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Dominican-American Ethnic/ Racial Identities and United States Social Categories

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The majority of Dominicans have sub-Saharan African ancestry,¹ which would make them “black” by historical United States ‘one-drop’ rules. Second generation Dominican high school students in Providence, Rhode Island do not identify their race in terms of black or white, but rather in terms of ethnolinguistic identity, as Dominican/Spanish/Hispanic. The distinctiveness of Dominican-American understandings of race is highlighted by comparing them with those of non-Hispanic, African descent second generation immigrants and with historical Dominican notions of social identity. Dominican second generation resistance to phenotype-racialization as black or white makes visible ethnic/racial formation processes that are often veiled, particularly in the construction of the category African-American. This resistance to black/white racialization suggests the transformative effects that post-1965 immigrants and their descendants are having on United States ethnic/racial categories.

Although academics over the last decades have increasingly emphasized that United States notions of race are local, mutable and contradictory sociopolitical constructions, the majority of Americans continue to treat individuals of African ancestry as “black” and individuals of only European ancestry as “white.” Such categories have long organized the American social world, *e.g.*, through residential patterns, marriage partner choices, church memberships, and overall social hierarchy, and both black and white Americans treat them

¹In the 1980 Dominican census, 16 percent of the population were classified as *blanco* (‘white’), 73 percent were classified as *indio* (‘indian-colored’), a term used to refer to the phenotype of individuals who match stereotypes of combined African and European ancestry and 11 percent were classified as *negro* [‘black’] (Haggerty, 1991). These categories are social constructions, rather than objective reflections of phenotypes. The positive social connotations of “whiteness,” for example, lead many Caribbean Hispanics to identify themselves as white for the public record regardless of their precise phenotype (Dominguez, 1978:9). Judgments of color in the Dominican Republic also depend in part upon social attributes of an individual, as they do elsewhere in Latin America. Money, education and power, for example, “whiten” an individual, so that the color attributed to a higher class individual is often lighter than the color that would be attributed to an individual of the same phenotype of a lower class (Rout, 1976:287).

as useful guideposts to understanding social reality (Feagin, 1991; Smedley, 1993; Omi and Winant, 1994). Many Americans see these categories as fixed and objective, reflections of natural categories and differences, rather than as a result of specific sociohistorical relationships of domination.

Post-1965² immigrants and their children are increasingly challenging the assumptions underlying United States racial categories through their everyday assertion and enactment of identities that do not fit neatly into historically dominant United States racial and ethnic categories. The majority of post-1965 immigrants come from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia (rather than Europe, which was the case for the 1880–1920 immigration), and many assert identities that cross-cut traditionally accepted United States categories in ways that expose and controvert the assumptions on which the categories are based. In addition to problematizing such categories by their lack of obvious fit, many immigrants bring with them to the United States very different social classification systems. The available macrosocial categories in countries of origin organize the ways that out-migrants think of themselves; ways which are often distinct from the identity options available in the United States upon arrival. These differences in social organization, the result of disparate and specific social histories, are confronted and negotiated at the microsocial level by individual migrants in their everyday lives after immigration (Mittelberg and Waters, 1993). The ways in which this post-migration encounter is negotiated can make visible the otherwise highly naturalized processes by which social and racial categories are enacted, challenged and transformed.

This clash of social categorization systems and meanings is particularly salient in the lives of the second generation.³ First generation adult immi-

²The watershed event defining this new wave of immigration was the enactment of changes in United States immigration law in 1965. Highly restrictive immigration quotas that were based on nationality and that favored Northwestern European countries were abandoned in favor of increased quotas based on hemisphere, not country. In addition, quotas were lifted entirely for “family reunification.” Those who were given visas as part of such family reunification could then eventually sponsor their close relatives, resulting in elaborately linked webs of large numbers of immigrants (Kraly, 1987). The result of these changes in immigration law was a new wave of immigration beginning in the late 1960s that represents the largest influx of immigrants to America since the 1880–1920 period.

³I use the term “second generation” to refer both to the U.S.-born children of Dominican immigrants, as well as to Dominican-born children who came to America by the first years of elementary school (what some have dubbed the “1.5 generation”). I use the term “Dominican-American” to refer to the same group, *i.e.*, the second generation, rather than third- and fourth-generation Dominican-Americans who experience a much more American than Dominican socialization.

grants are often shielded from macrosocial contrasts and their meanings because of linguistic isolation and social networks that are limited to immigrants and co-ethnics. Although the second generation receives their early socialization in immigrant families and, frequently, networks, they encounter popular United States discourses on language, race, ethnicity and identity in American neighborhoods, schools, part-time jobs and popular culture. They must negotiate a United States social reality with understandings and interpretive frameworks that are partly the result of the distinct social histories of their parents' homelands.

The post-1965 second generation population is estimated to exceed 28 million, thus outstripping the previous peak of second generation immigrants, which occurred in the 1940s (Portes, 1996:2). This second generation group represents about 10 percent of the overall United States population and a much higher percentage of American youth. As post-1965 immigrants and their children and grandchildren comprise an ever-larger percentage of the U.S. population over the next decades, U.S. constructions of race and identity will necessarily shift to accommodate groups whose identities and understandings of social categories are only partially a function of pre-1965 United States social history.⁴

Dominicans are representative of post-1965 immigration in that they come from a part of the world that was once colonized and subjugated by Europeans; most do not count as white in the dominant U.S. racial hierarchy; and they bring with them systems of social categorization distinct from historically dominant ones in the United States. Analysis of Dominican-American negotiation of identity can thus illustrate 1) types of identity issues relevant to many in the post-1965 second generation and 2) the transformative effects that post-1965 migrants more generally can have on United States social categories.

Dominican-Americans problematize traditionally accepted United States social categories particularly for two key, interrelated reasons. First, in terms of phenotype, individual Dominicans match dominant United States criteria for inclusion in the categories "black" and "white," but in terms of language and cultural heritage, they match criteria for assignment to the popularly and officially recognized category, "Hispanic." The cross-cutting ways in which Dominican-Americans fit these categories undermine the assumptions of

⁴The data used for the analysis reported here have been corrected for overreporting of naturalized citizen status in the Current Population Survey; see Passel and Clark, 1998 for an explanation of the problem and correction.

purity and discreteness upon which the categories are constructed. Race based on 'one-drop' (Davis, 1991) or 'hypodescent' (Harris, 1964) rules has historically been the pre-eminent criterion for social organization in the United States, preceding national, ethnic and religious allegiances. Dominican-Americans, however, define their race in terms of language and ethnolinguistic heritage, referring to their race variously as "Dominican," "Spanish," "Hispanic," or "Latino," and not as black or white. They thus place themselves outside of the historical black/white dichotomy used to categorize individuals of African and/or European descent in the United States. Dominican-American enactment of ethnolinguistic identity highlights contradictions in the category African-American particularly because African descent race in the United States has historically been treated as equivalent to African-American ethnicity (Waters, 1991). The Spanish language of Dominican-Americans makes their Hispanic ethnicity salient, which directly problematizes the popular American construction of black identity as both race and ethnicity. Second, Dominican immigrants bring with them ways of understanding their African and European ancestry that are directly at odds with the roles that African and European ancestry have historically played in United States social organization. In the United States, a white majority has maintained a color-line for centuries, and notions of race are dominated by dichotomous categories of "black" and "white," which are popularly seen as representing unbridgeable differences. In the Dominican Republic, in contrast, the majority of the population ranges across a continuum of phenotypes encompassing both African and European ancestry, and there is little sense of social identity associated with perceived relative degrees of African and European ancestry (Davis, 1994).

Dominicans growing up in the United States are thus confronted with often contradictory Dominican and American frameworks for construing "racial" identities (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1996; Duany, 1998). This is salient in their everyday lives because they are often seen by others in black/white racial terms, based on their phenotypes, that are at odds with the ethnolinguistic terms in which they see themselves. Boundaries delineating race in the United States are double boundaries (Royce, 1982), comprising a boundary that is enacted or identified from within and another one from without. Successful constitution of an identity thus involves congruent self-ascription and other-ascription, so Dominican second generation racial self-ascription as "Spanish"/"Dominican"/"Hispanic" does not, in itself, constitute successful enactment of such identities.

My research in the Dominican community of Providence, Rhode Island (Bailey, 1999) shows that Dominican-Americans are able to achieve these congruent ascriptions of identity through displays of Spanish speaking. The many second generation Dominicans who are phenotypically indistinguishable from African-Americans regularly show that they can "speak Spanish," in both intraethnic and interethnic contexts, in order to counter others' assumptions that they are African-American, and many of their peers, including non-Hispanics, accept this evidence of a Spanish, non-black identity. Unlike non-Hispanic, African descent immigrant groups, they are successfully maintaining a distinct, non-black ethnolinguistic identity in the second generation.

This Dominican-American recognition and enactment of nonphenotype racial identities highlights the incipient transformation of social categories in America. For post-1965 immigrants, there are many forms of social differentiation – *e.g.*, based on language or national origins – that are much more salient in everyday life than the perceived presence or absence of African ancestry. As the post-1965 immigrant-American population grows, such immigrants and their children are reframing notions of race and what constitutes significant social difference, at least at the local levels where they are present in large numbers.

In this article, Dominican-American high school students' accounts of their identities and their explanations of race reveal significant divergences between their ethnic/racial categorization system and dominant, traditionally accepted ones in the United States. These divergences illustrate the growing heterogeneity of notions of race among Americans and undermine both popular and social-scientific differentiation between ethnicity and race, showing both to be historically and culturally specific constructs. Dominican-American identities are then compared to second generation identities among African descent immigrants who lack Spanish language and colonial heritage. These groups, *e.g.*, Haitians, Jamaicans and Trinidadians, are much more likely than Dominicans to identify as black or African-American in the second generation, suggesting the ways that linguistic and cultural characteristics, and not just phenotype or the 'one-drop' rule, can shape racial identities in the contemporary United States. Historical Dominican notions of race and social identity in the Dominican Republic are then described, highlighting the sociohistorical specificity of racial constructions and illustrating one source of frameworks for self-definition among the Dominican second generation. Finally, discontinuities between first and second generation Dominican immigrants in understanding race and intergroup relations are explored. Contrasting the two generations' frames of reference serves to highlight the effects on the second generation of

socialization within a racialized American society. Second generation concepts of race and identity are presented as hybrid, drawing from both their Dominican heritage and their structural position in the United States, which encourages solidarity with others who count as non-white, including African-Americans.

METHODS

Fieldwork for this study took place in Providence, Rhode Island and the Dominican Republic between July 1996 and July 1997. Data collection methods included ethnographic observation, audiorecorded interviews, and video-recordings of naturally occurring interaction in school, home and community contexts, focusing on high school students. At the time of this fieldwork, community leaders estimated the Dominican population of Providence to be over 15,000. Census data from 1990 put the Dominican population of Providence at 7,973, but that figure almost certainly represents an undercount, and it does not include immigrants arriving in the early 1990s, a period of increased migration resulting from economic crises on the island.

I interviewed over 30 high school students in Providence. These one-hour audiorecorded sessions were conducted in English during school hours at three of the four major Providence public high schools, after school on school grounds, in homes, and at a South Providence church. Interviews were organized loosely around a questionnaire that addressed issues of ethnic/racial identity in Providence, including peer and family social networks and perceptions of different ethnic groups. This form of interviewing resulted in relatively open-ended discursive answers, transcribed portions of which are presented in this article.

Contacts with students were initially made through a Friday night Spanish language Catholic youth group and through Spanish teachers at two of the high schools. In those classrooms (16- to 18-year-olds), I identified Dominicans who had been born in the United States or had come to the United States before age 10. I contacted students at a third high school, the academic magnet in the district, via a consultant I met at the church group.

The Providence high school system is over 40 percent Hispanic, with Dominicans representing the largest Hispanic group. Roughly 25 percent of the students in the system are classified by the school system as white, 25 percent as black, and about 11 percent as Asian (primarily the children of Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong refugees). The Hispanic drop-out rate was over 30 percent and approximately 20 percent for other groups.

The main research site for observation, interviewing and videorecording was Central High School, a Providence city school of 1,350 students, which is over 20 percent Dominican. Roughly 60 percent of the student body is Hispanic, with Puerto Ricans and Guatemalans comprising the second and third largest Hispanic groups. About 16 percent of the students are of non-Hispanic African descent (including many immigrants), 16 percent are Southeast Asian, and about five percent are white American. Central High School has the problems typical of many urban public schools. Almost 90 percent of the students are categorized as poor based on federal guidelines, and more than half of the students officially enrolled in the ninth grade drop out by the 11th grade. Over 20 of my Providence high school student interviews were conducted at Central High School. In addition to interviewing students, various administrators, teachers and graduates, I repeatedly observed six primary subjects at school before videotaping them throughout a school day and in one family or community context.

THE SOCIOHISTORICAL SPECIFICITY OF "RACE" AND "ETHNICITY"

There is disagreement among scholars as to the relationships and distinctions between "race" and "ethnicity," and the constructed boundaries between them shift over time. Referents of the English word "race" have varied even within this century in the United States: various immigrant groups in the early 1900s, such as Jews, Italians and Slavs, were referred to as races (Waters, 1990), for example, while now they are more commonly described as ethnic groups. The commonalities of descent, whether cultural or biological, implied by both race and ethnicity often overlap, *i.e.*, groups that share common language, culture and religion often share a degree of common biological ancestry.

The terms "race" and "ethnicity," like the categories to which they refer, are highly naturalized, and few analysts treat them as the sociohistorical artifacts that they are. The first attested uses of the term "ethnicity" in America, for example, were only in the early 1940s, and the term "ethnic group" first appeared only shortly before that (Sollors, 1996). These terms were both coined to describe social phenomena growing specifically out of the 1880–1920 immigration rather than universal types of social categories.

Scholars giving broad-based definitions often treat "race" as a subset of "ethnicity," in which "ethnicity" has the general meaning of "social category" (*e.g.*, Gordon, 1988). Those whose focus, whether implicitly or explicitly, is

the United States often highlight distinctions between race and ethnicity (*e.g.*, Ringer and Lawless, 1989; Omi and Winant, 1994) to avoid collapsing significant sociohistorical differences between categories. Defining African-Americans as an ethnic group equivalent in type to other United States ethnic groups obfuscates a distinct and coercive social history, and it can invite invidious and invalid comparisons between white ethnics, typically the descendants of 1880–1920 European immigrants, and racialized groups, particularly the descendants of enslaved Africans.

In the United States, the dominant constructions of race imply distinctions based on biological descent (popularly equated with physical appearance), while ethnicity is taken to imply distinctions based on national origin, language, religion and culture (often also popularly equated with physical appearance). Although Asians and Native Americans are popularly labeled and officially authorized as races, the term “race” is commonly used in a narrower sense to refer to the black/white dichotomy. The United States history of slavery, segregation, color-line maintenance and discrimination makes contemporary black/white racial categories qualitatively distinct from other social/ethnic categories in terms of cultural meanings and salience in popular consciousness.

Dominican-Americans, like other post-1965 immigrants, did not experience the specific social history out of which United States black/white social categories were formed, and they do not treat the categories black and white as necessarily of a different, or superordinate, type than social categories based on other criteria. For Dominican-American high school students, the term “race” does not just refer to distinctions based on, or symbolized by, phenotype, but also to linguistic and national-origin distinctions. In both interviews and more discursive contexts, such high school students use the same set of labels - Spanish/Hispanic/Dominican/Latino - to identify their race and their culture/ethnicity. When asked specifically how they identified their race (“If someone asked you, ‘What’s your race?’ what would you say?”), individuals described their race as “Spanish” or “Hispanic,” and sometimes as “Dominican” or “Latino,” but never as “black” or “white,” regardless of phenotype.⁵ This national/ethnolinguistic concept of race “decenters” the dominant, nat-

⁵The style of open-ended interviewing used in this study was not designed for quantitative analysis, making quantitative breakdowns of answers difficult and potentially misleading. Some students immediately identified their race in multiple terms, *e.g.*, “Spanish or Dominican.” Some added terms in response to the researcher’s prompts, *e.g.*, “Do you ever call yourself Hispanic?” Others qualified responses, *e.g.*, *Researcher*: “Do you ever call yourself Hispanic?” *Student*: “Only when I’m like taking a [standardized] test.”

uralized American notion of race, highlighting its historical and cultural specificity.

These findings counter those of a more quantitative survey on Dominican adult immigrants by Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral (2000), but methodological differences between the two studies may account for these differences. In Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral's survey of 60 Dominican adults in the Dominican enclave of Washington Heights in New York City, 14 individuals identified themselves as "black" in the United States and five identified themselves as "white." In that survey, however, respondents were not asked "what they were" but rather how they would fit into the existing racial classification system in the United States: "*A qué raza pertenece Usted en los Estados Unidos?*" ("What race do you belong to in the United States?") This question followed one asking, "*A qué raza pertenecía Usted en la República Dominicana?*" ("What race did you belong to in the Dominican Republic?") thus activating contrasting Dominican and United States racial frameworks.

Differences in the sample and further methodological differences also may have contributed to different findings: the average age of the New York sample was 35, the mean number of years in the United States was 11 (*i.e.*, most of the sample arrived as adults), and they used Dominican interviewers administering the questionnaire in Spanish. In contrast, my sample consisted of high school students growing up in the United States, and they responded to a white American interviewer in English. These differences in language and interviewer identity may have activated contrasting sociocultural frameworks for conceptualizing identity. My white American identity may have led subjects to emphasize their Spanish/Hispanic/Dominican identities and their distinctiveness from white and black Americans, in part because they are accustomed to white Americans seeing them in black and white terms. Subjects may also have been less inclined to note group-internal boundaries to a nonmember outsider than they would be to another group member.

In Providence, Dominican-American claims of identity outside of the black/white dichotomy have already made the categories Spanish/Hispanic/Dominican available in local contexts to individuals of African descent. Non-Hispanic peers of Dominican-Americans generally accept Dominican claims that they are something other than black when faced with evidence of ethnolinguistic identity:

*Researcher*⁶: If somebody asks you, "What are you?" what do you say?

Janelle (U.S.-born): I usually say Spanish, Dominican. I'll usually say Dominican

⁶The "Researcher" is, in all cases, the author.

first, cause most people – most people think I'm black though. A lot of people think I'm black.... a lot of people!

Researcher: Can you think of a specific time when someone thought you were black?

Janelle: I was in the gym, and usually in school I don't really talk in Spanish, and I was talking to some kid in English, and some girl, I guess she was listening, and I said a word in Spanish, and she goes, "Oh my God, you're Spanish." "No," she goes, "You know Spanish." She thought I was just a black who knew Spanish. I was like "I am Spanish." She's like, "Oh my God, I thought you was Cape Verdean or black." I was like "No." A lot of people think I'm black. I don't know, it's usually just little things like that, just people be like "What are you, black?" I'm like "No, I'm Spanish."

In Janelle's reported exchange with an African-American classmate, "Spanish" is treated not just as a language, but as an ethnic/racial identity. Janelle and her interlocutor treat the social category "Spanish" as parallel in type to the folk-racial category "black", but mutually exclusive from it. In local terms, if one is Dominican or Spanish speaking, one doesn't count as "black," regardless of phenotype. This local system of classification does not necessarily privilege identities based on phenotypes – specifically, perceived degrees of European and African ancestry – over those based on other social criteria such as language or national origins. Janelle's African descent or "black" phenotype remains constant, but she no longer counts as black when she speaks Spanish and claims a Spanish identity.

The option that Janelle exercises of having African descent phenotype and a non-black American identity is novel in the United States. "Black" in the United States has historically been a particularly and peculiarly totalizing identity that has been applied to anyone of African descent, even when it fails to capture the social heritage of individuals whose cultures and identities were not formed in the particularly American context of slavery, discrimination and segregation. The freedom of Dominican-Americans to situationally define themselves as something other than black, despite African descent, represents a local transformation of the category.

At the same time, however, Janelle's adoption of the label "Spanish" suggests the hegemonic effects of the overall U.S. racial hierarchy. Pan-national labels such as "Spanish," "Hispanic" or "Latino" are United States constructions (e.g., Dominguez, 1978; Oboler, 1995; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral, 2000) that reflect and reproduce exclusion from the racial category white and its attendant privileges.

The Dominican-American lack of differentiation between black/white race and other types of social identity is evident in the ways that Dominican-Americans talk about themselves and others and in the ways in which they

use and define the word "race." Most Dominican-Americans are aware that the majority of Dominicans are of both European and African ancestry, but they do not define their race in terms of Old World (Europe/Africa) origins, but rather in terms of much more recent linguistic/cultural/national origins in the New World. For Dominican-born individuals such as Wilson (arrived at age seven), race can be nothing more than where they were before they came to the United States:

Researcher: What does "race" mean to you?

Wilson: If they're asking, "What race are you?" I just say what I am; Dominican, Spanish. It means like where you're from.

For American-born individuals such as Martin, race is typically defined in terms of where one's parents or grandparents were before they came to America:

Martin: Where you're originally from, like your parents and your grandparents and things like that, that's what I take for your race.

Local theories of biological descent are intertwined with sociogeographical allegiances in this Dominican American notion of race. In describing how American-born Dominicans should be identified, Jose, who came to the United States at age five, invokes the notion of "blood," a biological notion, but he traces such blood back only one or two generations, more similar in time depth to contemporary social science notions of ethnicity than dominant, contemporary American notions of race:

Jose: If they ask you what's your race, like where are your parents from and stuff like that, then you would tell them, my parents, they come from the Dominican Republic, before I was born here, so my blood is from Dominican Republic, my blood is Hispanic....

In contrast, black and white Americans typically define their race in terms of much more remote ancestry. Americans whose ancestors have been in North America for nearly four centuries are still categorized based on African or European ancestry, *i.e.*, African-American or European-American.

For the many Dominican-Americans who define their race in pan-ethnic terms as "Spanish," "Hispanic" or "Latino" (as opposed to the national term "Dominican"), linguistic, cultural and/or geographic commonalty underlie their notions of race:

Researcher: What do you understand when you hear the word race?

Maritza (immigrated at age two): I guess, race, I kind of like picture a map in my

head, say Hispanic is all towards Central America and South, if I look up North, then there's America, Americans. Basically, I guess, where countries are.

At the same time that "race" is used to refer to a pan-ethnic Hispanic group, it can also be used to refer to national origin groups. Frangelica, who came to the United States at age five, for example, refers to Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans as being of different races:

[In discussing parents' attitudes towards different groups.]

Researcher: What about Puerto Ricans?

Frangelica: To date? No, no. That's another race they do not like....They really like you to stay in the group, because if you stay in the group, if you ever want to retire, you don't really have the disagreement as to where to go, who stays with the kids. Like my uncle, he married a Mexican woman, now he realizes that's not what he likes, he likes his own race. He wants to go to the DR ['Dominican Republic'] and she doesn't want to go.

The term "race" is also used to refer to non-Hispanic national origin groups. In describing how people do not know how to classify her when they first see her, Frangelica refers to Haitians and Cape Verdeans as "races":

Frangelica: Sometimes some of them get confused, like, 'What are you?' Some have confused me with this race, I don't know what it is, Haitian. They have confused me in a lot of ways. Cape Verdean, that's the one.

Dominican-Americans also use "race" to refer concurrently to historical United States racial categories ("American-Indian" and "black") and social categories defined by national origin ("Portuguese" and "Cape Verdean"):

Jose: Like my girlfriend is mixed, she has like five different races. Her father is American Indian and black, and her mother is Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and I don't know the other one.

This collapsing of distinctions between "race" and "ethnicity" shows the historical and cultural specificity of even recent, constructionist definitions of race. Omi and Winant (1994), for example, define race in terms of phenotype differences, disregarding the growing number of Americans who have very different ideas of what constitutes race:

Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies (Omi and Winant, 1994:55).

When Dominican-Americans refer to races such as "Spanish" and "Dominican," they are not referring to "types of human bodies," but rather to national/linguistic/cultural types. As the post-1965 immigrant second gen-

eration becomes the American next generation, ethnic/racial categories formed in the pre-1965 period are being subtly transformed.

SECOND GENERATION AFRICAN DESCENT IDENTITIES: NON-HISPANIC VERSUS DOMINICAN

Rejection of American phenotype-based racial categorization among the Dominican second generation is virtually categorical, in sharp contrast to the patterns of identification dominant among non-Hispanic African descent immigrants. Historically, such immigrants have merged into the African-American population by the second generation (Bryce-Laporte, 1972). In the post-1965 immigration, such non-Hispanic immigrants have continued to adopt an African-American identity by the second generation, although identification may partially covary with socioeconomic class (Waters, 1994). Briefly reviewing research on the ethnic/racial identities of such non-Hispanic African descent immigrants highlights the distinctiveness of the Hispanic/Dominican-American pattern and thus helps to isolate the role of Spanish language and ethnolinguistic heritage in making such resistance possible.

Most studies on the identities of post-1965 Afro-Caribbean immigrants have focused on the first generation. Such works (*e.g.*, Foner, 1987; Zephir, 1996; Stafford, 1987) emphasize the first generation's dismay at being assigned to a subordinated folk-racial identity based on their phenotype. The "black" identity assigned to them in America effectively disregards their language background, national origins and culture, *i.e.*, what they see as the bases of their social identity. The first generation overwhelmingly rejects the folk-racial categorization "black American" that is imposed on them, instead emphasizing their ethnicity as Haitians, Jamaicans, Trinidadians, etc. Many in the first generation actively disaffiliate themselves from African-Americans:

[I]f race unites Jamaicans with American blacks, ethnicity divides them. Jamaicans ... feel they are different than, indeed superior to, indigenous blacks and they conduct their social life mainly with other Jamaicans. Ethnicity...while it draws them together with their fellow Jamaicans (and often other West Indians), it drives a deep wedge between them and American blacks (Foner, 1987:213–214).

Such synchronic studies on the first generation yield results that emphasize the maintenance of ethnic identity and resistance to American folk-racial categorization. Given that the subjects of the studies are immigrants who left their countries as adults, it is not surprising that they reject the American folk-racial categorization that effectively denies them national and/or linguistic origins. Inattention to generational differences leads to conclusions – *e.g.*,

"Haitian immigrants, in general, show no tendency toward assimilation" (Zephir, 1996:69) – that are directly contradicted by studies that look at social identification across generations.

Woldemikael (1989), for example, sharply distinguishes between the identities of first and second generation Haitian immigrants in Evanston, Illinois. While the first generation maintains Haitian identity and practices, the second generation increasingly conforms

to [racial] expectations of American society rather than those of the Haitian community....with increasing interaction with their black American peers, younger generation Haitians become less distinct from black Americans. This means Haitians become black Americans in the second generation (Woldemikael, 1989:114).

This pattern of assimilation to an African-American identity in the Haitian second generation is also found by Stepick (1998) in Miami, Florida.

Waters (1994) finds a type of segmented assimilation among the second generation of non-Hispanic African descent Caribbean immigrants in New York City. While most of these second generation immigrants have become African-American identified, *i.e.*, see themselves as essentially the same as native-born African-Americans, some remain relatively ethnic identified, *e.g.*, as Jamaican or Jamaican-American. This smaller group who is ethnic identified tends to come from families of higher social and economic class and attends better schools. They share their parents' belief that Afro-Caribbean immigrants are different from African-Americans and superior in many respects and that, with perseverance, they can succeed socioeconomically despite racism. They have enough contact with white Americans and middle-class Americans to know that many whites and socially mobile Americans share this view that African descent immigrants are more industrious, disciplined and education-oriented than other African descent Americans. They attribute their hard work in school and opportunities for mobility to the discipline and culture of their immigrant ethnicity. They tend to have friends who are Afro-Caribbean and white American. The much larger group who identify as African-American are more likely than their immigrant-ethnic identified peers to come from poorer families, live in lower-income segregated neighborhoods, and attend substandard schools with almost no native-born white Americans. These students' experiences of discrimination and their assessments of negligible opportunities for social mobility lead them to reject their parents' ideology of individual social mobility and accept peer analyses of blocked social opportunity (Waters, 1994:189).

The Dominican second generation displays neither the relatively uniform identification as African-American described by Woldemikael (1989) nor the

slightly variable assimilation to African-American identities based on social class described by Waters (1994). The Dominican second generation high school students that I interviewed identify their race categorically as Dominican, Spanish or Hispanic despite the dominance in America of a phenotype-linked racialization system (*cf.*, Rodriguez 1989, 1993 among mainland Puerto Ricans).

Several interrelated factors enable Dominicans in the second generation to resist American black racialization: 1) Dominican-Americans as a group do not fit into a single United States phenotype-based racial category. 2) Dominicans on the island have traditionally seen themselves as a Spanish and more or less white population, and certainly not as African or black. This framework for self-identification as not black is passed on to the second generation in America; 3) Speaking Spanish sets Dominican-Americans apart from most native-born black and white Americans, qualifies them for membership in the widely recognized category "Hispanic" and contributes to the maintenance and vigor of an ethnolinguistic community which in turn reinforces and validates traditional Dominican ways of thinking about social identities.

Compared to Haitian and West Indian immigrants, who are relatively uniformly identified by outsiders as "black" in America, Dominicans exhibit a wide range of phenotypes in a smooth continuum from those associated with Europe to those associated with sub-Saharan Africa. Many Dominicans are of overwhelmingly European descent and are never perceived as black in the United States, and many others do not match popular stereotypes of African-American phenotype. As a group, then, Dominican-Americans are not uniformly assigned by outsiders to the category "African-American."

A second difference between Dominicans and non-Hispanic, African descent immigrants – that Dominicans have traditionally considered themselves European and not black or African – will be addressed more fully in the next section.

A third factor, the Spanish language of the Dominican Republic, is a key to on-going reproduction of a Dominican identity, both on the island and in the United States. In the Dominican Republic, adoption of Dominican Spanish by immigrants to the island has historically been a key to the relatively rapid and complete assimilation that has been characteristic of such immigrants (Del Castillo and Murphy, 1987). For Dominicans on the island who are phenotypically indistinguishable from individuals who count as black (*e.g.*, Haitians and West Indians), "the ability to speak Spanish like a Dominican becomes the ultimate symbol by means of which they establish their Dominican identity" (Gonzalez, 1975:113). Just as they situationally do in

the United States, individuals in the Dominican Republic use Spanish language to show that they are Dominican and “not black.”

Spanish language and colonial heritage aligns Dominicans with peoples from other former Spanish colonies, both before and after immigration:

Citizens of countries of the Hispanic Caribbean view their nations... as subsets of the linguistically determined macroculture area of the Hispanic Caribbean, which is in turn a subset of Spanish America. Language thus allies this island region more with Latin America than with the rest of the Caribbean. The implication of ethnic homogeneity is reinforced by the imposition of “La Raza” by Spain (in other words, the new mestizo/ethnic/cultural population in the colonies) and “Hispanic” by the United States, as the founding and current colonial powers in the region (Davis, 1994:120–1).

Spanish language has thus served as an index of commonalty for social categories – “La Raza” and “Hispanic” – even as the political economic centers have shifted over time.

Following immigration, the Spanish language of Dominican-Americans and their parents sets them apart from black and white Americans in ways that the languages of many other African descent immigrants do not. Among the anglophone West Indian second generation, for example, language does not provide such a clear line of demarcation between immigrants and Americans whose parents and grandparents are native born. First generation West Indians can understand American English, even if it is not the variety the first generation use among themselves, so language does not isolate the community from the surrounding English-speaking population as effectively as Spanish does.

For the Haitian second generation, Haitian creole, and to a lesser extent French, contribute to the constitution of a distinct identity, but this ethno-linguistic identity does not have the support of the massive community that Spanish does. While there are Haitian ethnic enclaves in New York and Miami, for example, their ethno-linguistic communities are dwarfed by the Spanish-speaking and identified one, and there is no ethno-linguistic category such as “Hispanic” to which to assign francophone/creole-speaking immigrants from former French colonies. While a few Haitians from the educated elite may define themselves as “French” (Stafford, 1987; Schieffelin and Doucet, 1994), few Americans will ratify them in that identity.

This lack of recognition of a “French” identity for Haitians is apparent in local contexts in Providence. In speaking to a (Laotian-American) friend in class, for example, Dominican-American Janelle characterizes two Haitian-American classmates as “black kids” who were “talking French” :

"A lot of black people know French. Yesterday two black kids came into my class talking French" (JS #1 9:28:50).

For Janelle, the defining feature of these francophone African descent students is their blackness. Their phenotype thus precedes their ethnolinguistic identity, reversing the ordering of these criteria in Dominican-American racial self-ascriptions. The way that Janelle characterizes these students – "black people who know French" – contrasts sharply with the way she identified herself in reporting a situation (transcribed above) in which she herself was perceived as black:

...she goes, 'You know Spanish.' She thought I was just a black who knew Spanish. I was like 'I am Spanish'.

For Dominicans, African descent individuals who are native speakers of French count first and foremost as black, rather than French, while African descent individuals who are native speakers of Spanish count as Spanish.

The Spanish language of Dominicans is a defining criterion for assignment to a widely-recognized, pre-existing United States social category. In everyday terms, it enables access to a thriving ethnolinguistic community with its own churches, restaurants, stores, Spanish language media, and community organizations, a world that exists in many ways parallel to, and separate from, anglophone society. Participation in this immigrant ethnic community has important implications for the trajectories of acculturation of second generation immigrants (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes, 1995). A thriving community validates the customs, language and beliefs of the first generation, reinforcing a common cultural memory and identity for the second generation. Without this community reinforcement of linguistic and cultural identity, parents' customs, practices and expectations can seem irrelevant and out of touch with the social realities faced by the second generation, resulting in faster acculturation away from parents' cultural frameworks. The presence of a vibrant and visible Hispanic community is a key to the second generation's maintenance of Dominican frameworks for racial categorization – *i.e.*, that Dominicans constitute a race and that they are not black – in the face of dominant American phenotype-symbolized racialization practices.

The Dominican second generation differs starkly from other African descent immigrants who overwhelmingly adopt and assimilate to black-American identities in the second generation. Dominican-American maintenance of a distinct ethnicity and resistance to phenotypic racialization is

made possible by social and linguistic conditions in both the Dominican Republic and the United States. The Spanish language of the second generation marks boundaries between them and other American groups, and it connects them to an immigrant and ethnolinguistic community in which their Dominican and Spanish identities, rather than their phenotypes, are of primary significance.

RACE AND IDENTITY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Many of the ways in which Dominican-Americans see their racial/ethnic identities are a result of socialization into ways of thinking about identity that are prevalent in the Dominican Republic. Many, particularly those who spent their earliest years on the island, identify their race in the same terms used by their parents and by those who haven't left the island, *i.e.*, as "Dominican" (*cf.*, "Dominican" as the "anchoring identity" for adult immigrants; Itzigsohn and Dore-Cabral, 2000). An overview of the ways Dominicans on the island think of themselves and, in particular, how they treat African and European ancestry can explain much about the way Dominican-Americans see their identities.

In the Dominican Republic, there is no binary division among Dominicans into social categories based on the perceived presence/absence of sub-Saharan African ancestry, and Dominicans do not have a notion of race that differentiates among Dominicans in the way the American folk-notion of black/white differentiates among Americans (Hoetink, 1967). For Dominicans, Dominican nationality, Dominican ethnicity and Dominican race are more or less the same thing (Davis, 1994:119).

When I surveyed 15 Dominicans in Santiago,⁷ Dominican Republic, *Cuál es tu raza?* (What race/people are you?), they answered *dominicanola* (Dominican) without regard to individual phenotype, and most treated this expression of identity as a statement of the obvious. This categorical identification as *dominicanola* occurred despite the placement of the question in my survey immediately after a question referring explicitly to skin color: *Cuál es el color de tu piel?* (What color is your skin?) One informant called his skin color *blanco* (white), another called his skin color *moreno* (dark/black), and others used various forms of *indio* (indian-colored), *e.g.*, *indio oscuro* (dark indian-colored) or *indio medio claro* (medium light indian-colored), or equivalents. Although the Dominican Republic is a country of immigrants, both

⁷Informants were mostly male, ranging in age from their early teens to early 20s. I approached them at a public basketball court in the upper/upper-middle class neighborhood of Villa Olga and on the street in the more working class Pueblo Nuevo neighborhood.

voluntary and involuntary, few Dominicans define themselves as the descendants of a particular immigrant group, but rather simply as Dominican, nationally, ethnically and racially (Del Castillo and Murphy, 1987).

Gradations in African/European phenotype are recognized, labeled and hierarchically ranked in the Dominican Republic, but they are not treated as the most fundamental basis of social group membership. Individual differences in phenotype, *i.e.*, relative degrees of African/European phenotype, do not covary with language, culture, religion or other markers of social identity in the ways they do in the United States (Davis, 1994). There is no "Afro-Dominican" style of Spanish corresponding to African-American English, for example, despite the many African contributions to Dominican language and cultural practices (Davis, 1987; Deive, 1981; Megenney, 1990), and no sense of ethnicity or group identity based on, or symbolized by, relative degree of African/European ancestry. In contrast, differences in socioeconomic class, regional origins, and urban/rural background are all highly salient symbols of difference and identity in the Dominican Republic, and they are often used to represent essentialized social categories.

Although perceived African and European ancestry are not racialized in the same ways that they are in the United States, there is a clear hierarchy of desirability. African phenotype is considered less attractive than more European phenotype, for example. Relatively straight hair is called *pelo bueno* (good hair) and relatively kinky hair is *pelo malo* (bad hair) (Badillo and Badillo, 1996; *cf.*, *e.g.*, Cleaver, 1973; Gaskins, 1996 on 'bad hair' among African-Americans). The Miss Dominican Republic beauty pageant is dominated by contestants from the small percentage of the Dominican population that is overwhelmingly European in ancestry. Employment advertisements for positions with public contact, *e.g.*, bank tellers or flight attendants, often specify that they seek individuals *de buena presencia* (of good appearance), which Dominicans understand as excluding individuals of relatively African phenotype (Alarcón, 1994:303).

There is also a correlation between phenotype and class: the oligarchy are white and more or less endogamous, resulting in maintenance of a color line between the oligarchy and the rest of the population; the elite and upper classes are disproportionately light; and the very poor are disproportionately dark. The phenotypes typical of the lower classes and the middle class vary substantially by region (Davis, 1994:122). This correlation between phenotype and class is not a categorical form of hierarchy, however. Although the oligarchy is white in phenotype, for example, not all phenotypically white

individuals are in the middle and upper classes, let alone the oligarchy (Gonzalez, 1975), and leading military and political figures have historically ranged across a spectrum of phenotypes (Hoetink, 1985). In the 1996 presidential election, the winning candidate was of a phenotype associated with both European and African ancestry, and the runner-up was of a phenotype associated with overwhelmingly African ancestry.

Dominicans on the island generally do not think of themselves as being black, but rather as more or less European/white. While the historical United States 'one-drop' rule has made individuals with perceived, recorded or imagined African ancestry count as "black," in the Dominican Republic, a very different 'one-drop' rule is in effect: perceived or imagined European ancestry makes an individual not black. By this standard, only a small percentage of Dominicans count as black.

Dominican understandings of their color, race and nationality have been constructed in contradistinction to Haiti, both historically and in contemporary times (*e.g.*, Moya Pons, 1995, 1996; Silié, 1989; Torres-Saillant and Hernandez, 1998). Two 19th century Haitian occupations of the Dominican side of Hispaniola served both to galvanize a sense of Dominican national identity when it was still a colony and to vilify Haitians in the popular memory. Today, Dominicans differentiate between themselves and Haitians in terms of color/race, culture, language and religion. To Dominicans, Haitians are black/African while Dominicans are white/European, Haitians speak an Afro-French creole while Dominicans speak Spanish, and Haitians practice African voodoo while Dominicans are Catholic (Duany, 1994:67, 69). Haitians are racialized as the Other: for many Dominicans, the only *negros* (Blacks) are Haitians (Silié, 1989:170), while relatively dark-skinned Dominicans are referred to by the terms *prieto* (literally 'dark') or *moreno* (literally 'dark').

The obfuscation of the Dominican-African heritage has been accompanied by an aggrandizement of its Native American, or Taíno, heritage. Emphasizing Dominican Taíno heritage is compatible with Dominican nationalism, a non-black/African-Dominican identity and anti-Haitian sentiment. The popular and official construction of significant Taíno ancestry provides an explanation for the *indio* skin color of most Dominicans without invoking their African ancestry or the stigma of slavery. The term *indio* in the Dominican Republic differs both in denotation and connotation from the term *indio* in the many Latin American countries where *indio* refers to contemporary indigenous groups and is considered pejorative. In the Dominican Republic it does not refer to a contemporary ethnic/social group but to a

range of skin colors/phenotypes. The majority of Dominicans describe their skin color as some form of *indio*, and it is unmarked both as a phenotype and a term.

Identification with the aborigines of the island was encouraged by 19th century romantic *indigenista* writers, who sought roots of Dominican culture in an idealized Indian past (Duany, 1994:69). An 1882 Dominican novel, *Enriquillo*, for example, depicted a noble, Christian-convert, European-clothing-wearing Dominican Indian chief of the 1500s. This tradition of idealizing Native Americans as opposed to Africans/African-Americans extends as far back as Bartholomew de Las Casas' 1519 suggestion that Africans rather than Native Americans be used for forced labor in the New World, because the aborigines had souls and could be saved whereas Africans could not be saved (Fennema and Loewenthal, 1987).

This Spanish-Taíno version of the Dominican past is in conflict with the historical demographics of the islands given by scholars. According to Moya Pons (1995:37), European diseases, forced labor, and armed attacks killed over 99 percent of the aboriginal population within 30 years of Columbus' 1492 arrival, leaving fewer than 3,000 Taíno. In contrast, by the late 18th century there were over 450,000 African and African descent slaves on Hispaniola, comprising over 90 percent of the population of the island (Fennema and Loewenthal, 1987).

Despite the virtual extirpation of the Taíno more than four centuries ago, they still play a strong role in the popular and official construction of Dominican identity. Contemporary junior high school textbooks describe the Dominican people and culture as a mix of Spanish, Taíno and African influences, thus privileging the role of the Taíno, whose contributions to Dominican society were relatively few and minor (Del Castillo and Murphy, 1987). It was only in the last 20 years that a statue representing an African joined the two representing a Spaniard and a Taíno in front of the Dominican *Museo del Hombre Dominicano* (Museum of the Dominican People) in the capital city (Hoetink, 1985). In Providence, Rhode Island, Dominican-Americans generally consider themselves to be part Native American, or Taíno, and one consultant even described one of her grandmothers as "full-blooded" Taíno.

Construction of an aboriginal Dominican heritage, rather than one of colonialism and African slavery, distracts attention from divisive historical social relations and serves to unify the Dominican people (Fennema and Loewenthal, 1987). The power of this constructed national identity to obscure the history of slavery among Dominicans – but not in Haiti – is cap-

tured in a Dominican-American's explanation of why some people in the Dominican Republic have relatively dark skin:

Wilson: Haiti is in the same island as Dominican Republic. That's one reason why there's a lot of dark Dominicans, cause as you know, people from Haiti *are* from Africa, they're really from Africa, from Africa to Haiti, and being in the same island [they just walk across]...

Even though this student is aware of his own African ancestry ("I know our background, most people come from Africa, Spain, and America, so we're all mixed. I say that I've got African blood, Spanish blood, American blood..."), his African ancestry counts as different and less direct than that of Haitians. His statement that "people from Haiti *are* from Africa, they're really from Africa, from Africa to Haiti" suggests that Dominicans aren't really from Africa, and if they have African ancestry, it's not because their African ancestors traveled directly from Africa to the Dominican Republic in the way that Haitians went directly from Africa to Haiti. In a literal and physical sense, this is not accurate: African slaves were brought from Africa to the Spanish part of Hispaniola just as they were brought to Haiti (Moya Pons, 1995). In terms of Dominican perceptions and ideology, however, the link between Africa and the Dominican Republic is remote and obscure. The heritage that Dominicans have historically seen as defining their identity is Spanish and European.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN RACIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

At the same time that historical Dominican notions of race inform the understandings of the second generation, their understandings of race and identity are different from those of their parents, a result of their socialization in the United States. First generation identities are forged on the island and maintained by isolation in the United States, while second generation identities develop in a context in which various American social and cultural frameworks are central. The second generation's structural position – as non-white/African descent, Spanish-speaking immigrant, and low income – is central to the ways they perceive themselves and their social world. While the Dominican ethnicity of the adult first generation largely represents continuity of identities and cultural and linguistic practices from the Dominican Republic, identities in the second generation are a function of both Dominican heritage and socialization in the United States (*cf.* Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

The differences in the social experiences of first and second generation Dominican immigrants result in very different generational attitudes toward other social groups. Many in the first generation symbolically align themselves with white Americans, admiring their socioeconomic success, while many in the second generation see white Americans as a discriminatory group that consider Dominicans inferior. Generational differences in attitudes toward African Americans and African descent immigrants are particularly pronounced. While the first generation is highly critical of African-Americans, members of the second generation often align themselves closely with African-Americans, who are their peers and friends at school. Many Dominican-Americans report that they feel more comfortable with African-American peers, in general, than they do with Hispanic peers who are not from the Caribbean, *e.g.*, Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants.

First generation prejudice against those who count as black is highly salient to members of the second generation. Repeatedly, teenagers I talked to accused their parents of being prejudiced against African-Americans, and many did not understand why their parents spoke negatively about them. When I asked students about their parents' perceptions of other social groups, they regularly addressed their parents' negative beliefs about African-Americans:

Researcher: Do your parents ever talk about other groups, like white Americans, black Americans, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Asians?

Eva (U.S.-born): They'll sit there and like they'll talk about some crazy stuff, they talk about all sorts of people and it's sickening cause they'll be like – I don't care, I think my mother is a racist, cause she said something about, she asked me to ma – she wants me to understand that it's not that she's racist, it's that most African-Americans don't really do good, most of them if you see them selling drugs or something, that's what she thinks, that's her opinion, she thinks that most African-Americans don't do good. And she'll be like, "No you shouldn't look for the baddest person, you can do better." If I was to find somebody that I want to be with that's African-American, she'll be like "You better check if he sells drugs this-that-and-the-other cause you could get in trouble for that." But she thinks that mostly Puerto Ricans and African-Americans, they really don't do good. Most of them are selling drugs or using drugs, that's what she'll probably say. She hasn't really talked about white people. In a way, my family has had so many bad luck with white people, though, not to be mean or nothing, cause most of the time they'll like, like if we was to be in the bank or something, they'll like, they won't attend you, cause there's some people that are like that or there's cops that'll stop you and stuff, stupid stuff like that. I don't have nothing against nobody, I like all sorts of people. The only thing she'll probably say is don't get married with the wrong person, ...I don't know why she got that crazy idea that most African-Americans are no good.

Eva doesn't understand her mother's prejudices against African-Americans. These prejudices are particularly incomprehensible to her because her

mother does not talk in similar terms about white Americans, who regularly discriminate against members of her family.

The anti-black sentiments of the Dominican first generation have multiple roots. As described above, blackness is deprecated in the Dominican Republic and associated with Haitians, a racialized Other. Immigrants also bring with them negative stereotypes of African-Americans, based on media representations and what they hear from friends and relatives in the United States. Teenagers I interviewed in the Dominican Republic, who had not had personal contact with African-Americans, associated them with gangs, crime, poverty and success in sports. Newly immigrated Dominicans, hoping to make better lives for themselves, also have little incentive to affiliate with a group that is widely perceived to be among the least socially and economically mobile in America. African-Americans and first generation economic immigrants, regardless of race/ethnicity, who encounter each other in low-income, segregated neighborhoods typically have different experiences and beliefs regarding the nature of racism, discrimination, self-reliance and opportunities for social and economic mobility in America (Waters, 1994:797). Many first generation Dominicans have few opportunities to develop deeper personal contact with non-Hispanics. Alejandro characterized his parents' social reality as consisting of work and home in explaining their stereotypes about American groups:

Researcher: Do they ever talk about white Americans?

Alejandro (immigrated at age eight): They say whatever they listen, so they say that black people are bad. That's what they think. They think that everybody is bad. White people are bad, black people are bad...you know, they have such a different way of living. Their way of living is work and home. For the kids, it's like school, and they see that it's different, cause they see that the black students and the Spanish students, and they mix...

With limited interpersonal contact, members of the first generation base their impressions of African-Americans in part on public behaviors, *e.g.*, drinking and drug dealing, that they observe in their low-income neighborhoods. Many attribute crime and the torn social fabric of their neighborhoods to African-Americans. This attribution of a negative "otherness" to African-Americans is not always consistent with the behavior of the first generation toward individual African-Americans they encounter. Many students reported that their parents made blatantly racist statements against African-Americans as a group and criticized second generation children for talking, dressing or acting "black," but that their parents would treat African-American friends that they brought home respectfully and on an individual basis.

Even though many in the first generation have little personal contact with either black or white Americans, they are ready to express opinions of both groups to their children:

Researcher: Do your parents ever talk about their experiences in America with different groups of people, with white Americans for example?

Maritza (immigrated at age two): They consider white Americans to be very polite. They speak of them very highly. Compared to how they speak about, like black people? They're not prejudice or anything, but they speak, I guess they prefer, I guess they are prejudiced, I don't know if I should call it prejudice, but...they kind of prefer white people, more, I don't see why.

Researcher: Do blacks seem less polite?

Maritza: I don't know. I guess because — I don't know why. I don't know. I won't say why. I always disagree on that aspect.

Researcher: Do they say anything in particular? Can you think of an example of what they might say?

Maritza: For example, my dad, he could be like driving, and the light is green, and there goes a black person walks, they're like "You don't see white people doing that" whatever. I don't like the way they talk like that. I think if they had a little bit more education, they wouldn't speak like that, because if they learned about Africans being slaves and stuff, they wouldn't really think of blacks as bad as they do.

Maritza explains her parents' attitudes toward African-Americans as a function of their lack of education. Neither had attended school beyond the seventh grade in the Dominican Republic, and both were employed in factories in America. Maritza suggests that if they knew about African-Americans' past as slaves they would better understand their present situation in American society.

Both Dominican and American racial frameworks are evident in Maritza's understandings of race. Maritza and her parents are almost certainly the descendants of African slaves: she reported that people generally perceived her to be African-American until they heard her speaking Spanish, and she said that her parents, despite speaking little English, are even mistaken for black Americans at times. She empathizes with historical oppression of African-Americans, displaying an American framework for understanding race — but she disassociates herself and her parents from similar historical oppression, thus displaying a Dominican understanding. For Maritza, historical slavery is relevant only to understanding African-Americans and not Dominicans.

While those of the first generation symbolically align themselves with white Americans, members of the second generation understand that Dominicans are in a similar structural position to African-Americans. They realize that racism can just as easily be aimed at Dominicans as at African-Americans and that the dominant groups in society do not differentiate among non-white groups in the

ways that first generation Dominicans do. Maritza argues that this common experience of subordination from whites should deter Dominicans in the first generation from discriminating against blacks:

Maritza: ...they shouldn't be prejudiced against them [African Americans] or racist against them. Cause you see how some white people are racist against blacks? Sometimes they see us also as blacks, or Spanish people. They kind of have the same idea about us, not the same, but they relate to us as the same people. I don't think we should be racist against blacks.

Many in the second generation are also more ready than their parents to acknowledge their African ancestry. They find their parents' criticisms of other African descent groups to be hypocritical in light of the African ancestry of most Dominicans:

Rosa (U.S.-born): Dominicans talk about black people in a negative way, and that really gets on my nerves. I really can't stand that. Because they're part black. They took Africans to the Dominican Republic and they're just mixed with everything. I think Dominicans have absolutely no right to talk about anybody because they're everything...when she's [my mom's] talking about black people or any other culture, she's talking about herself. I think that's really wrong, and Dominicans do that all the time.

The first generation's disparagement of African-Americans is often accompanied or introduced by invidious comparison with white Americans:

Maria (U.S.-born): I told my Mom she's prejudice because she always says, "white people this, white people that." "You don't see white people wearing those kind of clothes." I'm like, "Mom, nowadays, everybody wears those kind of clothes." She's like, "black people this, black people that." I'm like, "No, mom, you are so prejudice." She's like, "No, I'm not prejudice, I'm not prejudice." I'm like, "Mom, my grandmother is dark, she's dark. You know, Mom, I'm not (???), but she's black no matter what. It's bad when people are known as black. Cause we Hispanics are black." She's like "No." "We're black, so I don't know what you're talking about." I just leave her. She's like, "white people this, white people that, white people work." I'm like, "No *mami* ['mom'], I know white people, it don't matter. I know black people, it don't matter. Everybody's the same thing." She thinks that black people are the ones that go do gangs and all that.

Researcher: She says whites do what?

Maria: She say that whites are people that are responsible, they think about working, going to school... And I don't consider it like that.

The social construction of racial identity can become particularly clear in such intergenerational conflicts. Because the two generations are raised in different social contexts and use different cultural frameworks to view themselves, racial identity and solidarity can be better predicted by generation than

actual phenotype. Maria, for example, describes herself as “very white” and “almost whiter than you” (the white American researcher). Despite her relatively light skin color and her self-ascriptions of being “very white,” Maria identifies strongly as non-white, and in some senses as black:

Maria: In America, there's only white and black, that's the only colors we have. Spanish people are considered black, that's the way they consider us, black. I think Asians is white. I just know Spanish is considered black. Cause I asked my Social Studies teacher, she said, “Yeah, Spanish are considered black”.... when my Mom talk about black, I'm like “Mom you're talking about Hispanics”, [she says] “Yeah, I know, but it's different, they're black”. She's starting to leave that....I just tell her I'd appreciate her not to talk about black people in front of me.

Maria considers herself “black” in some senses despite her light skin. Maria's mother, in contrast, aligns herself with white Americans despite having hair, facial features, and skin color that lead to her being perceived at times as African-American. Her mother's prejudice against African-Americans and her symbolic identification with whites has led Maria to accuse her of thinking she's white:

Maria: I consider that [anti-Haitian racism in the Dominican Republic] very bad, that's one of the reasons I don't really like the DR, “You people think you're so white,” “Mom, you think you're really white.” She's like, “I don't think of myself as white.” I'm like, “I don't want to hear it.”

Most members of the first generation see themselves as having little in common with African-Americans. They do not think of themselves as black or of African descent, and discrimination based on lack of English or immigration status are much more salient to most than discrimination based on phenotype. Life in America for many is a sojourn in a land of economic opportunity that consists of work, family and little beyond the immigrant community. Those who immigrate as adults maintain a Dominican frame of reference for viewing themselves, and many plan on retiring to the Dominican Republic. Isolation from American ethnic and racial discourses prevents them from seeing themselves in a structural position similar to African-Americans, which might otherwise lead to greater solidarity.

The second generation, in contrast, grows up as non-whites in a society in which whites are at the top of the economic and ethnic/racial hierarchies. Those who attend public schools in Providence have on-going contact with African-Americans, and the essentialized ethnic/racial stereotypes of their parents do not hold for the individuals the second generation encounter and with whom they become friends. The social reality the second generation faces of being non-white, low-income, and urban is shared with other American and immigrant

groups, contributing to intergroup solidarity. Exclusion and discrimination by white Americans thus lead many in the second generation to see their identities relative to black and white Americans in very different terms than their parents, even as the second generation maintains an ethnolinguistic, rather than black/white, understanding of their own identities.

CONCLUSIONS

Dominican-American high school students' understandings and enactment of race in Providence, Rhode Island reflect socialization in both Dominican immigrant circles and a low-income, multiethnic urban United States environment. Unlike non-Hispanic African descent immigrants, who generally identify themselves as "black" in the second generation, Dominicans in the second generation identify themselves as "Dominican," "Spanish" or "Hispanic." Spanish language is a readily available diacritic (Barth, 1969) of an ethnolinguistic identity, and it helps to preserve a distinct sense of Dominican origins, encouraging the second generation to see their roots as remote from the United States history of social relations out of which American black/white racialization practices have grown. At the same time, however, the second generation's understandings of social groupings reflect growing up in a United States context in which specific racial and ethnic hierarchies are central to social categorization. Unlike their parents, for example, those in the second generation readily acknowledge their African ancestry, and many experience significant solidarity with African-Americans, based on their common experiences of subordination and discrimination. Their situational adoption of the labels "Spanish"/"Hispanic"/"Latino" reflect both resistance to the category black and incorporation into a United States racial hierarchy in which the great majority of Dominicans are excluded from the unmarked category, white.

The notions of race maintained by Dominican-Americans and their everyday enactment of Spanish racial identities highlight the processual, constructed and shifting nature of racial categories, particularly the United States category "black." While it is commonly accepted that larger-scale social constellations – e.g., available racial categories – affect individuals' social actions, such larger scale phenomena are themselves constituted through social action and relations at a smaller scale (Giddens, 1984). The case of Dominican-Americans illustrates the ways in which ethnolinguistic practices and understandings can be used to resist a hegemonic form of racial ascription, enabling African descent individuals to count as Spanish race. Reproduced on a broader scale, post-1965 second-generation immigrant enactment of identities based on immigrant practices

and understandings can speed and make visible on-going United States ethnic and racial (trans)formation processes.

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