The Effect of Racial and Ethnic Identity Salience on Online Political Expression and Political Participation in the United States

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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Date of Approval:
June 13, 2022

Keywords: White, Black, Hispanic, Social media, Facebook, Twitter

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ABSTRACT

How close an individual identifies with their race or ethnicity can affect how individuals behave as political actors. Racial identity can affect how individuals express their political beliefs on social media sites or participate in political activities. However, does political expression on social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, affect levels of political participation? The purpose of the project is to examine the relationship between racial and ethnic identity, online political expression, and political participation among the three largest racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Specifically, this project aims to answer whether online political expression mediates the relationship between racial and ethnic identity and political participation. Using data from the 2019 ANES Pilot Study and 2020 ANES Time Series Study, the results show that online political expression on Twitter only mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and political participation in 2020. The data shows a stronger relationship between racial and ethnic identity and political participation. These findings lend evidence that there is a reciprocal relationship between expression and participation and offers more support for Shah et al.'s (2017) revised communication mediation model.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

On January 6, 2021, supporters of Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol Building in the hopes of stopping the certification of then President-Elect Joe Biden's victory. While the insurrectionists delayed the vote by several hours, the events of that day also were an important reminder to the country that race is a central part of American life. The imagery of Trump flags being flown alongside the flag of the former Confederacy carried by a largely white crowd displayed the feelings of many white Americans losing grip of their dominance in the United States (Jefferson, 2021). However, over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country had several other reminders of how important of a force race plays for all racial and ethnic groups that make up the country. The police murder of George Floyd that brought the Black Lives Matter movement back to the forefront of American society to the disproportionate toll the pandemic took on communities of color continued to reinforce the centrality of race.

The racial hierarchy in the United States has not afforded every individual a voice, particularly in American politics. Racial and ethnic minorities have been subjected to various laws and movements to limit their ability to participate in the political process. Voter Identification Laws, for example, exist, in some form, in 35 of the 50 states (NCSL, 2022) and these laws disproportionately affect Black voters compared to white voters. The America Civil Liberties Union reports that Voter ID laws have a particularly depressive effect on turnout among racial minorities and other vulnerable groups, worsening the participation gap between voters of color and whites" (ACLU, 2017). These issues may only deepen as some state

legislatures engage in efforts to further restrict access to the ballot box. While voting is an indispensable part of a healthy democracy, there are several ways that citizens can take part in the political process. Social media offers one such avenue.

Individuals who face discrimination, whether actual or perceived, may see social media as important tools for overcoming some barriers to take part in the political process. Racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have used social media to help organize mass demonstrations and avoid confrontations with the police through these channels (Jackson, Bailey, Welles, 2020). Some researchers have noted that social media, or Internet-based channels that allow users to select their interactions and presentation with varying sized audiences (Carr and Hayes, 2015, p. 49), lower the barriers that exist in traditional forms of political participation and have created a space where people can express their political thoughts and participate in civil and political life (Cho and Keum, 2016).

However, it should not be assumed that all white Americans see the same potential (or lack thereof) in social media. Particularly, white Americans who possess high levels of racial identity and racial consciousness may view social media differently. Those who are racially conscious, including individuals who have both a strong attachment to one's race and belief that race needs to work together for political purposes (Jardina, 2019, p.5), may also view social media as a critical tool to express their political opinions and participate in politics. These individuals may see themselves in an underrepresented position, whether or not this stance is supported by relevant evidence. As a result, some white individuals may adopt similar views of social media's organizing potential as racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. Additionally, social media may offer these individuals opportunities to connect to like-minded others in weakly moderated spaces (Jackson, Bailey, Welles, 2020). These communities could

offer them the chance to reinforce beliefs and allow them to plan political actions. These types of political actions can be seen in the Capitol Insurrection, which was largely planned and amplified on various social media sites (Heilweil & Ghaffary, 2021).

Using data from the 2019 American National Elections Pilot Study Survey and the 2020 American Nation Elections Time Series Study Survey, the present study employs social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the mediated communication model (Shah et. al, 2017) to examine whether individuals with higher levels of racial identity and racial consciousness are more likely to express political thoughts on social media. Additionally, the study also intends to examine whether online political expression mediates the relationship between racial identity and offline political participation. Finally, the study also examines whether these relationships differ between Democrats and Republicans.

This thesis will proceed in several parts. First, I will examine the literature on racial identity in the United States alongside the research on online political expression. Then, I will focus on the literature on offline political participation along with literature where scholars examine the association between online political expression and offline political participation. Next, the two theories guiding this research, social identity theory and the communication mediation model, will be reviewed and discussed. After reviewing the extant literature, I will review the methods and discuss the choice to use the 2019 ANES Pilot Study Survey and the 2020 ANES Time Series Survey to test the research questions and hypotheses, discussing the strengths and limitations of these pre-existing data sets. I follow this by discussing the results, future work, and limitations of this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Racial Identity

Minoritized Racial Identity

Many scholars conceptualize racial identity as the importance an individual places on their membership in his or her racial or ethnic group (Belgrave et al., 2000; Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1992; Sellers et al., 1998). Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) explicitly define racial identity as "the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within their self-concepts" (p. 23). Belgrave and colleagues (2000) define racial identity as "one's sense of self that is related to racial group membership (p.387)."

Though the conceptualization of racial identity slightly changes depending on the researcher, there are two key aspects highlighted across the scholarship. First, racial identity focuses on how an individual views the importance of their race to their identity. Second, researchers emphasizes that racial identity is a dynamic concept that can fluctuate in evaluation over time. Since racial identity is a dynamic, intrapersonal concept, it has been argued racial identification can be measured through participant's self-reporting of their racial identity (Phinney, 1992; Sellers et al., 1998).

Traditionally, research in political science and political communication has looked at racial identity from the perspective of racial and ethnic minorities (Cross 1978; 1991; Phinney, 1992; Sellers et al., 1998). One such concept related to racial identity is linked fate, which is the idea that individuals see their own fate as tied to their race. Linked fate tried to explain why

Black Americans, despite varying socio-economic status, tended to vote for one political party (Dawson, 1995). However, individuals' race or ethnicity is not always central to their identity. The importance of one's race and ethnicity to a person's identity varies from person to person. Therefore, it is also important to look at race from a more individual perspective compared to a collective perspective.

Some racial identity scholarship grounds itself in social identity theory (Phinney, 1992; Sellers et. al, 1998). Developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), social identity theory argues that individuals strive not just for positive self-esteem, but also for positive social identity. This positive social identity comes from both favorable views about the social groups they belong to, also known as in-group favoritism, and favorable comparisons to relevant outgroup members, which can manifest into out-group hostilities. In-group favoritism can be understood as "rooted in a desire to protect group members' privilege and status" (Jardina, 2019, p.78). On the other hand, out-group hostilities or resentment can be understood as "possess[ing] some degree of negative affect toward racial and ethnic [groups]" (p. 5). However, individuals typically go through a process of self-identification before discussions of in-group favoritism and out-group hostilities. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on in-group favoritism since available measures in my data sources allow for this concept to be measured effectively.

Social identification refers to how "an individual perceives their group and their membership thereof as meaningful, desired, and important" (Reimer et al., 2020, p. 5). Ashmore and others (2004) review of the literature on social identification found it contained seven unique components. Two of these components, self-categorization, "placing oneself in a social category, and thinking of oneself as a member of said category" (p.3) and importance, "the degree to which an individual perceives a given social identity as important to their self-concept" (p.7), are

key concepts for the purpose of this study and conceptualizations of racial identity, since they focus on how an individual perceives and reports the importance of their race to their self-identity. In a racialized society like the United States of America, race is a pervasive social identity and cannot be avoided in most contexts. The centrality of race as an organizing element makes it an important identity to observe and see how one's racial identity can affect various aspects of his or her life.

Furthermore, some scholars look at racial identity as a multidimensional concept. For example, Sellers and colleagues (1998) view racial identity as a multidimensional concept made up of four components: 1) salience, 2) centrality, 3) regard, and 4) ideology (p.24). For the purpose of my study, I will focus mostly on salience since this concept is regarded by Sellers (1998) as a component focused on self-identification. Salience, "the extent to which one's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation", is a concept that focuses on evaluating the significance that an individual attaches to race in their self-definition (p. 24). Moreover, salience is a concept that is highly sensitive to environment and self-conception. This means that the salience of one's race in making decisions can change depending on the context. Salience also features as an important part of other conceptualizations of racial identity, such as Phinney's (1992) ethnic identity model.

Much of the early scholarship on racial identity focused on racial and ethnic minorities because it was believed that white Americans did not possess the same homogenized histories and experiences that many Black and Latinx communities did in the United States (Jardina, 2019; Schildkraut, 2017). This is not to say that Black and Hispanic communities faced the same experiences across the country or these groups had similar histories. However, these groups faced many similar legal and societal discrimination practices that were not present for most

white Americans. For example, both Black Americans and Hispanic Americans were pushed into segregated communities and faced violence from the police. The Zoot Suit Riots in 1943, an event where soldiers and citizens attacked Hispanic youth in Los Angeles (The Washington Post, 2019), to Bloody Sunday in 1965, when police in Selma, Alabama perpetrated violence on demonstrators marching from Selma to Montgomery for Black voting rights (ABC 7 NY, 2022) are just two instances. These events offer notable examples of police violence against marginalized communities in the United States.

Since the 1970s, Hispanic has been considered an ethnic identity in the United States (Porter & Snipp, 2018). How Hispanic Americans choose to racially identify varies across sub-group. For example, Cuban Americans are more likely to designate their race as white on census forms and other surveys (Porter & Snipp, 2018; Rios, Romero, & Ramirez, 2014). Pew Research (2021) reports that the number of Latinos who report being multiracial has increased dramatically between 2010 and 2020. Moreover, Latinos who identified as white only for racial identity dropped sharply from 26.7 million in 2010 to 12.6 million in 2020. In the context of this study, I will assess those who identified as Hispanic. Those who identified as Hispanic will be further evaluated based on another question that assessed heritage.

It should be noted that the social identity model of deindividuation, or SIDE model has also been used in the study of social identities and computer-mediated communication (Postmes et al., 1998). The SIDE model argues two main points. Reicher et al. (1995) note that "immersion in the social group and lack of personalizing cues can enhance social identity" and "deindividuation manipulations also have strategic effects upon the ability of group members to express their social identity in the face of outgroup opposition." (p. 191) This model could be useful in similar future projects, as it may explain why people choose to interact on social media

sites based on their levels of racial identity. However, social identity theory was chosen for two reasons. First, the question used in this project was developed in previous studies that drew from this theory (i.e., Jardina, 2019; Sellers et al, 1998). Second, the measure for online political expression (discussed in detail later in this paper) does not measure why someone posted political content, but how often they posted. SIDE model may do well to explain the latter but could be a better model for explaining and predicting why certain political content was posted.

To summarize, racial identity, as a concept, is generally rooted in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Moreover, racial identity is a multidimensional concept, which for the purpose of this project, I will focus on looking at racial identity salience. Salience focuses on how an individual reports how important their racial identity is to their idea of themselves. Salience is a dynamic concept that can change across time, which helps explain why it is important to measure and compare around various times. In this study, I will examine how levels of minoritized racial and ethnic identity for Black Americans and Hispanic Americans explain their levels of online political expression and political participation.

White Racial Identity

Much like other identities, white racial identity research shows that the concept is made up of two distinct concepts, in-group favoritism and out-group hostilities (Jardina, 2020). However, early research on the concept found little to no evidence of white racial identity (Sears and Salavei, 2006; Wong and Cho, 2005). When studies did find support for white racial identity, it was largely framed from the perspective of out-group hostilities (Kinder and Sanders, 1996; Kinder and Sears, 1981; Sears, 1993). However, recent scholarship began shifting the focus away from out-group hostilities towards in-group favoritism. (Jardina, 2019; Schildkraut, 2017) Some extensive work in the realm of white racial identity was done by Jardina in *White*

Racial Identity. (2019) Jardina used several surveys conducted at various times between 2007-2016 to show that there is a large plurality of white Americans who identify with their race. From the perspective of in-group favoritism, levels of white racial identity were smaller than those of Black and Hispanic identity. However, levels of white racial identity were fairly constant between 2008 and 2016. Further research adds further evidence to her original findings and makes clear that "whites' racial attitudes are a central feature of American partisan politics." (Jardina, 2020, p.20)

Recent scholarship helps to bridge the findings of early research on the subject with current findings in an American political climate that experienced the presidency of Barack Obama, the first non-white President of the United States. Jardina and colleagues (2021) recently found varying levels of attachment to white identity following the first election of Donald Trump. Levels of white identity decreased between 2016 and 2018 (Jardina, 2020). However, this trend may not have continued. Events in 2019 and 2020 may have made race a more salient concept for a larger portion of white Americans. In 2020, the re-election of Donald Trump and Black Lives Matter protests may have activated white racial identity for some Americans. The police killings of Black Americans and the subsequent protests in the wake of these deaths led to increased discussions about race. There were also news stories about teachers discussing systemic inequalities in classrooms. One story came out of Burlington, Wisconsin. Though Burlington is a small town of 11,000, 89 percent of its residents are white. Following the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, a fourth-grade teacher incorporated various materials on racial inequalities in her classroom. However, parents in the city argued the teacher was trying to "indoctrinate [their] kids." (ABC News, 2020) In Sarasota, Florida, parents argued with the county school board that they wanted "politics" left out of the classroom, as parents raised

concerns about anti-bias training and discussions about racism in class curriculums (McKinnon, 2020). These stories help to highlight the ways in which discussions about race and racial inequality were made more open and demonstrate the opposition to these discussions in white dominant communities.

This research adds to the evidence that social and political environments may shape levels of white identification. Racial identity, especially among white Americans, is not a stagnant identity; it can shift depending on how much individuals feel they are in a vulnerable state. The years 2019 and 2020 are important to compare for several reasons. One reason for potential increases in racial salience could be due to the increased attention to the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of several Black murders, most notably George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His death on May 25, 2020, sparked a wave of protests both in Minneapolis (which lasted several days) and across the United States in cities such as Memphis, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C (New York Times, 2020). This wave of protests was covered heavily by a variety of news networks. News organizations, such as *The New York Times*, Fox News, and CNN, covered these protests to a wide audience of the American public, which could have made race more salient in the minds of Americans. According to Gallup (2020), about 19 percent of Americans surveyed identified race relations as the top problem for the United States in their poll conducted after Floyd's death. This was a dramatic increase from earlier in 2020, when race was near zero in their findings. Gallup's (2020) data illustrates that certain events can make race a more salient concept for people.

For instance, between the end of May 2020 (after the death of George Floyd) and early November 2020 (before the U.S. Presidential Election), Fox News published 518 stories. One article written by Fox News host Tucker Carlson tried to argue the Black Lives Matter

movement was “working to remake the country and then to control it” (Fox News, 2020) They also ran stories that focused on former politicians and celebrities, like Rudy Giuliani and Herschel Walker, arguing against the movement. Fox News hosted former Mayor Giuliani and ran an article on August 17, 2020, stating that Trump should declare Black Lives Matter a domestic terrorist organization. In his interview, Giuliani argued Black Lives Matter [was] run by communists and compared scenes from Portland to a war (Creitz, 2020). Giuliani also echoed Tucker Carlson’s sentiments that the intent of the Black Lives Matter movement is “to overthrow our government.” Another story on June 25, 2020, posed the idea of BLM supporters creating their own political party to challenge both Republicans and Democrats (Fox News, 2020). These stories help to illustrate how Fox News’ reporting, which is largely consumed by older, white Americans (Pew Research, 2020), may have made race more salient for their audience. These stories connected a racial movement to potential political power, potentially pushing their audience to counter the Black Lives Matter movement. These stories connected a racial movement to potential political power, potentially pushing their audience to counter the Black Lives Matter movement.

Other research has found similar trends related to media portrayals and Black Lives Matter (Brown & Mourao, 2019; Media Matters, 2021). Brown and Mourao (2019) found that increased conservative media consumption correlated with increased negative evaluations of the Black Lives Matter movement. Brown and Mourao’s (2019) findings may also indicate that those consuming conservative media in response to a perceived threat from Black Lives Matter’s goals. Media Matters (2021) found that Fox News aired 440 negative statements about Black Lives Matter between November 2020 and April 2021. These findings illustrate how often some conservative news outlets make negative reference to Black Lives Matter, how these appeals

impact their listeners, and why people make seek out these types of stories. For a subset of conservative, white Americans who watch Fox News, race may have been more salient for news discussions increased the perceived threat the Black Lives Matter movement made to the country.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic could have also increased racial salience because several news reports documented the unequal toll the pandemic took on communities of color (APM Research Lab, 2021). For example, by the end of 2020, APM Research reported that the death rate among Black Americans, nationally, was 1 in 800 by early December of 2020 (Egbert and Liao, 2020). These numbers were even more stark in some states, as Egbert and Liao (2020) also reported that the mortality rate for Black residents in Michigan was 1 in 470. For Latinos, they found the death rate to be 1 in 410 in the state of New York. However, the disproportionate effect of the pandemic reached far beyond death. Job loss, for example, was increased exponentially across the country, racial minorities were impacted more severely than their white counterparts. In April 2020, 32 percent of Black adults and 41 percent of Hispanic adults experienced job loss due to the pandemic compared to 24 percent of white adults in the United States (Parker, Horowitz, &Brown, 2020). This and other issues, such as housing and food insecurities, existed in American society well before the COVID-19 pandemic due to structural inequalities (i.e. redlining, reverse redlining, food deserts). However, the pandemic exacerbated these issues and furthered the gap between communities of color and their white counterparts. These exacerbated inequalities may have also worked to make racial identity a more salient concept for individuals, as the hardships faced may have worsened due to systematic inequalities related to their race. The Washington Post discussed in June 2020 how Black Americans worked in industries heavily affected during the pandemic, such as hospitality,

dining, public transportation, and grocery stores. These jobs were either lost or forced workers to be in situations that made them more likely to be exposed to the virus (The Washington Post, 2020).

Furthermore, with 2020 being a U.S. Presidential Election year, there was more focus on politics for many Americans. For example, levels of voting in the general election were larger in 2020 compared to the 2018 midterm elections (U.S. Elections Project, 2018; 2020). Donald Trump began his first presidential run with making derogatory statement against Mexico at "it's people", who he called "rapists" (Coates, 2017). Furthermore, Trump's signature policy initiative, the border wall, constantly evoked racial identity overtures during his rallies before and after the 2016 election. From Trump's response to the violence in Charlottesville in 2017 to referring to the coronavirus as the "China Virus" in 2020, race was consistently centered during his administration. Going into the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, Democratic candidates for president emphasized Trump and his racialized comments and actions during his presidency. The 2020 U.S. General Election reported the highest turnout for a U.S. election in the 21st century. Specifically, across Black, Hispanic, and white voters, there was a noticeable increase in turnout in 2020 compared to 2016 (U.S. Elections Project, 2021). The context surrounding the presidency of Donald Trump, which is tied to the previous two events, made also have increased the salience of race among the electorate.

To summarize, racial identity comes out of social identity theory and is an important identity category to observe due to the centrality of race in American society. Researchers typically conceptualize racial identity as a multidimensional concept that focuses on how individuals see themselves within a particular race and how important that identity is to their self-concept. Furthermore, racial identity can ebb and flow depending on contextual situations.

While early researchers tended to focus on racial and ethnic minorities, as they were perceived to share a more homogenous history, the election of Donald Trump brought more attention to racial identity amongst white Americans. Research tends to show that Black and Hispanic Americans tend to have a more stable racial identity compared to white Americans. However, recent studies have found a drop in white identity in the years following Trump's election. In the context of this study, the presidency of Donald Trump and the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, the salience of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the COVID-19 pandemic, could have made race a more salient identity for people.

The similarities across the racial identity literature shows that survey research is an appropriate way to measure racial identity. Moreover, it is important to look at racial identity in, at least, two years since contextual factors may affect the salience of racial identity amongst group members. While ideally longitudinal data could be used, generalizable, cross-sectional data still should provide some insights how levels of racial identity may be affected by current events. Although the time between these surveys differs by only a year, it should be noted the context around these surveys were markedly different. Racial identity may be more salient for participants in 2020 since several pivotal events, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the salience of the Black Lives Matter movement events, and the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election.

Online Political Expression

The Internet offers multiple platforms for individuals to express their political opinions and views in a variety of ways. One such group of platforms are social media sites. Social media political expression has been a topic of great interest for scholars in the last two decades, especially since the proliferation and use of Facebook and Twitter in the 2000s. Social media, especially Facebook, are used by a large swath of the population in the United States. Over 70

percent of the U.S. population (regardless of age) reported using Facebook in the previous year (Pew Research Center, 2022). Almost 80 percent of individuals aged 30- to 45-years-old use Facebook. Even the lowest usage group, people ages 65 and over, still boasts over 50 percent of the group using the platform. This shows that many people are already in these spaces and have the opportunity to express their political opinions on these sites.

For the purpose of this study, online political expression is defined as a means by which individuals transmit their political opinions on social media (Lane et. al, 2017, p.7). This definition encompasses both expression as voice and interactivity. Voice, as discussed by Zukin et al. (2006), focuses on how individuals express their opinions on public issues. Interactivity focuses on how individuals share and create political content for themselves and others in their network (Lane et al., 2021).

Zukin and colleagues (2006) distinguished expression differently from political and civic participatory acts. They discussed expression as "public voice," such as contacting broadcast and print media, which is "the ways citizens give expression to their views on public issues" (Zukin, et. al, 2006, p.54). Their definition of public voice coupled with the intention of civic and political participation makes it a distinct realm.

It should be noted that the means for individuals to express their voices has changed dramatically since the publishing of Zukin et al.'s (2006) work. The Internet was still in the Web 1.0 phase, a time categorized by the Internet being largely used to consume information in a digital format (Ellison and boyd, 2013). However, this study's data focuses on Web 2.0 expression, where interaction with other users and technology itself is a prominent feature of digital and social media platforms. For example, at the time of publication, social networking was mostly dominated by MySpace, with Facebook slowly emerging on the market. Twitter did

not exist for another three years. Additionally, smartphone technology was also in its infancy at the time. The Blackberry was the main device on the market. The iPhone, synonymous with smartphone use today, would not be introduced to the market until 2007 (Markoff, 2007). Additionally, connectivity became stronger in the 2010s with more people having access to high-speed Internet connections. These developments require a more contemporary definition of online political expression that includes interactivity as a component.

Changes between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 necessitate why "public voice" in Zukin et al.'s (2006) words needs to be reexamined. The intention of contacting a public official or signing a petition (whether physically or online) have clear intention and focus. However, expressing political beliefs on a social media site may be done for various reasons and do not necessarily align with the intention of the sender. Scholars (see Lane et. al, 2021) study political expression as a separate concept, but online political expression could be considered a distinct concept from many of Zukin et al.'s (2006) concept of public voice. Digital technologies have lowered the barrier to enter this area (i.e. an individual may only need to reach into their pocket and type out a message) and the intention of such expression could be considered subjective, since a sender may interpret their action differently than a receiver. In the context of this study, social media may have played a large role in how individuals expressed their political opinions in 2019 and 2020. Particularly in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced many people to change the ways they interacted with others in their daily lives. Restrictions and changes to daily activities led to the adoption of digital platforms to complete tasks, such as work, entertainment, and communication with others. Since many people may have adopted these platforms or used them more during this time, they may have viewed social media as tool to express their opinions on political events happening around them. Posting a message in support or opposition of the Black

Lives Matter movement on social media, for example, requires less resources than attending a physical protest. This lowered thresholds to express one's opinion on important topics. In turn, this could lead in an increase in reported online political expression in 2020.

Though there is not one clear conceptualization of online political expression across the field, Lane and colleagues (2021) review of the extant literature on the topic found three broad categories for defining online political expression. The first category, opinion expression, conceptualizes expression as "a means by which individuals transmit their political opinions on social media" (p. 7). The second category, instrumental behaviors, conceptualizes expression as "a set of behaviors with specific instrumental purposes, such as posting, sharing, and commenting about politics" (p.7). The last category, collective expression, conceptualizes expression as a behavior centered around social movements or collective action of a specific group" (p. 7). Lane's (2021) findings suggests that most studies either view social media as a network to transmit ideas and gain support and build solidarity or as a tool that "enable[d] users to engage in different expressive behaviors related to politics" (Lane et. al, 2021, p.7). In the context of this study, the reasons for engaging on political expression online are unknown. Lane's (2021) first conceptualization, opinion expression, explicitly relates to how the concept of online political expression was measured in the data used for this study. Opinion expression captures online political expression but does not explicitly examine why an individual chose to express their opinion.

Political expression is important in general, and to this project specifically, because it is "a form of political participation that can foster and lead to traditional modes of political participation" (Gil de Zúñiga, Molyneux, & Zheng, 2014). Some work, however, does not distinguish political expression from political participation. Lane and colleagues (2021) note that

political expression is a different phenomenon from political participation for three reasons. First, political expression can be viewed "as an intrapersonal communication process" (Lane et. al, 2021, p.2). Next, political expression "is not defined by a fixed set of motivational or normative criteria" (Lane et. al, 2021, p.2). Last, political expression can be operationalized in a number of ways compared to similar political communication concepts since it is intrapersonal and can take many normative forms. In the context of this study, the notion of "political" is based on individuals' personal understandings of what political expression means to them in their digital activities.

Predictors of Political Expression

Sociodemographic and political characteristics matter for understanding political expression. One such factor is race and ethnicity. Lane (2020) provides support that members of marginalized communities see social media as a tool that allows them to express their political opinions. Some research shows there is a positive relationship between racial identification and online political expression. (Velazquez et. al, 2019) Lane, Do, and Molina-Rogers (2021) found identity-based explanations helped explain varying levels of political expression on social media. They found a positive association between political expression and whether racial and ethnic minorities believed their group had too little influence in American politics. This lends additional support that the utility of social media for political expression should be different when examining levels of racial identity amongst various racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Moreover, these findings indicate that racial identity could play a pivotal role in shaping how often individuals express political beliefs and information on social media.

Jackson, Bailey, and Welles (2020) examined the use of social media in various social justice movements, including the Black Lives Matter Movement. Their analysis of social media

around several police killing of Black individuals showed several ways in which individuals used social media in expressing their opinions on the topic. Primarily, online political expression allowed individuals to start and maintain a dialogue about these killings. These conversations could occur without requiring the attention or mediation of traditional news outlets. Additionally, online political postings allowed Black individuals to report their viewpoint of the events, allowing for a counternarrative, rooted in marginalized experiences, to develop. Jackon, Bailey, and Welles (2020) discussed these conversations around the killings of Black men, such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner. However, this use of social media for online political expression was also important in more contemporary cases. For instance, in the death of George Floyd, personal recordings of Officer Derrick Chauvin putting his knee on Floyd's neck for over 8 minutes surfaced quickly online following his death. Additionally, these videos and stories provided a visible and vocal counternarrative to the Minneapolis Police Department's official account of the incident. The sociopolitical environment around 2020 may have led more people to utilize social media as a way to take part in conversations about current events and make their position known.

However, research has also shown that various types of political expression are engaged in at different levels by members of different racial groups (Lane, Do, and Molina-Rogers, 2021). For my study, online political expression is restricted to political postings on social media sites. These measures may show different levels of online political expression between white, Black, and Hispanic Americans. For example, Lane, Do, and Molina-Rogers (2021) found that white individuals expressed general political thoughts more, yet Black individuals engaged in "more symbolic social media actions such as using hashtags or changing profile pictures" (p.14). This suggests that while there may be some difference in the content of political expression

between racial groups, the data used may capture a larger difference since the ANES question wording supports expression types used by white Americans more than minorities. Given the findings from previous research, this project poses the following hypothesis:

H1: Black (H1a) racial identity salience and Latinx/Hispanic (H1b) ethnic identity salience will be significant predictors of online political expression in 2019 and 2020.

Though some research shows that online political expression can be used by members of marginalized communities to voice their opinions, members from historically dominant groups can also use social media to express their opposition to political movements (Scott, 2020; Ince, Rojas, & Davis, 2017). Ince, Rojas, and Davis (2017) found that the Black Lives Matter hashtag was used both to garner solidarity and approval of the Black Lives Matter movement, but also found users used the same hashtag for police violence, to express countermovement sentiments. When examining which groups engaged with the Black Lives Matter hashtag, they found six distinct groups. They found that Black Lives Matter activists, the leftist hacktivist group Anonymous, conservative Twitter users, mainstream news outlets, Black celebrities, and young Black Twitter users all used the hashtag to express support or opposition to the movement. These groups coupled with how the hashtag was used suggests that racial salience may play a role in why some people decide to express their beliefs on political events or topics. Black users may see a need to show support for their group and solidarity with the movement. White users, on the other hand, also may have their racial identity be made salient by these conversations and choose to engage to counter the narratives of the movement or reinforce institutional narratives on the event. These conversations may have shaped how individuals racially and ethnicity identified themselves in response to these events and interactions (Cardwell et al., 2020). With the increased attention to and conversations about the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, these

online discussions may have increased racial salience. In turn, the greater salience of race may have affected a user's desire to express their opinions on these topics, both among racial minority and white individuals. Given the research on white racial identity, this project poses the following research question:

RQ1: What is the relationship between white racial identity salience and online political expression in 2019 and 2020?

Two other characteristics may also affect an individual's willingness to express political opinions online. Researchers have found that political party identification (Vraga, 2016; Bode and Dalrymple, 2014; Halpern and Gibbs, 2012, Vitak et. al, 2011) and age (Vraga et. al, 2015; Kim, 2016) also impact how often individuals are willing to express political opinions and beliefs on social media sites. Democrats tend to post more political content when exposed to other political content. (Vraga, 2016). For younger Americans, political postings are associated with drama and disagreement, which keeps them away from expressing their political beliefs on these sites (Vraga et al., 2015). This suggests that it is important to control for party identification and age when measuring the association between racial identity and online political expression.

It is important to keep in mind the racial make-up of the major political parties in the United States. In 2020, the Pew Research Center reported that white Americans make up about 81 percent of Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters compared to 59% of registered Democratic or Democratic-leaning voters. Though these findings are from 2019, voting data from the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election shows these figures remained relatively

stable when it came time to vote. According to Pew (2021), 85 percent of validated[1] Republican voters identified as non-Hispanic white compared to 61 percent of validated Democratic voters who identified as white. It is important to measure both levels of racial identity and political party affiliation to test the explanatory power of both variables on online expression and offline participation. Race, age, and political party affiliation are all distinct but related identity markers, which will be accounted for in my analysis.

RQ2: What is the relationship between party identification (RQ2a), age (RQ2b), gender/sex(RQ2c), and online political expression in 2019 and 2020?

We should expect online political expression to have been particularly prominent in 2019 and 2020 due to the sociopolitical context. In the context of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic may have increased online political expression. The United States was in the middle of the presidential primary schedule when concern about COVID became prominent in most of the United States in early to the middle of March 2020. Joe Biden's campaign, for example, did not have any physical offices or traditional canvassing strategies to engage potential voters due to worries about the spread of the virus (Time, 2020). Instead, his campaign opted to conduct their operations exclusively through online channels. Health and safety concerns or other restrictions may have pushed more individuals to adopt social media sites for more political purposes in 2020 compared to previous years. Moreover, former President Trump was well known for his use of Twitter to engage followers and the media (Ott and Dickinson, 2019; Stolee and Caton, 2018; Enli, 2017). His presence of the platform may also have pushed more individuals into these online spaces, particularly Twitter and post about their political beliefs and opinions in a

[1] Validated voters are citizens who told us in a post-election survey that they voted in the 2020 general election and have a record for voting in a commercial voter file. Nonvoters are citizens who were not found to have a record of voting in any of the voter files or told us they did not vote. (Pew Research Center, 2021).

way to show support or opposition for a candidate, cause, or issue in a way that was both convenient and safe given the public health concerns. These same concerns may have also led to increased online political expression related to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Political Participation

Political participation is "activity aimed at influencing government policy or affecting the selection of public officials" (Zukin et. al, 2006, p. 51) and "participation aimed at achieving a public good, but usually through direct hands-on work in cooperation with others" (Zukin et. al, 2006). Such a definition of political participation requires some recontextualization due to contemporary sociopolitical factors. Since Zukin's (2006) writing, Internet speeds and Internet-based technologies have increased in quality and usage. In turn, political participation occurs in an environment where people engage in political activities in both a physical and digital space. Moreover, individuals can act on their own and do not need to be a part of a group to be involved in many types of political and collective action (Bennet and Segerberg, 2013; van Derth, 2016). In the context of this study, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted many political activities into a digital format. Particularly during this time, Internet-based technologies became tools that allowed people to participate in political activities without the need to physically interact with others due to health and safety concerns caused by the pandemic.

Political participation and political expression are centered on politics. However, the motivation for both differs. Participation is motivated to create change in government or society that is either interpersonal or mass in nature (Arnstein, 1969; van Derth, 2016; Verba & Nie, 1972). Donating money to a candidate or party to help win an election or voting in an election are actions that are interactive and require other people or motivations outside of oneself. Conversely, political expression is an intrapersonal communicative act and is not defined by "a

fixed set of motivational or normative criteria" (Lane et. al, 2021, p.2). Individuals are not inherently motivated to affect change or create a dialogue when they engage in expressive acts. When an individual "likes" or "reshares" a news article or a political meme, the action need not have value outside of the user who is partaking in said action.

The concept of political participation has changed over time. Early conceptualizations of the concept generally focused on voting and electoral behavior. Verba and Nie (1972) initially conceptualized political participation as "acts that aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of governmental personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel" (Verba & Nie, 1972, pp. 2-3). Some of the actions initially part of this scope included voting, contacting elected representatives, and volunteering or participating in political campaigns. However, other activities, such as participating in marches and protests or expressing support and attitudes, were not part of their conceptualization of participation. Separate research conceptualized participation in broader terms, referring to the concept as "a categorical term for citizen power" (Arnstein, 1969, p.216) that encompassed a wider range of actions, like protests.

More recent scholarship recognizes that almost any activity that is motivated by political beliefs could be viewed as political participation (Kim and Hoewe, 2020; van Derth, 2016; Zukin et. al, 2006). However, there are classifications of various political activities. Zukin and others (2006) focus their distinction on which realm the actions are trying to impact. Specifically, they broadly conceptualize political participation into two categories: political engagement and civic engagement. Political engagement includes activities such as voting, volunteering for a candidate or political organization, and donating to a political campaign or organization. Civic engagement includes activities, such as volunteering for nonelectoral organizations, membership in a group or association, and charity fundraising. In the context of this study, political activities specifically

focused on the election would be considered political engagement while participating in a march or demonstration would be considered civic engagement.

Moreover, scholars previously divided political participation through the space where political activities are conducted (Bimber et. al, 2014, Cantijoch et. al, 2013). However, in the context of this study, the distinction between online and offline participation is not made. As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted many day-to-day activities to a digital space. Much like school, work, and interpersonal interactions, political activities were also adapted during this time to accommodate health and safety guidelines. Though some activities still occurred in a physical space, such as Black Lives Matter demonstrations or political rallies for President Trump and Joe Biden, many activities did shift to digital spaces and eroded the distinction between off-line and online political participation.

The online/offline conceptualization of political participation focused on political participation as either 1) offline or traditional political participation or 2) online political participation. Traditional political participation is generally considered to be actions such as voting, volunteering on a political campaign, signing a petition, or participating in a march or demonstration (Bimber et. al, 2014, Zukin et. al, 2006). Online political participation, on the other hand, is not as conceptually concrete as offline participation. Some scholars note how there has been a digital component added to political campaigning, (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Cantijoch et. al, 2013). Bimber et al. (2014) note that online political participation, or as they refer to it as e-participation, includes "online petitioning, blogging, use of social media for politics, citizen journalism, and the like" (p.1).

Bimber et al.'s (2014) conceptualization is problematic for a few reasons. First, it generally treats online political participation actions as a mirror of their offline counterpart (i.e.

signing a petition to signing an e-petition). While this is true for some forms of online political participation, it fails to capture the nuance of how online activities can foster change in both digital spaces and real-world spaces. One can look at social movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. These two movements started online in response to real-world events that were pushed forward through online expressive actions (i.e., use of hashtags to increase reach of information, sharing news and videos). Some actions are unique to social media and allow for information and ideas to be spread more rapidly that may not have an exact counterpart in offline spaces.

Second, the prior conceptualization does not make a distinction between expressive activities and participation activities. The using social media for politics is a broad concept that can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. This could be interpreted as following elected officials and political campaigns on social media, to sharing news stories, to using a hashtag to engage in a political conversation. Moreover, this part of the definition would largely capture how many scholars have conceptualized political expression and make expression a part of the participation phenomenon and not a unique aspect of digital environments worth studying on its own.

While many scholars were interested in digital political participation before the pandemic, the dramatic shift in utilizing digital technologies to connect with people makes it important to reevaluate this topic. In the context of this study, political participation may have seemed more accessible to some people. For example, Joe Biden almost exclusively utilized a digital strategy to run his 2020 presidential campaign in the face of health and safety restrictions. Social media became an important place to mobilize supporters for his election. This change to a digital format may have encouraged people to volunteer for campaigns since they did not have to spend time going to campaign offices or door knocking around neighborhoods, potentially

having to sacrifice less time to help a candidate. Additionally, the salience of the Black Lives Matter movement may have encouraged people to either participate in mass demonstrations or may have pushed others to find alternative ways to digitally participate in the movement. These events help highlight the importance of social media during the pandemic.

Shah et al.'s (2017) revised communication mediation model may help to explain the relationship between racial identity, online political expression, and political participation. The revised mediated communication model proposes that individual characteristics, the political environment, and social structures affect consumption and production of political content and conversation. The model treats the relationship between media and conversations as "highly integrated and reciprocal" (p. 7) Additionally, this relationship between media and conversation illustrates how types of mass communication and interpersonal communication can influence and shape each other. In this study, social media political postings should offer some insight into the interplay of these types of communication, as these posts are made in a medium in which mass communication and interpersonal communication can occur simultaneously. In turn, conversations and media affect partisan participation. In this study, only a part of the model can be tested. Specifically, racial identity should act as the individual characteristic for the respondents. Levels of racial identity should influence the production of political postings on social media. These political social media posts, then, should influence an individual to participate in political activities

Some recent studies suggest this direction of influence to be the case. For example, Clark (2016) examined how digital media helped high school and college students engage with political protests in the wake of the shooting of Michael Brown. Clark (2016) found that "as students encountered evidence how of their peers and other in their communities participated in

political dissent through social media, they may have been able to overcome fears, muster the courage to participate, and find themselves hailed as members of counterpublics." (p. 245) This finding suggests that expression on social media may give individuals the ability to take part in small political actions that may encourage them to participate in real-world activities when they find supportive networks. Jackson, Bailey, and Welles (2020) also discuss how social media were important tools in organizing and maintaining counter-narratives following the shooting of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. The relationship between online expression and participation could be reciprocal, as suggested by Shah et al.'s (2017) revised communication mediation model. Specifically, political participation may spur individuals to express their political beliefs online. For the purpose of this project, however, the relationship will be tested as appeared in Figure 1.

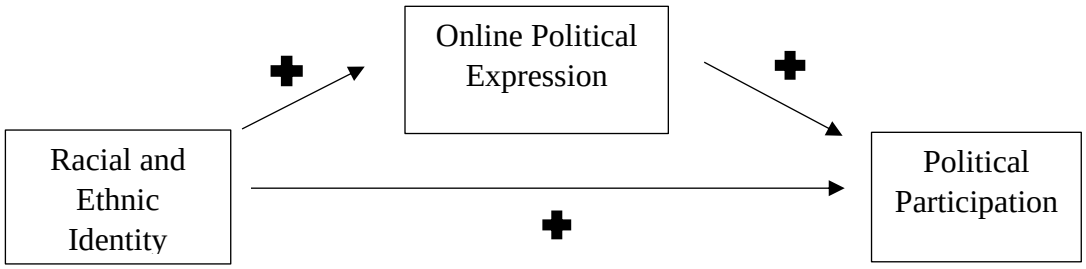


Figure 1: Proposed Model for Project. This shows the relationship between racial and ethnic identity, online political expression, and political participation.

The ANES data allows us to measure changes in these relationships before the pandemic and during the pandemic, since data is available from both 2019 and 2020. While the time of data collection in 2020 may affect associations measured, it will provide an important comparison of any changes in how online political expression affected political participation before and during the pandemic. Given the research on political participation, this project poses the following research questions:

RQ3: What is the relationship between online political expression and political participation in 2019 and 2020?

RQ4: Does online political expression mediate the relationship between racial and ethnic identity and political participation in 2019 and 2020?

Predictors of Political Participation

Social Media Use: Political communication scholars have had a great deal of interest in how social media use affects political participation. In the last twenty years, over 300 studies have been conducted on the effects of social media use on participation (Boulianne, 2020). Over this time, research shows that improvements in Internet capabilities have correlated with a greater association between digital media use and participation (Boulianne 2020). This differs from Boulianne's previous meta-analysis (2016), which indicated that there was only a small, positive relationship between digital media use and political participation.

Findings support the idea that social networking sites can help individuals participate in politics (Bode, 2012; Boulianne, 2016; 2020). However, there are differences in associations different types of social media use and political participation. Some research has found that some behaviors on social media sites, such as Facebook, are associated with online and offline political participation (Bode, 2012). How individuals use Facebook helps to better predict the correlation between Facebook use and different types of political participation than general use (whether one uses Facebook or not) or the amount of type spent on the platform.

In this project, I will examine how general social media use and using social media to post about politics are related to political participation. For the purpose of this project, the measure for social media political postings will include two different measures. The first measure examines at political postings on Facebook. The second measure examines social media

postings on Twitter, and Reddit. Examining political postings on Twitter and Reddit together allows for a better insight into the relationship between social media political postings and political participation since these social media sites are used by a small percentage of the population compared to Facebook. According to Pew Research (2021), a majority of social media users rarely post about politics. Approximately 9 percent of users report posting about politics and social issues often and 20 percent report making political posts sometimes. Additionally, these three sites are used by varying degrees of the United States' population. In 2021, 69 percent of U.S. adults reported using Facebook while only 23 percent reported using Twitter and 18 percent used Reddit (Pew Research, 2022). Although these sites, particularly Facebook, are relatively ubiquitous amongst the U.S. population, political postings on social media are infrequent. Given the research on political participation and social media use, this project poses the following hypothesis:

H2: The relationship between political participation and online political expression will be larger than political participation and general social media use.

Sociodemographic Factors: Political participation can be affected by various sociodemographic factors, such as race (Chong & Rogers, 2005; Stokes, 2003; Weller and Junn, 2018), age (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Zukin et al., 2006), and gender (Bode, 2016; Conway, 2001; Junn & Masuoka, 2019; Scholzman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). The first factor that affects political participation is race. Early research on political participation found that Black Americans participated in politics at higher percentages than white Americans (Verba & Nie, 1972). However, research in the following decades did not find the same relationship between racial identity and participation; some studies found little to no support that stronger levels of racial identity affected levels of political participation, particularly in Black Americans (Leighley

and Vedlitz, 1999; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Chong and Rogers (2005) found that the effects of racial identity on political participation varied based on the type of participatory activity. For example, Chong and Rogers (2005) found that racial identity had a moderate effect on voting and a large effect on petitioning government officials, protests, and campaign activities. These findings indicate that, for Black Americans, the relationship between levels of racial identity and political participation may vary across different types of participatory activities. In the context of my study, there could be large relationships with participatory acts, such as participating in a protest or mass demonstration, since protests were a more visible and salient form of participation seen in the 2020 election, primarily related to Black Lives Matter and demonstrations against police brutality across the country. Additionally, the data may also show decreased relationships with other activities due to the pandemic forcing political activities to adapt to a digital environment and reduced personal contact in political campaigning.

For Hispanic Americans, several studies note the importance of Latinx and Hispanic ethnic identity on political participation (Masuoka, 2007; Sanchez, 2006; Stokes, 2003). Stokes (2003), for example, found that increased levels of identity positively correlated with increased political participation. However, Stokes (2003) and Masuoka (2007) found that when comparing Hispanic subgroups in the United States, the effects of identity on participation varied. Stokes (2003) looked at identity from a national origin perspective. On the other hand, Masuoka (2007) found that racial identity, or the perspective from being a member of a marginalized group in the United States, was the best predictor of political participation. Though I cannot distinguish between these different types of Hispanic identity in this study, both of these sub-identities could have played a role in encouraging political participation.

Regarding the 2020 election, (both before and after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic), Hispanic voters were heavily appealed to by both parties in various ways. For example, in Trump's last State of the Union, he invited Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido to attend as a show of opposition to both the socialist government of Venezuelan President Nicholas Maduro and progressive Democrats running for the nomination, most notably Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (at the time, a likely opponent in that year's general election). Additionally, Donald Trump's campaign made appeals during his presidency and reelection campaign to values important to Hispanic voters, such as economic policies and support for religious freedom (Cadava, 2020). For example, Trump's visited with Mexican President Obrador to celebrate the signing of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Trump also created the Hispanic Prosperity Initiative, a program offering support to Hispanic business owners and Hispanic-serving institutions. Such efforts may have made racial and ethnic identity more salient to encourage participation in the election.

In the contexts of both the Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanic ethnic salience could push members of this group to view their identity from a racial identity perspective. The systemic inequalities discussed in Black Lives Matter and the disproportionate effects the pandemic had on communities of color in the United States could have made their racial identity a more salient concept. Since the group's marginalized position may have been more salient for some, these two events could have encouraged those that identified strongly with their racial identity to participate in political and civic activities in 2020. However, not all Hispanic groups identify with a marginalized position. For example, Cuban Americans are more likely to designate their race as white on census forms and other surveys (Porter & Snipp, 2018; Rios, Romero, & Ramirez, 2014). Pew Research (2021) reports that the number of Latinos who

report being multiracial has increased dramatically between 2010 and 2020. Moreover, Latinos who identified as white only for racial identity dropped sharply from 26.7 million in 2010 to 12.6 million in 2020. To better measure how Hispanic identity relates to political participation, an additional question assessing Hispanic heritage.

In this study, if there is a significant relationship found between Hispanic identity and political participation, it will be important to examine on some prominent Latino subgroups. Specifically, three groups will be further evaluated if a significant relationship is measured, if subgroup sizes are large enough. These three groups are 1) Mexican Americans, 2) Puerto Ricans, and 3) Cuban Americans. The first two groups represent about 71 percent of the Hispanic American population in the United States (Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). Cubans, though they make up under four percent (3.9 percent) of the Hispanic population in the United States, have a unique history with socialism that was appealed to during the election by Republican candidates. The unique experience and appeals to Cuban Americans could have increased the relationship between racial identity and political participation for this group.

White identity and political participation have received less attention in research, compared to Black and Hispanic identities. Some scholars argued at one time that minority communities had more homogenous goals compared to white Americans, which helped to explain larger rates of participation when controlling for socioeconomic status (Olson, 1970; Verba & Nie, 1972). Additionally, Weller and Junn (2018) note that political scientists do not usually view white racial identity as having an effect on political behavior in the United States. Still, some scholarship since the 1990s examined the effects of white identity on participation. Leighley and Vedlitz (1999), for example, did not find a relationship between white identity and

participation. However, there has been some renewed interest in the topic following the election of Donald Trump. For example, Weller and Junn (2018) argue that white racial identity can be an important factor in vote choice. However, their work does not specifically address whether higher levels of racial identity among whites would increase levels of participation in both political and civic activities.

In the context of this study, white identity could have been made more salient by Donald Trump's reelection. Discussions about race that accompanied policy decisions and events surfaced during the election. Additionally, the Black Lives Matter Movement, while discussing issues of systemic inequalities faced by marginalized communities in the country, could have also pushed individuals with higher levels of white racial identity to participate in various political and civic activities as a way to protect their interests.

RQ5: What is the relationship between racial identity salience and ethnic identity salience and political participation in 2019 and 2020?

Race can play an important role in pushing individuals to participate in political and civic activities. However, other sociodemographic factors can play a role in affecting levels of political participation. One such factor is age. Older individuals in the United States tend to be more politically active than younger Americans (Zukin et al., 2006). Furthermore, the relationship between digital media use and political participation has increased (Boulianne, 2020). This trend is not the same for the youngest group of voting-aged Americans. The Internet has allowed all people more pathways to participate in politics and younger people tend to adopt these platforms earlier than older individuals. However, Boulianne and Theocharis (2018) found that, among youth[2], the relationship between digital media use and participation depends on the

[2] Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) note there is a broad conceptualization of the term "youth". The studies included in their meta-analysis include participants ranging from ages 12-34. This age range captures individuals that cannot

direct use of these platforms for political purposes. Political purposes include activities such as sharing political information, signing online petitions. Some researchers have found that there is a positive association between social media use and participation among youth (Clark, 2016; Raynauld, Lalancette, & Tourigny-Knoeb, 2016; Theocharis, 2012; Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014). However, others found a negative relationship between levels of youth digital media use and participation (Theocharis & Lowe, 2016). Moreover, various researchers suggests that how these platforms are used by individuals impacts the association with political participation (Bakkar & de Vreese, 2011; Kahne and Bowyer, 2018). This indicates that while the relationship between digital media use and participation are increasing in the general population, age may affect levels of political participation.

Data for this study was gathered during a time when more people were using Internet-based technologies for everyday activities and may have also adopted them to participate in politics. This indicates that while the relationship between digital media use and participation are increasing in the general population, age may affect levels of political participation. Given the research on age and political participation, this project poses the following research question:

RQ6: What is the relationship between age and political participation in 2019 and 2020?

Another factor that affects political participation is gender. In regard to voting, women have turned out in greater numbers compared to men since 1984 (Center for American Women and Politics, 2022). When examining other political and civic activities, researchers have found that women participate at slightly lower levels compared to men (Conway, 2001; Scholzman, Burns, & Verba, 1994). Online, the gender gap in participation is smaller or statistically

participate in certain political activities (i.e. voting) to individuals who fall outside of the 18-29 age range that are typically considered the "youth voter". While this age range is large and arguments could be made against some of the research included, it is important to note that there is a difference in how "youth" digital media use correlates with participation compared to the general population's use of digital media and participation.

nonexistent for certain activities (Bode, 2016). This gap in participation generally is associated with women being denied the right to vote until 1920 (Conway, 2001) and societal differences in careers, childcare, and leisure time (Jennings & Niemi, 1981; Luskin, 1990). Additionally, the effects of gender and race may intersect in who is more likely to engage in political activities. Junn and Masuoka (2019) found that white women are the only female racial and ethnic to vote for the Republican presidential candidate in a majority in 16 of the last 18 elections. In the context of this study, we may see a smaller gap between men and women on participation since there is not a distinction between offline and online activities, but we still should expect to see smaller levels of political participation, besides voting, for women compared to men. Given the research on gender and political participation, this project poses the following hypothesis:

H3: Those who identified as male will be more likely to participate in politics than those who identified as female in 2019 and 2020.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

To examine the relationship between racial identity, online political expression, and political participation, I use cross-sectional survey data collected by the American National Election Studies in two different survey projects, the 2019 ANES Pilot Study Survey and the 2020 ANES Time Series Survey. This project does not need human subjects' approval because the data come from publicly available data sets through the American National Election Studies. Using cross-sectional survey data is appropriate to test the relationships between these variables because this method of research has been conducted in similar studies. The findings from the 2019 Pilot are less generalizable since participants could choose to take the survey instead of being randomly selected to take part. The findings from the 2020 Time Series Study can be generalized to the intended population, adults in the United States who use social media, since respondents were randomly selected to complete the survey. However, I cannot establish any causal relationship between the variables since there was no manipulation of any variable in either study. Additionally, no time-series comparison can be made since there was a different set of respondents for the 2019 Pilot Study and the 2020 Time Series Study.

The 2019 Pilot Study was conducted through online panels curated by YouGov, a data collection firm. The population of this study was U.S. citizens aged 18 and older. Survey responses were collected from December 20-31, 2019. Participants could opt into the survey. 3,000 surveys were completed and the survey tested new questions that were not previously asked in previous Time Series Studies or other Pilot Studies. Compared to the Times Series Study, the Pilot Study asked less questions and was only intended to last 30 minutes. This means

that some measures may not be as robust as they are in the 2020 Time Series Study. However, as discussed later, there were enough questions for all variable types to conduct the proper analyses with this data set.

The 2019 Pilot Study survey was conducted using non-probability sampling. This sampling method typically does not produce a sample that is representative of the population; the sample of respondents do not necessarily reflect a sample of the population that allows. This method of sampling reduces the representativeness of these data. In order to make population inferences with these data, data used from this survey instrument will be weighted during analysis.

The 2020 Time Series Study, which surveyed U.S. citizens aged 18 and older, was conducted in multiple modes. Some questions were answered by respondents through online surveys and other questions were answered in an "interviewer-administered mode" where respondents answered questions over a videoconference or telephone call with a survey administrator. For the post-election survey (where all questions measuring my independent, dependent, and mediating variables were asked), 7,449 respondents were surveyed. 4,779 surveys came from a new cross-sectional sample. These respondents were surveyed over the Internet, phone, and video. New respondents were randomly assigned to "one of the three sequential mode groups: web only, mixed web, and mixed video" (ANES). The remaining 2,670 respondents had previously participated in the 2016 ANES. All ANES 2016-2020 Panel respondents answered the survey through the Internet. Responses for the post-election survey were collected between November 8, 2020, and January 4, 2021. Data collection was completed by Westat, Inc. The 2020 Time Series survey used probability sampling methods to collect responses. Representativeness is important because it allows the findings to be generalized to the

sampled population, which, in the context of this study, adults in the United State who use social media. Data used from this post-election survey will also be weighted to accurately represent the population.

2019 ANES Pilot Study

The 2019 Pilot Study was comprised of 48.4% males and 51.6% females with no other category being offered for gender. In regard to race and ethnicity, whites, non-Hispanic individuals comprised a supermajority of the respondents (70.1%) followed by Hispanics (11.3%), Black, non-Hispanic (10.7%), Asian or Pacific Islander (2.7%), multi-racial, non-Hispanic (2.5%), and Native American and Alaskan Native (1.6%), and Middle Eastern (0.1%). A little under one percent of respondents (0.9%) either refused to answer the race and ethnicity question or did not know their race and ethnicity. The 2019 Pilot Study asked respondents their birthyear, where birthyears ranged from "1926" to "2000". A new variable was created to calculate respondent's age in year. The average age of respondents was about 51 years (M= 51.03) (SD= 17.15). Respondents were given a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strong Democrat, 7= Strong Republican) to report their political party identification (M=3.88, SD= 2.18). Respondents also reported their political ideology on a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Very liberal, 5= Very conservative) (M= 3.16, SD=1.26).

Several sets of questions were asked in both the 2019 Pilot Survey and 2020 Time Series Survey. Most questions used the same wording for each year (i.e. questions on political participation and racial and ethnic identity). Questions that appeared in both the 2019 Pilot Study and the 2020 ANES Time Series Study were worded the same way.

Independent Variable

Racial Identity: One question measured racial and ethnic identity in the 2019 Pilot Survey. The question measured responses on a 5-point Likert Scale (1= Not at all important, 5= Extremely Important). The question asked respondents how important the respondent's race was to their identity. The race changed depending on how they racially identified earlier in the survey (white: M= 2.40, SD= 1.37) (Black: M= 3.97, SD= 1.22) (Hispanic: M= 3.26, SD= 1.37).

Mediator Variable/Dependent Variables

General Social Media Use: Three question measured respondent's general social media use, similar to the 2020 Time Series Study. Two different questions measured how often a respondent visited a specific platform, how often they saw political content on that platform, and how often they posted political content on that platform. To make comparisons with the 2020 Time Series Survey, questions measuring use of Facebook and Twitter will be examined from this data set.

For general use, respondents were asked which social media platforms they had visited in the past year. They were given seven different social media platforms, which included Facebook (80.9%) and Twitter (40.3%). The second question asked respondents on a 7-point Likert Scale (1= Many times a day, 7=less than once a month) how often they used Facebook in a given month (M=5.33, SD=1.75). The third question asked respondents on a 7-point Likert Scale (1= Many times a day, 7=Less than once a month) how often they used Twitter in a given month (M=3.90, SD= 2.14). Questions two and three were reverse coded so lower values indicated less use of a platform.

Online Political Expression: Three questions measured online political expression in the 2019 Pilot Survey. The measures asked respondents how often they posted information about

political issues or candidates on certain platforms. Each question measured responses on a 5-point Likert Scale (1=Always, 5=Never). Each question was reverse coded so lower values indicated less time posting. The first question measured Facebook political postings (M=1.95, SD= 1.21). The second question measured Twitter political postings (M=1.96, SD= 1.32).

Dependent Variable

Political Participation: The set of questions reduced the most in the 2019 Pilot Survey compared to the 2020 Time Series survey was the set of questions asking about political participation. The 2020 Time Series Survey had multiple measures for various types of political participation activities (further details about those measures in the next section). However, there is only one battery of questions in the 2019 Pilot Survey that measured respondent's participation in politics. Respondents were given seven types of participation activities and could mark all that they had done in the past 12 months (α =.739)[3]. The seven questions were summed together with scores ranging from 0, representing a score for those who did not participate in any of the activities, to 7, representing a score for those who did all seven political activities. These activities were 1) "Attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns" (11.9%), 2) "Given money to an organization concerned with a political or social issue" (19.7%), 3) "Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration" (7%), 4) "Tried to persuade anyone to vote one way or another" (21%), 5) "Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house" (13%), 6) "Given money to any candidate running for public office, any political party, or any other group that supported or opposed candidates" (18.8%), and 7)" Gotten into a political argument with someone" (33.7%). Respondents could

[3] Cronbach's alpha can be calculated meaningfully with dichotomous as well as continuous variables according to the University of Virginia's Research Data Services + Sciences.

also answer they had done “None of these” activities in the past 12 months (42.7%). (M= 1.25, SD=1.64).

While the set of questions for participatory activities is not as robust as the questions available in the 2020 Time Series Survey, these measures still allow us to test whether there is any association between levels of racial identity and online political expression. Additionally, these questions allow us to test whether online political expression mediates the relationship between racial identity and political participation.

2020 ANES Time Series Survey

The 2020 Time Series Study was comprised of 45.4% males and 53.7% females while .8% refused to answer the question on sex. In regard to race and ethnicity, white, non-Hispanic individuals comprised a supermajority of the respondents (72%) followed by Hispanics (9.2%), Black, non-Hispanic (8.8%), Asian or Pacific Islander (3.4%), multi-racial, non-Hispanic (3.3%), and Native American and Alaskan Native (2.1%). A little over one percent of respondents (1.2%) either refused to answer the race and ethnicity question or did not know their race and ethnicity. To further assess Hispanic ethnicity, a question was asked about the respondent’s country of Latino heritage. Most reported either other Hispanic (not of either Mexican or Puerto Rican heritage) or more than one Hispanic heritage mentioned (45.3%), followed by Mexican (43.7%) and Puerto Rican (10.5%). Half a percent of those who identified ethnically as Hispanic did not report a heritage.

Ages ranged from “18” to “80 and older” and the average age of respondents was 51.59 years of age (SD= 17.21). Respondents were given a 7-point Likert scale (1=Strong Democrat, 7= Strong Republican) to report their political party identification (M= 3.89, SD= 2.25).

Respondents also reported their political ideology on a 7-point Likert scale (1= Extremely liberal, 7= Extremely conservative) (M= 4.09, SD= 1.70).

Independent Variable

Racial Identity: The ANES asked one question related to how closely someone identifies with their race or ethnicity. For white respondents, one question asked respondents on a 5-point scale from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important", how important is being white to respondent's identity (M=2.34, SD= 1.28)? For respondents who identified as Black, one question asked respondents on a 5-point scale from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important" How important is being black to respondent's identity (M=4.24, SD=1.18)? Hispanic respondents were asked on a 5-point scale from "Not at all important" to "Extremely important" How important is being Hispanic to [their] identity (M=3.52, SD=1.37)?

The same questions asked to white, Black, and Hispanic respondents using the same scale were asked to smaller minority groups, like Asian Americans and Native Americans. However, they are not included in this study, since I am most interested in comparing these three racial and ethnic groups based on my research questions.

Additionally, while one item measures are not ideal, the question has substantial face validity and has been used to measure racial and ethnic identity is other studies (e.g. Jardina, 2019).

Mediator Variable/Dependent Variable

General Social Media Use: The survey asked respondents "Which social media platforms have [they] visited in the past year?" While not used as a measure in this study, this allows a descriptive look at which social media sites respondents were most likely to visit. They were

offered seven specific social media sites, which included 1) Facebook (67.6%), 2) Twitter (27.7%), and 3) Reddit (15%).

The survey asked two questions that measured general social media use. Each question asked respondents "How often do you use [social media site]?" Each question also used the same 7-point scale, measuring usage from "Less than once a month" to "Many time every day". The first question measured Facebook usage (M= 5.06, SD= 1.86) and the second question measured Twitter usage (M= 3.32, SD= 2.14). Both of these questions were followed by a measure of political expression on the social media site (discussed in greater detail below).

The survey also asked a question about Reddit but was excluded for the purpose of this analysis. This was partially due to the difference in how many respondents reported using the platforms. While more than half of survey respondents could answer the question about Facebook use for political postings, only about a quarter of people could respond to the same question for Twitter and an eighth of respondents could answer for Reddit.

Online Political Expression: The two measures of political expression looked at how often respondents posted "information about political issues or candidates" on two social media sites. Each of these measures used the same 5-point scale from "Never" to "Always". The first question asked respondents about Facebook (M=1.53, SD= .83). The second question asked respondents about Twitter (M=1.46, SD=.93).

Dependent Variable

Political Participation: The ANES also asked several questions that measured different kinds of political participation activities. These activities included, contacting government officials, electoral participation, general political participation, and civic engagement. For the purpose of this study, all 18 of political participation questions will be assess as one measure.

Political participation can be broken down into subcategories, but reliability was low for certain subcategories, such as civic engagement (α=.638) and general political activities (α=.444). However, all of these concepts are conceptually similar as they all measure whether a respondent has taken part in various political activities in the previous year (α= .793). The new measure was summed. Participants could have a score from 0, which indicated they reported not doing any of the political activities measured, to 18, which indicated they reported doing all of the political activities measured.

It all should be noted that for some of the participation measures in the 2020 Time Series Survey, both offline and online forms of activities were not always separated into their own measures. For example, the question regarding signing petitions included both signing a digital petition and a physical petition. However, the ANES measured online political meetings and other events and offline political meetings and other events separately.

For clarity, the measures still remain separated in the following sections to have a better understanding of the individual measures.

Contacted Government Officials: Four questions measured whether or not participants had contacted various types of government officials. The first two questions focused on contacting federal government officials. The first question asked participants, "In the past twelve months, have you contacted a federal elected official, such as a member of Congress or the President, or someone on the staff of such an official?" (13.4%) The second question asked, "And what about a non-elected official in a federal government agency? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?" (4.7%) The third and fourth questions focused on contacting state and local government officials. The third question asked "What about an elected official on the state or local level, such as a governor, mayor, or a member of the state legislature

or city council, or someone on the staff of such an elected official? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?" (15.7%) The four, and final, question asked, "And what about a non-elected official in a state or local government agency? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?" (7.6%) All four questions used a dichotomous Yes/No answer selection to assess whether participants had contacted some type of government official.

Electoral Participation: The second set of questions focused on electoral participation activities. Seven questions assessed various types of political activities associated with helping a party or candidate win an election in the past 12 months. All seven questions simply allowed for a dichotomous Yes/No response.

The first question asked, "Did you participate in any online political meetings, rallies, speeches, fundraisers, or things like that in support of a particular candidate (11.9%)?". The second question asked, "Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate (4.9%)?". The third question asked, "Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house (15.4%)?" The fourth question asked, "Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates (3.2%)?".

The last three questions all focused on donating money to different groups or individuals. The first donation question asked, "Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office (17.8%)?". The second donation question asked, "Did you give money to a political party during this election year (11.6%)?". The last donation question asked, "Did you give any money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates (5.5%)?".

General Political Participation: Four questions measured various political participation activities in the past 12 months. The questions had the same dichotomous (Yes/No) response choice as the previous participation questions.

The first question focused on donating money, which asked participants, "Not counting a religious organization, during the past 12 months, have you given money to any other organization concerned with a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months (19.7%)?" The second question asked participants, "During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or on paper about a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months (25.6%)?". The third question asked, "During the past 12 months, [did] you [join] in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or [did] you not [do] this in the past 12 months (8.4%)?" The fourth question asked participants, "During the past 12 months, have you ever gotten into a political argument with someone, or have you not done this in the past 12 months (47.5%)?"

Civic Engagement: Three questions measured respondent's level of civic engagement in the past 12 months. Each of the three questions had dichotomous set of response choices (Yes/No). The first question focused on volunteering and asked respondents, "Many people say they have less time these days to do volunteer work. What about you, were you able to devote any time to volunteer work in the past 12 months or did you not do so (26.7%)?" The second question asked, "During the past 12 months, did you attend a meeting about an issue facing your local community or schools (16.8%)?" The third asked "During the past 12 months, have you worked with other people to deal with some issue facing your community (21.4%)?"

Analytic Plan

To analyze the data, I will first conduct an OLS regression with the dependent variables of interest (online political expression and political participation). Separate regressions will be run for the 2019 Pilot Study data and the 2020 Time Series data. The regression will also include relevant control variables. Then, I will run a mediation analysis for the relationship between racial and ethnic identity, online political expression, and political participation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

2019 ANES Pilot Study

Facebook Political Expression

To answer Research Question 1, which asked what the relationship was between white racial identity and online political expression, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship was between age, party identification, and gender and online political expression, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted.

For white respondents (n= 1518), the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,1513) = 3.02, $p < .05$). The model predicted less than 1% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.008). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 2.38, SE= .15, $p < .001$), White Racial Identity(b= -.00, SE= .02, p = .86), Age (b= -.003, SE= .00, p = .04), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= .07, SE= .06, p = .26), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.18, SE = .06, $p < .01$).

White racial identity, in response to Research Question 1, was not a significant predictor of online political expression on Facebook when controlling for age, party identification, and gender. Additionally, for Research Question 2, age and gender were both significant predictors of online political expression on Facebook. Specifically, older individuals and those who identified as female were less likely to make political postings on Facebook. Party identification was not a significant predictor of online political expression on Facebook.

To test Hypothesis 1, which predicted that online political expression would increase as Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity increased, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship was between age, party identification, and gender and online political expression, an OLS regression was conducted.

For Black respondents (n = 209), the overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,204) = 1.72, p = .15). The model predicted about 3% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2 =.03). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 2.35, SE= .51, p < .001), Black Racial Identity (b= -.04, SE= .08, p = .65), Age (b= -.00, SE= .01, p = .80), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= .64, SE= .30, p < .05), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.15, SE= .17, p = .39).

For Hispanic respondents (n = 190), the overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,185) = 1.76, p= .14). The model predicted about 4% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2 = .04). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 3.23, SE= .50, p < .001), Hispanic Ethnic Identity(b= -.17, SE= .07, p < .05), Age (b= -.01, SE= .01, p= .23), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= .02, SE= .21, p = .91), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.10, SE= .19, p= .59).

Partial support was found for Hypothesis 1 for online political expression on Facebook. Black racial identity (H1a) was not a significant predictor of online political expression on Facebook. Hispanic ethnic identity (H1b) was a significant, negative predictor of Facebook political expression. However, this relationship was in the opposite direction of what was expected and the overall regression model did not exhibit good fit. As such, this result is

interpreted cautiously. For Research Question 2, age, party identification, and gender were not significant predictors of Facebook political expression for Hispanic respondents. For Black respondents, age and gender were not significant predictors of Facebook political expression. Party identification was a significant predictor of Facebook political expression for Black respondents. Republicans were more likely to make political postings on Facebook compared to Democrats.

To answer Research Question 3, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an OLS regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5, 1911) = 62.76, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 14% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2 = .14). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 1.78, S = .20, $p < .001$), Facebook Political Postings (b= .36, SE= .03, $p < .001$), Age (b= -.01, SE= .00, $p < .01$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= -.60, SE= .07, $p <$ .001), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.33, SE= .07, $p < .001$).

In answering Research Question 3, the results indicate that online political expression on Facebook is a significant, positive predictor of political participation, controlling for age, party identification, and gender. Specifically, the regression showed that those who made more political postings on Facebook were more likely to participate in political activities. The results also show that Democrats and males were more likely to participate in political activities. Additionally, younger individuals were more likely to participate in politics.

To further analyze the finding for Research Question 3, separate analyses were run for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents. For white respondents, the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F, (4, 1516) = 66.66, $p < .001$). The model predicted

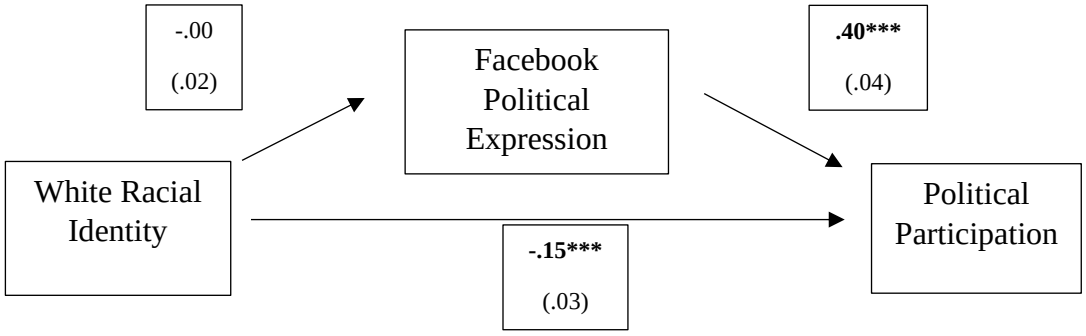
about 15 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2= .15). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 1.50, *SE*= .22, *p* < .001), Facebook Political Postings (*b*= .40, *SE*= .04, *p* < .001), Age (*b*= .00, *SE*= .00, *p*= .11), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.95, SE= .08, *p* < .001), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.30, *SE*= .08, *p* < .001).

For Black respondents, the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F*, (4, 204) = 8.40, *p* < .001). The model predicted about 14 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2= .14). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b* = .68, *SE* = .41, *p* < .001), Facebook Political Postings (*b* = .31, *SE* = .07, *p* < .001), Age (*b* = .00, *SE*= .00, *p*= .74), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b* = .34, SE= .28, *p*= .22), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b* = -.38, *SE* = .16, *p* < .05).

For Hispanic respondents, the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F*, (4, 185) = 2.93, *p* < .05). The model predicted about 6 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2= .06). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b* = 1.16, *SE* = .53, *p* < .05), Facebook Political Postings (*b*= .22, *SE*= .09, *p* < .05), Age (*b*= .00, *SE*= .00, *p*= .49), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.11, *SE*= .25, *p*= .66), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.47, *SE*= .23, *p* < .05).

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 to examine the direct and indirect effects of racial identity and Facebook political expression on political participation. Hayes' PROCESS program (model 4) was used to conduct the analysis in SPSS. The results of the mediation analysis showed that there was a negative direct effect of racial

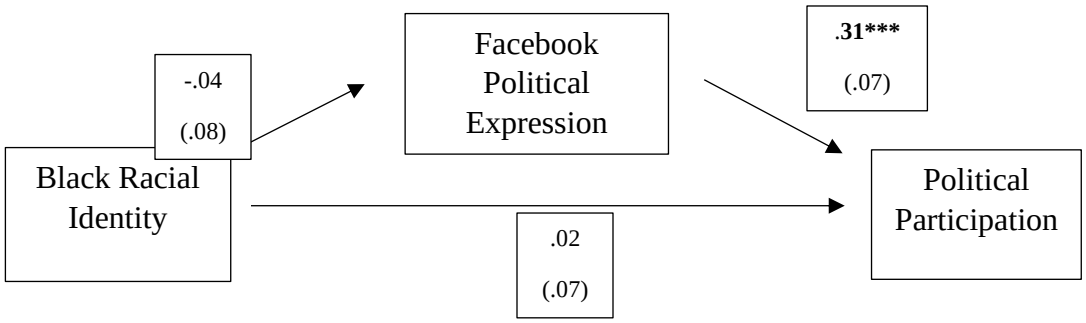
identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= -.22, *SE*= .02, *p* <.001). However, when examining the direct effects by race, only white racial identity had a significant relationship with political participation (see Figure 2). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from racial identity salience to Facebook political postings to political participation for white racial identity, (*Effect: b*= -.00, *SE* = .01, *LLCI*= -.02, *ULCI*= .02), as seen in Figure 2, and Black racial identity (*Effect: b*= -.02, *SE*= .03, *LLCI*= -.08, *ULCI*= .04), as seen in Figure 3. However, there was a significant, negative indirect effect for Hispanic ethnic identity (*Effect: b*= -.06, *SE*= .03, *LLCI*= -.11, *ULCI*= -.01), as seen in Figure 4. This effect was not in the expected direction. Facebook political expression partially mediated the relationship between Hispanic ethnic identity and political participation.



Direct Effect: b= -.15, SE= .03, *p* < .001

Indirect Effect: b= -.00, SE= .01, 95% CI [-.02, .02]

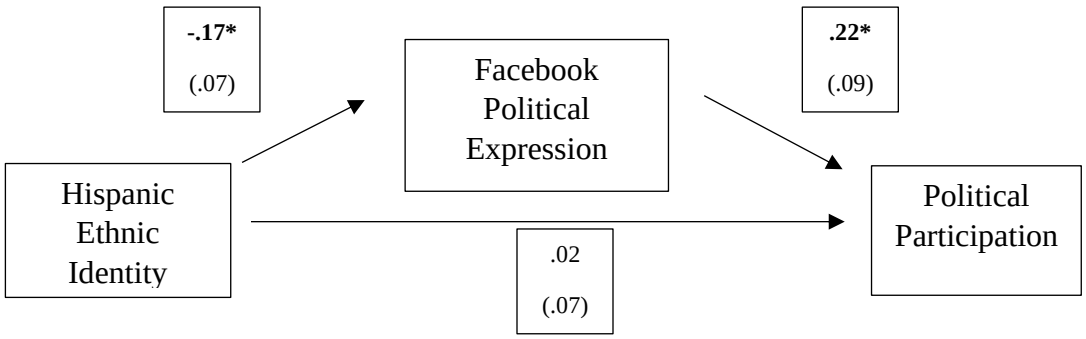
Figure 2: Direct and Indirect Effects for white racial identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2019.



Direct Effect: b= .02, SE= .07, *p*= .80

Indirect Effect: b= -.01, SE= .02, 95% CI [-.05, .02]

Figure 3: Direct and Indirect Effects for Black racial identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2019



Direct Effect: b= .02, SE= .07, *p*= .78

Indirect Effect: **b= -.06***, SE= .03, 95% CI [-.11, -.01]

Figure 4: Direct and Indirect Effects for Hispanic ethnic identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2019.

For Hypothesis 2, which stated the relationship between Facebook political postings and political participation would be greater than the relationship between general Facebook use and political participation, a Z-test was conducted. The findings supported Hypothesis 2. There was a larger correlation between Facebook political postings \ and political participation compared to general Facebook use and political participation (z=11.08, p < .001)

Twitter Political Expression

To answer Research Question 1, which asked what the relationship was between white racial identity and online political expression, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship was between age, party identification, and gender and online political expression, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted.

For white respondents (n= 763), the overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,758) = 1.25, p= .29). The model predicted less than 1% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.01). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 2.40, SE= .22, p < .001), white Racial Identity (b= -.04, SE= .10, p = .38), Age (b= -.01, SE= .00, p= .07), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and

Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= .04, *SE*= .10, *p*= .70), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.08, *SE*= .10, *p*= .43).

White racial identity, in response to Research Question 1, was not a significant predictor of online political expression on Twitter when controlling for age, party identification, and gender. For Research Question 2, age, party identification, and gender were not significant predictors of Twitter political expression for white respondents.

To test Hypothesis 1, which predicted that online political expression would increase as Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity increased, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship was between age, party identification, and gender and online political expression, an OLS regression was conducted.

For Black respondents (*n*= 118), the overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F* (4, 113) = 1.68, *p*= .16). The model predicted about 6% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.06). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 3.56, *SE*= .69, *p* < .001), Black Racial Identity (*b*= -.16, *SE*= .11, *p*= .17), Age (*b*= -.01, SE= .01, *p*= .42), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= .05, *SE*= .36, *p*= .88), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.43, *SE*= .24, *p*= .08).

For Hispanic respondents (*n*= 102), the overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F* (4,97) = .35, *p*= .84). The model predicted about 1.5% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.01). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 2.60, *SE*= .69, *p* < .001), Hispanic Ethnic Identity(*b*= -.09, *SE*= .10, *p*= .37), Age (*b*= -.01, *SE*= .01, *p*= .49), Party Identification, with Democrats

coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= .06, SE= .29, p= .83), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.02, SE= .27, p= .93).

These results indicate that there was not support for Hypothesis 1 for online political expression on Twitter when controlling for age, party identification, and gender. There was not a significant relationship between Black racial identity or Hispanic ethnic identity and online political expression. For Research Question 2, age, party identification, and gender were not significant predictors of Twitter political expression for Black and Hispanic respondents.

To answer Research Question 3 asking what the relationship is for online political expression on Twitter and political participation, an OLS regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5, 977) = 32.40, p < .001). The model predicted about 14% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2 = .14). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 1.79, SE= .28, p < .001), Twitter Political Postings (b= .39, SE= .04, p < .001), Age (b= .01, SE= .00, p < .01), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= -.64, SE= .12, p < .001), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.26, SE= .11, p < .05).

The results indicate that online political expression on Twitter is a significant, positive predictor of political participation when controlling for age, party identification, and gender. Specifically, the regression showed that those who made more political postings on Twitter were more likely to participate in political activities. The results also show that Democrats and males were more likely to participate in political activities. Additionally, older individuals were more likely to participate in politics.

To further analyze the finding for Research Question 3, separate analyses were run for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents. For white respondents, the overall model exhibited good

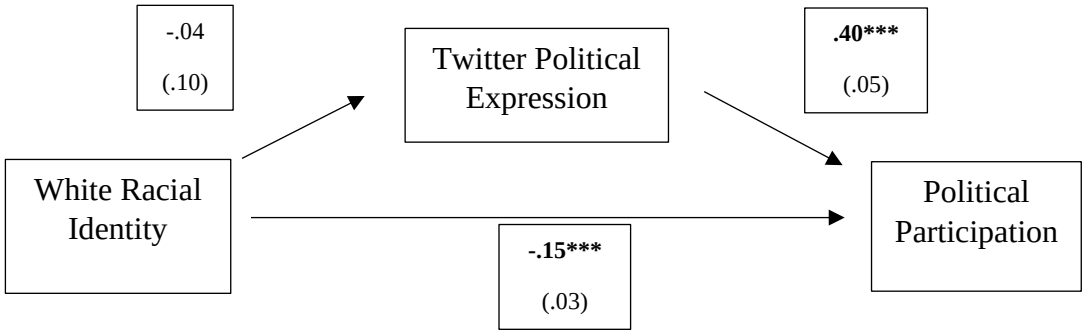
fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F, (4, 758) = 31.54, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 14 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample ($R^2 = .14$). The following variables were included in the model: Constant ($b = 1.54$, $SE = .31$, $p < .001$), Twitter Political Postings ($b = .40$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$), Age ($b = .01$, $SE = .00$, $p < .05$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 ($b = -.98$, SE= .13, $p < .001$), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 ($b = -.21$, $SE = .13$, $p = .11$).

For Black respondents, the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F, (4, 113) = 8.42, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 23 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample ($R^2 = .23$). The following variables were included in the model: Constant ($b = .01$, $SE = .57$, $p = .98$), Twitter Political Postings ($b = .43$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), Age ($b = .01$, $SE = .01$, $p = .11$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 ($b = .38$, SE= .33, $p = .25$), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 ($b = -.31$, $SE = .23$, $p = .18$).

For Hispanic respondents, the overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F, (4, 97) = 2.99, $p < .05$). The model predicted about 12 percent of the variability in political participation in the sample ($R^2 = .12$). The following variables were included in the model: Constant ($b = 1.52$, $SE = .80$, $p = .06$), Twitter Political Postings ($b = .36$, $SE = .13$, $p < .01$), Age ($b = .01$, $SE = .01$, $p = .43$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 ($b = -.39$, SE= .10, $p = .29$), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 ($b = -.68$, $SE = .35$, $p = .05$).

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 and examine the direct and indirect effects of racial identity and Twitter political expression on political participation. Hayes' PROCESS program (model 4) was used to conduct the analysis in SPSS.

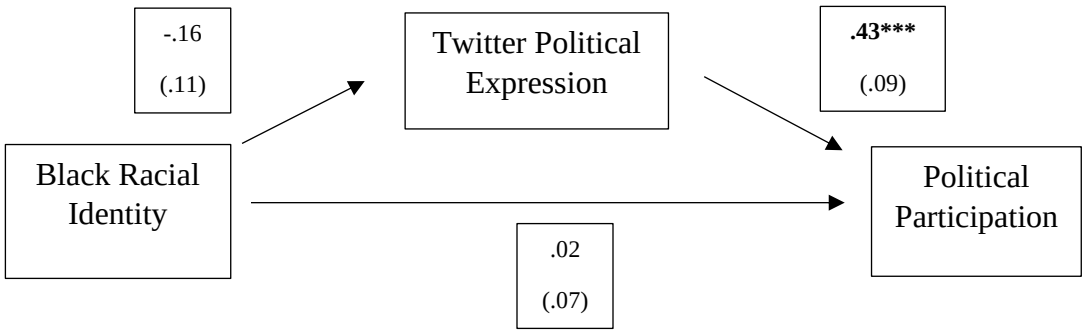
The results of the mediation analysis showed that there was a negative direct effect of racial identity salience on political participation (Effect *b*= -.21, *SE*= .04, *p* < .001). Again, when breaking this direct effect down by race, only white racial identity is a significant predictor of political participation (see Figure 5). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from racial identity salience to Twitter political postings to political participation for white racial identity (*Effect*: *b*= -.02, *SE*= .02, *LLCI*= -.05, *ULCI*= .01), as shown in Figure 5, Black racial identity salience (*Effect*: *b*= -.07, *SE*= .04, *LLCI*= -.16, *ULCI*= .02), as shown in Figure 6, and Hispanic ethnic identity (*Effect*: *b*= -.04, SE= .04, *LLCI*= -.11, *ULCI*= .04), as shown in Figure 7. Twitter political expression did not mediate the relationship between any racial or ethnic identity and political participation.



Direct Effect: b= -.15, SE= .03, *p* < .01

Indirect Effect: b= -.02, SE= .02, 95% CI [-.04, .01]

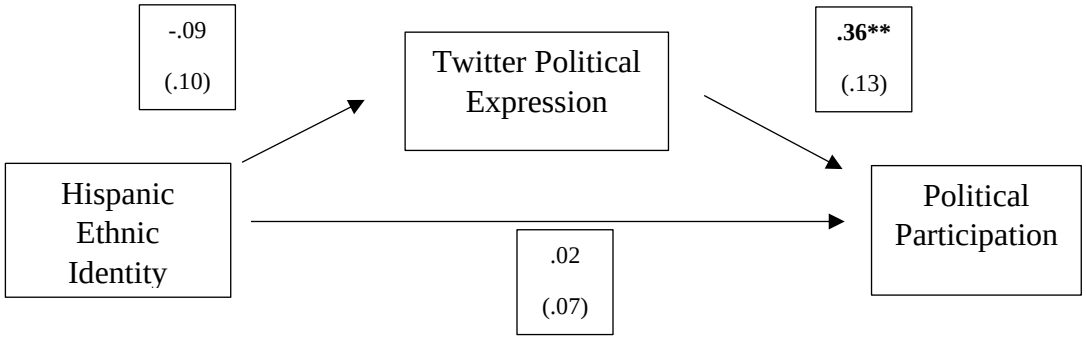
Figure 5: Direct and Indirect Effects for white racial identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation in 2019.



Direct Effect: b= .02, SE= .07, *p*= .80

Indirect Effect: b= -.07, SE= .04, 95% CI [-.16, .02]

Figure 6: Direct and Indirect Effects for Black racial identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation in 2019.



Direct Effect: b= -.20, SE= .07, *p*= .78

Indirect Effect: b= .04, SE= .07, 95% CI [-.11, .04]

Figure 7: Direct and Indirect Effects for Hispanic ethnic identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation in 2019.

For Hypothesis 2, which stated the relationship between Twitter political postings and political participation would be greater than the relationship between general Twitter use and political participation, a Z-test was conducted. The findings supported Hypothesis 2. There was a larger correlation between Twitter political postings and political participation compared to general Twitter use and political participation (z= 3.98, p< .001).

To answer Research Question 5, asking what the relationship is between racial and ethnic identity and political participation, an OLS regression was conducted. Separate regressions were conducted for white racial identity, Black racial identity, and Hispanic ethnic identity.

For white racial identity, the overall model showed good fit, as indicated by the F-test (F (4, 1828) = 39.17, p < .001). The model predicted 7.9% of the variability in political participation in the sample. The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 2.73, *SE*= .19, *p* < .001), white Identity Salience (*b*= -.15, *SE*= .03, *p* < .001), Age (*b*= .00, *SE*= .00, *p*= .72), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.76, *SE*= .08, *p* < .001), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.33, *SE*= .08, *p* < .001).

For Black racial identity, the overall model showed good fit, as indicated by the F-test (*F* (4, 256) = 3.05, *p* < .05). The model predicted 4.5% of the variability in political participation in the sample. The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 1.30, *SE* = .45, *p* < .01), Black Identity Salience (*b*= .02, *SE*= .07, *p*= .80), Age (*b*= .00, *SE*= .01, *p*= .74), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= .47, *SE*= .26, *p*= .07), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.43, *SE*= .16, *p* < .01).

For Hispanic ethnic identity, the overall model did not show good fit, as indicated by the F-test (*F* (4, 244) = 1.39, *p*= .24). The model predicted 2.2% of the variability in political participation in the sample. The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b* = 1.30, *SE* = .51, *p* < .01), Hispanic Identity Salience (*b*= .02, *SE*= .07, *p*= .78), Age (*b* = .01, *SE*= .01, *p*= .35), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b* = -.14, *SE*= .21, *p*= .49), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.37, *SE*= .19, *p*= .06).

Results for Research Question 5 indicate that white racial identity was a significant, negative predictor of political participation. There was a non-significant relationship between Black racial identity and political participation and Hispanic ethnic identity and political

participation. Support was also found for Hypothesis 3. Males were more likely to participate in politics in both the model for Facebook political expression and Twitter political expression.

2020 ANES Time Series Study

Facebook Political Expression

To answer Research Question 1, which asked what the relationship is between white racial identity and online political expression, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship is between party identification, age, and sex, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted (n= 3744). The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,3739) = 2.49, $p < .05$). The model predicted less than 1% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.00). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 1.60, SE= .07, $p < .001$), white Identity Salience (b= -.01, SE= .01, p= .64), Age (b= -.00, SE= .00, p= .42), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= -.08, SE= .03, $p < .01$), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= .01, SE= .03, p= .68).

Table 1: White Racial Identity and Facebook Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	**2.38*** ** (0.15)	**1.60*** ** (0.07)
White Racial Identity	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
Age	**0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Party Identification	0.07 (0.06)	**-0.08**** (0.03)
Gender	**-0.18**** (0.06)	0.01 (0.03)
R^2	0.008	0.003
Sample size (n)	1,518	3,744

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

As noted in Table 1, white racial identity was not significantly related to online political expression on Facebook. For Research Question 2 for white individuals, sex, and age were not significantly related to online political expression on Facebook. Party identification was significantly related to Facebook political expression. Specifically, Democrats were more likely to make political postings on Facebook compared to Republicans.

To test part of Hypothesis 1, which predicted that levels of online political expression would increase as Black racial identity increased, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship between party identification, age, and sex and online political expression, an OLS regression was conducted (n= 460). The overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,455) = 1.75, p= .14). The model predicted about 2% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2 =.02). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b = 2.00, SE = .26, $p < .001$), Black Identity Salience (b= -.02,

SE= .04, *p*= .60), Age (*b*= -.01, *SE*= .00, *p* < .05), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.08, *SE*= .04, *p*= .59), and Gender, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.11, *SE*= .09, *p*= .25).

Table 2: Black Racial Identity and Facebook Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	2.35*** (0.51)	2.00*** (0.26)
Black Racial Identity	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.04)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	**-0.01*** (0.00)
Party Identification	**0.64*** (0.30)	-0.08 (0.04)
Gender	-0.15 (0.17)	-0.11 (0.09)
R^2	0.03	0.01
Sample size (n)	209	460

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

To test the last part of Hypothesis 1, which predicted that levels of online political expression would increase as Hispanic ethnic identity increased, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship between party identification, age, and sex and online political expression, an OLS regression was conducted (*n*= 391). The overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F* (4,386) = 1.75, *p*= .14). The model predicted about 2% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2 =.02). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 1.84, *SE*= .27, *p* < .001), Hispanic Identity Salience (*b*= -.09, *SE*= .04, *p* < .05), Age (*b*= .00, *SE*= .00, *p*= .31), Party Identification, with

Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.13, *SE*= .12, *p*= .28), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= .04, *SE*= .11, *p*= .69).

Table 3: Hispanic Ethnic Identity and Facebook Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)	Facebook Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	**3.23*** (0.50)	**1.84*** (0.27)
Hispanic Ethnic Identity	**-0.17*** (0.07)	**-0.09*** (0.01)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Party Identification	0.02 (0.21)	-0.13 (0.12)
Gender/Sex	-0.10 (0.19)	0.04 (0.11)
R^2	0.04	0.02
Sample size (n)	190	391

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For Hypothesis 1, some support was found. Hispanic ethnic identity (H1b) was a significant predictor of Facebook political expression. There was a negative relationship between Hispanic ethnic identity and Facebook political expression. Black racial identity (H1a) was not significantly related to Facebook political expression. With regard to Research Question 2 for Hispanic respondents, age, party identification, and sex were not significant predictors of Facebook political expression. For Black respondents, age was a significant predictor of Facebook political expression while party identification and sex were not. Specifically, younger Black respondents were slightly more likely to reported making more political postings on Facebook compared to older respondents.

To answer Research Question 3 for white respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5,3738) = 119.13, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 14% of the variability in political participation in the sample ($R^2 = .14$). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= 2.52, SE= .25, $p < .001$), Age (b= .02, SE= .00, $p < .001$), Facebook Political Expression (b= 1.03, SE= .06, $p < .001$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= -1.40, SE= .09, $p < .001$), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.18, SE= .09, p= .07).

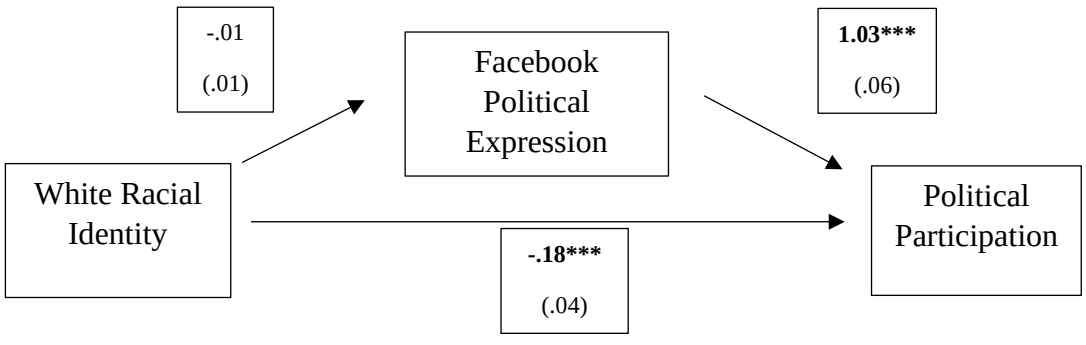
To answer Research Question 3 for Black respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5,454) = 13.57, $p < .001$). The model predicted 13% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2=.13). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b= -1.19, SE= .86, p=.16), Facebook Political Expression (b= 1.14, SE= .15, $p < .001$), Age (b= .02, SE= .01, $p < .05$), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= .09, SE= .46, p= .85), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= .48, SE= .28, p= .09).

To answer Research Question 3 for Hispanic respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5,385) = 6.61, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 8% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2=.08). The following variables were

included in the model: Constant (*b*= 3.13, *SE*= .77, *p* < .001), Facebook Political Expression (*b* = .66, *SE*= .14, *p* < .001), Age (*b*= -.00, *SE* = .01, *p* = .70), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.69, *SE*= .32, *p* < .05), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.40, *SE*= .29, *p*= .16).

To answer Research Question 3, there was a significant, positive relationship between online political expression and political participation when controlling for age, sex, and party identification. This was true for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents who used Facebook.

A mediation analysis was conducted to answer Research Question 4 to examine the direct and indirect effects of white racial identity and Facebook political expression on political participation. Hayes' PROCESS program (model 4) was used to conduct the analyses in SPSS. As shown in Figure 8, the mediation analysis showed a negative direct effect of white racial identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= -.18, *SE*= .04, *p* < .001). Survey respondents with lower levels of white racial identity salience were more likely to participate in politics. An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from racial identity salience through Facebook political postings to political participation for white individuals (*Effect: b*= -.01, *SE*= .01, *LLCI*= -.03, *ULCI*= .02).

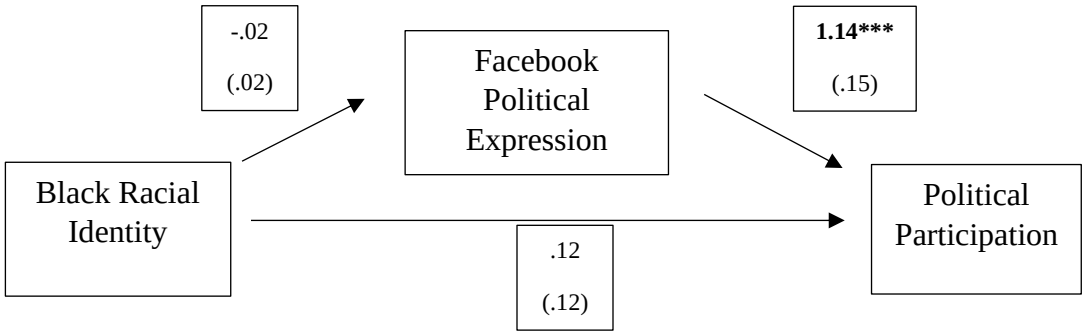


Direct Effect: b= -.18, SE= .04, *p* < .001

Indirect Effect: b= -.01, SE= .01, 95% CI [-.03, .02]

Figure 8: Direct and Indirect Effects for white racial identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2020.

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 to examine the direct and indirect effects of Black racial identity and Facebook political expression on political participation. As shown in Figure 9, the mediation analysis showed a non-significant direct effect of Black racial identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= .12, *SE*= .12, *p*=.31). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from Black racial identity salience through Facebook political postings to political participation (*Effect: b*= .02, *SE*= .05, *LLCI*= -.07, *ULCI*= .11).



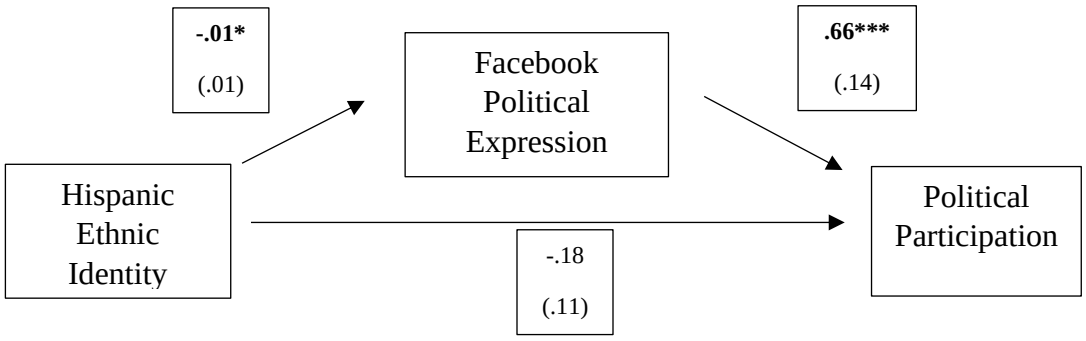
Direct Effect: b=.12, SE= .12, *p*= *.31*

Indirect Effect: b= .02, SE= .05, 95% CI [-.07, .11]

Figure 9: Direct and Indirect Effects for Black racial identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2020.

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 and examine the direct and indirect effects of Hispanic ethnic identity and Facebook political expression on political participation. As shown in Figure 10, the mediation analysis showed a non-significant direct effect of Hispanic ethnic identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= -.18, *SE*= .11, *p*=.11). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was a significant, negative indirect effect from Hispanic ethnic identity salience through Facebook political postings to political participation (*Effect: b*= -.06, *SE*= .03, *LLCI*= -.13, *ULCI*= -.01). This

indicates that Facebook political expression mediates the relationship between Hispanic ethnic identity and political participation.



Direct Effect: b= -.18, SE= .11, *p*= .11

Indirect Effect: b= -.06, SE= .03, 95% CI [-.13, -.01]

Figure 10: Direct and Indirect Effects for Hispanic ethnic identity, Facebook political expression, and political participation in 2020.

To answer Research Question 4, the results showed that only Hispanic ethnic identity mediated the relationship between Facebook political expression and political participation. White and Black racial identity did not mediate the relationship between Facebook political expression and political participation in 2020.It was also found that white identity was significantly related to political participation. As racial identity salience decreased for white individuals, they were more likely to participate in political activities. Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity were not statistically related to political participation.

For Hypothesis 2, which stated the relationship between Facebook political postings and political participation would be greater than the relationship between general Facebook use and political participation, a Z-test was conducted. The findings supported Hypothesis 2. There was a larger correlation between Facebook political postings and political participation compared to general Facebook use and political participation (z= 17.94, p< .001).

Twitter Political Expression

To answer Research Question 1, which asked what the relationship is between white racial identity and online political expression on Twitter, and Research Question 2, which asked what the relationship is between party identification, age, and sex, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. (*n*= 1522) The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,1517) = 11.17, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 3% of the variability in Twitter political postings in the sample (R^2=.03). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 1.60, *SE*= .07, $p < .001$), white Identity Salience (*b*= -.01, *SE* = .02, $p = .47$), Age *(b*= .00, *SE* = .00, *p*= .94), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.30, *SE*= .05, $p < .001$), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= .03, *SE*= .05, $p = .47$).

Table 4: White Racial Identity and Twitter Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	**2.40*** (0.22)	**1.60*** (0.07)
White Racial Identity	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.02)
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Party Identification	0.04 (0.10)	**-0.30*** (0.05)
Gender	-0.08 (0.10)	0.03 (0.05)
R^2	0.007	0.03
Sample size (n)	763	1,522

Note.*$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For Research Question 1, white racial identity was not significantly related to online political expression on Twitter. For Research Question 2 for white individuals, party identification was significantly related to Twitter political expression. Specifically, white Democrats were more likely to make political postings on Twitter compared to white Republicans. Sex and age, however, were not significantly related to online political expression on Twitter.

To test part of Hypothesis 1 and Research Question 2 for Black respondents, an OLS regression was conducted (n = 173). The overall model exhibited marginal fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,168) = 2.35, p= .06). The model predicted about 5% of the variability in Twitter political postings in the sample (R^2=.05). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b = 1.42 SE = .41, p < .001), Black Identity Salience (b= .02, SE= .06, p= .78), Age (b= -.01, SE= .00, p < .05), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b= -.06, SE= .27, p = .83), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= .26, SE= .14, p= .08).

Table 5: Black Racial Identity and Twitter Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	**3.56*** ** (0.69)	**1.42*** ** (0.41)
Black Racial Identity	-0.16 (0.11)	0.02 (0.06)
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	**-0.01*** (0.00)
Party Identification	0.05 (0.36)	-0.06 (0.27)
Gender	-0.43 (0.24)	0.26 (0.14)
R^2	0.06	0.05
Sample size (n)	118	173

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

To test the last part of Hypothesis 1 and Research Question 2, an OLS regression was conducted for Hispanic respondents (n=173). The overall model did not exhibit good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (4,186) =1.48, p= 21). The model predicted about 3.4% of the variability in Facebook political postings in the sample (R^2=.03). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (b=2.02, SE= .45, $p < .001$), Hispanic Ethnic Identity Salience (b= .04, SE= .07, p= .53), Age (b = -.00, SE= .00, p= .62), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (b = -.40, SE= .21, p= .06), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (b= -.15, SE= .19, p= .42).

Table 6: Hispanic Ethnic Identity and Twitter Political Expression

	2019 Model	2020 Model
	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)	Twitter Political Expression B(SE)
Constant	2.60*** (0.69)	2.02*** (0.45)
Hispanic Ethnic Identity	-0.09 (0.10)	0.04 (0.07)
Age	-0.00 (0.0)	-0.00 (0.00)
Party Identification	0.06 (0.29)	-0.40 (0.21)
Gender	-0.02 (0.27)	-0.15 (0.42)
R^2	0.01	0.03
Sample size (n)	102	173

Note. *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

For participants who used Twitter, support was not found for Hypothesis 1. Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity did not have a significant relationship with political expression on Twitter. For Research Question 2 for Black respondents, age was a significant predictor of online political expression. Specifically, younger Black respondents were slightly more likely to express political opinion on Twitter. Party identification and sex were not significantly related to Twitter political expression. For Research Question 2 for Hispanics, age, party identification, and sex did not significantly relate to online political expression on Twitter.

To answer Research Question 3 for white respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (F (5,1516) = 57.88, $p < .001$). The model predicted about 16% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2=.16). The following variables were included in the

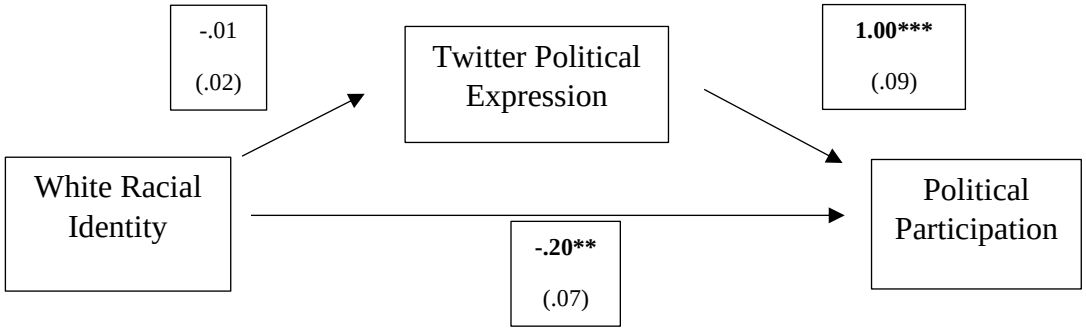
model: Constant (*b*= 2.53, *SE*= .40, *p* < .001), Age (*b*= .02, *SE*= .01, *p* < .001), Twitter Political Expression (*b*= 1.00, *SE*= .09, *p* < .001), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -1.71, *SE*= .17, *p* < .001), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= .29, *SE*= .17, *p*= .08).

To answer Research Question 3 for Black respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F* (5,167) = 6.99, *p* < .001). The model predicted about 17% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2=.17). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= -2.88, *SE*= 1.50, *p*=.06), Twitter Political Expression (*b*= 1.17, *SE*= .27, *p* < .001), Age (*b*= .06, *SE*= .02, *p* < .001), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b* = -.04, *SE*= .93, *p*= .97), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= .55, *SE*= .51, *p*= .28).

To answer Research Question 3 for Hispanic respondents, which asked what the relationship is between online political expression and political participation, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was conducted. The overall model exhibited good fit, as indicated by the results of the F-test (*F* (5,167) = 5.68, *p* < .001). The model predicted about 15% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2=.15). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 3.53, *SE*= 1.07, *p* < .001), Twitter Political Expression (*b*= .70, *SE* = .17, *p* < .001), Age (*b* = -.00, *SE*= .01, *p*= .85), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b* = -1.21, *SE*= .47, *p* < .05), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.42, *SE*= .41, *p*= .30).

To answer Research Question 3, there was a significant, positive relationship between online political expression and political participation when controlling for age, sex, and party identification. This was true for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents who used Twitter.

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 to examine the direct and indirect effects of white racial identity and Twitter political expression on political participation. Hayes' PROCESS program (model 4) was used to conduct the analysis in SPSS. As shown in Figure 11, the mediation analysis showed a significant, negative direct effect of white racial identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= -.20, *SE*= .07, $p < .01$). This indicates that those with lower levels of white racial identity salience were more likely to participate in political activities. An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from racial identity salience through Twitter political postings to political participation for white individuals (*Effect: b*= -.01, *SE*= .02, *LLCI*= -.05, *ULCI*= .02).



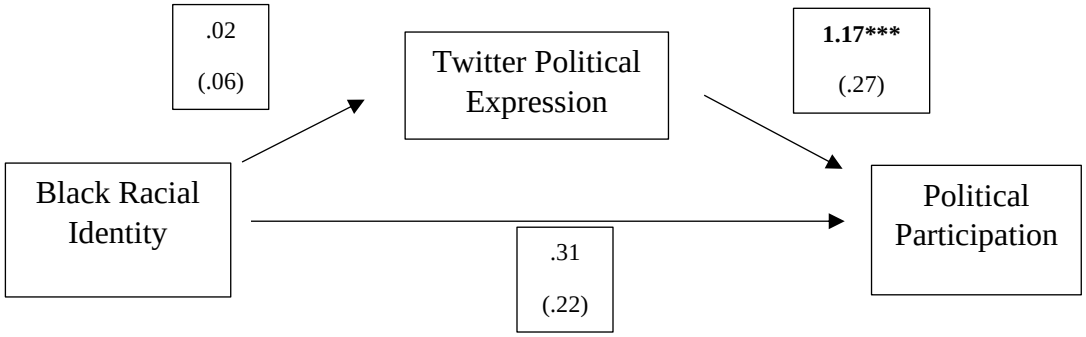
Direct Effect: b= -.20, SE= .07, $p < .01$

Indirect Effect: b= -.01, SE= .02, 95% CI [-.05, .02]

Figure 11: Direct and Indirect Effects for white racial identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation.

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4, examining the direct and indirect effects of Black racial identity and Twitter political expression on political

participation. As shown in Figure 12, the mediation analysis showed a non-significant direct effect of Black racial identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= .31, *SE*= .22, *p*=.17). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from Black racial identity salience through Twitter political postings to political participation (*Effect: b*= .02, *SE*= .09, *LLCI*= -.15, *ULCI*= .18).

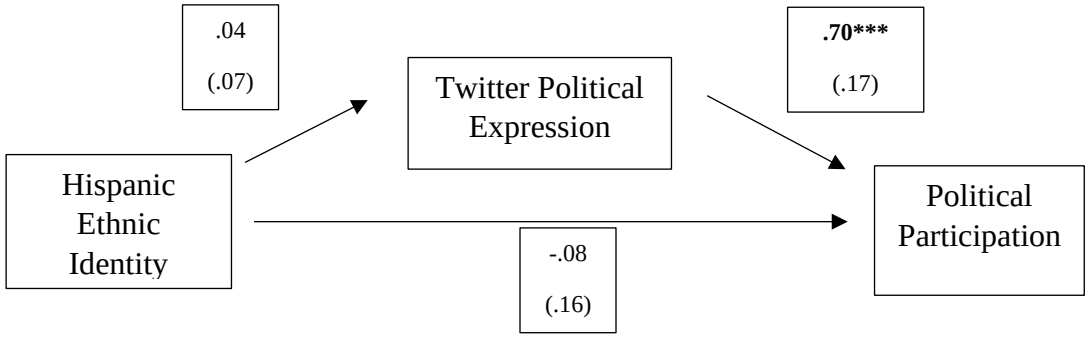


Direct Effect: b= .31, SE= .22, *p* = .17

Indirect Effect: b= .02, SE= .09, 95% CI [-.15, .18]

Figure 12: Direct and Indirect Effects for Black racial identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation.

A mediation analysis was also conducted to answer Research Question 4 and examine the direct and indirect effects of Hispanic ethnic identity and Twitter political expression on political participation. As shown in Figure 13, the mediation analysis showed a non-significant direct effect of Hispanic ethnic identity salience on political participation (*Effect: b*= -.08, *SE*= .16, *p*=.62). An examination of the indirect effect results showed that there was not a significant indirect effect from Hispanic ethnic identity salience through Twitter political postings to political participation (*Effect: b*= .03, *SE*= .06, *LLCI*= -.07, *ULCI*= .16).



Direct Effect: b= -.08, SE= .16, *p*= .62

Indirect Effect: b= .03, SE= .06, 95% CI [-.07, .16]

Figure 13: Direct and Indirect Effects for Hispanic ethnic identity, Twitter political expression, and political participation.

To answer Research Question 4, the results also showed that racial and ethnic identity for all three groups did not mediate the relationship between Twitter political expression and political participation in 2020. It was found that white identity was significantly related to political participation. As racial identity salience decreased for white individuals, they were more likely to participate in political activities. Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity were not statistically related to political participation.

For Hypothesis 2, which stated the relationship between Twitter political postings and political participation would be greater than the relationship between general Twitter use and political participation, a Z-test was conducted. The findings supported Hypothesis 2. There was a larger correlation between Twitter political postings and political participation compared to general Twitter use and political participation (z=6.60, p< .001).

An OLS regression was conducted to answer Research Question 5, which asked what the relationship is between racial and ethnic identity and political participation. Separate regressions were conducted for white racial identity, Black racial identity, and Hispanic ethnic identity. For white racial identity, the overall model showed good fit, as indicated by the F-test (F (4, 4791) = 67.914, p < .001). The model predicted 5.4% of the variability in political participation in the

sample (R^2= .05). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 4.21, *SE*= .21, *p* < .001), white Identity Salience (*b*= -.16, *SE*= .04, *p* < .001), Age (*b* = .01, *SE*= .00, *p* < .001), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b* = -1.37 *SE*= .09, *p* < .001), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.13, *SE*= .09, *p* = .14).

For Black racial identity, the overall model did not show good fit, as indicated by the F-test (*F* (4, 606) = 2.01, *p*= .09). The model predicted 1.3% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2= .01). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= .95, *SE*= .74, *p*= .20), Black Identity Salience (*b*= .21, *SE*= .11, *p*= .05), Age (*b*= .01, *SE*= .01, *p*= .07), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= .16, *SE*= .43, *p*= .72), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= .15, *SE*= .26, *p*= .56).

For Hispanic ethnic identity, the overall model showed good fit, as indicated by the F-test (*F* (4, 507) = 2.43, *p* < .05). The model predicted about 2% of the variability in political participation in the sample (R^2= .02). The following variables were included in the model: Constant (*b*= 4.09, *SE*= .66, p < .001), Hispanic Identity Salience (*b*= -.23, SE= .10, p < .05), Age (*b* = -.00, *SE*= .01, *p*= .67), Party Identification, with Democrats coded as 0 and Republicans coded as 1 (*b*= -.64, *SE*= .28, *p* < .02), and Sex, with males coded as 0 and females coded as 1 (*b*= -.24, *SE*= .26, *p*= .36).

To answer Research Question 5, white racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity were significant predictors of political participation. Specifically, as white racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity decreased, scores on political participation increased. Black racial identity was not a significant predictor of political participation. Additionally for Research Question 6 in 2020,

age was a significant, positive predictor of political participation for white respondents. Yet, age was not a significant predictor of political participation for Black and Hispanic respondents. Additionally, support was not found for Hypothesis 3. There was no significant difference between males and females' participation in politics for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overall, there was limited support for the models proposed in this project. In both 2019 and 2020, racial and ethnic identity did not have a significant effect on online political expression. Age, sex, and party identification also had little influence on online political expression. However, racial and ethnic identity had some effect on political participation in both years. Age, party identification, and sex were factors that were significant predictors of political participation, but this was not consistent across years. While these findings do not offer much support for the proposed direction in this model, they do offer considerations for future research.

Online Political Expression

Minoritized Racial and Ethnic Identity

The strength of ethnic identity for Hispanic respondents did not affect online political expression on Facebook or Twitter. One potential explanation for these findings could be the diversity amongst the Hispanic American population. Though the group is indicated as one throughout this project, each subgroup of Hispanic American identifies differently with their racial and ethnic identity. Some Hispanic groups, like Cuban Americans, identify with both a race and ethnicity (e.g., white and Hispanic). Other groups, such as Dominican-Americans and Mexican Americans, identify more with their ethnicity on surveys (Porter &Snipp, 2018; Rios, Romero, & Ramirez, 2014). Since the survey instrument categorized individuals on racial identity and included a separate question on ethnicity, it may have narrowed who identified as Hispanic on the survey. Additionally, a post-hoc analysis of the ANES data of the historic national origin of Hispanic survey respondents revealed that a supermajority of these respondents

identified as being Mexican American. Only one other group of Hispanic people, Puerto Ricans, responded above 10 percent. This did not allow for a more granular analysis of different Hispanic groups to see where the differences lie.

The strength of racial identity for Black respondents also did not affect online political expression on Facebook and Twitter. One potential explanation for this finding could be the measure used for online political expression. Only one question was asked about Facebook political expression in both survey instruments. Additionally, this measure narrowly assessed online political expression as postings about politics on Facebook. Since the measure did not include symbolic forms of political expression on social media, such as changing profile pictures or the use of hashtags, this may have skewed results. Lane, Do, and Molina-Rogers (2021) found that Black Americans were more likely to express political opinions through these more symbolic actions on social media. White Americans, however, were shown to make more explicit political postings. Since the question could be interpreted by respondents relatively narrowly, Black participants may have responded at lower levels.

Another explanation for the pattern of findings could be the sub-group sample size for both Hispanic and Black Americans, particularly with user differences by social media platforms. For Hispanic Americans, only 391 responses were analyzed in 2020 and 190 in 2019 for Facebook political expression. For Hispanic Americans on Twitter, only 173 responses were analyzed and 102 for 2019. For Black Americans, only 460 responses were analyzed in 2020 and 261 in 2019. For Black Americans on Twitter, only 173 were analyzed in 2020 and 118 in 2019. The sizes of both groups may not have been large enough to observe a significant relationship between racial identity salience and political expression on Facebook and Twitter. Future

research should consider using oversampling techniques to make sure the populations for Black and Hispanic respondents are large enough to analyze any relationships present.

Few sociodemographic factors help predictor online political expression for minoritized groups. For both Black respondents, age was a significant predictor on Facebook and Twitter in 2020 and party identification was significant in 2019 for Facebook political expression. Specifically, younger Black respondents were more likely to make political postings in 2020. One explanation could be the sociopolitical climate in 2020 spurred younger respondents to make more postings. The COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Presidential Election, and Black Lives Matter movement emphasized discussions about the future of our country and its citizens' well-being. Posting about political information could have been a way to be a part of these discussions or offering their opinions on potential solutions to their networks. Additionally, Black Republican respondents were more likely to make Facebook political postings in 2019. One explanation could be that Black Republicans felt they had to share more information to their networks since they make a much smaller proportion of the Republican electorate compared to Democrats. Pew Research (2020) reported that Black Americans made up less than 5 percent of the Republican electorate as of 2019 while they accounted for 19 percent of the Democratic electorate. These stark differences may have pushed Black Republicans to post more often to make sure their voices resonated in their social networks. This finding may also be explained that Black Republicans by how they organized their various identities. These respondents may have seen themselves more as Republicans in their political posting habits than Black in 2019. However, the sociopolitical climate in 2020 may have changed this view, especially with the prominence of Black Lives Matter in 2020.

Hispanic respondents, age, sex, and party identification were not significant predictors of online political expression on Facebook and Twitter. For both social media sites and both groups, the overall models did not exhibit good fit. Future research should consider whether these findings were a product of being subject to small sub-sample sizes.

White Racial Identity

Similar to Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity, white racial identity was not a significant predictor of online political expression on Facebook and Twitter in 2019 and 2020. These findings support recent research (i.e Jardina, 2020) about levels of white racial identity following Donald Trump's election in 2016. Those who motivated in 2016 to engage in online political expression may have not seen their racial identity as an important part of their identity in the following years. Difference in party identification may have changed how respondents interpreted the question.

However, online political expression was a better variable to use than a general measure of social media use. Facebook political postings and Twitter political postings had a greater relationship with political participation than general use of Facebook and Twitter. These findings are consistent with previous research (see Boulianne, 2020) that specific uses of a platform for political purposes are more correlated than general use of a platform with political participation. This suggests that future studies should still measure for political uses of social media sites to test these relationships.

Other sociodemographic factors, including age, gender, and party identification, did have an effect on online political expression for white respondents. In 2019, age was a significant predictor of Facebook and Twitter political expression. However, age was not a significant predictor of Facebook or Twitter political expression in 2020. A possible explanation for this

finding could be increased attention to political issues in 2020 due to the sociopolitical environment. Younger individuals in 2020 may have perceived more of a reason to post since primary elections and the general election were occurring in the year. Additionally, the increased attention to the Black Lives Matter movement and subsequent responses may also have increased political postings across ages in 2020 compared to 2019. Younger respondents may have wanted to share their opinions or other information with their networks since several events tied to racial inequality in the country were being discussed regularly on the news.

Gender/Sex was a significant predictor in 2019 of Facebook political expression, but a non-significant predictor for Twitter political expression. In 2020, sex was not a significant predictor for either Facebook or Twitter political expression. The sociopolitical environment may have weakened the effect across sex. The various events taking place in the United States, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the U.S. election, may have caused more individuals who identify as female to express their political opinions on social media compared to 2019. Those who identified as female may have felt the need to express their opinions on general political topics or topics that specifically referenced gender inequalities, such as abortion right access following Ruth Bader Ginsburg death. The consistent finding across Twitter may be explained by the type of user who uses the platform. According to Pew Research (2021), the type of user is a better predictor of how individuals use the platform. They found that a quarter of users of the site produce 97 percent of the tweets from the United States. Moreover, of high-volume users, 77 percent report using Twitter as a way to express their opinions and 42 percent of high-volume users reported feeling more politically engaged. This compared to 29 percent of low-volume users who report using Twitter to express their opinions and 27 percent of those feel more

politically engaged. This may mean that, regardless of sex, how much one uses the site determines how much they are posting.

In 2019 and 2020, political identification was not a significant predictor of Facebook political postings. On Twitter, political identification was not a significant predictor in 2019, but was a significant predictor of Twitter political expression in 2020. Specifically, Democrats on Twitter were more likely to make political postings than Republicans. This may be explained by the type of political expression is measured. Though political expression can be measured in various ways, the survey only provided one measure of political postings. This type of political expression could have been more appealing to Democrats compared to Republicans. Democrats may also have been more motivated than Republicans to make political postings in 2020 since their party was seeking to upset an incumbent for the presidency. They may have seen more reason to make postings as a way to show their opposition to Trump and his responses to racial unrest and the coronavirus pandemic. These posts may have also been in response to Donald Trump's notable presence on Twitter, which could explain why party identification was significant on Twitter, but not on Facebook in 2020.

Political Participation

Minoritized Racial and Ethnic Identity

There were limited findings for the indirect effect of online political expression on Facebook. In 2019 and 2020, there was an observed negative, indirect effect through Facebook political expression to political participation for Hispanic respondents. However, there was no observed significant indirect effect for Black racial identity. On Twitter, there was no indirect effect for Black, and Hispanic identity salience. There was no significant direct effect observed for Black and Hispanic respondents. When looking at the effects on online political expression

on political participation in 2019 and 2020, it was found that online political expression on Facebook and Twitter were positive, significant predictors of political participation. This finding was true for both Black and Hispanic respondents.

White Racial Identity

When we look at the direct effects, there was a significant relationship between white racial identity and political participation. The analysis showed that as white racial identity decreased, white respondents were more likely to participate in politics. When looking at the effects on online political expression on political participation in 2019 and 2020, it was found that online political expression on Facebook and Twitter were positive, significant predictors of political participation.

Social identity theory would suggest that individuals put different parts of their identity into a hierarchy. Some identities may be more important to an individual's self-perception than others. White Democrats, for example, may ascribe less importance to their race while white Republicans could be more likely to report higher levels of white racial identity. To test this idea, a post-hoc analysis of the correlation between white racial identity salience and party identification was conducted for the 2019 and 2020 data. The post-hoc analysis revealed that in 2019, there was a moderate correlation between Republicans and white racial identity (r= .20, p <.01). However, in 2020, the post-hoc analysis revealed there was a small correlation between white racial identity salience and Democrats (r= -.10, p< .01). These findings offer mixed evidence that partisanship effected responses to white racial identity. As expected, identifying as Republican was more correlated with reporting higher levels of white racial identity in 2019. However, in 2020, white racial identity was more correlated with reporting to identify as a Democrat. This change in correlation may be explained by the greater emphasis on politics and

race in 2020. The presidential election and the difference in platforms between then President Trump and candidate Joe Biden may have made white Democrats put a greater emphasis on their racial identity. Similarly, the increased attention on the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 may have made white Democrats more aware of the impact race has in American society and may have ascribed more weight to their racial identity in 2020 compared to 2019. Future research to pay greater attention to the moderating role that partisanship may have on white racial identity. Future research should also attempt to examine these relationships longitudinally. While cross-sectional data offers important insights, it does not allow us to interpret changes that may happen over time or that could be impacted by sociopolitical events occurring during data collection.

Overall, these findings lend very limited support for the proposed direction of the effects of racial and ethnic identity on online political expression and political participation. In this study, it was proposed that online political expression would mediate the relationship between racial and ethnic identity and political participation. However, the only support found was for Hispanic respondents and was in the opposite direction expected. It was expected that as racial and ethnic identity salience increased, online political expression would increase, in turn, increasing political participation. However, the strongest effects were found between white racial identity and political participation. Yet, these findings were in the opposite direction than expected. This offers more support for Shah et al.'s (2017) revised mediated communication model. Specifically, these findings offer support that expression and participation are reciprocally related. In this study, this direction of the relationship was not tested. Future research should examine a model where political participation mediates the relationship between racial and ethnic identity and online political expression.

Several different factors affected political participation. Of note, racial and ethnic identity had a more noticeable effect on political participation than online political expression in 2019 and 2020. In 2019, it was found that there was a negative association between white racial identity and political participation. There was no statistically significant relationship between Black racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity and political participation. In 2020, white racial identity and Hispanic ethnic identity were negatively associated with political participation, while there was a non-significant relationship between Black racial identity and political participation.

A potential explanation for the findings for white racial identity could be the sociopolitical context around the time of each study. As mentioned previously, research following Trump's election in 2016 found that levels of white racial identity have been decreasing. This decrease could also lead the importance of an individual's race in participate in politics decreasing. Additionally, the findings from 2019 and 2020 showed that, among white respondents, Democrats were more likely to participate in politics compared to Republicans. White Democrats may put less importance on their racial identity but see their privileged racial position as a reason to participate in politics. This offers one possible explanation for the negative association between white racial identity and political participation.

For Black respondents in 2019 and 2020, there was not a statistically significant relationship between racial identity and political participation. One explanation for this finding could be the measure used for racial identity. Chong and Rogers (2005) noted that research since the 1980s has found that the effect of Black racial identity on political participation has diminished over time. However, using a measure for both racial identity and group consciousness, they found that these concepts had a large effect on political participation. Using

only a measure of racial identity may have underestimated the effect. Additionally, the measure for political participation in 2019 and 2020 could not appropriately examined subcategories of political participation to see if racial identity effected more individual-centric activities or group-centric activities. Since Black Americans have always represented a marginalized group in the United States, an examination of an individualized concept, like racial identity salience, may yield little to no results if not examined alongside a collectivized concept like group consciousness or political participation.

For Hispanic respondents, the findings may be explained, like Hypothesis 1, by the diversity within the concept of Hispanic ethnic identity. This is similar to Black Americans, since Hispanics represent a historically marginalized group and may also require a group-level concept to offer insights into the effect of ethnic identity on participation. However, Hispanic/Latinx is a pan-ethnic concept made up of various groups with different sociopolitical histories in the United States in various regions. The measure used only recorded responses from those who identified as Hispanic. However, 80 percent of the survey was made up Mexican American and Puerto Rican respondents for both 2019 and 2020. Valdez (2011) found that Hispanics who also identify as American are more likely to engage in political action. Those who identified as Mexican in the group may identify closer with their Hispanic identity more than their American identity, which could explain why lower levels of Hispanic identity were associated with greater levels of political participation. Moreover, the inclusion of group consciousness for Hispanics could also have changed the effect. Valdez (2011) found that those with greater senses of group consciousness were more likely to participate in politics, regardless of how they viewed their Hispanic identity.

Some sociodemographic factors also were significant in predicting political participation. Gender/Sex also played a role in predicting political participation. Males were more likely to participate in politics compared females for both Facebook and Twitter in 2019. However, this finding was not consistent between 2019 and 2020. In 2020, there was no difference between males and females for white, Black, and Hispanic respondents. These results could be explained by the sociopolitical climate around survey collection. 2020 was a general election year, so there may have been more opportunities to participate in politics compared to 2019. Furthermore, events like the death of Ruth Bader Ginsberg and the nomination and confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court may have made issues, like abortion access, more salient. In turn, this may have motivated more women to participate in political activities in 2020 compared to 2019. However, Bode (2016) did find that social media did help to close the participation gap between males and females. The lack of difference in participation between males and females may offer some insight that social media could be helping to close the participation gap (outside of voting) between those who identify as male and those who identify as female.

Similar to previous research (i.e., Brady, Schlozman, &Verba, 1995; Zukin et al., 2006), age was a significant predictor of political participation. However, this was not the same across racial and ethnic groups. It was found in 2020 that as white respondents got older, they were more likely to participate in political activities. Yet, there was a nonsignificant difference for Black and Hispanic respondents. This non-significant difference for Black and Hispanic respondents in 2020 may be explained by the sociopolitical context facing each group. In 2020, the shooting and killing of several Black people at the hands of law enforcement across the country recentered the Black Lives Matter movement in public discussions. These discussions

and subsequent protests in wake of these killings, such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Jacob Blake, may have encouraged Black individuals of all age groups to be more involved in political activities. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic took a disproportionate toll on historically marginalized communities in the United States, including Black and Hispanic communities. In turn, these realities faced by these groups may have encouraged more participation during an election year. Additionally, the pandemic shifted many political activities online and this may have encouraged younger people to participate in political activities.

CHAPTER SIX: LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several notable limitations to these data for both the 2019 Pilot Study and the 2020 Time Series Study. First, the measure used in both data sets for racial and ethnic identity was limited to a single-item measure that only measured one component of racial and ethnic identity. This was the only question specifically related to racial identity salience in both surveys. Future versions of the American National Election Studies should adopt a larger measure of racial identity salience. This would allow researchers to have a more reliable measure. Additionally, the inclusion of a more robust measure would allow for racial identity to be tracked over time. Jardina (2019) discusses a three-item measure that has been used to measure white racial identity. This three-item measure uses the question about racial importance in addition to a question that asked, "To what extent do you feel that white people in this country have a lot to be proud of?" and "How much would you say that whites in this country have a lot in common with one another?" (Jardina, 2019, p. 58) For Black respondents, one potential set of questions to be adopted that could further assess Black identity would be Sellers et al.'s (1998) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI). Though the MIBI scale includes 56 questions that assess four components of racial identity, the eight questions about centrality could be adopted to assess how important being Black is to Black respondents. For Hispanic respondents, a three-item measure for Hispanic centrality could be adopted to assess Hispanic ethnic identity. This measure has been used in previous studies that focus specifically on Hispanic populations. (Velasquez et al., 2019; Leach et al., 2008) While the one-item measure

for racial and ethnic identity has noticeable face validity, expanding the measure to more reliable measures could improve the measure of racial and ethnic identity in future studies.

Second, the one-item measure for online political expression also may have limited the conclusions drawn on expression. In both survey years, one question asked respondents how often they posted political content on specific sites. This limited the type of online political expression captured by the measure and may have underestimated how often people use social media to expression political beliefs. Posting political content could be interpreted parochially as original content made by the user. It does not explicitly capture sharing political content, such as news clips, news articles, or memes. This political content could be found and reshared by a user but may not be considered posting political content. Future studies should include more questions that tap different types of online expression that could take place on various social media sites. Other types of online political expression could include sharing political content created by others or exchanging comments about political topics. Yamamoto, Kushin, and Dailsay (2013) offer a five-item measure that measure the posting component used in this study and these other elements of online political expression that could be used. Furthermore, the question wording was vague and did not explicitly offer examples of what may count as political postings. The wording of the question, which asked respondents how often they made political postings on a certain social media site, could be interpreted in a few ways. Some may view this question as asking about specific posts made by the respondent. It could also be interpreted as any change to a profile or timeline with political content. From the former standpoint, this could exclude symbolic actions, such as the use of hashtags or changing profile pictures to include political stances, from making political postings. Jackson, Bailey, and Welles (2020) discussed the importance of hashtags in activist movement and Clark (2016) described why certain

platforms were more attractive for members of historically marginalized movements in expressing opinions. Future research should adopt and develop more questions that measure different components of online political expression. Additionally, these questions should attempt to offer broad examples to help respondents think about what online actions may be considered a politically expressive act.

Additionally, the questions used may not have captured emergent platforms increasing used for political expression. The 2019 Pilot Study asked about several platforms, but the 2020 Time Series Study only asked about Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit. Due to reliability issues and the low number of respondents who reported using Reddit in any capacity, this study limited the examination to political expression on Facebook and Twitter. This may have limited some of the findings since information posted on both platforms are viewable by the general public, unless the user specifically makes their posts and profiles private. These privacy issues may have limited how often people posted political content on these platforms. Clark (2016) found that younger people were hesitant to post about their political beliefs on Facebook and Twitter since they feared receiving backlash from members outside of their social circles. Instead, her participants were more likely to post about their political beliefs on Snapchat since they could control who would see certain messages. Future studies should examine online political expression on a variety of different social media platforms beyond Facebook and Twitter. Sites like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok should be examined since they offer different ways of postings and engaging others with political information.

Third, the measures used for political participation could have been improved. Primarily, the scales for both 2019 and 2020 could have been expanded. In the 2019 Pilot Study, only 7 questions are included that measure political participation. This measure did achieve reliability

but could have been improved if more questions were included. In the 2020 Time Series Studies, more question for various political activities were included. However, several of the subscales, such as civic engagement, were not reliable. To overcome the reliability issue, one measure for political participation that included 18 different activities was used. This scale was reliable but the strength of the results could have been further improved if more questions for subcategories of political participation, such as civic engagement and general political participation, were included in the study. This would allow future studies to see which types of participation may be associated more or less with online political expression and racial and ethnic identity salience.

Another weakness of the measures for both surveys was that questions had a dichotomous Yes/No response. This limits the analysis of the results since it cannot be measured how often political activities were conducted. These questions still accurately assess whether respondents participated in a series of political activities, but these questions could have been improved if participation questions asked respondents how often they did a certain action during a 12-month period.

Finally, the makeup of our samples in 2019 and 2020 limited some interpretations. While the sample size for both surveys was large, when breaking down by race and social media use, it severely limits the number of Black and Hispanic participants surveyed in both studies, particularly in 2019. As mentioned above, only 261 Black respondents used Facebook while 118 used Twitter in 2019. These numbers decreased for Hispanic respondents, where only 190 reported using Facebook and 102 reported using Twitter in 2019. These small sample sizes for platform-specific analyses limits these findings and provides one potential explanation for the lack of findings. One potential remedy for this in future research is to oversample for Black and Hispanic populations. This sampling technique is effective for a national sample design (Chen &

Kalton, 2015; Kalton, 2009). Some potential ways to elicit these respondents would be to work with survey firms that focus on specific sub-populations, like Velasquez et al. (2019), or to initially screen out respondents in conjunction with a research firm that has access to a large, diverse sample. This would allow them to maximize responses and make sure members of that group are properly represented.

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APPENDIX A:
QUESTION WORDING FOR 2019 ANES PILOT STUDY

Race

"I am going to read you a list of five race categories. You may choose one or more races. For this survey, Hispanic origin is not a race. Are you White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?"

Ethnicity

"Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?"

Gender

"What is your gender?" (2019)

Political Party Identification

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as [a Democrat, a Republican / a Republican, a Democrat], an independent, or what?

"Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat / Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat / Republican]?"

"Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?"

Racial Identity Salience

How important is being [RESPONDENT RACE] to your identity?

5-point Likert scale from “Not at all important” [1] to “Extremely important” [5]

General Social Media Use

How often do you use [Facebook or Twitter]?

7-point Likert scale from “Less than once a month [1] to “Many times every day” [7]*

Online Political Expression

When using [Facebook or Twitter], how often do you post information about political issues or candidates?

5-point Likert scale from “Never” [1] to “Always” [5]

Political Participation

During the past 12 months, have you done any of the following? Mark all that apply

1) Attended a meeting to talk about political or social concerns

2) Given money to an organization concerned with a political or social issue

3) Joined in a protest march, rally, or demonstration

4) Tried to persuade anyone to vote one way or another

5) Worn a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house

6) Given money to any candidate running for public office, any political party, or any other group that supported or opposed candidates

7) Gotten into a political argument with someone

APPENDIX B:
QUESTION WORDING FOR 2020 ANES TIME SERIES STUDY

Race

"I am going to read you a list of five race categories. You may choose one or more races. For this survey, Hispanic origin is not a race. Are you White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander?"

Ethnicity

"Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?"

Sex

"What is your sex?"

Political Party Identification

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as [a Democrat, a Republican / a Republican, a Democrat], an independent, or what?

"Would you call yourself a strong [Democrat / Republican] or a not very strong [Democrat / Republican]?"

"Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?"

Racial Identity Salience

How important is being [RESPONDENT RACE] to your identity?

5-point Likert scale from "Not at all important" [1] to "Extremely important" [5]

General Social Media Use

How often do you use [Facebook or Twitter]?

7-point Likert scale from “Less than once a month [1] to “Many times every day” [7]

Online Political Expression

When using [Facebook or Twitter], how often do you post information about political issues or candidates?

5-point Likert scale from “Never” [1] to “Always” [5]

Political Participation

Contacted Government Officials

“In the past twelve months, have you contacted a federal elected official, such as a member of Congress or the President, or someone on the staff of such an official?”

“And what about a non-elected official in a federal government agency? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?”

“What about an elected official on the state or local level, such as a governor, mayor, or a member of the state legislature or city council, or someone on the staff of such an elected official? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?”

"And what about a non-elected official in a state or local government agency? Have you contacted such a person in the past twelve months?"

Electoral Participation

"Did you participate in any online political meetings, rallies, speeches, fundraisers, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?"

"Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?".

"Did you wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house?"

"Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?".

"Did you give money to an individual candidate running for public office?".

"Did you give money to a political party during this election year?".

"Did you give any money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates?"

General Political Participation

"Not counting a religious organization, during the past 12 months, have you given money to any other organization concerned with a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?"

"During the past 12 months, have you signed a petition on the Internet or on paper about a political or social issue, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?".

"During the past 12 months, [did] you [join] in a protest march, rally, or demonstration, or [did] you not [do] this in the past 12 months?"

"During the past 12 months, have you ever gotten into a political argument with someone, or have you not done this in the past 12 months?"

Civic Engagement

"Many people say they have less time these days to do volunteer work. What about you, were you able to devote any time to volunteer work in the past 12 months or did you not do so?"

"During the past 12 months, did you attend a meeting about an issue facing your local community or schools?"

"During the past 12 months, have you worked with other people to deal with some issue facing your community?"