that's transitioned into how do we understand abolition? And how do we make other people understand abolition, because police brutality is something that we just cannot continue to live under, and our people cannot continue to suffer under, right? More recently, I feel like my interest has been gravitating towards Latin American politics, how messed up the region is, and how the U.S. has had a hand in all of that. My main focus has always just been history, history, history, and how do we get history to our people, so that they can understand that?

As Quisqueya worked on his bachelor's degree, he also found time to volunteer and serve his community. At the time of the study, Quisqueya was involved in an intergenerational movement focused on providing legal services for youth. This movement is the same reason why he chose to revitalize the Afro-Latine club on campus to mentor, lead, foster community, and leave a legacy on campus. He shared:

I see myself as being a mentor and I feel like reading and doing all the things that I've done in activism has led me to be a better person, has helped me to become more self-actualized. And self-actualization is nothing if I'm not in better communion with the world.

Part of this self-actualization challenged Eurocentric ideologies by locking his hair, attending an HBCU, and fighting toward justice for marginalized communities.

Rio's Narrative

I understood when I was [a] child that the schools were reproducing the racism. The most explicit way to reproduce racism was through the lack of counter-narratives and role models about African diaspora in Colombia. Hence, I . . . [never heard] how crucial . . . Black people [were] to build the nation that we have today . . . Fortunately, my mother's teaching and persistent support was key, because she reminded her children how

beautiful, powerful, and smart they were. For example, I remember that my mother told me that my skin was so powerful that could bright with the sun. In that sense, I learned how to love myself, my hair, my identity as a Black child. I love my hair. I have never used like, alisantes . . . even though I was in a white predominant culture that was trying to modify who I am. But I've found a lot of support in my mother.

Rio (she/her) was born and raised in Colombia. She described, "I am [a] Black woman, with multiple intersections, being woman, being victim of the war in my country, [and] belong[ing] to a family who was being impoverished for multiple generations. First generation in the United States." As a child, Rio was displaced due to violence in her country that forced her family to move away from extended family and to a "predominantly white town." There, white communities, white leaders, and white culture, which were very conservative and valued whiteness and Spanish heritage, surrounded her. Rio recalled a time she was playing with her friends in the street and some children called her siblings and her "negros chocoanos." Rio explained that "chocoanos" referenced individuals from a state located on the Pacific Coast of Colombia, which is predominantly Black. Rio stated, "Those children were reminding us that we did not belong to that town, that our Blackness made noise in that society." From a young age, Rio proudly expressed she was "una mujer negra." Her family was instrumental in the positive ways she viewed herself in society, regardless of the messages she received in school. Rio's mother instilled a strong sense of pride in her Black skin, hair, and features. Rio mentioned, "My mother taught us to feel proud of our heritage, such as being tied to Chocó."

Rio stated, "I see the academia, the universities in my country, like the way to reproduce racism." However, she still attended said institutions. Rio's higher education journey had its foundation in Colombia, where she received both her bachelor's and master's degrees. She recounted a research project in college that was transformational, sharing:

I study in a public university my undergraduate, so yes it influences a lot my activism, but mainly because I was working in a research project, where I needed to travel to some Black communities. And when I was speaking . . . with students, I realized . . . the

silence, the hidden aspect. For example, some children expressed that their primary language was different than Spanish, but the teachers did not understand the double effort they were doing to learn mathematics in a different language. It showed how the education system creates obstacles rather than increasing and maximizing a student's potential and multiple skills. And, yeah, I decided . . . to raise my voice to find community, to try to understand these problems. It's not easy to solve, but at least we have the possibility to talk.

For a long time, Rio identified the social issues she engaged in through her activism were racial justice, education access, and women's rights. In Colombia, protesting was a common way to "raise our voices." She affirmed she could not stand by when some were gaining a lot while others were not, sharing, "[Many were] losing our dignity, our knowledge, our names, our linguistic values." For example, Rio protested, signed petitions, strategized using social media activism, and wrote demands to the government to correct how the Colombian Census was conducted, which caused the erasure of many Black people. She worked with many groups in Colombia to advocate for an update to the Census because she understood the impact on quality of life that the Census had on public policies and immigration laws for Black communities.

Through both pláticas, Rio connected her Black identity to her activism efforts. Examples included the Census advocacy/demands, her move to the United States to study AfroLatinidad, and her future intentions to move back to Colombia to contribute to her society and advance the voices of marginalized communities. She described her activism as pain, collective effort, sisterhood, and belonging, which were terms that also related to her Black identity. She said:

I feel like our main motivation is our constant pain that we have been suffering . . . over years, decades. The past is not the past. Our ancestors are here. Still are crying. So, because of this is the constant pain and abuses and violence, and because our ancestors tell us to fight for our freedom. Activism is the way to continue with this legacy and the best way is through a collective mechanism with friends, with sisters, with other communities . . . in order to like . . . try to raise our voice and show that we are not enjoying how we are living.

Rio explained the terminology she used to identify herself in the United States was different from how she would identify in Colombia. In Colombia, there are different

categorizations for how Black communities identify themselves, based on cultural and linguistic variations such as Raizales, Palenqueros, Afro-descendientes, Comunidades Negras, or AfroCimarronajes. In Colombia, and sometimes in the United States, she identified as AfroCimarrona. Cimarrones is a word Colombians have been reclaiming. Rio explained:

It was a word for Black people in Colombia during the slave process that when they escape, they were called Cimarrones like . . . the same way that some labors . . . treated some animals. But currently, this word has a different meaning. Black people . . . self-recognize with that concept because . . . we feel that all the time we are trying to achieve our freedoms.

In the United States, Rio sometimes identified as AfroLatina, which was more mainstream compared to Latin America. Centering her Black identity and African ancestry was at the root of it all. She explained, “I am Black here, I am Black in Colombia.” Rio explained how her identity as AfroCimarrona was directly tied to her activism because she believed history must be present in how people move forward. She stated:

I can feel the racism, the colonization, the slavery in our values and in our society, in our communities. So, for me, the main meaning of Cimarronaje, Cimarronas is trying to remember that we need to build in community and collective projects to achieve the freedom.

She strived to achieve freedom through her activism and scholarship and recover the Palenquero language.

Rio was an economist by training and was a PhD student and quantitative researcher at the time of the study. She came to the United States to understand and conceptualize race, especially AfroLatinidad as a whole. Her racialized experiences in the United States also strengthened her AfroCimarrona identity as she navigated race relations in the United States. She shared feelings of exclusion living in California surrounded by mainly Mexican and Central American people. She shared how she felt: “Okay, you don’t belong to Latino community.” Similarly, her interactions with African Americans felt like, “You are from Latin America, so,

your Black roots are not so Black.” She felt frustrated and shared, “So, I wonder where am I from? I was living under multiples intersection and vulnerabilities. That was very hard to navigate in the system. However, yes, I am a Black woman.”

Rio identified existence as resistance as another form of activism, which means being in spaces where people of color were previously excluded. Rio embodied a scholar activist. She exclaimed, “Activism is very inside me, like this is my other voice.” She articulated how her racial identity connected to her research, saying, “It’s . . . why we need to write about racism more because it’s very painful. You know, sometimes I have been crying, listening to some stories, but if we don’t do that, nobody is going to do that.” Rio emphasized how, in Colombia and the United States, although academia was made up of predominantly white people, she found refuge engaging with Black women. She stated:

Not only because I have found a place to belong but also a place to express our pain. To try to heal, to try to do . . . collective mechanisms that although are hard to eradicate the system, the racism, has been a way to support each other. So, it has been a very important part of my life.

Black women continued to inspire her, make her feel like she belonged, and, through collective efforts, advocated for marginalized communities.

Theresa’s Narrative

To me, activism has little to do with how you do it and more to do with your integrity and when are you standing up for when you’re looking around and seeing something that is harming someone. How are you helping to rectify that harm? If you are helping in any way to rectify that harm, you’re an activist.

Theresa (she/her) was an all-around proud AfroLatina and social justice educator. Her parents, both immigrants from the Dominican Republic, raised her with the understanding that although she was born in the United States, they were “Dominican, not American, and not Latino.” Theresa described her upbringing in the Bronx, New York, having attended Catholic schools through her childhood. She felt affirmed daily by her Latino, Black, and Asian teachers

who told her she was “brilliant.” Theresa paused to think about her earlier educational years, her family, and the messages she received and then internalized. She received more validation at home where her mother would say:

You put your pants on in the same way that the president puts his pants on. He is no better than you. Esa gente no es mejore que tu. Tu eres fina. Tu eres una mujer culturada. Tu eres una mujer educada.

Theresa felt like she belonged wherever she went, which was extremely formative for her. When we discussed the messages about her racial and ethnic identity growing up, Theresa recalled her family telling her she was from three different bloodlines. They told her, “We have European, we have the African, and we have the Indigenous.” However, her family always centered the Indigenous and European parts. Theresa shared, “I didn’t really grow up with an understanding of African roots as being a central cultural part of my experience.”

In addition, when her parents immigrated to the United States., they observed how people treated African Americans and Theresa did not want to be associated with a group that was mistreated. Growing up, Theresa received messages from her family about Black people as “cucarachas, cockroaches,” “Why would you want to date that cocolo?,”²⁵ and “You’re already light, so don’t try and get no darker, kids.” Theresa shared a memory of a school prom she attended with her first love, a Black Dominican young man. She vividly remembered her extended family criticizing the pair, saying, “Oh my god, Theresa va tener un hijo con el pelo malo eto [esto] y el otro’ . . . You’re going to have a kid with bad hair and all these other things.”

At times, Theresa felt like an outsider who was navigating an in-between feeling in her family and community. In her family, she had lighter skin complexion and almond shaped eyes; she was chubbier and taller than other family members, and some members even called “blanca.”

²⁵ According to Urban Dictionary, “cocolo” refers to a non-Hispanic person of African descent. It is used as a racial slur or derogatory slur.

However, based on her appearance and complexion, she believed others would consider her racially mixed or Black/African American. In thinking back, Theresa recognized her pet names were all adjacent to whiteness, unlike her sisters who had pet names like “chocolate francés,” meaning having chocolate brown skin and European features. Hearing these pet names had an impact on her interactions with her sisters. Theresa recalled an instance where their differences were reflected in a school lesson about Rosa Parks, sharing:

I remember coming home in third grade and telling my sister, “Oh, if we would’ve been back in the 60s, you would’ve been all the way in the back of the bus, but I would’ve been a little bit further up because I’m lighter than you.” My processing of myself in terms of skin color was in a white supremacist ideology of “I’m better than the people who are in my household that are darker.”

In addition, Theresa exclaimed everyone on television did not look like her; however, she shared, “[I spent my] entire life being told that I’m a white girl, I identified more with the white images that I saw on TV. I didn’t see myself as Black at all.” In her community, Theresa spoke about this in-between feeling as well. She shared, “When I would go to [the Dominican Republic], I was not Dominican enough, I was a gringa, right? And then when you’re here, your family members are like, ‘Oh, you are not Dominican enough.’” This in-between feeling was challenging for Theresa because it was full of contradictions in her family and community. Theresa internalized the messages about whiteness.

Religion informed most of Theresa’s familial values and Catholic school socialization. She firmly stated, “Jesus, to me, was the first and biggest activist,” so much so that Catholicism felt like a call to activism, kindness, and empathy for her. Her mother, who used to buy food for a homeless veteran in their Bronx neighborhood for years, further instilled these beliefs of helping other people. Theresa shared:

And I grew up not just hearing the stories of Jesus, I grew up seeing my mom being kind to different people.... To me, activism is just an extension of this. It is what you do, you care about people, you don’t walk through your life and not see the people in pain. You

stop and you acknowledge them and you do what you can to help them and to speak for them. To me, that's where my activism has come from. It comes [from] my faith more than anything else.

Theresa went to college at a 4-year public institution with these beliefs, values, and internalized messages. In college, she felt blessed to have very diverse suitemates, mainly Black women from across the African diaspora. She resonated with these women and built strong friendships with them. She described feeling isolated from the Latin American students and organizations. The Latino community in college questioned her Latinidad because she was into hip-hop, reggae, and R&B; hung out with Black students; and did not know the latest *perico ripiao*.²⁶ Although she had negative interactions with some Latinos in college, she decided to join a historically Latina sorority to understand and connect with her Latinidad. The membership process allowed her to learn more about her culture, nationality, ancestry, and history. Through her sorority's programming and community service, which centered on advocating for the needs of the Latino community, she believed these initiatives could help "uplift marginalized voices."

After college, Theresa continued learning more about her racial, ethnic, and activist identities. When her daughter was younger, her partner, a white man, shared concerns about how Theresa was perpetuating internalized messages by straightening her daughter's hair. He said, "I don't want you to put in her head the Dominican self-hate bullshit." Theresa exclaimed that she brushed him off, not ready to reflect more about her own internalized anti-Blackness. When prompted to think about what influenced her identity as AfroLatina, Theresa shared vivid memories of a 2013 multicultural institute that sought to investigate anti-Blackness in Brazil.

²⁶ A colloquial term literally meaning "ripped parrot," which was the name of the brothel where the music was originally played in the Dominican Republic. This music, also referred to as *merengue típico*, was first banned because of the sensual lyrics and movements and is now popular music on this island (IASO Records, n.d.).

Theresa talked about her experience in a museum witnessing the bones of a slave ship. The following passages include our discussion:

Theresa: I had never been in front of a structure that big that carried so much pain. . . . Brazil being the last place that abolished slavery . . . that there were actual silent movie footage of slaves being processed coming into Brazil. That was playing on one of the walls and there were shackles on the walls. One of the tour guides says you could probably find your own DNA because it was all people of color that were on the trip. If you scrape DNA off of these shackles, you'll probably be able to find your own.

Marinel: That's powerful.

Theresa: I remember how hot it felt in the room, and . . . I bent over, and I was with one of my friends and I was just sobbing and I couldn't catch my breath. I just started thinking about why I wanted to be closer to the person who committed these crimes instead of identifying with the person who survived. That's when I said, "I have to start identifying as Black and as Afro-Latino because that human being survived in order for me to be here." To identify with a rapist, it just didn't seem right. It just felt disgusting to me. That was the year I stopped straightening my hair. I started really being interested in the history of [the Dominican Republic], and also the ancestry, my ancestry, and my DNA, and trying to figure those types of things out, but also trying to figure out in my own journey.

Throughout her life, Theresa experienced racial microaggressions, messages of acculturation, and exposure to racist sentiments from family. She admitted she internalized these negative messages of Blackness. After this trip to Brazil, Theresa was more committed to embracing her Blackness by identifying as AfroLatina. Identifying as AfroLatina meant reflecting, unlearning, and relearning how she viewed and treated her body, hair, ancestries, identities, and history, and how she would raise her biracial children. She called this process her "Afro-affirmation," an awakening to identify as racially Black. Theresa seemed overjoyed to describe her AfroLatinidad as pride, excellence, resilience, resistance, and survival. She shared, "I feel like AfroLatinidad is the first . . . identity marker that feels like my own. I get to conceptualize what that looks like . . . and that's why I love it." Theresa shared the following about AfroLatinidad as a subcategory of the Latino community: "It's a way to empower . . . fight against the potential anti-Blackness that exists within the Latino community . . . a way for us to share stories and find community."

Theresa described the social issues she focused on in her activism as racial justice, sexual assault and violence awareness, LGBTQ issues, and education. All of these social issues related directly to her own identities or the identities of loved ones, which sustained and motivated her activism. She described her thirst for continued learning and critical reflection to educate others through her work on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Theresa mentioned she engaged in more direct activism-related behaviors in college such as protesting. Her activism shifted after having children. At the time of the study, her activism related to service and leadership in women's organizations, city councils, and school district committees. Theresa elaborated:

The marchings become more limited since there's been more hate, and I have children. To be honest, I did more of that when I was younger in college. I think that signing a name is safe . . . and helping to eradicate policies and procedures that are inequitable. It is something that I can . . . lending my intellectual ability to look at things from different perspectives. To be able to voice things that people are afraid to say in spaces where people are afraid to say them is my superpower.

Theresa spoke with passion and conviction. She discussed comments she made at a YouTube televised school district meeting, where she expressed how society gaslights people of color. Theresa described being bold and brave enough to highlight her experiences in this meeting, sharing, "It punches holes in the facade. . . . There is a fearlessness in me when it comes to that, and I don't care."

When speaking about what her activism meant to her, Theresa talked about educating others. Her activism was purposeful, intentional, full of love, filled with compassion, and emotionally resilient. Theresa described her activism as a quiet rage and spitting out venom. She stated, "When you are an activist, you have to know when to emotionally not react, but that doesn't mean that that doesn't have a visceral effect on your insides." This visceral effect is the reason she was an avid advocate for therapy. She explained:

In order to let them in your heart to educate them, because my activism is really through education, trying to change mind and hearts. When I'm in that space, I have to spit out

the venom because if I'm in a negative space, then I am not going to be compassionate towards the fact that this human that's in front of me that's spewing garbage has been swimming in this garbage their entire lives. That's how they were brought up and some of it they can't help.

Theresa's me-search journey spanned from her K-12 education to her college years to the time of this study. Her Catholic upbringing, joining a Latina sorority, the Brazil immersion trip, her natural hair journey, and having children were all critical moments that impacted her AfroLatina activist identity. All of these transformative times in Theresa's life impacted how she would eventually connect her AfroLatinidad and activism during the pláticas. Furthermore, Theresa stated:

I don't think I would be where I am today had I not connected to my AfroLatinidad. I didn't see it. I didn't see the anti-Blackness as a problem until I understood my identity and how it robbed me of certain experiences. That's what prompted my activism because I didn't want my lack of understanding of my identity to rob my children of their pride in their culture.

Theresa described her AfroLatina identity and activism as part of her DNA. She shared, "I don't know where that begins and the other thing ends," so much so that she called her AfroLatina activist identity "the recipe for how [she moved] through the world."

Concluding Thoughts

Through this research process, my insider positionality became evidently clear to me. The collaborators and I shared mutual sentiments and experiences through the pláticas, from our immigration stories, childhood memories, explorations of what it meant to be Black, navigation of predominantly white spaces, and all the way through our experiences in college and careers. Something I kept hearing was "you know," which validated my role in this research in more ways than I can express here. I truly believe these moments of connection, which I deeply cherished, helped us build trust and community. In this concluding section, I share some of these

moments of connection and how my collaborators impacted my identities as an AfroDominicana, Black woman, and activist.

The pláticas between my collaborators and I were filled with so many laughs, tears, and nostalgia—all beautiful moments where we connected about our AfroLatinidad, Black identity, and natural hair journeys. During several pláticas, I heard collaborators share a feeling of in-betweenness or feeling not enough. I echoed these feelings toward my Black identity and activist identity. Similar to Theresa, Dominican spaces would tell me I was a “gringa” because I lived in America, did not know the latest Dominican music, or was at a loss for words when speaking Spanish sometimes. In Black spaces, I felt like an imposter or outsider because I had lighter brown skin, spoke Spanish, and was born in the Dominican Republic.

Collaborators like Bori, Christy, Mercedes, Nini, Rio, and I chose to consciously express the significance of our nationality in our AfroLatinidad. Nini articulated this sentiment powerfully by sharing our culture, customs, and traditions were intertwined in our lived experiences; thus, emphasizing nationality was important for us. I appreciated how Christy, Mercedes, and I chose *AfroDominicana*, recognizing that Latinidad is so expansive, and our truest connection was our Dominican culture, customs, and traditions. It was a point of mutual understanding, or this immense pride that we grew up with and continue to maintain in our Dominican culture. Some of my fellow Dominican collaborators and I also grappled with sometimes loving our country and acknowledging its anti-Black history and ongoing hostile racial climate toward our Haitian neighbors. I appreciated the many discussions of how we may have internalized these messages. I shared the following sentiments with Angela:

When I think about growing up in the bodega, listening to music, my family playing dominoes and overhearing jokes, whether they’re anti-Black jokes or racist jokes . . . it’s interesting to think about how I may have internalized them [anti-Black messages] within like beauty standard, who I choose to date, et cetera. . . . For example, going to the salon

every week to straighten my hair and even relaxing my hair to make it straighter. Y para que? For who, you know? Like damn, even indirectly, I was getting messages about my skin color, my hair, my beauty that weren't the most positive or reaffirming.

Discussing, reflecting, and memoing about our interactions influenced how I stand today proudly, not only in my Dominican identity but also my Black identity. I felt seen, heard, and validated.

Identifying as Black racially has been difficult to express for me because of all the anti-Black/anti-Haitian sentiments that Dominican culture, media, and government have espoused. Like Angela, Christy, Eva, and Mercedes, my family did not talk about race growing up. And, like Bori and Theresa, my family told me that we were Spanish, Indigenous, and African and that on forms like the Census, our race was either "other" or "two or more races." Some of us shared how we heard anti-Black and anti-Haitian messages from family when growing up. For me, I internalized these messages and subconsciously distanced myself from my Black identity until I went through my own curly hair journey, something multiple collaborators also shared was impactful. I loved discussing our natural hair journeys during the pláticas. I shared the following message with Larimar:

Growing up, we just said we are Dominican, never Black. And so, witnessing the curly hair movement and Black Latina women like you said, Miss Rizos, and one of my sorority sisters embrace their natural hair, it was beautiful. I felt inspired. So, I too started a journey of my own, not only for my natural hair but to define and expand Blackness for myself.

My collaborators reminded me that being Black is not a monolith and it felt like they gave me permission to embrace being a Black woman. Through my curly hair journey, graduate school education, this research process, and my attendance at the Social Justice Training Institute, I was able to proudly claim my Black identity, which I ignored for so long.

Additionally, the collaborators in this study were instrumental in expanding my own definition and engagement in activism. Like Eva, Liz, and Angela, I felt I was not being and

doing enough activism to make a true impact, of feeling like our activism was not transformative enough nor world changing. In my plática with Theresa, she asked me about my activism and the following exchange occurred:

Marinel: That's interesting. I've never identified with the term *activist* because I just always think of the people who are organizers, who are canvassing. I was never that and I'm not that, but when you discussed being that person who was empathizing, whose actions reflect this kindness for humanity . . . I am that person. I never associated it with activism. I think of it like I vote, I sign petitions, I make donations, and I write to elected officials and those things. Yea, I do do things that are meaningfully contributing to the world even though I'm not the rah rah activist.

Theresa: You are an activist in the ways that you can be and in the ways that you've been taught to be. There's no one way to be anything, and there's no one way to do anything. You need people that are the organizers and the leaders. You also need people that are going to write the checks too. . . . To me, activism has little to do with how you do it and more to do with your integrity and when you're looking around and seeing something that is harming someone. How are you helping to rectify that harm? If you are helping in any way to rectify that harm, you're an activist.

Marinel: I love that. You're right, thank you for that. Thanks for validating me in this way.

My collaborators were crucial to my activist identity development in countless ways. The way Rio used her research and scholarship as part of her activism was impactful because I do this too. The way Larimar, Bori, Theresa, and Angela used their careers in education as part of their activism is the same way I do. I also resonated with the way many of the collaborators like Eva, Rio, and Quisqueya resonated with existence as resistance as part of their activism, especially as I navigated my doctoral journey. I appreciated how much our pláticas had a positive, emotional, and validating effect on me. I smile as I write this, in disbelief that we did this, that I cocreated such a collaborative and affirming space for us.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to describe the findings the collaborators cocreated during the community plática and I generated from my individual analysis. The findings presented in this chapter are representative of the 11 collaborators: AfroLatine/a/o activists living throughout the United States who were either attending college at the time of the study or graduated from college. After analyzing the qualitative data and survey, I uncovered four findings. The first finding illustrated how AfroLatine/a/o activists asserted agency and critical reflection to unlearn white supremacy and anti-Blackness. The second finding showed some of the racial ideologies AfroLatine/a/o activists created: (a) embracing Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group. The third finding detailed that AfroLatine/a/o activists defined their activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. The fourth finding highlighted the intersection of Blackness, Latinidad, and activism in how the collaborators share their AfroLatine/a/o identities as a form of existence as resistance.

Finding #1: AfroLatine/a/o Activists Asserted Agency and Critical Reflection to Un/learn white Supremacy and Anti-Blackness

In conceptualizing AfroLatinidad, AfroLatine/a/o activists displayed critical consciousness through critical reflection. The collaborators became more conscious of their AfroLatine/a/o identities by learning and then unlearning throughout their critical reflection journey's. First, AfroLatine/a/o activists displayed critical reflection through learning more about their history and their African ancestry. Second, the collaborators emphasized that before they could embrace AfroLatinidad, they had to unpack and unlearn some of the indoctrination of white supremacy and anti-Blackness they received growing up.

The AfroLatine/a/o activists highlighted their journey to AfroLatinidad as a continuous process of learning and unlearning due to the insidious nature of white supremacy and anti-Blackness. In this finding, I demonstrate how the collaborators asserted agency and critical reflection to un/learn anti-Blackness and white supremacy in their racial and ethnic identity development journey toward AfroLatinidad. As Theresa named, this journey and process was part of their “Afro-affirmation,” an awakening to identifying as Black or AfroLatine/a/o.

Learning

As collaborators navigated their identity development journeys with AfroLatinidad, they asserted agency by engaging in deep learning and reflection. The collaborators spoke about various points when they learned more about their own AfroLatine/a/o identities, countries of origin, history, colonization, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and internalized racism. Educational settings like college or participating in life-changing trainings that set Nini, Mercedes, and Eva on a path of critical reflection. Angela’s learning began once she identified some of the white supremacy and anti-Blackness socialization she received, which resulted in learning about her country’s history and racial climate.

Nini, a first-year college student from California, learned about the similarities between colonization in the United States and in Latin America, and the influences of the African culture on the diaspora. Her family and historically Black college and university (HBCU) educational settings supported her learning. She shared:

I think being able to understand . . . there’s just as many different nuances to this idea of a Latina identity . . . Salvador[ans] are gonna be different than Mexicans gonna be different than Dominicans gonna be different than Cubans is one way to challenge that. Especially as I start thinking about just learning more about Latin America. Like, recently, I learned that outside of Palestine, El Salvador is the other country that has the most number of Palestinian people. And I believe my experience at an HBCU really like, has opened the doors also to exploring . . . a potential like, stronger connection to an African identity as

you realize just how much closer I feel to . . . West African . . . cultural staples through music and food.

Nini's attending an HBCU influenced her AfroSalvadorian identity and critical reflection journey by broadening her lens and global knowledge. For example, learning about the origins of plátanos and cumbia made her feel more drawn to the continent of Africa. In addition, Nini took time to learn more about her history and culture, which is different than other Latine countries. She said, "That's how I am challenging Eurocentric indoctrination, by learning more and more about our history and making those connections." She was able to do so because of her family's political involvement in El Salvador, her HBCU education, and the influences of the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement. Nini expressed her learning and critical reflection journey catapulted her racial and ethnic identity development as AfroSalvadoran.

Mercedes, a New York organizer, spoke about learning, surviving, and challenging white supremacy. Mercedes attended a life-changing training that taught her about undoing racism. She said:

I learned so much more about my identity, my Blackness, how my like, socioeconomic class impacts how I view poverty. I learned about . . . poor people, it's not their individual faults that they're poor, it's the system that allows for them to live in a poverty state. So, don't blame the individual, blame the system, kind of that perspective. . . . I learned about . . . survival strategies for people of color, how we survive coping, code-switching being one of them . . . the way we alter our voices, and all of that . . . and just all these other . . . term[s] ethnocentrism, which is like people of color fighting, battling against each other . . . that's a part of white supremacy. That's what they want us to do.

This training was a transformative experience for Mercedes that affected not only her identity as an activist but also the ways she resonated with AfroLatinidad, which moved her more toward identifying as AfroDominican. She discussed how this training affected her Black identity by reflecting critically on her own race and racialized experiences. Mercedes understood Black issues and racial justice pertain to her too. Through this training, Mercedes learned more about

systemic structures in the United States that marginalize Black and Brown communities. She also learned how to resist in a white supremacist society.

When Eva was in college, she started to read more about the racial tensions, racism, and anti-Blackness that was happening in the Dominican Republic, especially Haitian–Dominican relations. She shared, “I just like, try to understand it better, and like all its complexities. . . . Because it’s important to educate ourselves and others when possible. This is how we start to change our world.” Eva expressed how important it was for her to understand and learn about the political and racial divisiveness in her home country because she wanted to help educate others, including her family members. College was a setting that promoted her curiosity and inquiry. By learning and then educating others, Eva could challenge some of the anti-Blackness she was exposed to with knowledge and awareness of the social issues happening.

Angela, a Dominican-born woman, explained that once she identified some of the white supremacy and anti-Blackness socialization she received, she could do the inner work within herself. She learned more about the Dominican Republic’s history, politics, Haitian-Dominican relations, and racial climate. Angela, at the community *plática*, noted that many of the collaborators spoke about “how Blackness and like, the African diaspora shows up in Dominican culture.” She further shared, “And then, it got me thinking about the anti-Blackness *within* Dominican culture.” She discussed her mixed feelings about the country she was born in because of how conservative it is and the rampant colorism, racism, and classism she observed:

As I’ve . . . become more politically involved over the years, I’ve started to reflect on that. And for me, I’m also kind of battling with, like, being AfroLatina and also what that means for how I feel about the country that I’m from, and how sometimes I actually struggle with, like, loving my country as much as I used to because of how anti-Black and conservative it is. . . . And I think one of the [collaborator’s] narratives talked about like . . . loving her AfroDominicanness, and . . . that being a resistance to colonization, right? And... that is, like, what I’m trying to figure out . . . loving [the Dominican

Republic] is kind of loving it for what it's supposed to be, not like, what colonization has influenced it to be, if that makes sense.

Angela was eager to get involved and be in dialogue with others about the Dominican Republic. It made her reflect on her own feelings about her homeland in a critical way. She thought through one of the narratives she read, and it made her reflect on her own identity as AfroLatina and how racial tensions in the country affected her deeply. At the time of the study, she read about the political and racial climate in the Dominican Republic and was working towards a Dominican identification card so she could vote in her country of origin. The collaborators were adamant about engaging in a cycle of critical reflection through learning and unlearning.

Unlearning

As part of our pláticas, the collaborators reflected on their upbringing, unlearning experiences, and racial and ethnic identity development. The collaborators described their racial and ethnic identity development journeys toward embracing their AfroLatine/a/o identities as continuous. Through the process of unlearning, collaborators clarified how white supremacy and anti-Blackness is embedded in American and Latine/a/o culture and norms. Understanding, navigating, and challenging white supremacy and anti-Blackness in themselves was important. For some collaborators, this meant challenging white standards of beauty such as straightening their hair and interrogating their own internalized anti-Blackness and racism. In this section, I spotlight how Larimar, Theresa, Quisqueya, and Mercedes showed vulnerability in admitting some of the white supremacist and anti-Black messaging in their families and in themselves and how they unlearned these perspectives to embrace AfroLatinidad.

Larimar, an educator in New York City (NYC), identified she had a lot of unlearning to do around her dating and love life. Larimar was from the Dominican Republic and grew up hearing from family about what an ideal husband looks like, and she admitted they were not

supposed to be Black. Her parents warned her, “No te case con un prieto.” She internalized these messages, which glorified whiteness and actively dismissed Blackness. This internalization resulted in dating lighter skin Dominican men. She shared, “Because that’s what I thought was, you know, the norm. . . . I had to unlearn and I’m still unlearning a lot of things, right? And changing my actions accordingly to challenge some of my own internalized anti-Blackness.” As she got older and went through her own self-discovery journey and started to identify as AfroLatina, she acknowledged, “Black is not just African American.” As part of her connection to AfroLatinidad, Larimar also realized her family’s anti-Black messages were racist. At the time of the study, she was dating an African American man, which she shared would not have happened if she had not reframed her mind and unlearned some of her family’s anti-Blackness and white supremacist messaging. She admitted she had to let go of her own biases and previous dating patterns and be more open as an AfroLatina who was striving against anti-Blackness.

Similarly, Theresa, an AfroLatina educator living in New York, discussed receiving racist and anti-Black messages from her parents about Black people being inferior and calling them “cucarachas.” She articulated how she internalized these messages as prioritizing and valuing whiteness. As a young adult, Theresa did not allow herself to sexualize darker skin men. She said:

I always thought Zack Morris was cute, but I did not allow myself to think Mario Lopez was cute . . . I remember I was in love with Method Man and Redman, in love with them. I don’t know . . . but I’d be like, why is that a bad thing?

Theresa interrogated the impact of the anti-Black socialization she received growing up. Later in the plática, she questioned aloud, “Did I pick my [life] partner because I picked my partner, or did I pick my partner because I was conditioned to pick somebody white?” She shared how there was a lot of pain associated with these critical reflections, which also helped her to accept and understand her own Black or Afro identity.

Quisqueya, a college senior at an HBCU, discussed his unlearning process. As a high school student, he was determined to identify as Dominican, or anything but Black. Quisqueya attended schools with majority Black and Brown students until he was accepted to a specialized high school. He reflected upon this experience and how the color of his skin was “weaponized” against him. For example, reading his yearbook, he recalled seeing a phrase saying, “Go back to picking cotton” or hearing his peers say, “Oh, you’re the Black kid, you’re the slave.” Quisqueya stated:

Those type of situations and things . . . made me hate that [Black] identity and not wanna have it. I remember even thinking of when I was little, like, ‘Why am I dirty? Like, why can’t I wash this off?’ That’s just because of culture, and that’s just because of like, situations and also your environment and so middle-schoolers are very mean, and they was on my head, and so, I was not trying to be any types of Black like Dominican, Dominican, Dominican, Dominican.

For Quisqueya, being the “only Black kid” and these racialized and violent experiences impacted his racial identity. He quickly learned Blackness was associated with slavery, dirtiness, and inferiority. By identifying with his Dominican nationality, he avoided anything that was associated with his Black racial identity. Quisqueya credited his critical reflection and unlearning process to a Latine/a/o youth organization he joined in high school, which taught him about social issues, his own identities, and activism. Through this youth organization, his journey to AfroLatinidad began by unlearning the negative associations he had internalized about Blackness in Dominican culture. His mentors looked like him and represented the possibilities of activism, social justice, and leadership. Quisqueya unlearned negative associations of Blackness that he had internalized in order to become his most “actualized self.”

Mercedes was deeply influenced by her older sister, who challenged Mercedes to unlearn white standards of beauty. A turning point was when her older sister, whom she referred to as “a second mom,” cut her hair and did “a big chop,” an instrumental act of resistance. Mercedes

engaged in meaningful dialogues with her sister about how they grew up, messages they received from family about hair, their racial identity, and the reasons they needed to change the narrative about their hair. She thought, “The fact that society doesn’t or didn’t at that time embrace natural looks, let alone our mother, this was huge.” Mercedes valued these interactions with her older sister and it influenced the way she unlearned and disassociated from white standards and ideals. Her interactions with her older sister even impacted her own hair and AfroDominican identity eventually. She expressed:

Identifying as AfroDominican made me affirm more of my AfroLatinidad. . . . I think the hair was a big part of like, “Oh yeah, this is our experience.” And I thought, I need to be proud of this attribute. I’m still trying to make sense of it because like, sometimes I feel like my Afroness makes me stronger and most resilient.

Having an older sister take this initial step helped Mercedes transition to natural hair. She discussed how unlearning the norm in Dominican women’s culture of straightening her hair and her transition to natural hair was even more important because she had darker skin than her siblings. Her older sister’s transition to natural hair affirmed her AfroDominican and Black identity as beautiful in its natural state. The collaborators’ agency and critical reflection helped them explore and challenge white supremacy and anti-Blackness in themselves which was important in their journey toward AfroLatine/a/o identity.

Finding #2: Centering AfroLatine/a/o Racial Ideologies in Conceptualizations of AfroLatinidad

As collaborators navigated through a continuous process of learning and unlearning, they created AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies, or the world views, beliefs, and perspectives that AfroLatine/a/o activists create and live by in conceptualizing their racial and ethnic identities. AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies consist of first defining and then expressing AfroLatinidad. In this finding, I demonstrate how AfroLatine/a/o collaborators (a) positively embraced a Black

identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centered their resistance in language; and (c) rejected stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group through their racial ideologies.

During the pláticas, collaborators were descriptive in defining their racial and ethnic identities as AfroLatine/a/o or Afro[nationality]. Many collaborators self-identified with AfroLatinidad based on the cultural and historical influences of the African diaspora in Latin American countries, emphasizing their Afrodescendencia. AfroLatinidad was also based on their lived experiences; many of them identified racially as Black and ethnically as Latine/a/o or used their nationality. The collaborators also used the following words to describe their AfroLatine/a/o identities: pride, excellence, resilience, community, and survival. Collaborators talked about AfroLatinidad being a “culture of resistance,” a way to “reclaim Blackness and resist erasure.” Identifying as AfroLatine/a/o was “a source of empowerment,” or “seeing . . . racial attributes as more of a strength” rather than a weakness.

***“My Pelo is not Malo, it is Still Beautiful”:* Embracing Black Identity and Taking Pride in Physical Appearance**

Collaborators who described their natural hair journeys and the complexities of skin color as a turning point explained that embracing AfroLatinidad was about taking pride in their Black identities and features. Liz, Eva, and Quisqueya discussed their natural hair journeys, which included hearing anti-Black messages growing up, learning and embracing their natural hair, and challenging Eurocentric ideologies of “good” and “beautiful” hair. Christy and Angela discussed their natural hair journey’s, which included unlearning anti-Blackness and embracing AfroLatinidad, their Black identities, and their skin color. For Liz, Eva, Quisqueya, Angela, and Christy, embracing their Black identities and taking pride in their physical appearance was

something they interrogated, reflected on, and then projected out in the world as connected to their AfroLatine/a/o identities and part of their AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies. These collaborators interrogated their anti-Blackness to be their most authentic selves by reframing their perspectives about their natural hair, beauty standards, and skin color.

Liz and Eva both expressed how they received negative messages from family members and strangers regarding their hair. Strangers even told Liz she had “pelo malo.” But Liz affirmed, “My pelo is not malo, it is still beautiful.” Liz had always been most comfortable in Black/African American spaces. By being in community with other Black people, Liz could strengthen her love for her natural hair and defend it against critics. These Black spaces were eventually one of the factors that led her to embrace AfroLatinidad. Eva’s family received her decision to go natural negatively. Her family labeled her an “outlier and a rebel” for wearing her hair curly. She stated, “I started showing up to . . . family functions with curly hair, and it was like, the end of the world. It was like, you know, ‘Ella no se peina.’” Eva’s curly hair journey allowed her to reflect on her upbringing, societal/familial messages, and her race. By embracing her curly hair, Eva understood her Black identity and could defend it. Despite these criticisms, Liz and Eva embraced their curly hair in its natural state. Both collaborators shared how their curly hair journey was instrumental in embracing AfroLatinidad.

Quisqueya shared that he recently locked his hair as a way to embrace and display his Black identity, and to “challenge dominant or Eurocentric ideology simply by locking my hair.” Quisqueya was the first person in his family to lock his hair and was proud of his decision despite getting negative comments from his family. He affirmed, “Going on this route is for me most importantly, not for others.” Being his most authentic self was part of Quisqueya’s

AfroLatine identity. But Quisqueya did not stop here; he attempted to also educate his loved ones. He shared:

This is something that I have to take back to myself and take back to my family. It's a fight that I'm fighting there and I'm trying to get people to understand and recognize our Blackness and who we are. It's just about . . . pushing the bounds in every space and being unapologetically yourself. And that's what I intend, I try and attempt to do each and every day.

By locking his hair, being his unapologetic self, and embracing his Black identity, Quisqueya could educate and model this behavior for his family. Quisqueya took extraordinary pride in his physical appearance, something that had not always been the case. Identifying as Black and AfroLatine was instrumental in his critical reflection journey. His lived experiences allowed him to un/learn dominant ideologies of hair and create positive AfroLatine and Black racial ideologies that centered and loved his natural hair.

Christy and Angela both shared how part of their self-discovery involved their curly hair journeys and pride in their physical appearance, which included their skin color. Christy was the “light skin unicorn” in her family and they put her on a pedestal, “fetishized for [her] physical appearance.” She said, “It's a tender spot to say there's a lot of anti-Blackness and self-hatred in my family.” For example, her mother shared she married her father to “progress the race,” yet there was lack of discussion about race. Christy felt “hindered” to express her Blackness because her parents’ “negation of that identity did not create the full space for those Black wings to fly. Like the freedom that existed in the college space.” She admitted:

I'm already Black, right? I was always already Black. . . . The freedom to be Christy, to be me, which college afforded just made me more Black, right? And it was when I did the big chop and you know, started noticing my curls coming in and, I started getting resistance from my family that I was like, ‘There's something here.’

Uncovering the “something” meant,

Liberating my mind and decolonizing my physical body. Decolonization for Christy is not changing. Decolonization for Christy is a return to self. And I would say that that's

for us all because we know who we are, but the insidious nature of colonization has made us afraid to return to ourselves. We all know who we are deep down, right—if we allow ourselves, we will return to ourselves.

For Christy, the messages of being a “light skin unicorn” and interrogating her family’s anti-Blackness were part of her racial and ethnic identity development. Going to college encouraged her to embrace her full and authentic self, including identifying racially as Black, embracing her natural hair, and taking pride in her skin despite all of the messages she received as a child.

Similarly, Angela, a fierce educational advocate, expressed her journey to identifying as AfroLatina involved a rediscovery of her curly hair and embracing her darker skin color. The women in Angela’s family went to the salon every weekend. Angela hated this family norm/tradition because even as a child she felt that straightening her hair did not feel or look right. For Angela, her journey to AfroLatinidad meant unlearning the beauty standards with which she grew up. She shared:

When you woke up and realized that . . . straightening your hair wasn’t the thing that you needed to do to be beautiful . . . to accept yourself. . . . So, as soon as I was old enough to . . . make my own decision . . . like [in] high school, and especially in college, I was like, ‘We’re done here. Right?’ . . . [This] led me down like a rediscovery of sorts and . . . more of an acknowledgment of AfroLatinidad and my Black identity . . . constructing that pride over time. . . . At the time, when I was also trying to unlearn the things I had been taught and trying to embrace my curls and my natural hair, my skin color, it made it a lot harder. And even when I think about my skin tone, right? Growing up, I was always considered the darker skinned one in my family. Like, ‘Why was my skin darker than everyone in my family?’ As a kid, it created a sense of insecurity but as I got older, I found more and more pride in my melanated skin and found how beautiful it was in others as well.

Angela reflected critically on the history of the Dominican Republic, the anti-Blackness in the culture, and how it impacted entire generations. Part of Angela’s self-discovery journey was about embracing AfroLatinidad and unlearning and relearning her Black identity. Angela acknowledged she had to reframe her standards of beauty and professionalism. She had to challenge the insecurities she had about her skin color to live and honor her authenticity. As,

many collaborators expressed, their natural hair journeys and exploring the complexities of skin color were turning points in their lives. Embracing AfroLatinidad was about taking pride in their Black identities and features.

“I’m Not Like, in the Business of Trying to Make white People Comfortable”: Reclaiming Language as Part of Their AfroLatine/a/o Identity

The collaborators discussed language as part of their AfroLatine/a/o identities and racial ideologies. The collaborators, including Angela, Rio, and Larimar, shared examples of how they critically reflected and conceptualized AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies expressed through authentic language, especially in connection with their AfroLatine/a/o identities and activism. Angela emphasized her self-awareness regarding code-switching in her language, which is her most authentic voice. Rio provided two examples of how she reclaimed language. First, Rio and others in Colombia reclaimed the term *Cimarrona* and identified as *AfroCimarrona*. Second, Rio decided to learn and speak the language Palenquero,²⁷ which is a resistance to the Spanish language and colonization. For Larimar, part of her AfroLatina journey meant correcting others in the pronunciation of her name to be said in Spanish, not English. The collaborators were deliberate about avoiding codeswitching, embracing an accent, reclaiming terminology and languages, or correcting the pronunciation of their name.

Angela, an educator born in the Dominican Republic, grew up in NYC believed that her journey to identifying as AfroLatina meant living and expressing her most authentic self, no matter the setting. Angela explained:

One thing that I’m also trying to be really conscious of now is . . . code-switching at work . . . I try really hard to not codeswitch and like, just speak how I would regularly speak . . . to my peers or like, to a friend. I try and bring that into work as well . . . just because I’m not like, in the business of trying to make white people comfortable. . . . I’m in this

²⁷ Palenquero “is one of the 68 languages found in Colombia and is a mix of Spanish and African Bantu languages” (Stunt, 2019, para. 3).

stage of my life that I'm like, 'No, I'm gonna speak to you how I would regularly speak.' If I have a slight accent, I'm gonna speak that way. I'm not gonna . . . change it up or try and sound whiter to make other people comfortable.

Angela grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and shared how kids laughed or mocked her parents' accents. She understood her family was different in multiple ways: immigration status, accent, language, and skin color. By embracing AfroLatinidad, Angela was authentic to herself and a form of resistance from Eurocentric/white norms. Being mindful and conscious of the way she spoke, even if with a slight accent at times, was a point of pride. Angela, spoke without codeswitching and was unwilling to negotiate as she embraced AfroLatinidad.

Rio, a proud Colombian and doctoral student, discussed two ways that embracing AfroLatinidad and centering her Black identity affected her perspectives on language. First, Rio shared her reclamation of the term *Cimarrones*:

Black people in Colombia during the slave process that when they escaped, they were called Cimarrones. But currently, this word has a different meaning. Black people also . . . self-recognize with that concept because we feel that all the time, we are trying to achieve our freedoms.

Rio stated how important it was for her to be part of a movement of Black people in Colombia who use their collective efforts to fight injustices. As an AfroCimarrona activist, Rio shared, "The past is right now in our life, still I can feel the racism, the colonization, the slavery in our values and in our society, in our communities." Rio also recognized the Spanish language unifies across Latin America but advocated for the government in her country to recognize other native or diasporic languages. She said:

So, in my experience, my first . . . language is Spanish, but I know that this language don't belong to me, don't belong to my family. It was more imposition. So, we are trying to recover Palenquero or we are trying . . . to try to teach that there are different languages beyond Spanish that are part of identity but that has been hidden by government, by the same society, by the white supremacy.

Learning Palenquero and reclaiming the term *Cimarrones* thoughtfully connected Rio to her Black identity and her activism. Both acts of resistance demonstrated how she challenged Eurocentric ideologies and created AfroLatine/a/o expressions and perspectives.

Larimar, who identified as AfroLatina, reconsidered how she and others pronounced her name. This part of language stood out to her in her self-discovery journey. Larimar shared:

How I pronounce my name now than how I did back then, super different. ‘Cause now, I catch myself saying Larimar a lot, you know, Larimar, Larimar [in Spanish]. Before it was like, Larimar [in English], and it’s so small. [laughs] Something so small, but it really makes a difference because the minute I open my mouth, people like, their eyes, you know, como que, they communicate with their eyes like, ‘Oh, she’s Dominican.’ You know? It’s like yeah. I think it’s important for me to make it aware like, ‘I’m AfroLatina and proud.’

Although saying her name in Spanish may be considered a “small” act of resistance, it demonstrated how Larimar reframed her own perspective and reclaimed her name correctly for herself and others. Identifying as AfroLatina empowered her to embrace her name in the way her parents intended it to be pronounced. In this small act of resistance, Larimar centered language as part of how she expressed, lived, and defined AfroLatinidad. Pronouncing her name in Spanish also connected her with the Latine/a/o student body, which was the majority at her school where she served as an administrative leader. Saying her name authentically modeled the pride she wanted her students to have in their own social identities, cultures, and names. The collaborators shared examples of racial ideologies surrounding their resistance in language and their expression to live and speak authentically and unapologetically.

“I’m Living Proof . . . All Latinos are not the Same”: Embracing AfroLatinidad and Rejecting Latine as Monolithic Term

Several of the collaborators discussed their existence as AfroLatine/a/os actively rejected Latinidad as a monolithic label and identity. Nini, Eva, and Angela expressed that in identifying with AfroLatinidad, they were able to challenge and interrogate Latine/a/o stereotypes and

white/Eurocentric norms, emphasizing the nuances of AfroLatine/a/o subpopulations. As the collaborators rejected stereotypes of the monolithic term *Latine/a/o*, they created AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies that challenged generalizations. The AfroLatine/a/o activists created racial ideologies that reflected critically on these stereotypes and then embraced AfroLatinidad in their racial and ethnic identity development. Part of creating AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies was rejecting Latinidad and centering their Afro/Black identities.

Nini spoke about the nuances in the Black diaspora and Latine/a/o populations. Her racial and ethnic identity development journey to identifying as AfroSalvadorian was “living proof” of these nuances. Her racialized experiences and an HBCU education challenged stereotypes and generalizations of Black/African Americans and Latine/a/os. Nini pointed out a time when she was jokingly threatened in Spanish by two boys who did not realize she understood and spoke Spanish. They assumed she was African American based on her appearance. Nini described this experience as a moment in her life where she understood all Latine/a/os are not the same. In addition, Nini shared why she deliberately chose to attend an HBCU. She said:

I think everyone also assumes that same stereotype for Latinos. So, like all Latinos are the same, but I'm like, I feel like I'm living proof of how that's not true at all and how you got a ton of different experiences of simply being Latino or being under that umbrella term of Latino. So, I was very much wanting to go into a space where it's like, that was understood of that like Blackness, Black is not a monolith. That whole concept was very much understood. So, I really wanted to go to HBCU for that. And also, in general too.... 'cause I felt like in my predominantly white middle school and high school, I feel like I had to really limit myself.

Part of Nini's choice to attend an HBCU for college was because she did not want to explain herself and the intersection of her identities. Nini also believed she limited herself at her secondary schools and wanted a space where others would embrace, support, and challenge her. At an HBCU, everyone around her would understand the complexities of race, ethnicity, and diversity in the African diaspora.

Eva believed her identity as AfroLatina did not resonate with generalizations being made about Latinas. She shared an experience that occurred in one of her undergraduate classes where a stereotype was made about Latine/a/os. Eva felt an urge to “advocate for AfroLatinos, which have a like, different experience than from the stereotypical Latino or Hispanic experience.” She mentioned, “The existence of AfroLatinidad is definitely itself already an activist movement.” Eva was confident in her rejection of Latinidad.

Angela (she/her) grew up watching novellas with Mexican casts that did not look like her. She shared:

Being an AfroLatina rejects this idea that all Latinos are like the ones we see in novellas. Latinidad is incredibly layered and our people are incredibly diverse in the best ways. So, acknowledging my Black identity and AfroLatinidad taught me to see that.

Understanding her Black identity helped Angela create racial ideologies that expanded the notion and generalizations of Latinidad. By identifying as AfroLatina, she spoke about how Latinidad, via the Mexican novellas, did not represent her lived experiences and realities. Thus, the AfroLatine/a/o activists’ racial ideologies demonstrated resistance of generalizations made about Latine/a/os based on white/Eurocentric standards and norms.

Finding #3: Conceptualizing Activism as Community, Advocacy, and Compassion

The collaborators conceptualized their activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. They described their activism as community oriented, community power and strength, intergenerational, and collective liberation. Second, the collaborators noted advocacy was a big part of their activism and consisted of talking about the issues, identifying solutions, educating others, and working together to achieve their goals. Third, unlike empathy and sympathy, compassion fueled the collaborators to act through their activism. It is important to note that the most popular social issues/causes the collaborators articulated were tied to one or more of their social identities such as racial justice, women’s rights, and education access/equity.

Throughout the following examples, I will share how the collaborators demonstrated political efficacy and critical action within some of the identity-based activism.

***“Todo Pasa en Comunidad. Freedom Happens in Community”:* Activism as Community**

Collaborators defined their activism through community, which not only fueled them but also sustained their activism. Community also gave the collaborators purpose and vision for their activism. Their emphasis on community and what they could achieve as a collective was powerful and a demonstration of their political efficacy. The collaborators’ political efficacy and critical action, via activism, illustrated a level of confidence in their power to change oppressive conditions as individuals and as a collective. Mercedes, Rio, Quisqueya, and Bori mentioned community in some aspect of their conceptualization of their activism.

Mercedes shared the communal nature of Latine/a/o environments and socialization as influencing how she engaged in activism with a collective. In the plática, Mercedes spoke about feeling empowered when she did the “inner work” to self-liberate, meaning unlearning white supremacy and anti-Blackness. She felt like this was a necessary first step in her activism. Her critical reflection or self-liberation journey propelled her to then engage in activism related to racial justice and, most importantly, in a collective manner. Mercedes emphasized:

For me it’s . . . that co-liberation piece . . . that’s what we need. That’s the only way we’ll free ourselves. You can self-liberate, of course, there’s definitely inner work that everyone has to do as an individual. But a lot of the real change is happening on a collective level. I think co-liberation is key in a supremacist world that tries to tell us that everything is individualized. It’s a product that’s capitalism to be like, ‘Oh, your individual home, your individual family.’ No. Especially as a Latino . . . we’re used to mash[ing] everybody all in the house at the same time, una bulla. And like, yeah, it’s not for everybody, but that’s how that collective liberation takes place, right? And that’s, I think, one of the key values of our ancestry, of our Afro-Latin identity, is that todo pasa en comunidad.

For Mercedes, co-liberation was about fighting together to liberate each other and a “deep care for others.” As an extrovert, Mercedes was drawn to community work and care which motivated her activism.

Rio described her activism as a collective struggle, or a collective fight for freedom and a testament to her political efficacy. She said, “I feel like our main motivation is our constant pain that we have been suffering ... over years, decades.” She reiterated the past is not the past, meaning history continues to repeat itself and communities continue to be marginalized. Rio exclaimed, “Our ancestors are here,” and shared that the constant pain, abuses, and violence Black people face must be addressed and eradicated. She emphasized, “We still are crying . . . our ancestors tells us to fight for our freedom.” Rio’s activism was about continuing a legacy of community and resilience based on her ancestors who did the same and centered racial justice.

Rio stated:

We wasn’t born activists. We became activists, but more because sometimes we are facing very hard conditions that the only way is raising our voices. And when I say voices, is taking into account the power of the collective community, the power when we join forces that has been a central element . . . that feed[s] with my experience, how I can raise my voice when I find . . . multiple Black women were asking the same question, we’re feeling the same experiences and how . . . we were looking [for] how to solve that. So, it was very significant when we can embrace our Blackness with people similar to us and our collective actions strive for change.

In the community plática, Rio shared she found strength in fighting for social issues with Black women because they shared common lived experiences. This community power and strength sustained her activism.

Quisqueya explained that some of his values and activism were community oriented and also intergenerational. He said:

There’s elders that have knowledge, there’s folks in the middle of the way, and then we have the youth, that have all these . . . different skills, and we all have different things that we can collaborate on. No one person . . . has to be above the other.

Quisqueya prided himself on this nontraditional approach to his activism. His activism focused on education equity/access and racial justice. He adamantly and genuinely cared and respected all generations who strived for social justice because he believed everyone can contribute.

Quisqueya's will, determination, power, and political efficacy, was always connected to:

the people. How can we bring it to the people? And I personally think that that's done through culture. It's through music, it's through dance, it's through reading, it's through eating. We all sit down together; I think that the revolution will commence when we all sit down and eat a plate of mangú. And los tres golpes²⁸ . . . AfroLatinidad is also about resistance, right? Resistance can be small, it could be large, it could be voting, it could be starting the revolution . . . but everything far in between is necessary, and everything worthwhile is done together. As long as we can continue to cultivate community, continue to talk about these things and lean on one another, we'll really be able to . . . change the world than offset the systems that have oppressed and marginalized our families for so long.

Quisqueya's communal approach to his activism was through creating intergenerational relationships based on cultural connections like music and food. His activism not only tied into his core values as a person, but also his identity as an activist, and AfroLatine.

Similarly, Bori highlighted a connection between his conceptualization of activism as community oriented and his AfroBoricua identity. Bori articulated how his AfroBoricua and activist identities created a bridge in the African diaspora to fight for the BLM Movement. He believed it is our responsibility as AfroLatine/a/os to also fight racial injustices. Around 2016, Bori started to ponder questions like, "How do I identify?" "What does that [identity] mean for me?" and "How do I go about my actions based on how I identify myself?" Bori said:

I have to . . . make sure that I'm a part of this movement to make a difference for the lives of a lot of us 'cause remember Black Lives Matter isn't just . . . African American. It's differences and race and skin color and AfroLatinidad and dark skin Latinos. It includes us within the African diaspora, me as AfroBoricua. And it's affecting us all. So, I definitely started to identify as AfroBoricua when I understood this. So, I think that when that opportunity to march on Washington came about . . . with already identifying as AfroBoricua . . . this does affect me and the people I love. I think my protest of Puerto

²⁸ Tres golpes is a common Dominican breakfast that consists of mangú or mashed plantains with a side of fried cheese, Dominican salami, and eggs (Mota, 2022).

Rico is more about mi cultura and everything. But [Black Lives Matter] was more about . . . my race . . . my identification as AfroBoricua. My AfroBoricua and activist identity go hand-in-hand because it's just this understanding of . . . what are the things in my life that are most important to me. We have to join forces to achieve racial justice in this country.

Bori emphasized how he was motivated by the 2016 killing of Black people at the hands of police. It was his community of friends, fraternity brothers, and family who motivated him to engage with actions related to racial justice. This engagement was one way in which his political efficacy propelled his commitment to build cross-cultural community-building for racial justice. Through collective efforts, the collaborators shared examples of how they demonstrated political efficacy and critical action to achieve some of their social justice goals.

“My Words, My Ideas Have Value”: Activism as Advocacy

The collaborators highlighted advocacy as a crucial part of their activism. They described advocacy as spreading awareness of an issue that deeply resonated with them, their identities, and their lived experiences. Although they engaged in activism-related behaviors like protests, rallies, speak outs, and career-related actions, Quisqueya, Christy, and Nini articulated the importance of advocacy. Advocacy included talking about the issues, identifying solutions, and working together to achieve their goals. Educating others through advocacy and advocating personally on behalf of others was part of how the AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualized their activism.

Quisqueya talked about being a “credible messenger,” someone who had “the experience to go along with the issue.” He shared:

I definitely feel like [activism] putting me in places of being a credible messenger to speak on different issues. . . . Being AfroLatino means that I can understand that both of the communities that I identify with are the ones that are most ravaged by police, that are most ravaged by poverty, that are often at the end of the negative stats, Black and Latinx, right?

Quisqueya connected racial justice and education equity and access to his activism. In high school, he “was trying to erase anything [he had] to do with Blackness” but joining a youth Latino organization was a turning point for him. This Latino youth organization was where he “started to get activated and talk about all these things and be able to like, to understand these issues.” Further, he shared, “They developed us as youth leaders to dismantle school segregation in New York City.” Quisqueya elaborated:

We eventually launched a campaign for the 65th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. . . . What we found is that, well, 65 years later, we’re still experiencing segregation and even hypersegregation, and so, our campaign was about retiring segregation because 65 is when you retire. . . . We made some newspapers . . . with student stories [and distributed them] all throughout the city. At the end of the day, we all got together in Times Square with all the different teams, and we spoke on the issues. And I got to speak in front of 600+ students that day. So, my main work was . . . around mobilization and outreach. So, that really got my feet wet, and I really got to see like, okay, this is the scene, this is how we organize, and this is like, issues that matter.

What started out as an after-school youth organization soon became a learning opportunity for Quisqueya to reflect on his Black identity and then advocate for others who looked like him. Going to a specialized high school that was predominantly white and being involved in this youth organization drove him to understand the racial disparities, inequitable resources, and segregation in NYC schools. Understanding these varying educational experiences fueled Quisqueya to activism. He understood he needed to mobilize others and advocate for those who looked like him to create change.

Christy and Nini also described advocacy as something they had to do based on the identities they held as women, highlighting their role in the women’s rights movement. Christy discussed being an enthusiastic advocate for women’s rights because she understood the lived realities of women and how issues such as sexual assault or reproductive rights—to name a few—impact them. In college, she studied Africana studies, criminal justice, and women’s

studies to not only understand her identities, but also explore how U.S. society marginalizes people of color, especially women of color like her. She shared:

I'm an activist for women because walking the world as a woman, I have to be an activist for myself. Because you're in New York, motherfuckers will try it. . . . I say that coming from today being in the city, just being the world as a woman . . . people assume that they're entitled to your figure as a woman. I have to be a women's right activist. That's my daily life. Because sexual assault violence and awareness, women's rights, reproductive rights are all really important. My background in social work is part of my activism.

Christy also identified her experiences as a social worker for 10 was conducive for advocacy. Her career required her to be an activist and advocate for marginalized and vulnerable people, especially for women. Not only was this issue important for Christy based on her personal identities, but it was also important to her career.

Nini also spoke about spreading awareness and advocating for women's issues, specifically reproductive rights. After the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade in 2022*, Nini sprang into action, attending protests and high school dialogues. She shared:

I remember having a conversation with my grandmother . . . was like, 'Oh, like this is so unfair, grandma. Like, I can't believe they're doing this.' And she would be like, 'Birth control's not even good. Like, don't ever use it.' And I was like, 'Grandma, why would you say that?' She told me a story about how when she was growing up in El Salvador, the birth control available in the markets there... sent by the United States were ineffective . . . and made her sick. And then, I did more research about it. I talked to my mom and my mom told me that, 'Oh, actually what would happen is the United States would send the testing [version], not the finished birth control version to Central America and Mexico and South America and the Caribbean, all those countries . . . and so then, of course, the women are gonna have bad ideas of birth control cuz the stuff they're taking is not even like actual, it's the testing.'

Identifying as AfroSalvadorian provided Nini with a global perspective when understanding reproductive rights. Nini carefully articulated how women's rights and reproductive rights have historically impacted women in El Salvador after learning about this topic via a conversation with her grandmother. In addition, these rights have continued to be under attack in the United States. Nini was outraged and motivated to do something about it and decided to spread

awareness and advocate for these issues at her high school. Nini and her friends organized speak outs and talked about how this issue impacted them. Nini elaborated:

I made really sure to emphasize that this is going to affect Black and Latinas and you know, people of color very differently than how it's gonna affect more affluent people, maybe more white people just because . . . how like world is.

For the collaborators, engaging in traditional forms of activism in combination with their advocacy was important. Advocacy included talking about the issues, identifying solutions, educating communities, and working together to achieve their goals.

“Jesus to me was the First and Biggest Activist”: Activism as Compassion

Compassion fueled the collaborators to not only understand others' experiences but also, most importantly, act through their activism to help change unjust circumstances. Theresa, Larimar, and Quisqueya were a few collaborators who articulated the power and strength in having compassion in their activism. Compassion was not only a core value in their activism but also in themselves as humans. Family, God, the youth with whom collaborators worked, and personal experiences motivated them. Some of the collaborators identified having compassion because of the hardships they witnessed and experienced.

As a mother, daughter, and activist, Theresa identified compassion as a value others socialized her to view as a strength. For her, activism tied directly to her upbringing with Christianity, calling Jesus “the first and biggest activist” and the kindness and compassion her mother modeled. She shared:

My Christianity . . . always felt like a call to activism. There was a [disabled] veteran who couldn't speak. . . . He was in the streets . . . for 5 years of my life, and every day, my mom brought him food. And I grew up not just hearing the stories of Jesus, I grew up seeing my mom being kind and compassionate to different people. To me, activism is just an extension of this is what you do, you care about people, you don't walk through your life and not see the people in pain. You stop and you acknowledge them and you do what you can to help them and to speak for them. To me, that's where my activism has come from. It's come from my faith more than anything else.

Theresa's activism was motivated by her spirituality, upbringing, and family who taught her to be compassionate to others. This is a message she continued to carry with her and was part of her activism. Theresa used her career in education to demonstrate care and compassion to students who needed help. In addition, she used compassion in her education career to create emotional spaces during her diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings to "change minds and hearts."

Similarly, Larimar, at one of the community pláticas, highlighted how her activism was about compassion and purpose. Larimar ensured her actions represented AfroLatine/a/os and she could connect to her AfroLatine/a/o students through their shared lived experiences. She highlighted education access and equity was especially important to her life. Larimar expressed:

When you are not just educating, but through dialogue, through conversations and hearing other people's experiences, and then kind of sharing yours and them seeing like, 'Oh, I'm not alone . . . I've gone through that. I've been there, I'm experiencing that.' I think that makes . . . the process of activism a lot better, a lot stronger, because there's a connection and then there's someone who's gonna be rallying right behind you or next to you. . . . So, activism for me comes with feeling, with purpose.

Larimar identified immigration issues were important to her activism because the community where her school was located had some undocumented families. Larimar shared:

I have students that are undocumented . . . that are still trying to figure out what they're gonna do after they graduate high school because they wanna go to college, but . . . it's scary. They don't know. And I am trying to help them by researching, becoming knowledgeable, and helping them navigate these systems.

As an immigrant to the United States and first-generation college student, Larimar understood the hardships of navigating the education system. Larimar took every opportunity possible to understand the issues and resources in the community to best assist her students and their families.

Quisqueya shared the hardships he and his mom faced growing up low income, seeing some "very dark sides[of] poverty." His lived experiences motivated the compassion he displayed in his activism. He shared:

Being . . . an immigrant, a second generation, a first generation, whatever you want to call it, but just a person of color in the United States. . . . So, being at the behest of those systems, like my family has been evicted . . . we have been considered homeless. My mother and I used to live and sleep on the bottom bunk of a bed together. And so, to know like, what it looks like to be all the way at the edge, but still know that there's hope, and people to look out . . . and invest in you, and want to believe in you. That's why I do my work. And I do it because I hope that we can build a better world . . . where we can all live together.

Because of these hardships, Quisqueya strived to ensure compassion, care, and hope filled his activism. He tried to demonstrate the care and compassion others showed him and his family during particularly challenging times in his life. His lived experiences also pushed him to “become more self-actualized.” He tried to mentor and build this consciousness in others because the legacy and movement must be collectively fought for with love. The collaborators discussed how their family, God, the youth with whom they worked, and their personal experiences motivated and sustained them to engage in activism; thus making compassion a core value in their activism.

Finding 4: “Existence of AfroLatinidad is Definitely Itself Already an Activist Movement”:

AfroLatine/a/o and Activist Identity as Existence is Resistance

Although some collaborators may have been aware of the phrase, *existence as resistance*, before this study, I offered a definition in the initial survey. Nini, Angela, Eva, Theresa, and Quisqueya discussed the concept of existence as resistance through the pláticas as a movement to embrace their race and ethnicity as AfroLatine/a/os. The collaborators believed that identifying as AfroLatine/a/o, was a statement of a larger global movement of people embracing their African roots/ancestry—their Black identity in Latinidad. The existence as resistance of AfroLatine/a/o identity was one of the deepest connections between the collaborators’ AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities.

For example, during the community plática, Nini identified many collaborators who mentioned the words *resilience* and *resistance* to describe their AfroLatinidad. She stated:

I think that is one way . . . I definitely challenge ideas of race and ethnicity and . . . the dominant Eurocentric culture of just being able to embrace AfroLatinidad and introduce myself as that. And acknowledge that mix and the nuances of that mix and the history of that is one way to really do that.

Nini believed it was important to acknowledge the nuances in the Latine/a/o community, so identifying as AfroSalvadorian was part of her activism and how she displayed existence as resistance. Angela also viewed her identity as AfroLatina as part of her activism through existence as resistance. She shared “Existence as resistance to me means that claiming and identifying as AfroLatina alone is part of a larger social movement to embrace our Black identity, something that we grew up thinking as negative.” Claiming her Black identity was a contradiction to her socialization, something she had to unlearn through her self-discovery journey to become a proud AfroLatina activist.

Quisqueya echoed a similar sentiment by stating, “AfroLatinidad is a culture of resistance” that white ideologies have tried to erase throughout history but the culture has continued to persist and thrive as a “bright, vibrant, and colorful” community. Attending an HBCU and locking his hair created a space to be his most authentic and unapologetic AfroLatine self, sharing, “Whether my tia likes [my hair in locks] or not, is like, part of being an activist for me.” He expressed how his AfroLatine identity, his existence as resistance, empowered him to live his most unapologetic self and challenge his family’s anti-Blackness.

Theresa described her AfroLatinidad identity as “a show of resistance or a form of counternarrative.” Theresa further stated white/Eurocentric ideologies promoted by U.S. society “are kind of dismissive of our African roots and our identities. By creating this subcategory [AfroLatinidad], it’s a way to empower or . . . fight against potential anti-Blackness that exists

within the Latino community.” Theresa’s existence as resistance was also about interrogating her socialization and unlearning anti-Blackness. She elaborated:

I don’t think I would be where I am today had I not connected to my AfroLatinidad. . . . I didn’t see the anti-Blackness as a problem until I understood my identity and how it robbed me of experiences. That’s what prompted my activism because I didn’t want my lack of understanding of my identity to rob my children of their pride in their culture. Also, being a mother to white-passing children at times, depending on where they are, made me really weary of them erasing me from their narrative because I am the person that’s of color in the equation. And that hurt me deeply and it made me want to create a world where they wouldn’t have to be ashamed of me.

Theresa was motivated to unlearn, learn, and relearn ways of knowing and being. Theresa did not want her biracial children to erase her or their ancestry and history. Activism meant living in her most authentic self to model AfroLatinidad to her children.

The collaborators asserted great agency and resistance in claiming AfroLatinidad. The collaborators discussed existence as resistance as resilience, the process of unlearning and learning, authenticity, and reflection. Whether it was claiming their Black identity, being their most unapologetic selves, or interrogating their own and others’ anti-Blackness, AfroLatine/a/o activists asserted agency and critical consciousness. In this last finding, I shared how the AfroLatine/a/o activists demonstrated critical consciousness through critical reflection, critical action, and political efficacy through connecting their AfroLatinidad and activist identities. This allowed the AfroLatine/a/o activists to express existence as resistance as part of their activism.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In Chapter 6, I first provide an overview of the study. Second, I describe the background context, problem statement, and purpose of the study. Third, I summarize the literature review, conceptual framework, methodology, and methods. Fourth, I highlight the research questions and describe how my findings addressed the questions. I then detail the study's limitations and connect the study to literature and the conceptual framework. Lastly, I conclude Chapter 6 with implications for theory, praxis, research, policy, and AfroLatine/a/o activists.

Overview of the Study

This study's aims were two-fold: (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualized AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogate the relationship between these identities. Scholars have studied AfroLatine/a/os' racial and ethnic identity development and activism separately. This dissertation highlighted the critical consciousness that both these identities bring together. Through a critical reflection process, a form of critical consciousness, AfroLatine/a/os assert agency and resilience to make meaning and reflect upon their Blackness and Latinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Activists also engage with critical consciousness in understanding social inequities and oppression (Freire, 1970b).

Exclusionary practices and a hostile campus climate continue to exist in U.S. higher education, especially for people with marginalized identities. Thus, students continue to engage in activism that demands institutional change that aligns with social justice and equity. The first problem this study addressed is that AfroLatine/a/o activists' retention and persistence must matter to higher education leaders, especially as institutions struggle to support, develop, and retain Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students. Black and Latine/a/o students already face educational difficulties and are persisting at lower rates. Those who engage in

activism are potentially at greater risk of not being retained in college because of hostile campus climates (Harrison & Mather, 2017). The second problem this study identified was that the literature on Latine/a/o college student racial and ethnic identity development is often Mexican-centric, treats Latine/a/os as a monolithic group, or is scant. The pan-ethnic term *Latine/a/o* or *Hispanic* obscures the significant differences in race, culture, history, language, and immigration patterns among subpopulations like AfroLatine/a/os. It leads to generalizations about the Latine/a/o population (McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004). Although some studies have looked at social identities and activism separately, this dissertation study aimed to extend the literature and center on race, ethnicity, and activism together. AfroLatine/a/os activists possess a uniquely heightened awareness or critical consciousness to reflect on the inequities in their lives—especially regarding their race and ethnicity—and then act through activism to create change.

Summary of Literature Review

AfroLatine/a/os have a long history of living in the present-day United States and Latin America, beginning with those from the Spanish conquest (Reid Andrews, 2004). During slavery, an estimated 5.7 million Africans were transported forcibly and enslaved to Spanish and Portuguese America (i.e., present-day Latin America), in contrast to an estimated 560,000 Africans who were brought to present-day North America (Reid Andrews, 2004). AfroLatinidad is not a new concept, but an identity Latine/a/o people have increasingly embraced to emphasize their African ancestry and culture (Daché et al., 2019; Haywood, 2017b; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020). AfroLatine/a/os are ethnically Latine/a/o and racially Black and have visible or self-identified African ancestry (Daché et al., 2019; Haywood, 2017b; Hernández, 2022; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020; Vega et al., 2012).

AfroLatinidad can “develop a racial sociopolitical consciousness” (Comas-Díaz, 2021, p. 68) that interrogates racism because they are “forced to negotiate multiple cultures, panethnicity, and the U.S. social construction of race and ethnicity” (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020, p. 2). Understanding this identity is complex because ethnic and racial identity development models place identity stages as markers of achievement, are linear in nature, and were created with a lack of diversity in the samples. Through a “me-search” process or self-discovery journey, AfroLatine/a/os assert agency and resilience to make meaning and reflect upon their Blackness and Latinidad (García-Louis, 2020, 2021).

I designed my dissertation study to encompass all types of activism-related behaviors (i.e., traditional and contemporary) and any social issues (e.g., immigration rights, racial justice, women’s rights) in which the collaborators engaged. Student activists have mobilized to demand transformational change in higher education in response to local, national, and global issues. The literature has described activism as mobilizing others, forming consensus, and taking action toward collective liberation and social change (Hamrick, 1998; Linder et al., 2020; Mendes & Chang, 2019). Often, the media shows traditional activism such as acts interrupting power and social order through visual disruption like protesting and marching (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2014). Although contemporary activism shares similar characteristics with traditional activism, it has expanded to include the use of existence as resistance, technology, and social media (Biddix, 2014; Mendes & Chang, 2019). Not surprisingly, identity and social issues motivate activism (Crossley, 2008; Linder et al., 2020; Ruiz-Junco, 2011). My study explored the intersection of people who identify as activists and AfroLatine/a/o to engage with critical consciousness in understanding social inequities, oppression, and Blackness.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework created for this dissertation centers Blackness in the context of AfroLatine/a/o activists. A framework like this is more important than ever because of the state of racial injustice, greater interest in collective action toward social change, interest in learning outcomes, and the increasingly diverse U.S. society and college campuses. To understand the critical consciousness AfroLatine/a/o activists possess, this conceptual framework brings together (a) Latino critical race theory (LatCrit), (b) Daché et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento, and (c) Freire's (1970a) conscientization. I developed the conceptual framework by integrating critical components of each theory relevant to my study. This conceptual framework provided a lens to understand the experiences of AfroLatine/a/o activists in a way that highlights their embraced Blackness, heightened knowledge, and critical action.

The center of this framework, illustrated in Figure 1, reminds scholars to uphold certain values when exploring AfroLatinidad and activism. LatCrit, Black-imiento, and critical consciousness theories align with social justice validated experiential knowledge and take a transdisciplinary approach (Daché et al., 2019; Freire, 1970a; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The center of this framework influenced how I (a) organized the pláticas, (b) framed my positionality, and (c) connected the framework in the plática questions and purpose of this study. LatCrit is necessary for this framework because it acknowledges the factors specific to Latine/a/os such as immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, skin tone, and accent that are situated in larger racist institutional structures that perpetuate oppression and inequity (LatCrit Inc., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black-imiento and LatCrit capture the importance of recognizing race is interwoven in U.S. society and culture, and scholars must reject a pan-ethnic label such as *Latine/a/o* (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Black-imiento and LatCrit challenge

dominant white culture and ideologies similar to AfroLatine/a/os, who reject the Latine/a/o label and anti-Blackness (Daché et al., 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). In addition, Black-imiento and critical consciousness incorporate critical reflection. AfroLatine/a/os reflect, learn, and unlearn; rejecting anti-Blackness and asserting agency in embracing their AfroLatinidad (García-Louis & Cortes, 2020). Critical reflection also highlights how AfroLatine/a/os root themselves in history and interrogate their own internalized racism (Daché et al., 2019).

Summary of Research Design

I used plática methodology in my qualitative dissertation study to explore the experiences of 11 AfroLatine/a/o activists in the United States. The following research questions guided this study:

- Research Question 1: What racial ideologies are present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad?
- Research Question 2: How do AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their activism?
- Research Question 3: What, if any, is the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism?

To investigate these questions further, I used plática as a methodological approach. Through a plática methodology, I cocreated knowledge, built critical consciousness and community, and offered collaborators validation toward their lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores Carmona et al., 2021; F. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013; Valle & Mendoza, 1978). Plática methodology is not only an asset-based approach but also a more culturally appropriate way to understand the experiences of Latine/a/o communities (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Plática methodology helped me to foster a sense of meaning-making and knowledge creation among collaborators to theorize about their lived experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016).

In this study, I used both criterion and snowball sampling. I shared my recruitment flyer and criteria widely across social media networks like Twitter and Facebook, and historically

African American and Latine/a/os fraternity and sorority listservs (Terrell, 2016). I also confirmed two undergraduate AfroLatine/a/o activists through my social and professional networks, and those collaborators helped my recruiting efforts (Terrell, 2016). During the recruitment process, I also emailed gatekeepers at various higher education institutions and Latine/a/o and Hispanic community organizations in major cities with large Latine/a/o populations. I offered a \$40 electronic gift card as an incentive for the one-on-one pláticas and community pláticas.

I collected data via a 5-minute survey, 60-minute video-recorded one-on-one pláticas, and 90-minute video-recorded community pláticas. The survey, which had 46 respondents, offered a bigger picture on AfroLatine/a/o activism across the United States. The pláticas with the collaborators explored a deeper understanding of AfroLatine/a/o activists' lived experiences. Pláticas occurred through reciprocal dialogue that fostered trust and relationship building (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018). Pláticas also “constitute a method that recognizes and values familial and cultural knowledge, and platicando becomes the process of drawing on that knowledge and making meaning across experiences” (González Ybarra, 2018, p. 511). Through pláticas, collaborators share cuentos, chismes, charlas, regaños, and consejos (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; González Ybarra, 2018; M. Guajardo & Guajardo, 2007). In the one-on-one pláticas, I asked collaborators to express their racial and ethnic socialization and how they conceptualized their AfroLatine/a/o identity. I also asked collaborators to reflect on their activism and how it could relate to their AfroLatinidad. In the community pláticas, I fostered a space for collaborators to conduct their analysis collectively by finding the similarities and differences in each other's narratives. By aligning my conceptual framework with plática methodology, I centered Blackness in my data collection. Collaborators had the opportunity to

(a) theorize about their lived experiences, (b) reject dominant narratives, (c) embrace and honor their Blackness, and (d) exercise their critical consciousness and reflection skills in their “me-search” journey’s (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Freire, 1970a; García-Louis, 2020; LatCrit Inc., 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

I built trustworthiness through the research design by (a) transcribing and verifying transcripts, (b) creating collaborator narratives, (c) member checking narratives with collaborators, (d) facilitating community pláticas for collaborators to propose themes, (e) peer debriefing, (f) line-by-line initial/open coding, (g) initial memoing, (h) focused coding to create themes, and (i) final memoing. Initial coding is an open-ended, quick, and spontaneous approach to coding while remaining open to all possible interpretations (Saldaña, 2016). Focused coding involves on creating a codebook, combining codes into categories, and theming the data (Saldaña, 2016).

Summary of Findings

The first research question I asked was about the racial ideologies present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad. The first finding in this dissertation highlighted the critical reflection journey’s of AfroLatine/a/o activists, which spanned from childhood through college and, for many collaborators, after college. The AfroLatine/a/o activists asserted agency in claiming AfroLatinidad as part of their racial and ethnic identity development. The collaborators’ journeys demonstrated critical consciousness by engaging in critical reflection. The collaborators displayed critical reflection by navigating and un/learning how oppressive, white supremacist, and anti-Black structures and norms affected their families and communities. First, AfroLatine/a/o activists reflected critically and learned more about their own AfroLatine/a/o identity, country of origin history, colonization, white

supremacy, and anti-Blackness. Second, the AfroLatine/a/o activists took the initiative to understand, navigate, and challenge white supremacy and anti-Blackness in themselves as internalized racism.

The second finding connected to the first research question and emphasized how AfroLatine/a/o activists created racial ideologies that centered Afro/Blackness in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad. AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies refer to the worldviews, beliefs, and perspectives that AfroLatine/a/o activists created in conceptualizing their racial and ethnic identities (i.e., as Black or Afro). AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies include (a) embracing Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/o as a monolithic group.

I inquired how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualized their activism. The third finding demonstrated how the collaborators defined their activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. First, the collaborators discussed how their activism was community oriented, had community power and strength, was intergenerational, and collectively worked toward a higher purpose/goal. Second, the AfroLatine/a/o activists noted advocacy was also a big part of their activism and change. They displayed advocacy by discussing the issues, identifying solutions, educating others, and working together to achieve their goals. Moreover, the collaborators mentioned compassion as crucial to their activism. Unlike empathy and sympathy, compassion fueled the collaborators to act through activism.

My last research question involved exploring the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism. The final finding addressed the intersection of Blackness, Latinidad, and activism. The collaborators shared how their

AfroLatine/a/o identity was a form of existence as resistance, a form of activism. The AfroLatine/a/o activists described existence as resistance as a movement to embrace their race and ethnicity as AfroLatine/a/os. Understanding and identifying as AfroLatine/a/o was part of a larger global movement of embracing African roots/ancestry, or their Black identity in Latinidad. Despite their socialization, the collaborators deeply resonated with existence as resistance as part of their activism when identifying with AfroLatinidad, highlighting the connection between AfroLatine/a/o and the collaborators' activist identities.

Limitations and Boundaries of Study

Several limitations and boundaries of study were present and noteworthy to mention. First, the scope of this study was focused on AfroLatine/a/o activists in the United States. At the onset of the study, this approach and the perspective that AfroLatinidad might be a U.S.-centric concept, did not occur to me until a community plática where Bori pointed out, “when I go to PR [Puerto Rico] or when I go to the Spanish-speaking countries, I don't hear that term, right... it's a term we've created here in the U.S. just to be able to self-identify ourselves. I don't go to P.R. and say I'm AfroBoricua.” Notably, scholarship from Latin America was not utilized and this study did not consider a hemispheric lens through which to interrogate U.S. racial frameworks and discussions. Future research should consider studying AfroLatine/a/o activists using a hemispheric lens and approach. And when doing so, researchers should move past the political elements at play that hinder us from accessing and utilizing Spanish-written and Latin American literature and scholars. It is necessary and vital to uplift and cite scholarship from this region.

Second, the survey design could have been more explicit and descriptive during recruitment and data collection. For example, in the activism section of questions, I asked, “Have you ever engaged in any of the following activities (check off as many as you would like)?” and

“What topic(s) does your activism focus on?” As a result, the survey participants checked off many of the options. The questions were unclear regarding the timeframe, status of engagement, or frequency of actions. By understanding the status of their activism participation and current issues that their activism centered, I would have had a clearer picture of how the current context and time impacted these issues/engagement (i.e., the coronavirus pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement). In addition, the issues listed on the survey were not explicit about political activism, which could have deterred communities that were deeply engaged in political movements during the time I was recruiting participants. Cubans, in particular, were engaging in one of the largest uprisings challenging communism (Harrup & Pérez, 2021). Future studies should offer open-ended questions or include numerous topics that could be perceived as a form of activism to add clarity to the research, data collection, and analysis process, as well as expand the reach of this study. Third, during data collection and analysis, I intended for the community pláticas to serve as a coanalysis, where collaborators read other collaborator narratives and came to the community pláticas with themes they observed. Although some collaborators completed this unpaid prework, some did not and could only speak on their experiences. Future studies should consider making this prework paid and part of the commitment to participate in the study. In addition, instructions and/or training on what a co-analysis consists of would be beneficial.

Discussion

This study sought to explore the critical consciousness of AfroLatine/a/o activists using plática methodology. Freire’s (1974/2005) seminal scholarship emphasized that once marginalized Brazilians understood the inequities and oppressive structures they faced, they could begin to resist and demand change regarding their circumstances. Based on the three components of critical consciousness: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action

(Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Watts et al., 2011), I will expand how the collaborators embodied critical consciousness. The collaborators reflected critically on their racial, ethnic, and activist identity development through a continuous learning and unlearning process. AfroLatine/a/o activists also demonstrated political efficacy when understanding themselves in larger societal contexts and exploring the ingrained presence of white supremacy and anti-Blackness in U.S. society. Lastly, AfroLatine/a/o activists took their self-exploration and understanding of self in larger societal contexts, and turned that critical reflection and political efficacy into critical action to create change via activism.

AfroLatine/a/o Activists' Critical Reflection

The AfroLatine/a/o activists, my collaborators, engaged in critical reflection in their racial, ethnic, and activist identity development. Ethnic identity development models take into consideration customs, traditions, culture, language, behaviors, beliefs, and values (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Phinney, 1993; Tajfel, 1981). Ferdman and Gallegos's (2001) Latine/a/o racial identity development model included factors such as national origin, skin color and physical appearance, gender, socialization, socioeconomic status, language patterns, and acculturation level. This study validated the racial, ethnic, and activist identity development of AfroLatine/a/o activists and contributed additional factors such as Black-imiento and critical consciousness. The scholarship on critical reflection has also highlighted how AfroLatine/a/os root themselves in history and interrogate their own internalized racism (Daché et al., 2019), which my collaborators embodied in their journeys. This study expands the scholarship by (a) demonstrating the collaborators became more conscious of their AfroLatine/a/o identity and the impacts of white supremacy and anti-Blackness on their lived realities through a learning and unlearning process that occurred through their critical reflection journey, and (b) by expressing

that AfroLatine/a/o identity is fluid and identity development is a continuous and lifelong process.

Critical reflection acknowledges individuals are active participants in transforming the world by understanding oppressive structures and their own lived realities in those oppressive structures (Freire, 1970a). The collaborators' critical reflection journeys consisted of (a) learning more about their history and their African ancestry, (b) unpacking and unlearning some of the indoctrination of white supremacy and anti-Blackness they received growing up to embrace AfroLatinidad, and (c) creating AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies that defined and expressed their lived experiences. This study validates the literature that AfroLatine/a/os go through an identity negotiation process to understand how they are simultaneously ethnically Latine/a/o and racially Black and have visible or self-identified African ancestry (Daché et al., 2019; García-Louis & Cortes, 2020; Haywood, 2017b; Hernández, 2022; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020; Vega et al., 2012). My study findings indicate that AfroLatine/a/o identity is fluid and identity development is a continuous and lifelong process.

AfroLatine/a/o activists' critical reflection journeys provided them the avenue to engage in learning and unlearning white supremacy and anti-Blackness. The collaborators then embraced AfroLatinidad and defined or expressed AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies.

AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies consist of the world views, beliefs, and perspectives that AfroLatine/a/o activists create and live by in conceptualizing their racial and ethnic identities.

The collaborators' AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies included but were not limited to (a) positively embracing a Black identity by taking pride in their physical appearance, hair, and skin color; (b) centering their resistance in language; and (c) rejecting stereotypes and generalizations of Latine/a/os as a monolithic group. These racial ideologies connected deeply to the conceptual

framework of this study, which highlights the interconnectedness between (a) LatCrit, (b) Dache' et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento, and (c) Freire's (1970a) conscientization. The collaborators discussed how their AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies challenged dominant white culture and ideologies by rejecting anti-Blackness and white supremacy.

AfroLatine/a/o Activists' Political Efficacy and Critical Action

AfroLatine/a/o activists actively participated in a continuous critical reflection process to understand their racial, ethnic, and activist identities. By critically reflecting, the collaborators could also articulate forms of political efficacy, understanding themselves in a larger societal context and believing they could be part of social change to combat white supremacy and anti-Blackness ingrained fundamentally in U.S. society. The literature on political efficacy has emphasized that "people will be much more likely to engage in critical action if they feel that they can create change" (Watts et al., 2011, p. 46). This study expands the scholarship to include how AfroLatine/a/o activists translated their political efficacy into collective action via activism, which they described as community, advocacy, and compassion. For example, Mercedes wants to be part of the collective that rewrites the U.S.(?) Constitution and Quisqueya uses his stance as a "credible messenger" to advocate for his community. The collaborators' political efficacy via activism illustrated how they were confident in their power to change their oppressive conditions as individuals or a collective.

The collaborators transformed their critical reflection and political efficacy into critical action to create change via activism. Critical action "occurs when individuals actively seek to change their unjust conditions through policy reform, practices, or programs" (Christens et al., 2016, p. 17). Unsurprisingly, the collaborators engaged in identity-based activism related to one or more of their social identities (Linder et al., 2020). The collaborators identified the most

important social issues were racial justice, women's rights, and education access and equity. All 11 collaborators identified racial justice as being one of the social issues in which they engaged. In addition, nine collaborators, mainly those who identified as women, also selected women's rights. Although five of the AfroLatine/a/o activists had careers in the education field, nine of the collaborators identified education access and equity as important to their activism. Mathews et al. (2020) concluded (a) critical reflection may be a result of ethnic and race-based experiences and ethnic and racial identity exploration, (b) individuals with a greater sense of ethnic and racial identity could lead to increased critical action, and (c) there is a link between one's positive feeling toward their ethnic and racial group and engagement in political efficacy. My study's findings suggest collaborators' critical consciousness highlighted the connection between their race, ethnicity, and identity-based activism.

Implications

I identified several problems with the literature on AfroLatine/a/os and activism (e.g., lack of retention initiatives for AfroLatine/a/o or activists, Mexican-centric literature), and sought to address them in this study. This study's findings call for higher education professionals to reframe their perspectives on activism and look beyond Latinidad as monolithic and homogenous. Delving into the experiences of AfroLatine/a/os, an often-invisible subpopulation, is imperative. This study's findings allow higher education constituencies to learn more about the critical consciousness AfroLatine/a/o activists possess to create holistic research and programming that is attentive to their needs. In addition, this study's findings guide educators on how to support, develop, and help AfroLatine/a/o student activists thrive on persistently oppressive and perpetually racist campuses. In summary, this study illuminates the relationship between AfroLatine/a/o identity and activism, providing valuable insights for scholars, activists,

policymakers, educators, and other AfroLatine/a/o activists. By challenging existing paradigms and advocating for a more inclusive understanding of AfroLatine/a/o racial, ethnic, and activist identity development, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on race, ethnicity, and social change in the United States. I present various contributions to higher education theory, praxis, research, policy, and AfroLatine/a/o activists in the following sections.

Implications for Theory

Based on this study's findings and conceptual framework, I provide two implications for theory. The collaborators' racial and ethnic identity development was a continuous process that started before college, was impacted in college, and was enhanced after college and through their lifetime. Moreover, this study challenged a linear approach to identity development as collaborators went through learning and unlearning cycles, a constant identity negotiation process. Racial and ethnic formation is very complex, especially for AfroLatine/a/o individuals in the United States, where we live in an often Black/white binary. Therefore, I recommend challenging monolithic definitions of Latine/a/o identity. This study encourages rethinking racial identity and activism experiences for AfroLatine/a/o activists based on their existence as resistance and un/learning process. As a result, scholars must ensure race, ethnicity, and activist experiences are included in AfroLatine/a/o identity development models and research. Failing to include race, ethnicity, and activism displays an oversight that neglects, dismisses, and erases Black identity in Latinidad and their existence in identity negotiation and contributions to social change as resistance. Future scholars should consider more thoughtfully how racial and ethnic identity development models apply to AfroLatine/a/o and AfroLatine/a/o activists. Any limitations these models may present for AfroLatine/a/os must be combined with theories that address the limitations. I recommend utilizing Daché et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento, Rivera-

Rideau et al.'s (2017) AfroLatinx feminism, Black consciousness, or Black liberation; to name a few.

Second, this study suggests critical consciousness is central to the racial, ethnic, and activist identity development of AfroLatine/a/os activists. My conceptual framework notes critical consciousness includes critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Freire, 1970b; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Watts et al., 2011). The AfroLatine/a/o activists demonstrated all components of this theory. AfroLatine/a/o activists engaged in continuous critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action by learning and unlearning, embracing their Black identity through new racial ideologies, and challenging systemic oppression through activism. The collaborators articulated how they challenged dominant white culture and norms to create AfroLatine/a/o racial ideologies that rejected pan-ethnic labels and challenged the erasure of Blackness in the broader Latine/a/o community. For future theory-building, I recommend acknowledging, valuing, and including critical consciousness in conceptual frameworks when studying AfroLatine/a/os. Scholars should use a critical and asset-based lens to highlight how AfroLatine/a/os embrace Blackness; possess heightened knowledge, critical reflection, and critical action; and, as a result, challenge white/Eurocentric norms. I recommend that scholars who study AfroLatine/a/os center Blackness within their conceptual frameworks and research design to validate their lived experiences and identities.

Implications for Praxis

This study presents various implications for praxis. Although two of the collaborators were undergraduate college students at the time of this study, the other nine collaborators had already graduated from a 4-year college/university. Higher education professionals have great potential to influence AfroLatine/a/o student activists' senses of belonging, persistence, and

identity development through programming and policy initiatives. And as institutions continue to strive for social justice, we must remain persistent in addressing anti-Blackness as part of these efforts. Therefore, keeping these factors in mind, I recommend (a) creating a paradigm shift in how higher education institutions view AfroLatinidad and activism, (b) designing intentional and culturally relevant programs, and (c) implementing an inclusive curriculum.

These implications require staff and faculty to create a paradigm shift in how they approach AfroLatine/a/o and activist students. A paradigm shift will only happen when higher education views student activism as a valuable learning experience for students (Barnhardt & Reyes, 2016; Biddix, 2014; Linder, 2019). AfroLatine/a/o activists' existence and resistance matters! Therefore, once activism is treated as a valuable learning opportunity and coupled with identity development (e.g., race, ethnicity), higher education can reimagine opportunities to support AfroLatine/a/o student activism. As a result, staff and faculty should recognize, celebrate, and include Black racial identity and experiences in Latine/a/o spaces and programs. As Larimar implemented in her school, during Heritage month celebrations, she ensured that AfroLatine/a/os were represented in the stories and programs created for her students. Second, institutions should create a paradigm shift that decriminalizes activism and views it as a learning, developmental, and experiential leadership experience that empower students. As collaborators articulated, activism takes various forms, behaviors, and actions from protesting to signing petitions. Similarly, collaborators defined and expressed their racial ideologies and identity with AfroLatinidad in diverse ways. Therefore, staff and faculty must expand definitions of activism to include traditional and contemporary. Faculty and staff can genuinely foster collaboration and development for AfroLatine/a/o student activists through community, compassion, and advocacy. In addition, higher education institutions must develop AfroLatine/a/o racial, ethnic,

and activist identities through a critical consciousness, Black-centered, and strengths-based lens. Practically, this could mean creating training retreats or mentoring programs that center their Black identities and lived experiences, facilitate unlearning and learning journeys, and develop their activism as a form of leadership.

Many collaborators highlighted the lack of exposure and exploration of their racial identity when they were growing up. The collaborators discussed how their Latine/a/o and activist identities truly blossomed through critical reflection. I encourage student affairs practitioners to advise, celebrate, and support AfroLatine/a/o activists based on their lived experiences and realities. Staff and faculty should create culturally relevant programs, celebrations, support structures, and policies that recognize the diversity of the Latine/a/o community. These initiatives should center on critical reflection, building community, embracing Black racial identity, and navigating anti-Blackness and inequitable structures on campus. For example, within Latine/a/o and Black student centers, affinity spaces, and programs it would be beneficial to recognize and welcome Blackness in Latinidad. In addition, ways to engage AfroLatine/a/o activists include providing resources and meeting spaces to navigate social change on campus, creating peer mentorship programs, and offering professional development workshops. Workshops could address anti-Blackness, racial injustice, AfroLatine/a/o racial and ethnic identity, collective action and organizing efforts, social change strategies, and leadership and civic engagement. Another idea would be to use community pláticas to create a sense of belonging and inclusion, a space where AfroLatine/a/os could come together and dialogue around their critical consciousness, Black identity and liberation, and collegiate experiences. Pláticas can foster community, trust, healing, critical consciousness, vulnerability, and a sense of belonging. Efforts that center race, ethnicity, and activism for AfroLatine/a/o activists could

potentially increase their sense of belonging on colleges and university campuses. I challenge higher education leaders to consider: How can you support Black liberation and Black consciousness for AfroLatine/a/os on campuses?

The last implication for praxis addresses inclusive curriculum development for students, staff, and faculty. First, an inclusive curriculum incorporates AfroLatine/a/o and Black Latine/a/o voices, authors, experiences, histories, and contributions in the curriculum, both in curricular and cocurricular spaces. By including AfroLatine/a/os in the curriculum, educators can validate and enrich learning spaces for all students. Second, when creating an inclusive curriculum, all students would benefit from adding critical frameworks and literature such as critical race theories, Black-imiento, and critical consciousness. Inclusive curricular and cocurricular agendas need to discuss race and racism, which can potentially increase critical consciousness and race-based activism (George Mwangi et al., 2019). Lastly, faculty and staff who work with curricula should receive professional development. Faculty and staff should not assume a student identifies as Black or AfroLatine/a/o based on the way they look (i.e., their street race). These generalizations and monolithic views of identity can cause harm. Faculty and staff would highly benefit from professional development on stereotyping, bias, anti-Blackness, and cultural competency because these efforts address the unique challenges AfroLatine/a/os face. These professional development opportunities can inform more compassionate and effective support systems.

Implications for Future Research

This study presents several implications for future research based on (a) challenging generalizations made of the Latine/a/o population in research, (b) validating AfroLatine/a/o experiences, and (c) strengthening the notion that Blackness and Indigeneity exists in Latinidad.

Based on this study and how I operationalized Daché et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento framework, I recommend scholars move from blanqueamiento to Black-imiento, which means Blackening the consciousness in understanding Latinidad. The Black-imiento tenets of “(a) Black anti-racist aesthetics’ (b) Afro-Latinx/a/o historical consciousness, and (c) the rejection of a racialized pan-ethnic Latinx label” (Daché et al., 2019, p. 139) is one way to do this and should guide future research. Second, future research needs to expand plática methodology and methods. This assets-based methodological approach can be instrumental in understanding AfroLatine/a/os because it incorporates life experiences as an avenue to bring about change through critical consciousness.

Through this research process and literature review, it became clear how imperative it is to ensure researchers do not generalize Latine/a/o scholarship and communities as a monolith under the pan-ethnicity of Latinidad. When researching Latine/a/os, it is imperative to understand and explore the nuances, complexities, and diversity of Latine/a/os; thus, it is crucial to disaggregate demographic data to explore the intersection of race and ethnicity. This process will help highlight the differences in the experiences of AfroLatine/a/os instead of making them invisible under the pan-ethnic identity of Hispanic/Latine/a/o. Higher education professionals need to understand who is on their campus and that Latine/a/os can be of any race. These differences matter tremendously when researching Latine/a/os, especially AfroLatine/a/os. Researchers must center how AfroLatine/a/os experience race and define and express racial ideologies. By doing so, researchers challenge notions of Latinidad as homogenous, monolithic, and colorblind.

Because researchers have not often used pláticas as methodology and method traditionally in research contexts, this study presented one interpretation of the foundational scholarship from Fierros and Delgado Bernal (2016). As pláticas become increasingly popular,

researchers should consider (a) a critical paradigm, (b) the population of study (i.e., Latine/a/os and AfroLatine/a/os), and (c) the vast possibilities in the analytic process. First, future researchers using pláticas should adopt a critical paradigm, which includes interrogating the researchers' positionality; redistributing power in plática methodology by moving from participants to collaborators; practicing reciprocity and reflexivity; challenging how, why, and if scholars need to center Chicana/Latina feminist theory; and exploring collaboration and engagement with participants as collaborators. Future uses of plática as methodology and method should consider how the foundational role of Chicana/Latina feminism may limit the possibility of centering Blackness within pláticas. Future scholars are encouraged to incorporate Rivera-Rideau's (2017) AfroLatinx feminism and Dache et al.'s (2019) Black-imiento into their methodological approaches, including plática. Second, researchers must identify and articulate the nuances in the diversity of Latine/a/o communities. This nuance is especially vital when studying AfroLatine/a/os; researchers must acknowledge and validate collaborators' lived realities and experiences in pláticas and consider intentional ways to engage and celebrate them. Moreover, future researchers should expand and document the vast possibilities in the analytic process when using pláticas. This dissertation is one example of how I grounded my analytic decisions based on a critical paradigm when using pláticas. For example, although I used Valle and Mendoza's (1978) plática procedures: la entrada, an amistad interview, and la despedida; I took it one step further than just a pre-interview protocol. I intentionally created a space for the AfroLatine/a/o activists that (a) honored cultural traditions by playing music from an Afro-Cuban band, (b) shared my positionality through narrative and photographs, and (c) inquired about their well-being because of the societal circumstances impacting our communities at the time (i.e., COVID-19 global pandemic and racial injustices). I understood that making these

intentional and careful decisions impacted my collaborators when during our despedida Nini shared, “our experiences to be studied and... to be really talked about seriously and in ways that are also still very authentic and genuine to who we are” were very satisfying.

Implications for Policy

This study presents a policy implication that could impact AfroLatine/a/o activists in numerous ways, such as (a) impact on data accuracy and representation, (b) challenges in addressing discrimination, and (c) resource allocation and policy development. Based on this study’s research design and core focus, policymakers must oppose federal standards for collecting demographic data that would combine race and ethnicity into one question. According to the Afro-Latino Coalition (2023), the Office of Management and Budget of the United States intends to combine race and ethnicity into one question (i.e., What is your race or ethnicity?) Making ethnicity and race equivalent analytically will lead to inaccurate data and representations of the Latine/a/o community because “basic social science research is premised on the idea that you cannot use one question for two analytically distinct constructs” (N. López, 2023, para. 2). Consequently, the proposed standards will have severe impacts on how federal, state, and local organizations collect data, address discrimination based on race and ethnicity, allocate resources, and develop policy based on demographic data. Furthermore, “if adopted, the combined Hispanic ethnicity and race question will nullify our ability to do intersectional analysis, which was possible with the two-question format” (N. López, 2023, para. 9).

Thus, it is crucial to engage in proactive, intersectional, and culturally informed research that impacts policy significantly and depicts the diversity of the Latine/a/o community accurately by allowing Latine/a/os to choose any race separately. This practice will highlight the differences in Latine/a/o experiences, especially for AfroLatine/a/os who are simultaneously ethnically

Latino and racially Black and have visible or self-identified African ancestry (Daché et al., 2019; Haywood, 2017b; Hernández, 2022; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Salas Pujols, 2020; Vega et al., 2012). Not capturing race and ethnicity in separate questions is an oversight that neglects, dismisses, and erases Black identity in Latinidad.

Letter to AfroLatine/a/o Activists

I wanted to end this chapter and dissertation with a letter to my collaborators and other AfroLatine/a/o activists, sharing what I have learned and how they can use the findings of this study in their personal racial and ethnic identity development journey and activism efforts to move the United States toward social justice and collective liberation.

Dear collaborators and AfroLatine/a/o activists everywhere,

I want to start by thanking all 46 participants who completed the survey and the 11 courageous and exceptionally brilliant change agents who engaged with this study deeply as my collaborators. I loved interacting with Angela, Bori, Christy, Eva, Larimar, Liz, Mercedes, Nini, Quisqueya, Rio, and Theresa. You taught me so much, and I hope to continue our relationships outside of this study. I dedicate this letter to all of you. I hope other AfroLatine/a/o activists can use what we learned in our pláticas to move the U.S toward social justice and collective liberation. I hope the following lessons and recommendations motivate you to live authentically, engage in learning and unlearning, practice radical hope and collective care, and continue taking on our time's grand challenges.

Your existence and resistance matter: Although you resonated with activism deeply, some felt like they were not doing enough at times. You are enough! Like Theresa enthusiastically shared, “You are an activist in the ways that you can be. . . . There is no one way to be anything.” Your existence as AfroLatine/a/os is part of *our* resistance. Your agency in

reclaiming your Black/Afro identity is inspiring and your role in social movements is essential, valued, and appreciated. I see you! I hope you take this as a reminder to continue to live and act in a manner that is authentic to you. Remember, we are not a monolith, whether taking pride in our AfroLatine/a/o identity, skin color, natural hair, or anything else.

Continue to learn and unlearn: As many shared, critical reflection was a vital and continuous process in which you engaged. From negotiating your racial and ethnic identities to learning and unlearning white supremacy and anti-Blackness, this is a lifelong learning journey. Embrace it! Continue to learn, unlearn, and grow. Remember, this is a personalized journey. Create counternarratives that challenge how you grew up, which at times were filled with messages based on white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Your story matters and your lived realities and experiences are real. I see you, and I hope this study validates you! I believe genuinely that our learning and unlearning journeys can lead us toward collective healing and care.

Build coalitions that center community, advocacy, and compassion: As part of this study, you described your activism as community, advocacy, and compassion. I challenge you to create community-oriented social movements, center community power and strength, include intergenerational members, and focus on collective liberation. Since many of you identified as Dominican, I also ask you to consider ways to build coalitions with our Haitian brothers and sisters on the island to resist anti-Blackness/racism and seek social justice together. I also challenge you to consider how your intersecting identities, both privileged and marginalized, influence your activism and vice versa. Our social identities and lived experiences are intertwined in your approach to activism, the social issues you engage in, and what sustains your

activism. This connection can potentially center advocacy, collective liberation, and compassion in our activism.

With love and comunidad,

Marinel

Appendix A: Round 1 Recruitment Flyers

DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A BLACK LATINX/A/O? AND A STUDENT ACTIVIST?

PURPOSE



This study explores how AfroLatinx/a/o student activists conceptualize their AfroLatinidad, their activism, and see how, if at all, these two identities influence each other

CRITERIA

- Must be 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx/a/o or variation of term
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors
- Be an undergraduate student at a 2 or 4-year institution
- Live in New York

INTERESTED?

Collaborators will be expected to participate in a

- online screening survey (10-15 mins), one written life note prompt (60 mins), one-on-one virtual plática (video recorded, 60 mins), and an in-person community plática (video recorded, 120 mins).

Collaborators will be compensated \$15 per phase (a possible \$45 and \$5.50 MetroCard). Use the QR code to fill out a demographic interest form.



University of Maryland, College Park
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-1
For more information contact
Marinel Martinez-Benyarko, Doctoral Candidate

AFROLATINX/A/O STUDENT ACTIVISTS

PURPOSE



This study explores how AfroLatinx/a/o student activists conceptualize their AfroLatinidad, their activism, and see how, if at all, these two identities influence each other

CRITERIA

- Must be 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx/a/o or variation of term
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors
- Be an undergraduate student at a 2 or 4-year institution
- Live in New York

INTERESTED?

Collaborators will be expected to participate in a

- online screening survey (10-15 mins), one written life note prompt (60 mins), one-on-one virtual plática (video recorded, 60 mins), and an in-person community plática (video recorded, 120 mins).

Collaborators will be compensated \$15 per phase (a possible \$45 and \$5.50 MetroCard). Use the QR code to fill out a demographic interest form.



University of Maryland, College Park
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-1
For more information contact
Marinel Martínez-Benyarko, Doctoral Candidate
[REDACTED]

Appendix B: Survey and Survey Consent Form

Bienvenidos! Welcome!

My name is Marinel Martinez-Benyarko and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park campus within the College of Education (Student Affairs Program). Thanks for showing interest in participating in my dissertation research study.

Participant Criteria-

The first part of this study is intended for anyone who:

- Is 18 years or older
- Identifies as AfroLatinx, AfroLatina, or AfroLatino (or any variation of the prefix Afro, for example, AfroDominican or Black Latinx/a/o)
- Identifies as an activist or engages in activism behaviors/actions
- Lives in the United States

The second part of this study is a qualitative, more in-depth exploration, of how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their AfroLatinidad (racial and ethnic identity) and activism. I also want to explore if their AfroLatinidad is connected in some way to their activism; with a special interest in how the colligate experience influences these identities. Part 2 of this study includes 1 virtual one-on-one plática (conversation, 60 minutes) and 1 virtual community plática (group conversation, 90 minutes); all of which will be compensated for a possible total of \$40 (\$20 for each data collection stage). If you meet the criteria for Part 2 of this study, I will email you another consent form and additional details on how to move forward. Any questions can be referred to:

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko (xxxxx@umd.edu)

Doctoral Candidate,

University of Maryland

IRB Protocol #: 1907064-2

Institutional Review Board

1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	EXPLORING AFROLATINE/A/O ACTIVISTS’ CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Marinel Martinez-Benyarko at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose is to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogate the relationship between these two identities.
Procedures	<p>The procedures involve a 10-minute survey via Qualtrics. This survey covers demographic information, contact information, and questions about your social identities. This survey is the first part of a larger study on AfroLatine/a/o student activists. If you are eligible for the second part of the study, I will send you an email with an additional consent form and details on these procedures.</p> <p>At any time, you are free to withdraw from the study for any reason. You will also be asked to give consent before participating in the first part of this study by clicking the below field stating that you “agree to participate in Part 1 of this study.”</p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<p>There may be some risks from participating in this research study. A possible risk includes maintaining confidentiality. To mitigate this risk, I will be asking collaborators (you) to choose their pseudonyms so I am able to code your identifiable information and keep the identification key in a password protected computer and within UMD’s online Box platform, which requires dual authentication.</p> <p>You may end your participation at any time by not submitting the survey. You cannot skip any questions in Part 1 of this study, the survey, but if you feel uncomfortable answering any question, feel free to discontinue the survey and not submit the survey. If you submit the survey and would like to be removed from this study, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu and I can delete your submission manually.</p>
Potential Benefits	<p>There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, a possible indirect benefit includes having an opportunity to reflect, grow your network and community, and dialogue around your identities and activism; which could result in new knowledge for collaborators. Another possible benefit includes helping practitioners and researchers learn more about the racial and ethnic identity development and critical consciousness of AfroLatine/a/os student activists, which could advance how we support and collaborate with students to make their collegiate experience more inclusive.</p>

<p>Confidentiality</p>	<p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secure location such as: a locked office, password-protected computer, and UMD’s cloud platform Box, which requires dual authentication.</p> <p>I will also be asking collaborators to choose their pseudonyms so I am able to code your identifiable information. For transparency purposes (1) your name will not be included in the collected data; (2) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link the survey data to your identity; and (3) only the researcher will have access to the identification key and all data.</p> <p>If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park, or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p> <p><i>Data destruction timeline:</i> Additionally, I will destroy the link between identifiable information and pseudonyms within 7 years after the completion of this study. If you are not eligible for Part 2 of this study, your physical address will be deleted from the survey responses.</p>
<p>Compensation [*If Necessary]</p>	<p>For completing this 10-minute survey on AfroLatinidad and activism, there is no compensation.</p>
<p>Right to Withdraw and Questions</p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Marinel Martinez-Benyarko xxxxx@umd.edu XXX-XXX-XXXX</p> <p>If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or nonparticipation in this study.</p>

<p>Participant Rights</p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678 </p> <p>For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>
<p>Statement of Consent</p>	<p>By clicking the “I agree to participate in part 1 of this study” below, I am confirming that I have read, understand what is being asked of me, and am willingly able to participate in the research described above. I understand that I can discontinue my participation at any time. My consent also indicates that I am at least 18 years of age. Please print and save a copy of this consent form for your records.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree to participate in part 1 of this study (1) • I do not agree to participate in part 1 of this study (2)
<p>Date</p>	

Basic Information

Q1 What is your first and last name?

Q2 What is your preferred email?

Q3 What is your phone number?

Q4 What pronouns do you use? (*More information on pronouns here:*
<https://www.mypronouns.org/what-and-why>)

Q5 What gender identity do you identify as?

Self-Identification Questions

Q6 What variation of the term Afro do you resonate with? (*for example, AfroCuban, Afrodescendiente, LatiNegra, Black Latinx/a/o or AfroLatin American*)

Q7 What is your ethnic background? (*More information on race, ethnicity, and nationality visit:*
<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/race-vs-ethnicity-vs-nationality-what-are-the-differences.html>)

Q8 How do you self-identify racially? (adapted from N. López et al., 2018)

Q9 How do other people usually classify your race in this country? (adapted from N. López et al., 2018)

Q10 If you were walking down the street, what race do you think other Americans who do not know you personally would assume you were based on what you look like? (adapted from N. López et al., 2018)

- Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic (1)
 - Black or African America (2)
 - White (3)
 - Middle-Eastern/Arab (4)
 - Mexican (5)
 - Asian American (6)
 - Native American/ American Indian (7)
 - Some other race (8)
-

Q11 Have you ever engaged in any of the following activities (check off as many as you'd like)? (adapted from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, n.d.)

- Protesting (1)
- Marching or demonstrating (2)

- Writing demands (3)
- Sit-ins (4)
- Boycotting (5)
- Social media activism (using social media for the purposes of sharing information and advocating for a particular issue) (6)
- Contacting elected officials (7)
- Signing online or in-person petitions (8)
- Voting (9)
- Organizing or canvassing (10)
- Existence as resistance (being in spaces where BIPOC students were previously excluded) (11)
- Other: (12) _____
- None (13)

Skip To: End of Survey If Have you ever engaged in any of the following activities (check off as many as you'd like)? = None

Q12 What topic(s) does your activism focus on? (adapted from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, n.d.)

- Racial justice (1)
- Education access (2)
- Environmental concerns (3)
- Labor laws (4)
- Housing reform (5)
- Police reform (6)
- Immigration (7)
- LGBTQ issues (8)
- Trans and gender nonconforming rights (9)
- Voting rights (10)
- Women's rights (11)
- Sexual assault/violence awareness (12)
- Other (13)

Q13 Do you consider yourself an activist?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q14 How did you first come to engage in activism or activism related behaviors/actions?

Current Geographic and Educational Status:

Q15 Where do you currently live?

- New York (1)
- New Jersey (2)
- Connecticut (3)
- Other (4)
- I do not live in the United States (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If Where do you currently live? = I do not live in the United States

Q16 What is the name of the College or University you currently attend?

Q17 What is your academic classification at your college/university?

- Freshman (1)
 - Sophomore (2)
 - Junior (3)
 - Senior (4)
 - 5th Year (5)
 - 6th Year (6)
 - 7th Year or more (7)
 - I am not currently an undergraduate student, meaning I am not enrolled in a 2 year or 4 year higher education institution. (8)
 - I did not graduate from college (9)
-

Other Demographic Information

Q18 What is your permanent address? (*This will only be used if I am able to conduct an in person community plática, to mail you a roundtrip NYC MetroCard for you to use to travel to the community plática*)

Q19 What pseudonym would you like me to use when referring to you in this dissertation study? (*Pseudonyms will be used in this study in order to protect any identifiable information in the data. (i.e. My real name is Marinel but my pseudonym is Luna)*)

Q20 Do you need any accommodations throughout this research process to help facilitate a more meaningful and engaging experience? (*e.g. captions on zoom, food allergies, wheelchair accessible location for in-person meeting, etc.*).

End of Survey:

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for completing this survey on AfroLatinidad and activism. I truly appreciate your time. To take part in Part 2 of this study, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Activists’ Critical Consciousness” you must meet the below eligibility criteria:

- are 18 years or older
- identify as AfroLatine/a/o or a variation of this term
- identify as an activist or engage in activism-related behaviors
 - live in the United States

- currently enrolled, attended or graduated from a 2- or 4-year higher education institution

If you meet the eligibility criteria of Part 2 of this study, I will email you within 1 week with an additional consent form and the first phase of data collection: virtual one-on-one plática (conversation, estimated 60 minutes).

En Comunidad,
Marinel Martinez-Benyarko (xxxxx@umd.edu)
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-2

Appendix C: Confirmation Email to Potential Collaborators

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Activists’ Critical Consciousness.”

Participants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx, AfroLatina, or AfroLatino (or any variation of the prefix Afro, for example, AfroDominican or Black Latinx/a/o)
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors/actions
- Be currently enrolled, attended or graduated from a 2- or 4-year higher education institution
- Live in the United States

According to the demographic interest form you submitted, you meet the criteria of this study.

By participating in this study, you agree to:

- Engage in a one-on-one zoom plática (a conversation, estimated 60 minutes).
- Participate in one zoom community plática (a group conversation, estimated 90 minutes).

* The one-on-one plática and community pláticas will be video and audio recorded.

Before we move forward with the first piece of data collection, I would like you to read and sign the attached consent form for part 2 of this study. There may be some risks and benefits from participating in this research study, thus it is crucial for you to thoroughly read the attached consent form. Once you email me back the signed consent form for part 2 of this study, I will email you a link to schedule the one-on-one plática.

I would like you to keep in mind that this study is entirely voluntary; you are free to discontinue at any point. After each data collection phase, you will be compensated \$20 via an electronic gift card to your email (for a possible total value of \$40). Further questions, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu

En Comunidad,
Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

Appendix D: Part 2: Qualitative Study Consent Form



Institutional Review Board

1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title: EXPLORING AFROLATINE/A/O ACTIVISTS' CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Purpose of the Study: This research is being conducted by **Marinel Martinez-Benyarko** at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in the second part of this research project because you: 1) are 18 years or older, 2) identify as AfroLatine/a/o or a variation of this term 3) identify as an activist or engage in activism-related behaviors, 4) live and study in the United States, and 5) currently attending college as an undergraduate student, attended college (but did not graduate), or graduated from a 2- or 4-year higher education institution. The purpose is to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o student activists conceptualize AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogate the relationship between these two identities.

Procedures: The procedures involve a one-on-one plática (conversation via zoom, estimated 60 minutes and one virtual community plática (a group conversation, estimated 90 minutes). The total time estimated for collaborators to engage in this study is estimated 2 hours and 30 minutes. The virtual one-on-one plática that is intended to ask collaborators to reflect on what AfroLatinidad means to them, how they conceptualize their activism, and to consider if their AfroLatine/a/o identity connects to their activism and, if so, how. Example questions include: What motivates and sustains your activism? What social issues does your activism engage in? The one-on-one plática will be audio and video recorded via Zoom and is a requirement as part of participating in this study. Following the one-on-one plática, I will conduct my data analysis.

The second data collection method is a virtual community plática with a total of five collaborators at a time. I will conduct multiple community pláticas to ensure a group no more than five collaborators are able to participate at a time. You will only be asked to attend one virtual community plática. During the community plática, I will ask collaborators to theorize about their lived experiences by finding the similarities and differences in their narratives. The community plática will use Zoom to record video and audio of our interactions. You must consent and be comfortable with audio and video recording during the community plática in order to participate in this study.

It is my hope to record the pláticas for the purpose of accuracy –which is required to participate in the study. Your participation is voluntary. At any time, you are free to withdraw from the

study for any reason. You will also be asked to give written consent before participating in the study.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: There may be some risks from participating in this research study. I fully acknowledge that higher education practitioners may have perceived power over student collaborators and this perceived power can impact the interaction with you and I. I intend to mitigate this by building rapport and trust throughout the research process with you.

Another risk is maintaining confidentiality due to the collective nature of a community plática. I will be asking you to choose your pseudonym so I am able to code your identifiable information and keep the identification key in a password protected computer and within UMD's online Box platform which requires dual authentication.

Another risk is possible experiences of second-hand trauma based on information that is shared by you or other collaborators in the community plática. I will be providing collaborators with a resource sheet to help deal with any second-hand trauma they may experience. If you decide to engage in this research, you may stop participating at any time or skip any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

Potential Benefits: There are no direct benefits from participating in this research. However, a possible indirect benefit includes having an opportunity to reflect, grow your network and community, and dialogue around your identities and activism; which could result in new knowledge for collaborators. Another possible benefit includes helping practitioners and researchers learn more about the racial and ethnic identity development and critical consciousness of AfroLatine/a/os student activists, which could advance how we support and collaborate with students to make their collegiate experience more inclusive.

Confidentiality: Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secure location such as: locked office, password-protected computer, and UMD's cloud platform Box which requires dual authentication.

I will also be asking collaborators to choose their pseudonyms so I am able to code your identifiable information. For transparency purposes (1) your name will not be included on collected data; (2) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link the plática interview transcript to your identity; and (3) only the researcher will have access to the identification key and all data.

During the community plática, I will ask you to use your actual names since I do not want your personal information attached to your summary narratives (posted around the space) to be identifiable. It is up to you if you disclose more information about your own experiences related to your narrative at the community plática. Additionally, I will share community agreements at the beginning of the community plática, where I will clearly state to "honor confidentiality. What happens in the session stays in the session. Take learning out of the room, and leave the names in."

If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

Data destruction timeline: Additionally, I will destroy the link between identifiable information and pseudonyms within 7 years after the completion of this study. Audio and visual recordings will also be destroyed within 7 years after the completion of this study.

Compensation: You will receive a \$20 electronic gift card to your email after each data collection method provided (maximum \$40 value). You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation. If you refuse compensation, you may still participate if you choose.

If you will earn more than \$100 as a research collaborator in this study, you must provide your name, address and SSN to receive compensation.

If you do not earn more than \$100 only your name and address will be collected to receive compensation.

Right to Withdraw and Questions: Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
xxxxx@umd.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

If you are an employee or student, your employment status or academic standing at UMD will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or nonparticipation in this study.

Collaborator Rights: If you have questions about your rights as a research collaborator or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

University of Maryland College Park
Institutional Review Board Office
1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, Maryland, 20742
E-mail: irb@umd.edu
Telephone: 301-405-0678

For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:
<https://research.umd.edu/irb-research-participants>

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Consent: Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Collaborators will be asked to retain the copy of the form that they submit electronically.
If you agree to participate, please sign your name below. You can either (1) print, sign, scan, and email the consent form to me, or (2) sign via Adobe and email it back to me.

Signature & Date:

NAME OF COLLABORATOR (Please Print)

SIGNATURE OF COLLABORATOR

DATE

Appendix E: Round 1 Gatekeepers Email

Dear [Name of Colleague],

I am emailing you today to inform you of my dissertation research study, which has been approved through the University of Maryland, College Park. I am conducting a study that explores the critical consciousness of AfroLatine/a/o activists and would like your assistance in recruiting individuals to participate. My study consists of two parts. The purpose of this survey (estimated 10 minutes), part 1 of this study, is to provide a broad picture of the AfroLatine/a/o activist community. For part 1, I am looking for individuals who:

- Are 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx, AfroLatina, or AfroLatino (or any variation of the prefix Afro, for example, AfroDominican or Black Latinx/a/o)
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors/actions
- Live in the United States

Based on the responses from the survey, eligible participants will be selected to participate in part 2 which focuses on AfroLatine/a/o undergraduate student activists. By participating in part 2 of this study, students agree to participate in a virtual one-on-one plática (conversation, estimated 60 minutes) and participate in one virtual community plática (group conversation, estimated 90 minutes). The one-on-one plática and community pláticas will be video and audio recorded. At the end of each data collection method, collaborators will receive a \$20 electronic gift card to their email.

I ask that you please share this email and the attached recruitment flyer with your networks. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and have a wonderful day. Further questions, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko

Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

IRB Protocol #: 1907064-1

Appendix F: Round 2 Recruitment Flyer



PART 1 CRITERIA

- Must be 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx/a/o or variation of term
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors
- Live in the United States

PART 2 CRITERIA

- Be an undergraduate student at a 2 or 4-year institution
- Must be 18 years or older
- Identify as AfroLatinx/a/o or variation of term
- Identify as an activist or engage in activism behaviors
- Live in the United States

Follow this link:
<https://go.umd.edu/AfroLatinActivists>
to fill out Part 1 of this study: a consent form and 10-minute survey.

ONLY undergraduate students will be invited to participate in Part 2 which includes:

- a consent form,
- 60-minute one-on-one virtual plática,
- 90-minute virtual community plática

COLLABORATORS WILL BE COMPENSATED \$20 PER PLÁTICA!

CONTACT INFORMATION:



DOCTORAL CANDIDATE
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK
IRB PROTOCOL #: 1907064-2



Appendix G: Round 2 Survey Respondent Email: Expansion of Study – Part 2 Invitation

Hola [Name],

Thank you so much for participating in this survey for my dissertation study, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Student Activists’ Critical Consciousness.” I have some great news to share! I have updated my study to include AfroLatine/a/o activists across the United States and also will be including individuals who attended or graduated from college (not just current college students)!

If you have graduated or attended college, I would love to cordially invite you to participate in Part 2 of my study. By participating in Part 2 of my study, you agree to engage in pláticas. A plática is a casual and two-way conversation that centers on Latinx/a/o lived experiences. Part 2 includes:

- A one-on-one Zoom plática (a conversation, estimated 60 minutes).
- One zoom community plática (a group conversation, estimated 90 minutes).

* The one-on-one plática and community pláticas will be video and audio recorded.

If you have attended or graduated from college, please reply back to this email with what higher education institution you attended or graduated from. Afterward, I will send you a consent form and scheduling link for the one-on-one zoom plática.

I would like you to keep in mind that this study is entirely voluntary; you are free to discontinue at any point. After each data collection phase, you will be compensated \$20 via an electronic gift card to your email (for a possible total value of \$40). Further questions, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-2

Email sent on September 28, 2022 to original participants who completed the survey but were not originally invited to participate in Part 2 of my study (when it was solely focused on current undergraduate students).

Appendix H: Round 1 Email to Collaborators: Scheduling One-on-One Plática

Hello [Name].

Thank you for submitting the consent form in order to participate in Part 2 of my dissertation study, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Student Activists’ Critical Consciousness.” The first piece of data for my study is a one-on-one virtual plática (via zoom).

A plática is a casual and two-way conversation that centers on Latinx/a/o lived experiences. Pláticas can occur one-on-one or in group settings. They can occur informally between family or friends sharing cuentos, chismes, charlas, regaños, and consejos. Or they can be used in formal settings like this research study to collectively build new knowledge, validate each other’s experiences, foster healing, and vulnerability.

Please click the below link to schedule a 60-minute virtual plática with me:

- Meeting availability and sign up link: <https://calendly.com/marinelumd/one-on-one-platica?month=2023-01>

Further questions, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-1

Appendix I: Logistics Email to Collaborators: One-on-One Plática

Dear [Name],

Thank you for signing up for our one-on-one plática on [Date] and [Time]. I appreciate you moving forward with my dissertation research study, “Exploring AfroLatine/a/o Activists’ Critical Consciousness.” By using pláticas we are able to incorporate your life experiences as an avenue to bring about change through self-awareness and build community. I hope to use plática as a way to have you, the collaborator, be part of theorizing about your own experiences.

Below is the zoom link needed for this virtual plática.

[Zoom Link]

Please let me know if you have any questions, concerns or need any accommodation. My email is xxxxx@umd.edu

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park
IRB Protocol #: 1907064-2

Appendix J: Positionality Visual at One-on-One Plática



Appendix K: One-on-One Plática Script/Protocol

I. La Entrada

A. Welcome and Informal Exchange

1. [TURN CAPTIONS ON]
2. Thank you again for participating in this dissertation study “AfroLatine/a/o activists’ critical consciousness” through the University of Maryland, College Park. Once again, my name is Marinel Martinez-Benyarko and I use she/her/ella pronouns. I am a fifth-year doctoral candidate in the student affairs program. I also work full time at the university in the Stamp Student Union within the HR department.

B. Purpose of Study

1. The purpose of this study is to (a) explore how AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize AfroLatinidad and activism, and (b) interrogate the relationship between these two identities.

C. Acknowledgements and Check In:

1. Land acknowledgment:
 - a) It is important to acknowledge and honor that these states and institutions in which we study, occupy and operate are on Indigenous lands which witnessed grave violence and displacement. With that being said, I first want to acknowledge that my campus is situated on the lands of the Piscataway peoples.
2. Acknowledgements:
 - a) I also want to acknowledge that these past 2 years have been exhausting and sometimes traumatic with the many pandemics such as COVID19 and racism. How are you doing with all of this?
 - b) How are your loved ones doing?
3. Description of Pláticas
 - a) As a reminder, a plática is a casual and two-way conversation that centers on Latinx/a/o lived experiences.
 - b) Within pláticas we are able to share cuentos, chismes, charlas, regañs, y consejos. And hold space to discuss AfroLatine/a/o student activists’ lived trauma, oppression, survival, and accomplishments.
 - c) I choose pláticas because I want you, my collaborator, to feel validated, empowered, and cared for. I want to affirm that your lived experiences, wisdom, and critical consciousness matter and are important and worthy of researching.
4. Consent
 - a) Do you have any questions about pláticas or any aspects of this study so far?
 - b) I want to also remind you that if you don’t feel comfortable answering a question, please let me know and we can skip it.
 - c) Do you consent to have the plática recorded starting now?

II. The Amistad Interview

A. Researcher Positionality

1. [SHARE SCREEN AND SHOW PICTURE COLLAGE]
2. Because research doesn't happen in isolation of social and cultural contexts, and I am human with my own identity, history, and experiences, I intentionally want to share how and why I came to this research topic
3. I was born in the Dominican Republic and raised in Brooklyn, NY (right off the F train in Carroll Gardens). My parents came to this country with my sister and I when I was 4 years old in search for "el sueño Americano." and for us to have a good education. My parents worked in and then owned a bodega and still do today. I was immediately enrolled in English as a second language within a majority white school that further highlighted the white /Black binary in our society. I didn't see myself as either, although my parents emphasized we were Dominican and no mention of race. I remember encountering race when I was about 11 and had to fill out the Census for my family; and was instructed to choose 'other' as our race.
4. Within a large Dominican household and family, I feel like I grew up platicando con mi mama, abuelas, tias, primas, and hermanas. This was both positive and negative. Positive because we were able to share intergenerational stories and life lessons. And negative because at time we would hear or overhear anti-Black sentiments or jokes.
5. A turning point in identifying as AfroDominicana was in college when I joined a Latina sorority, then again in my Master's program where I learned the language of racial and ethnic identity development and the intersection of the two. It's then that I gained the words to describe how I felt and how others possibly perceived me racially; being Black.
6. In the height of the 2016 presidential election we saw overt racism in the media, with politicians, and the murder of Black men and women at the hands of the police. I was wondering in leadership and multicultural affairs and advised identity-based organizations including the Latin American club and Black Student Union. I immediately sprung into advocacy mode with them: demanding the institution denounce these actions, start equitable initiatives for students of color, and help them feel like they mattered and belonged. Those students inspired and continue to inspire my research and this dissertation.

B. Tell me about yourself? (name, pronouns, where you are from, what school you attend, and anything else you would like to share about yourself)

III. Plática Semistructured Protocol

A. AfroLatinidad

1. When filling out the survey, you indicated that you resonated with the term [INSERT HERE], a variation of AfroLatine/a/o. How did you come to identify as [INSERT TERM]?
 - a) Follow Up Question: What factors influenced your decision to identify yourself as [INSERT TERM]?
2. What messages did you receive about your racial and ethnic identity while growing up (e.g., through institutions like school or church, societal messages like tv or movies, family, culture, traditions, etc.)?

3. What attributes, characteristics, and values do you associate with AfroLatinidad? [RQ 1, CF]
 4. How do your intersecting identities influence your identity as AfroLatine/a/o [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH] (e.g., gender, sexuality, language, immigration status, etc.)? [RQ 1, CF]
 - a) For example, my nationality as Dominican has had a huge impact on my identity as an AfroDominicana because I've had to reclaim my Blackness. Because of how the Dominican Republic was ruled under dictator Trujillo, remnants of that period still permeate our society and our upbringing of children. In thinking about my gender, nationality, and race, among other social identities,, for years I have thought about and interrogated the role whiteness and assimilation have on my life. Like as a child I was told by elders to marry a whiter man with white features so my children's hair would be less kinky or curly than mine. Do you have similar or different experiences than the example I just shared?
 5. What influences, if at all, did college have on your AfroLatine/a/o identity [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH]?
 6. How has your identity as AfroLatine/a/o [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH] evolved since college?
- B. Activism Experience
1. When filling out the demographic interest form, you indicated [Yes or No] to identifying as an activist. Can you share more about your feelings for the label activist?
 - a) For example, I don't consider myself an activist, but do engage in activism behavior or actions like voting, letter writing to elected officials and companies, signing petitions, and do attend the occasional protest. I used to volunteer more in my community, especially with Latinx/a/o community organizations and hope to get engaged here in Maryland more.
 2. You selected on the survey these [INSERT HERE] social issues that your activism engages with. Why are these social issues important to you? [RQ 2, CF]
 - a) For me, I have always cared and advocated for equal rights and to treat everyone with dignity and respect no matter where they come from, what they look like, or how they sound. Everyone deserves basic human rights like food, clean water, quality education, healthcare, and a roof over their heads. Once I became a mother, I have really seen myself get more passionate about abortion rights, voting rights, and climate change because I want to help make a clean world for my daughter to live and breathe in, a world where my daughter has choices about her body, and a world where she has equal rights and equity, diversity, and justice are valued.
 3. How, if at all, has your activism [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH] shaped your undergraduate student experience? [RQ 2]

- a) IF NOT A CURRENT STUDENT- Follow Up Question: How has your activism changed since college?
 - 4. How do you define your activism [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH] in five words what would they be? Explain why these words. [RQ 2]
 - C. Connecting AfroLatinidad to Activism
 - 1. How have your social identities influenced your activism [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH]? [Q2, CF]
 - 2. How, if at all, has your racial and ethnic identity as AfroLatine/a/o changed or evolved from being involved in activism [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH]? [RQ2, CF]
 - 3. When thinking about your identity as AfroLatine/a/o [OR TERM THEY IDENTIFY WITH], do you find connections between your racial and ethnic identity and with your activism-related behaviors [RQ 3, CF]
 - a) Probing Question: If yes, how so? If not, why not? [RQ 3, CF]
- IV. La Despedida
- A. What haven't I asked that you'd like to share?
 - B. Message of Appreciation
 - 1. Thank you again for collaborating on my dissertation research study. I truly appreciate your genuine interest, vulnerability, honesty, and courage.
 - 2. I will be emailing you a \$20 gift card or Zelle, please confirm your email. Also let me know if you do not receive it within a couple of days.
 - C. Sharing Next Steps
 - 1. I will use the next few months to conduct my analysis and write a narrative for each collaborator. Afterward, I will email you the narrative to read and verify it for accuracy. Then, I will communicate with all of the collaborators to schedule the final piece of data collection: a community plática. In preparation for the community plática, I will email you three - four narratives to thoroughly review and take notes on. During the community plática, I will (a) present summary narratives for each collaborator (names withheld, only pseudonyms used) and (b) ask the community to find similarities and differences about your collective experiences regarding AfroLatinidad and activism.

Appendix L: Email to Collaborators: Member Checking Narratives

Hola [Name].

Thank you for participating in the one-on-one virtual plática for my dissertation study. Shortly after speaking, you should have received the \$20 electronic gift card or Zelle. Please let me know if you did not receive this. Throughout the last few months, I have been doing a preliminary analysis and then writing a narrative for each collaborator. This narrative is intended to summarize what we discussed in our one-on-one plática and will help facilitate the analysis you do as a collective in our community pláticas.

Before we schedule the community pláticas, I would like you to take intentional to read, comment, and provide any edits/feedback on the narrative I wrote for you. I want to make sure I am telling your story accurately. I welcome your feedback, comments, and edits via track changes. If there is any context you want to add or you feel like something is missing from your narrative, please add it. If you would prefer to give me your feedback via phone call or zoom, let me know. This is a collaborative process and I want to ensure you have a voice/input throughout the research process.

The narrative should help answer the following research questions that guide my study. If you feel like the narrative doesn't answer these questions feel free to add more context where you see fit or on the bottom and I can add it in myself. If you have not considered these connections yourself, it's completely okay since the community plática will also ask you to consider these questions.

- What racial ideologies are present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad?
 - *Side note: Racial ideologies are measured by how others perceive your race in the street (street race), how other Americans classify your race in the U.S. (ascribed race), and how you self-identify your race on questionnaires (self-perceived race).*
- How do AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their activism?
- What, if at all, is the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism?

If you could conduct this member check process and email me back the narrative ideally by Friday, January 6th, 2023 that would be greatly appreciated. I completely understand that the holidays are right around the corner, so if you cannot make this deadline please send me a message and we can work something out. Your input is most important to me.

Next Steps: I will send you a doodle to schedule the community plática. This narrative will then be emailed to 3-4 collaborators before our community pláticas where we will do a collective analysis. You only need to attend 1. This will also be compensated with \$20. No formal research experience is needed, I will facilitate this process and provide more detail before that day.

Further questions at all, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu or text me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

En Comunidad,
Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

Appendix M: Email to Collaborators: Scheduling Community Plática

Hello,

I hope this holiday season was filled with lots of rest and laughter; and that you and your family are doing well. Thank you for participating in my dissertation study. The next and last piece of data for my study is our virtual community plática in which I will ask you to think about the collective experiences of AfroLatinidad and activism among all collaborators. You have been assigned group [A, B, or C]. Please click the below link to schedule a 90-minute virtual community plática with me, yourself, and 2-3 other collaborators via Zoom. Please kindly complete the doodle by January 6, 2023.

Meeting availability (link): [LINK]

You do not need any research experience in order to participate. I will facilitate a conversation among all collaborators, and collectively you all will decide what themes stand out from the narratives I provide you. Once your community plática is scheduled, I will send you a confirmation email alongside 3-4 narratives to read to prepare for this final conversation.

This email also serves as a reminder if you have time before January 6, 2023 to please review your own narrative. I emailed you to ensure this is as accurate and true to who you are as possible. Your feedback is appreciated and welcomed. Thank you again for your patience, understanding, and contributions to this study. Have a wonderful day.

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

Appendix N: Email to Collaborators: Instructions for Community Plática

Hello,

Hope the new year has started off well. Thank you for completing the doodle. We are finally at the last stage of the data collection for my dissertation. To prepare for the community plática, if you have the capacity, please thoroughly read the attached narratives of three-four fellow collaborators (actual names withheld, only used pseudonyms to protect privacy).

In the community plática, I will facilitate a conversation for you all to discuss the similarities and differences and theorize about the groups' collective AfroLatinidad and activism experiences, which will be part of my findings. I am aware that by reading other collaborators narratives, engaging in the one-on-one plática, and now participating in the analysis in the community plática, there is a possibility for you to have gained some awareness (or critical consciousness) regarding your own experiences and conceptualizations of AfroLatinidad and activism; or even have realized a potential connection between these two things. Thus, I will end our community plática with an open forum for you to share any additional realizations or thoughts that will help answer my research questions below:

1. What racial ideologies are present for AfroLatine/a/os activists in their conceptualization of AfroLatinidad?
 - *Side note: Racial ideologies are measured by how others perceive your race in the street (street race), how other Americans classify your race in the U.S. (ascribed race), and how you self-identify your race on questionnaires (self-perceived race).*
2. How do AfroLatine/a/o activists conceptualize their activism?
3. What, if at all, is the relationship between the racial and ethnic identity of AfroLatine/a/o activists and their activism?

The community plática will be conducted via zoom. You should have already received a calendar invitation with the zoom information. I want to remind you that your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this part of my research study, you may stop participating at any time. I just ask that you kindly communicate with me regarding this change. Further questions at all, please email me at xxxxx@umd.edu or text me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Always happy to chat.

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko
Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

Appendix O: Martinez Grocery Picture



Appendix P: Community Plática Script/Protocol

- I. Setting the Scene
 - A. Set up Zoom background as a picture of our bodega, Martinez Grocery
 - B. Turn on playlist of AfroLatin music (i.e., Buena Vista Social Club)
 - C. Admit collaborators into the Zoom meeting
 - D. Turn on captions
- II. La Entrada (10 minutes)
 - A. Welcome Remarks
 1. I want to thank you all for making the time to be here today at our last plática, our community plática. I am thrilled to see you all again and engage with you in what I hope will be a meaningful way. Originally, I intended my community plática to be in person before I expanded my study to be throughout the U.S. it was first centered in the tri-state region of NY, NJ, CT. And I was really excited about doing the community pláticas somewhere that held special significance for me and my family, our family bodega, so that's what my virtual background is. This song is from the Afro-Cuban group Buena Vista Social Club, a favorite of my parents and something I grew up listening to.
 - B. Land acknowledgment meditation (retrieved from Pichardo et al., 2021):
 1. We will begin our community plática with a land acknowledgment meditation. This meditation was created by some colleagues of mine for a higher education conference we attended in 2021. This is a shortened version of their beautiful creation. I hope you take time to pause right now and engage in this meditation.
 2. I want to invite you all take a moment to close your eyes or lower your gaze and settle into your seats. Take a deep breath slowly and release. Inhale slowly this time, 1 2 3 release continue this rhythm with each breath. Release the chaos of the day that occupies your mind. Temporarily set your worries aside to ALLOW room for you to be present with us and with yourself. Draw your awareness inward, into your body. Our body is the site of deep and profound learning and unlearning.
 3. As you sit in awareness of your being, I want to guide us in a brief land acknowledgement meditation. I first want to acknowledge that my campus is situated on the lands of the Piscataway peoples. People who have and continue to be the caretakers and protectors of these lands. I want to offer a moment of silence as you consider the Indigenous peoples which you are situated in. In invoking their names, we welcome their presence in this collective moment.
 4. As we engage in this practice we would be remiss to not draw attention to the ways that acknowledgements often ring hollow because they seem to symbolically exonerate settler descendants and those who benefit from colonization by glossing over the violent dispossession and genocide that has and continues to take place in

order for us to gather today without fully acknowledging how we directly benefit from these violent Legacies. This is a legacy of ongoing Indigenous and Black displacement, of family separation, of the destruction of land and its natural resources. Of Native, Black, and Afro-Indigenous people having their humanity denied, being robbed of their right to life and self-determination. How can words ever adequately honor and give reverence to all that has been and continues to be taken?

5. Take a deep breath especially as you feel the weight of what this Legacy has cost you and others. Notice the thoughts, feelings, or sensations that are coming up for you. Take a deep breath and allow this discomfort to be your companion, to motivate your actions. There are no easy remedies to redress these harms. Instead, I invite you to create otherwise worlds, where we engage in concrete actions that ensure life-affirming Indigenous and Black futures today and tomorrow.
6. Please open your eyes.

C. Purpose of Study

1. The purpose of this study is to conceptualize how AfroLatine/a/o activists make meaning of their AfroLatinidad and activism. This study also explores the relationship between AfroLatine/a/os racial and ethnic identity and activism engagement.
2. AfroLatine/a/o.

D. Consent

1. I want to remind you that if you don't feel comfortable answering a question, please do not feel like you have to.
2. Do you have any questions before we move forward?
3. Do you each consent to have the plática recorded starting now? [wait for response from each collaborator]

E. Collaborator Introductions

1. Story of your name: To start off our plática, I will ask each of you to share the story of your own name, its history, familial importance, cultural significance, and its meaning.
2. Feel free to share anything else you'd like with us (name, pronouns, where you are from, etc.)

F. Share Community Agreements

1. It is important that while we engage in fellowship and this collective research process, we come to an agreement about what standards our group will follow. I have come up with a few and would like your input and additions to these:
2. We are all here with the best intentions
3. Honor confidentiality. What happens in the session stays in the session. Take learning out of the room, and leave the names in.
4. Share airtime. If you often speak a lot, take five deep breaths before answering. If you usually do not speak in groups, I encourage you to speak up first.

- a) Because this is being recorded, please try and only have one person speaking at a time
- 5. We are all experts on our own personal experience. Use “I” statements.
- 6. Practice empathy. Be kind to one another, we are a community here.
- 7. English, Spanish, Spanglish . . . it’s all welcomed!
- 8. Are there any other community agreements that any of you would like to add?

III. The Amistad Interview (70 minutes)

A. Community Plática Semistructured Protocol (70 minutes)

1. Structure

- a) Format: Questions will be presented on Google Slides. Please take a moment to reflect on your lived experiences and the narratives you read. Think about the similarities and differences within the narratives. Feel free to add brief notes to the Google Slides then elaborate/share with the group out loud. This is a reciprocal dialogue, feel free to ask me and each other questions.

(1) SHARE link in the Zoom chat.

- b) Time: This should be an estimated 90 minutes.

- c) Goal: Create community, validate, and empower each other, foster critical consciousness, cocreate knowledge, and provide a space for analysis.

2. Reflection on Narratives

3. AfroLatine/a/o AfroLatinidad Identity

- a) What does AfroLatinidad mean to the collaborators?
- b) How do the collaborators (and you) conceptualize their race?
 - (1) Think about the definitions of street race, socially assigned race, and self-perceived race that is provided on the screen.
- c) How do the collaborators (and you) conceptualize their ethnicity?
- d) How do you challenge dominant (white or Eurocentric) beliefs by embracing AfroLatinidad?
 - (1) Marinel’s Example: By starting my natural hair journey, I challenge Eurocentric standards of what “good hair” means
- e) How has college influenced your AfroLatine/a/o identity?
- f) Anything else you would like to share about the similarities or differences in the collaborator narratives and their AfroLatine/a/o identity?

4. Activism Experiences

- a) How do the collaborators (and you) describe their activism?

- b) What skills or outcomes have you, personally, learned from your activism?
- c) How has college influenced your activist identity?
 - (1) Marinel's Example: Joining a Latina sorority in college was my gateway to first community service and advocating for Latine community needs and now in my career creating programs and services that promote equity in higher education.
- d) What, if any, is the relationship between your AfroLatine/a/o identity and activism?
 - (1) Marinel's Example: For me identifying as AfroDominicana and embracing my Black identity, ancestry, and lived experiences connects to my activist identity by challenging family and friends on their anti-Blackness sentiments or beliefs.
- e) Anything else you would like to share about the similarities or differences in the collaborator narratives and their activist identity?

IV. La Despedida (10 minutes)

- A. What haven't I asked? What else came up for you during this conversation that you'd like to share?
- B. Preliminary Observations:
 - 1. Many collaborators spoke about race not being discussed or taught in their household. For example, being taught that they came from Spaniard, African, and Indigenous ancestors. Many collaborators were socialized to take pride in their nationality. For example, learning at a young age to have Dominican, pride.
 - 2. Many collaborators have experienced racial incidents personally or societal which have impacted their identity as Black and then AfroLatine/a/o once they learned that language. For example, movements like Black Lives Matter or personally have experienced racial profiling or colorism which have caused them to be curious and reflect about their own Black/ AfroLatine/a/o identity.
 - 3. Since most collaborators identify as female, many spoke about beauty standards, embracing natural hair, and physical appearance/ characteristics. For example, having an awakening when embracing their curly hair and that self-awareness journey, sometimes connecting to their AfroLatine/a identity.
 - 4. Many collaborators felt like their AfroLatine/a/o and activist identities were continuously growing. Meaning they may have been taught to advocate for others or treat those different from you with respect, then through formal education they became more aware of societal injustice and challenged oppressive structures, and now they are continuing to shift their perspectives on how they can best create change, especially through this coronavirus pandemic.
- C. Message of Appreciation

1. Thank you again for collaborating on my dissertation research study. I truly appreciate your genuine interest, vulnerability, honesty, and courage.
2. I will be sending you a \$20 Zelle. Please let me know if you do not receive it within a couple of hours.

D. Sharing Next Steps

1. I will take the next few months to conduct my analysis and write down the findings that we collectively created. Please email me if you are interested in learning more. I feel like we have gotten to know each other pretty well, so if I could be a resource to any of you please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix Q: Thank You Email to Participants

Dear [Name],

I wanted to send one final email sharing my gratitude for the time you have dedicated to my dissertation research study. I appreciate your genuine interest, vulnerability, honesty, and courage. I truly have enjoyed taking the time to pláticar with you, get to know you better, and support you in any way I can. It has been my honor and distinct pleasure to have engaged with you in such meaningful ways; from our pláticas to your narrative.

I would love to share my final manuscript with you if you like. I would also like to offer myself as a resource for you and stay connected. Please do not hesitate to contact me! If I can help, I will. . . . Or find someone that can be of assistance. I will forever be grateful for your time and contributions to my dissertation study.

Hope you have a wonderful rest of the year. Adios!

En Comunidad,

Marinel Martinez-Benyarko

Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland College Park

Appendix R: Second-hand Trauma Resource List

A risk in participating in this study is experiencing second-hand trauma. To address is the possibility of experiencing secondary trauma, also referred to as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, for collaborators I provide this resource sheet (Connolly & Reilly, 2007; Figley, 1995). Secondary trauma happens when a caring professional hears a traumatized narrative and is then “left to hold or bear their stories” alone (Connolly & Reilly, 2007, p. 529). To be as prepared as possible, I will bring a list of resources and information to promote mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and some information addressing second-hand trauma

Signs of second-hand trauma (van Dernoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009):

- Hopelessness and helplessness
- A sense that one can never do enough
- Hypervigilance
- Diminished creativity
- Inability to embrace creativity
- Minimizing
- Chronic exhaustion/Physical ailments
- Inability to listen/Deliberate avoidance
- Dissociative moments
- Sense of persecution
- Guilt
- Fear
- Anger and cynicism
- Numbing/Inability to empathize
- Addictions
- Grandiosity

Promoting mental, physical, and emotional well-being (2U Inc., 2020):

- Exercise
- Rest and relax, even meditate
- Spending time in nature
- Connect with others and ask for help
- Use your creative expression
- Plan for coping
- Celebrate yourself
- Speak up and say no

Where to find help for second-hand trauma:

The American Institute of Stress: <https://www.stress.org/military/for-practitionersleaders/compassion-fatigue>

Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project: <https://compassionfatigue.org/index.html>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255

Table 1*Collaborator Demographics*

Collaborator pseudonym	Pronouns	Gender identity ²⁹	Academic classification	Afro-identity	Ethnicity	Self-perceived race*	Socially assigned race**	Street race***
Angela	she/her	Female	Graduated college	Afro-Latina	Dominican	Black	Latinx	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Bori	he/him	Male	Graduated college	Afro-Boricua	Puerto Rican	Black	Black	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Christy	she/her	Female	Graduated college	AfroDominicana	Dominican	Black	Unsure	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Eva	she/her	Female	Graduated college	AfroLatina	Hispanic/ Latina	Biracial	Hispanic or Latina	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Larimar	she/her	Female	Graduated college	AfroLatina	Dominican/ Black Latina	Black	Black	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Liz	she/her	Female	Graduated college	AfroLatina	Latina	AfroLatina	Black or Latina	Latinx/a/o, Spanish, or Hispanic
Mercedes	she/her	Female	Graduated college	AfroDominican	Dominican	Black Latina	African American	Black or African American
Nini	she/her	Female	Freshman	AfroSalvadoran	Salvadoran-American	Black	Black	Black or African American
Quisqueya	he/him	Male	Junior	Afro-Latine	Latine	Black	Afro-Latine	Black or African American
Rio	she/her	Female	Graduated college	Afro-Cimarrona	Afro-Colombiana	Black	Black or Latinx	Black or African American
Theresa	she/her	Woman	Graduated college	AfroLatina	Dominican	Black	Mixed	Black or African American

* Self-perceived race is how one personally identifies on forms or questionnaires on a daily basis (N. López et al., 2018).

** Socially assigned race or ascribed race describes how you believe other Americans in the United States would identify your race (N. López et al., 2018).

*** According to N. López et al. (2018) street race is how you believe others, who do not know you personally, would identify your race if you were walking down the street.

²⁹ On the survey, I asked potential participants to identify their gender identity. Although many added ‘female’ and ‘male’ as their gender identity, it is noteworthy to mention that these terms are used in the scientific community to refer to sex, not gender identity.

Table 2*Collaborator Activism-Related Behaviors Summary*

Collaborator pseudonym and pronouns	Activism-related behaviors											
	Boycotting	Contacting elected officials	Existence as resistance	Marching or demonstrating	Organizing or canvassing	Protesting	Signing petitions	Sit-ins	Social media activism	Voting	Writing demands	Other
Angela (she/her)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Bori (he/him)		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		
Christy (she/her)	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	Art
Eva (she/her)	x	x	x	x					x	x		
Larimar (she/her)		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Liz (she/her)	x	x				x	x		x	x		
Mercedes (she/her)			x		x	x	x		x			
Nini (she/her)		x		x	x	x	x		x			
Quisqueya (he/him)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Rio (she/her)			x	x		x	x		x		x	
Theresa (she/her)	x		x	x			x		x	x	x	

Table 3

Collaborator Social Issues Activism Engages

Collaborator pseudonym and pronouns	Social issues activism engages												
	Education access	Environmental concerns	Housing reform	Immigration	Labor laws	LGBQ issues	Police reform	Racial justice	Sexual assault/violence awareness	Trans and gender nonconforming rights	Voting rights	Women's rights	Other
Angela (she/her)	x			x				x			x	x	
Bori (he/him)	x			x			x	x				x	
Christy (she/her)	x							x				x	Spirituality
Eva (she/her)	x	x		x		x	x	x	x			x	
Larimar (she/her)	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Liz (she/her)		x	x	x				x	x				
Mercedes (she/her)	x		x	x				x				x	
Nini (she/her)	x						x	x					
Quisqueya (he/him)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Rio (she/her)	x							x				x	
Theresa (she/her)	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	

Glossary

Afro-consciousness: Afro-consciousness means “to capture how they can form a concept or idea of their AfroLatinidad through an awareness of their lived realities and experiences. They could make sense of their existence by becoming aware of how others perceived their Afro identity in society” (García-Louis, 2016, p. 199).

BIPOC: BIPOC stands for Black (i.e. African or Caribbean descent), Indigenous (i.e. Native Americans, First Nations, and Native Alaskans), and people of color (i.e. Black or African American, East Asian, Latine/a/o, South Asian, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander). Using this term is inclusive because it speaks to the racism Black and Indigenous communities face, which not all people of color experience (Raypole, 2021). Using this term “shifts away from words like *marginalized* or *minority*” (Raypole, 2021, para. 3), which may imply inferiority.

Blanqueamiento: The whitening by breeding out any nonwhite lineage (Norwood & Foreman, 2014). Blanqueamiento is sometimes used in this context for Latinx/a/os to disconnect themselves from their African ancestry and uphold ideals of white supremacy (Cruz-Janzen, 2007; Daché et al., 2019).

Colorism: Colorism is discrimination based on skin tone and phenotypic characteristics, which develops a hierarchy between racial and ethnic groups in which those of lighter skin tone and more Eurocentric features are favored over those with darker skin (Adames et al., 2021; García-Louis, 2020; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019).

Indio: Indigenous peoples living in Indigenous communities (Wade, 2010).

Indigeneity: Indigeneity means identifying and living the realities an Indigenous person (Bello-Bravo, 2019).

Internalized racism: Internalized racism is “the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above people of color” (Pérez Huber et al., 2006, p. 184).

Latino/Hispanic: Latino/Hispanic is a monolithic term that refers to people from countries ruled by Spanish or Portugal between 1500–1800 and now living in the United States (Reid Andrews, 2004; Torres et al., 2019). *Latinx* (pronounced La-TEEN-x, Latin-x) is a gender-inclusive term that challenges the gender binaries in the Spanish language (Salinas & Lozano, 2019). When using direct quotes from existing literature, I used the authors’ terminology (e.g., Hispanic, Latino, Latine); otherwise, I used Latinx/a/o.

Mejorando la raza: Comments like “bettering the race” or “mejorando la raza” are deeply entrenched with anti-Black sentiments that come from one’s country of origin and their historical context. For example, in the Dominican Republic, Trujillo’s anti-Black regime against Haitians resulted in future leaders like Joaquín Balaguer expressing Dominicans as white and a Hispanic nation (M. Wright, 2015). This indoctrination of Dominicans as white continues to be passed down in subtle and overt ways in the home, which perpetuates anti-Blackness. Mejorando la raza is not unique to Dominicans but to many Latinx/a/o communities.

Mestizo/Mestizaje: Mestizaje claims to be the “perfect mix of white, Black, and Indio” (Wade, 1993, p. 21) when describing Latinx/a/o origins. Mestizaje ideology excludes individuals who fall outside the norm of mestizo or mixed, claiming skin color and phenotypical characteristics are unnecessary and do not make a difference (Adames et al., 2021; Dulitzky, 2005).

Morenos: Individuals of dark brown complexion (Wade, 2010). Morenos are also described as prieto or negro and at times used as a form of endearment (Rodriguez, 1974). These terms have historically described enslaved Africans and are currently used in the United States to describe African Americans (Rodriguez, 1974). Using these terms as forms of endearment, racist jokes, or racial microaggressions perpetuates and fosters anti-Blackness.

Mulato: Mulato is an individual of Black–white mixture (Wade, 2010).

Pan-ethnic: A term that describes when a population is treated as a singular group that obscures the significant differences in race, culture, history, language, immigration patterns in subpopulations like AfroLatine/a/os (McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004).

Pardos: Individuals of light brown complexion (Wade, 2010).

Phenotype: Using a racialized process, phenotype categorizes individuals based on skin color, hair texture, facial features, and stature. Latinx/a/os “span a wide range of phenotypes comprising varying degrees of European, Indigenous, and African ancestries, and many, perhaps most, are racially mixed” (Telles, 2018, p. 159).

Zambo: An individual of Black–Indigenous mixture (Wade, 2010).

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