

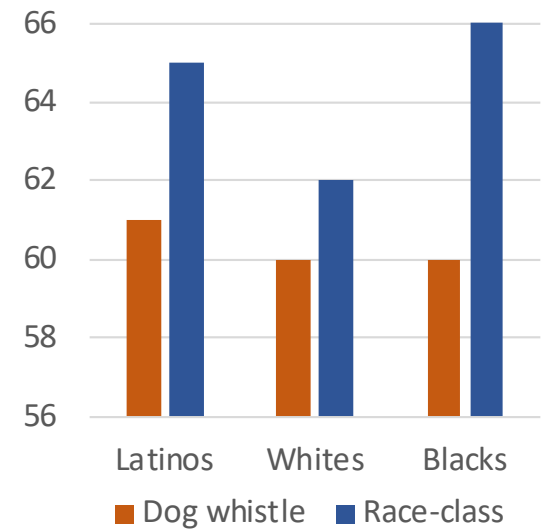


## PROJECT JUNTOS: LATINX RACE-CLASS

**In our research, Latino respondents found a dog whistle message even more convincing than did white or Black eligible voters.**

**This is doubly worrisome because the standard progressive responses to dog whistling do not move most Hispanics.**

**Race-class messages, in contrast, work very well. We tested 8 versions, and all 8 beat the opposition message.**



Dial test (above 50 indicates positive reaction)

Findings from a survey conducted in July 2020 by Lake Research of 1,145 eligible Latinx voters in select states (TX, CA, AZ, FL, GA, NC, MI, NV, PA, WI, CO, IA, NM, MN, VA), with an oversample of 400 white and 400 African American eligible voters. Ian Haney López and Lake partners Joshua Ulibarri and Celinda Lake crafted the survey based on 15 online focus groups, in collaboration with Way to Win and Equis Research.

## THE DOG WHISTLE NARRATIVE

Over the last half century, economic elites have sought to gain control over the political system by convincing working families to give up on collective action, especially government. Their principal strategy has been to use coded narratives to shatter solidarity, especially though not exclusively along racial lines.

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### Opposition message

Our leaders must prioritize keeping us safe and ensuring that hardworking Americans have the freedom to prosper. Leaders who built a strong economy once can do it again after COVID-19.

Taking a second look at China, or illegal immigration from places overrun with drugs and criminal gangs, is just common sense. And so is fully funding the police, so our communities are not threatened by people who refuse to follow our laws.

We need to make sure we take care of our own people first, especially the people who politicians have cast aside for too long to cater to whatever special interest groups yell the loudest or riot in the street.

The dog whistle narrative  
stripped of code

### Trust the marketplace

Everyone is on their own, free to succeed (or fail);  
business leaders should run the country

### Fear and resent people of color

They're dangerous and underserving

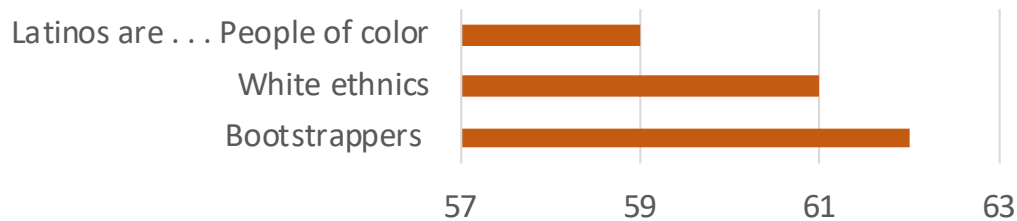
### Hate liberal government

It coddles criminals and welfare recipients—and thus  
betrays whites by favoring people of color

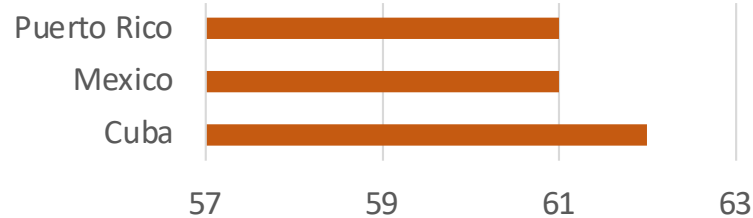
## DIFFERENCES AMONG LATINOS

### Reactions to the opposition dog whistle message

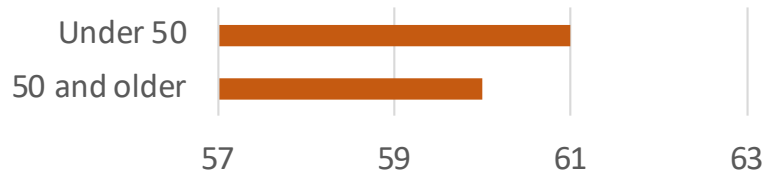
#### by conception of Hispanic racial identity



#### by family's national origin



#### by age



#### A note on gender

When measured by their moment-to-moment reactions, Hispanic women and men react very similarly to the various messages. When given time to reflect on the messages, though, Latinx women are much more likely to be positive toward messages that they recognize as progressive. Women and men make up almost equal shares of the “people of color” and “bootstrapper” cohorts, with men more likely to see Hispanics as “white ethnics” (35% vs. 30%).

## DIFFERENCES AMONG LATINOS

### Three conceptions of Hispanic racial identity

Latinos conceptualize their individual racial identity in multiple ways. When it comes to the racial identity of the larger group, however, three conceptions of race predominate.

**People of color** 25% see Hispanics as a group that, like African Americans, remain distinct over generations. Individuals in this group are more likely to be younger, U.S. born, members of the progressive base, and to prefer “Latinx” (even so, within this group “Hispanic” remains the overwhelming favorite, 65% to 6%). They are also more likely to say that they are perceived as “White or Caucasian” by people who do not know them, though this cohort also includes most Afro-Latinos.

**White ethnics** 32% view Hispanics as a group that, like European Americans, over generations become part of the American mainstream. Those in this group are more likely to be older, immigrants, and bilingual. Compared to those who see Latinx as people of color, this cohort is almost three times as likely to believe that “people of color who cannot get ahead are mostly responsible for their own situations” (38% versus 14%).

**Bootstrappers** 28% perceive Hispanics, not primarily as people of color or as white ethnics, but as a group that “over generations can get ahead through hard work.” Compared to white ethnics, they tend slightly more conservative regarding race, class, and government, and are the most likely to be Republican. They are also the group least likely to say that they are perceived as white by others.

## THE STANDARD MESSAGING STRATEGIES

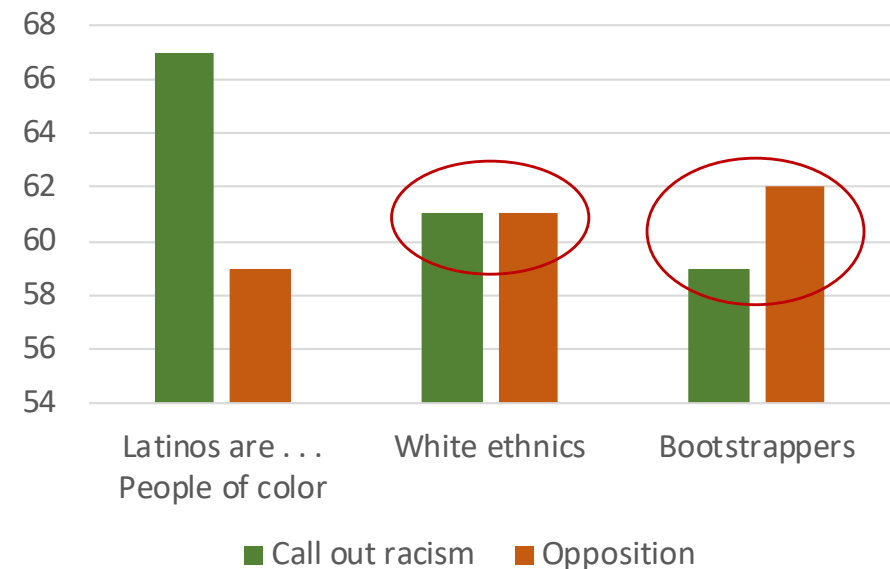
Progressives split over how to respond to dog whistle division. Some promote a strategy of directly confronting racism and its harms to communities of color—the **call out racism narrative**. Others advocate not addressing racial division—the **colorblind liberal narrative**.

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### Call out racism

There's been a horrible explosion of hate in this country. Certain politicians promote xenophobia, racism, and division. And it's not just their words. It's their policies, too. We see it in how they rip families apart at the border. And in how the police profile, imprison, and kill Black people, and use excessive force against people marching for justice. Right now, communities of color are suffering the greatest numbers of deaths from COVID-19, but have the least access to affordable, quality health care. To end the racism and reform immigration and policing, we must elect new leaders who truly believe that all of us are created equal and deserve to be treated that way.

By focusing on helping communities of color, the **call out racism message** inadvertently strengthens the opposition's claim that progressives elevate people of color over whites. This contributes to alienating those who see Latinos as white ethnics or as bootstrappers.



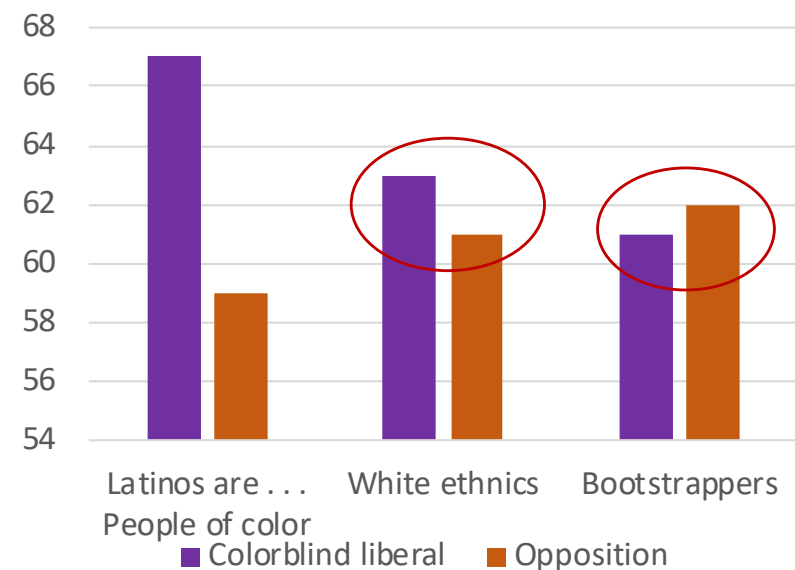
## THE STANDARD MESSAGING STRATEGIES

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### Colorblind liberal

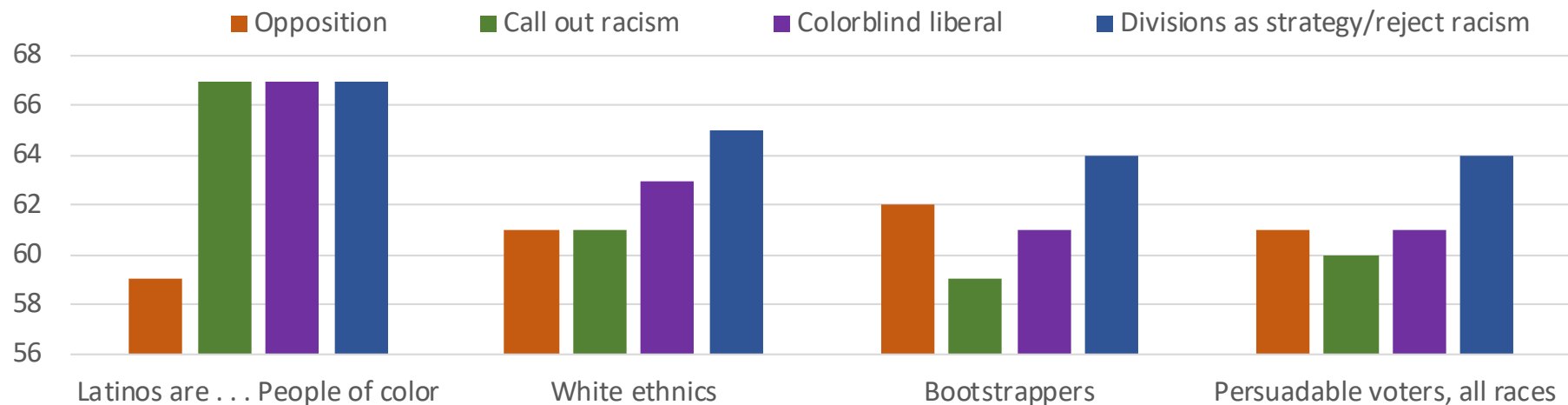
We had plenty of warning about COVID-19, but certain political leaders were unprepared to act in a crisis. They ignored the science, didn't make plans, and even failed to tell the truth about simple steps people can take, like wearing a mask. Most families are facing record unemployment, big health risks, and uncertain futures. Meanwhile, a tiny handful of individuals and corporations are getting even richer. We live in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, but COVID-19 illnesses and deaths are worse here than almost anywhere else. We must elect new leaders who have a plan and are ready to build this country back, better.

The **colorblind liberal message** ignores racial divisions in a way that is typically more comfortable to those privileged by race. White ethnics are okay with this, but bootstrappers—who are less likely to be perceived by others as white—find this message less convincing than the opposition message.



## THE RACE-CLASS NARRATIVE STRATEGY

Seeing dog whistle politics as part of a larger class conflict creates new possibilities for responding. Unlike the colorblind liberal strategy, the race-class approach directly challenges racism. Unlike the call out racism message, it frames powerful elites, rather than whites in general, as the problem.



## ANATOMY OF THE RACE-CLASS RESPONSE

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### Divisions as strategy/reject racism

We had come so far, but now COVID-19 threatens our families, for instance with health risks, record unemployment, and losing the businesses we worked hard to build. To overcome these challenges, we need to pull together no matter our race or ethnicity. We have done this before and can do it again.

But instead of uniting us, certain politicians make divisions worse, insulting and blaming different groups. When they divide us, they can more easily rig our government and the economy for their wealthy campaign donors.

When we come together by rejecting racism against anyone, we can elect new leaders who support proven solutions that help all working families.

To move forward, we must . . .

Build cross-racial solidarity

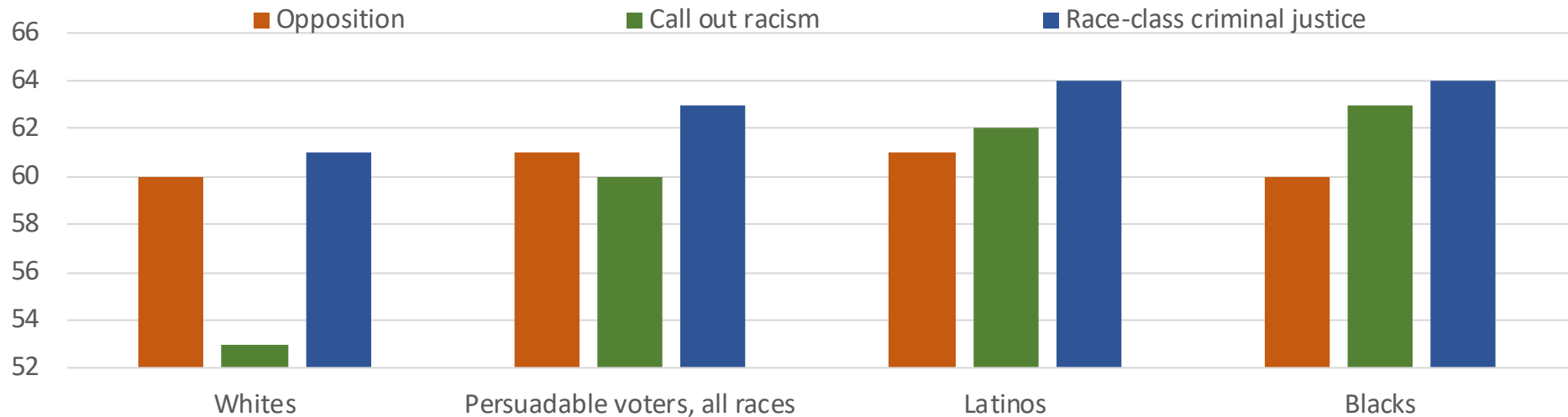
Distrust powerful elites  
sowing division

Demand that government work  
for us all



## RACE-CLASS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Race-class messages transform racial justice from a losing to a winning message among whites and persuadable voters generally. Among Latinx and Black voters, the race-class messages out-perform the call out racism approach in building support for racial justice reforms. The key is to show that dog whistling's story about supposedly dangerous people of color is a con that hurts us all.



## RACE-CLASS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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### Criminal justice

It doesn't matter what race or ethnicity you are, we all know that growing up in a healthy neighborhood helps our children to thrive.

But certain politicians describe some communities as basically criminal, and then they divert needed resources to pay mainly for police and prisons. Stoking fear seems like a strategy for these politicians to avoid taking responsibility for the decisions they're making, especially the things they do for their big-money donors.

When we reject messages of fear and division and join together with people from all walks of life, we can elect new leaders who will ensure all our communities get better schools, not more barbed wire, and more jobs, not more jails.

Shift the threat:  
The danger does not  
come from people of  
color; it comes from  
powerful elites pushing  
division.

## RACE-CLASS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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### Immigration

Whether it's from another town or another country, most of us move for the same reason—to build a better life for our families.

But especially during COVID-19, certain politicians are insulting immigrants while billions are going to a handful of corporations. The richest 1 percent benefit when politicians blame immigrants for the hard times regular people face.

We need to recognize the contributions of immigrants in our communities and states, and embrace people with the courage to move. When we come together, we can elect new leaders who will put fairness back into our immigration laws and make this a country that provides a better life for everyone, whether we're Brown, Black, or White.

Shift the threat:  
The danger does not  
come from people of  
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powerful elites pushing  
division.

## MESSAGING TO LATINX AUDIENCES

### ❑ Latinos want to join with others (so be careful singling them out)

- Hispanics are proud of their diverse cultures, hard work, and service to the country. But this does not mean that they want to be praised above other groups. This strikes many as pandering and divisive. The sweet spot is to **recognize and respect the many contributions Latinos make while addressing the group as an equal and valued part of the American whole.**
- In every message we tested, the call to join with others engendered the greatest enthusiasm. But joining with others can take two forms: an inclusive form that builds bridges across differences, or an exclusive form that fashions unity by erecting walls. **Framing division as an intentional strategy of the powerful few adds clarity and force to the injunction to join with others: salvation requires solidarity across differences.**
- Hispanics prefer a message of solidarity with other groups, versus calls for building power within Latinx communities.

### ❑ Honor hard work and call for greater opportunity

- Even more than whites and Blacks, **Hispanics emphasize the importance of hard work and favor government creating opportunities for advancement.** The opposition links valuing hard work to resenting government. Messages should stress that financial success requires appropriate policies.
- The pandemic is a sharp blow to the economic progress many Latinx had been making, in addition to being a health threat and a crisis that puts Latinos on the front lines of service. Discuss the pandemic as part of a larger story about **progress interrupted and reversed.**

## MESSAGING TO LATINX AUDIENCES

### ❑ Address racism as one source of division among others

- Efforts to stoke racial division encompass attacks based on immigration status, national origin, and language, which many Latinos see as distinct from race. Discussing attacks on and the need to join with other “groups”—rather than “racial groups”—is one way to allow more people to feel seen, including along the lines of gender.
- Race-class messages specifically emphasize racial division. Expressly naming race works well among Latinx when it is presented as one source of division among others, for instance including nationality and ethnicity.
- Efforts to build power in one community risk antagonizing other groups. Directly calling for cross-racial solidarity with whites and Blacks significantly increases support from those groups, with little loss in agreement among Latinos.

### ❑ Hispanic and Latino, and occasionally Latinx

- Terms like Hispanic, Latino, and Latinx can communicate distinct visions of Latinx racial identity. Use these interchangeably to allow people with different racial conceptions to see themselves as included. Keep in mind that only 3 percent prefer “Latinx.”

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### Latinx differences – the top performing message among Hispanics

Our Hispanic families may come from many countries, but most of us celebrate our differences and are proud to see our foods and music enjoyed widely. We also know our communities contribute to building the economy and serving this country. But certain politicians mainly criticize Latinos, talking about us as “illegals” or worse. Their divide-and-conquer tactics make it easier for them to rig the government and the economy for their wealthy campaign donors. Their attacks on some of us hurt all of us. By continuing to celebrate our differences and working together, we can build power with other groups to elect leaders who work for—and respect—all our communities.

