

Raced, But Not A Race:
A Perspective of Latino Racial Identity

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Abstract

Latinos have become the largest minority group in the United States and their identity has become of great interest to politicians and educators alike. However, the United States racial model leaves Latinos outside, forcing them into racial categories uncharacteristic of their social experiences. This paper examines the space that Latinos occupy in U.S. society and the sociopolitical nature of racial identity. By analyzing both historical and contemporary issues and events in the United States of America, I argue that Latinos are racialized to the same order and degree of Blacks, Whites, Asian Americans, and Native Americans and should thus be viewed as a racial category.

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Raced, But Not A Race

After surpassing Blacks as the largest minority group in the United States (Gracia, 2000; Jones, 2012), the topic of Latino identity has become a hotter topic than ever before (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Gracia, 2000). According to the 2010 United States Census, Latinos were responsible for over half of the growth of the total population between 2000 and 2010 (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011). To put things into perspective, Latinos grew from 35.3 million to 50.5 million (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011) and it is expected that by 2050 there will be about 128 million Latinos – approximately one-third of the entire population of the United States (Jones, 2012). Additionally, Latinos made up ninety-seven percent of the over 21.7 million respondents that classified themselves racially as “Some Other Race” – meaning that roughly thirty-seven percent of all Latinos (about 18 million) did not check off White, Black, Asian American, or the other categories listed (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011; Yen, 2012). However, Karen Humes of the U.S. Bureau of the Census states that this number does not include or reflect the Latinos that refrained from answering the question on race (as cited in Rothhaas, Bentley, Hill, & Lestina, 2011). This shows that at least over one-third of all Latinos do not see themselves within the context of the United States racial model. But why did so many Latinos choose not to identify with the racial groups listed?

The United States racial model acknowledges the following races: White, Black, Asian American and Native American. Where do Latinos fit in all of this? As stated in the 2010 United States Census, a Latino refers to “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin *regardless of race*” (Appendix B). This definition implies that all Latinos must belong to one or more of the

following racial groups: Black, White, Asian American or Native American. However, I disagree with this belief that Latinos belong in one of the four racial categories previously listed for several reasons. In this paper I argue that the Latino identity exists as an identity that is racialized by both non-Latinos and Latinos themselves and should thus have their own racial category.

My Story

I include my own encounter with racial identity in early 2010 because this was the first time in my life that this part of my identity was unstable. Born and raised in the city of McAllen, Texas, located approximately five miles from the United States border with Mexico, I understood race as Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Hispanics (that I now refer to as Latinos). However, when I filled out the 2010 United States Census during my sophomore year in college I saw my closest friends, who are Asian American, exhibit no difficulty in answering the question about race, whereas I did not know what to put for myself. I find this particularly significant because I was twenty years old, in a rigorous institution of higher education and I could not answer what seemingly should have been an easy question. This document is my way of answering my own confusion, and in which I begin to examine my own racial identity as a Latino.

Why Latinos?

Latinos, a group of people who primarily come from a mix of European, African and Indigenous backgrounds, possess physical appearances that vary as greatly as their ancestry. In my experience as a Latino, I have found there is tendency for many Latinos

to not identify with a “traditional” racial group as listed under the United States Census, i.e. White, Black, Asian American, or American Indian. Instead, for many Latinos there are strong ties to the countries of their heritage. This being so, many Latinos follow the racial model of the country of their heritage, not the racial model of the United States. For example, in Mexico the racial spectrum runs from White to Indian, with an in-between group called Mestizos (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Consequently, many Mexican Americans refer to themselves as Mestizos while in the United States, despite this category not existing within the United States racial model.

Can Mexican Americans usage of Mexico’s racial model be out of mere preference for this racial model over that of the United States? I think not. We must seek a more appropriate answer to this social phenomenon of rejecting the United States racial model. I believe that Latinos are aware, even if only on a subliminal level, that they are treated differently from Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, which might further indicate why so many seek another racial location or category into which they fit in.

Scope of Paper

Is the Latino experience a racialized experience? That is, are Latinos racialized differently than non-Latinos? Are Latinos viewed as a separate racial group by non-Latinos? Do Latinos view themselves as a separate racial group? These are the questions I seek to answer with this project. I begin my paper by defining key vocabulary that will be used throughout the chapters. The terminology of topics such as race, ethnicity and Latino identity are heavily disputed and their definitions are not always clear to a reader.

It is important that the reader is aware of how I use each term in this paper. In Chapter 2, I examine my own struggles with race and racial identity, including my journey of racial self-discovery and definition. In Chapter 3, I lay out the history of Latinos and then investigate who they are, where they came from, the space they occupy in society, and their social treatment. In Chapter 4, I discuss the topic of race and its sociopolitical meanings. By reviewing these topics, I try to understand what it means to be racialized and how racial classifications are used politically. I then apply these meanings to Latinos and their position in society. In Chapter 5, I write about the contemporary experiences of Latinos, drawing from media sources and interviews I conducted with Latino students from colleges and universities in the Northeastern part of the United States. In Chapter 6, I analyze the arguments in previous literature that oppose the concept of *Latinidad* as a racial identity. Lastly, I end with suggestions regarding the future and importance of Latino identity followed by conclusions I draw from my research.

Chapter 1 – Key Vocabulary

Race

Along with their sex, one of the first things we notice about people when we meet them is their race (Omi & Winant, 1994). More importantly, race signifies the social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies (Omi & Winant, 1994). I define race as a socially constructed human categorization system that sorts people to create advantage and disadvantage in which the White racial group is superior and all other groups are inferior. Racial categories are assigned to people and thus, their bodies, physical characteristics, names, clothing, foods, cultures, languages, and accents are racialized, or *raced*. This process of racialization is discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. In particular, because people's bodies are raced, so are their identities. I find that racial identity has three aspects to it that do not necessarily have to match each other. They are outlined as follows:

1. *Racial Self-Identification*: This is the race that people claim for themselves (Brodkin, 1998; Rodríguez, 2000). For example, someone can claim himself or herself as White and identify with other Whites, regardless of what race others view them as.
2. *Ascribed Identity/Racial Assigned Location*: This is the race that is assigned to people by those around them (Brodkin, 1998; Rodríguez, 2000). For example, because Barack Obama has a White mother and a Black father, he is of mixed race. However, those around him view him as a Black man regardless of what he views himself as.

3. *Government Racial Classifications*: These racial classifications are the options that the government and other dominant institutions choose to organize people by (Rodríguez, 2000). It is important to note that the racial categories defined by the government bodies such as the United States Bureau of the Census are not permanent, but that they undergo frequent changes, which indicates how fluid and unstable the concept of race is (Appendix C). Government racial classifications and ascribed identities are relatively reflective of each other to a certain extent as both have categories the other does not have and missing categories that the other does have. For the purpose of my paper, whenever I refer to a government racial classification I am referencing the 2010 United States Census because it is the most recent installment of governmentally defined racial groups.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is another socially constructed identity that is associated with a set of characteristics such as national origins, language, religion, and cultural practices (Allatson, 2007). I feel that this identity is usually more easily understood, as many people know where their ancestors came from. However, over time and different events some people either choose to forget their ethnic identities and assimilate or their identities were forcibly stripped from them, as was the case with the enslaved Africans during American slavery (Douglass, 2010; Jacobs, 1988). It is important to note that ethnicity is different from race. For example, someone whose race is White can be ethnically South African and someone whose race is Black can be ethnically French.

Latino

I understand *Latino* to be an umbrella term for people within the United States that identify as having origins from a Latin American country. Latino varies significantly from the term Hispanic, which is defined as having origin from Spain or another Spanish speaking country (Passel & Taylor, 2009). While some scholars choose to omit Brazilians from this category because they don't speak Spanish, others recognize them as a member of the Latino group (Bergad & Klein, 2010). Personally, I believe that Brazilians should be considered Latinos as well based on their Latin American origins. The United States government defines the terms Hispanic and Latino as based on a common language, culture and heritage – something that almost 70 percent of Latinos disagree with (Jordan, 2012).

Chapter 2 – My Story

March of 2010 was the first time I encountered racial identity issues. As I sat down in my dormitory common room, I was given a form to fill out: the 2010 United States Census. I answered questions one through eight with great ease, but when I approached question nine, “the race question” (Appendix B), I stopped dead in my tracks. I thought about this question and the answers it allowed. The question was asked so that it could be answered, but how was I *supposed* to answer it? My exact thoughts at the moment were, “Does this even apply to me?”

I felt almost inclined to check off White because I know that somewhere in my family lineage is some mixture of Spanish and Portuguese people, but there was no denying the indigenous roots my grandfather gave to me. Combining these two racial backgrounds, I knew that this was not fully equated with being White. In terms of my grandfather, I did not know anything about the name of the tribe or indigenous group that he descended from, its culture, language, or history, so I was incredibly uncomfortable with the small gesture of considering this as even just one of my races. As I looked at the other choices, I was certain that those were incorrect because I would have known if there was anyone in my family who is Asian American or Black. The way I understood race was that it had to do with family heritage – that race was something I was born with rather than something I was born into. Now, going back to the White box, I questioned it. Not only internally, but I asked people around me because I wanted to get rid of feeling like there was no racial location for me to check off. The entire experience was unsettling, so I created a plan of action. Emails were sent to the director of the Latino Center at Tufts

University, phone calls to my parents were made, and out of desperation I asked my friends if I was White. Consciously knowing that my family is of Spanish and Portuguese origins, what stopped me from selecting White? If I descended from people that are officially considered Whites, wouldn't that make me White? If I descended from Native Americans, wouldn't that make me a Native American? These were the questions I was asking and the questions whose answers eluded me.

My parents said that I should check off Mexican or Hispanic as my race. When I told them that that was the answer to a separate question, about ethnicity, they did not know what to say because we were not White, Black, Native American, or Asian American. I recall this conversation with my mother:

Me: If someone asked you, "What is your race?" What would you say?

My Mother: Hispanic. I know it is not a "race," but that is what I say.

Me: Why wouldn't you put White?

My Mother: I'm not White, but we supposedly are.

Me: But I thought we descended from Spaniards?

My Mother: Yes, we did.

Me: They're White, aren't they?

My Mother: Ha, I guess so.

Me: Wouldn't that make us White, too?

My Mother: I know, but it has been drilled in our heads otherwise. By society.

Me: What do you mean?

My Mother: We don't have privileges like Whites.

Me: How are we treated?

My Mother: Like non-Whites? I don't know.

Me: Are we treated like Blacks or Asian Americans?

My Mother: Not necessarily.

Me: Can you explain?

My Mother: I don't know how...

As far as I was concerned, this conversation did not clarify anything about my race. I was made aware of the races I did not belong to, but not the race I *did* belong to, at least not in terms of the United States racial model. I did not understand why “Hispanic” or “Latino” could not be a race.

This conversation with my mother made me think about what it meant to belong to a racial group. To my rather naïve understanding of race at the time, I knew that Whites as a racial group were better off than everyone else. However, I want to note that Whites were always referred to as “gueros” or “gringos” amongst those who were not White. I could tell you a million acts of greatness ascribed to Whites and the names of political figures, such as forty-one of our nation’s presidents, the famous actors and actresses I see in every film or TV show, or even the authors of famous novels that are considered great works of literary art. Also, the physical characteristics of Whites were what were preferable, such as light skin, colored eyes, straight hair, etc. In contrast, I admit that I struggled to associate any acts of great accomplishment or preferable physical characteristics with Blacks, Asian Americans or Native Americans. Moreover, whenever I did hear or learn anything about these other groups’ contributions to society, it was rarely positive.

Reflecting on this, I recall the dynamics of my family and our varying appearances. My younger brother has fair skin, straight brown hair and green eyes. Everyone would call him “guerito,” which roughly translates into “little White boy.” This was used as an endearing term, as he was always complimented on “how beautiful” his eyes and hair were. I, on the other hand, also had fair skin that ended up darkening by the time I was in elementary school. I have black hair and brown eyes. Not once did my family praise me for possessing *mestizo*, or mixed, characteristics. Furthermore, another one of my younger brothers was born with brown skin. Unlike myself who eventually tanned and unlike my other brother whose skin never changed color, this brother was dark since birth. His skin tone caused him to be called “negrito” or “little Black boy” by my mother and my grandparents. Interestingly enough, this was also used as an endearing term, but obviously carried negative undertones as his physical characteristics were without praise.

In addition to whatever sweeping generalizations and racial stereotypes I was conscious of, and even once believed without question, I also had a rough understanding of what determined someone’s race. Much like the thoughts of everyone else I knew, race was based off of looks. If someone had light skin, blonde hair, blue eyes, etc., they were definitely White. Basically, they looked like a Northern European. If they had dark skin, a wider nose, fuller lips, etc., they were Black (they possessed a phenotype associated with Africans and those of African descent). And there was also a certain phenotype I associated with Asian Americans, such as singular eyelids. But if race was based off of looks, why didn’t I look like any of these?

I was born and raised in McAllen, Texas, a city located in the southernmost part of the border between the United States and Mexico. Maybe it is because of its location, but McAllen as a city is comprised of approximately 130,000 people, of which 110,000 are Latino; racially the U.S. Census says that McAllen has 109,000 Whites and about 13,000 people that claim Some Other Race (“2010 census interactive population map,” 2010). Latinos account for approximately 85 percent of the population of McAllen (“2010 census interactive population map,” 2010).. Growing up in what can be described as none other than a Latino community, I was fortunate enough to experience and *live* my Mexican/Mexican American culture, not just read about it. My culture was in the air I breathed, the food I ate and the values I held. However, despite my community being fairly homogenous, racial differences were still experienced. For example, non-Latino Whites were still treated better than everyone, the handful of Blacks was still treated badly, and the Asian Americans were held to the model minority myth. This is the case for just about every place in the United States that I have lived in and/or visited. What is odd though, is that most Latinos were treated differently from all of these groups, unless the Latino possessed the European phenotype, or as we called it, “if they passed for White.” And even with this “passing,” everyone knew they weren’t *really* White. As far as I knew, I had never come across a Black Latino or an Asian Latino and did not know such a person existed before I left for college in 2008. But after meeting Black Latinos and Asian Latinos across various institutions in the northeast, the same went for them. However, for those that “passed for Black” the effects were different – there were no benefits for “passing for Black” as it is arguable that Blacks are stigmatized more than Latinos. And for the Asian Latinos I have come across, few have “passed for Asian

American,” but those who have were not fully accepted or perceived by either Asian Americans or Latinos as *just* Asian.

Reflecting on where I have come from and the experiences that I have had, I began to understand why I had so much difficulty answering the 2010 Census. My knowledge about race seemed to develop in a more critical and scholarly way. If race was biological, I would “look White” and if I “looked White,” other people would have no problem categorizing me as White. The White students in my classes and I would have similar physical traits, to say the least. Instead, I found race to be more of a social category that we are placed into and something that changes across time and place. Race is something that only has meaning when society is involved because it is used to categorize people into smaller subgroups in order to control allocation of resources. For example, an individual who is alone on an island does not have a race, more so if he or she has never seen another person in their life. There is no one to compare them to or a group to categorize them into. Additionally, racial categories change over time and the people these groups encompass changes as well. It may be hard to believe, but groups such as Jewish, Italian and Irish Americans once belonged to the Black racial category in the United States (Brodkin, 1998).

Socially, I lack membership with any of the “official” racial groups that are listed on the United States Census. The reason I felt uncomfortable checking off White was because I am *not* White. I am not treated as if I am White and I do not possess any of the undeniable privilege that comes with being White. In fact, many of the interactions and experiences I had with Whites were negative. Whites did not seem to like me. I have been called names such as a “stupid Mexican,” “mojo (the English version for ‘mojado’, which

is slang for ‘wetback’ – an inference to the status of my citizenship, suggesting that I just crossed the Rio Grande River),” “dirty Mexican,” “illegal alien,” among others. Simply put, I am not racially White and I will never be White in a society like the one I live in today. With this revelation, I not only knew what racial groups I did not belong to, but I understood why I did not belong to them. They did not accept me and I did not identify with them, their history, or their group in general.

With this knowledge, I approached my census form with a critical mindset. I examined the form and my responses to previous questions, still somewhat hesitant of answering Question 9, the impending question regarding my racial group affiliation(s). As I went through the answer choices, I did not stop until I reached the last one – Some Other Race. I checked off this answer and wrote in my response, “*Latino*.” In retrospect, I am intrigued by my actions at that point in time. While I did not have a complete understanding of what it meant to be racially categorized, my answer came from a place within me that knew I was tied together with other Latino groups in how I was viewed and treated.

However, my curiosity with race and ethnicity did not end when I mailed in that form. After attending the open house event for the American Studies program at Tufts University, something that my best friend referred me to and heavily insisted on my attendance to, I enrolled in the first of many courses of what was my soon-to-be double major. My coursework has affirmed my racial identity as a Latino and I hope that through my work I will be able to engage others with this question of racial identity. By expressing the empowerment I feel from racially identifying as a Latino, and my rationale for identifying this way, perhaps others may deal with this dilemma in a similar manner.

Chapter 3 – Latino History and Social Analysis

Who they are

Where did the terms Hispanic and Latino originate? Hispanic came from the Latin *Hispania*, which was the designation for a Roman province on the Iberian Peninsula that is modern day Spain, whose name itself derives from *Hispania* (Allatson, 2007). Because of this, a Hispanic person may be a Spaniard, a Spanish speaker, or someone in the United States who has Spanish or Latin American heritage. This term became widely used after its appearance on the 1980 census (Allatson, 2007). However, there is a heated debate by Latinos and non-Latinos alike over the usage of Hispanic over Latino and vice-versa. What does the usage of these terms entail? Noriega (1993) argues that the terminological debate between Hispanic and Latino is not over the people it aggregates, but is instead a sign of struggle between the political history of the term itself and who created the terms. Where the term *Hispanic* was created by the government as a category for social control by means of homogenizing this group of people, *Latino* was the creation of the people it represented, announcing collectivism as a means to create social change (Noriega, 1993). Additionally, Delgado and Stefancic (2011) believe that the term ‘Hispanic’ “strips people of their historical identity and reduces them to imputed common traits.” Sandra Cisneros, a Mexican American writer, also dislikes the usage of the word Hispanic as an identity. She states, “People who use that word don’t know why they’re using it... To me it’s like slave name. I’m a Latina” (as cited in Abalos, 2007). Furthermore, Jorge J. E. Gracia (2000) believes that “it is wrong to use a name for the oppressed that belongs to the oppressor.”

Latinos largely regard the term ‘Hispanic’ as an imposed identity that privileges the Spanish and European imperial, cultural and racial heritage (Allatson, 2007; Gracia, 2000). As a term that rose from the people it serves as part of their grassroots effort to oppose artificial bureaucratic homogenization (Gracia, 2000), ‘Latino’ is meant to embrace the individual identities of each culture while acknowledging their similarities (Allatson, 2007). Each ethnic group’s presence in the overall Latino group adds to its Latino-ness, or *Latinidad*. Noriega and López (1996) define *Latinidad* as an “available cultural identity, political affiliation, or expressive genre, encompassing but not superseding particular groups.” Abalos (2007) also expresses the politics behind the usage of Latino and Hispanic. Abalos states, “*the term Latino/a carries a sense of movement and history because it better captures the intermarriage of the European and the indigenous cultures and races. It fits the reality of the majority in Latin America who are clearly mestizos*” (Abalos, 2007). He further adds, “*to name yourself was and continues to be a political act of defiance against the dominant culture that named us to fit their views. Using Latino is a revolutionary statement that we are here, present, with all of our cultural and historical heritage that we celebrate*” (Abalos, 2007).

As previously stated, the Latino/a identity spans across ethnic groups and circulates as a self-adopted alternative to the government-imposed and media-preferred ‘Hispanic’ (Allatson, 2007). Moreover, because the media treat Latinos as a group separate of those in the U.S. racial model, many experience discrimination regardless of their skin tone. That is, the Cuban American with blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin may still be discriminated against if they have a name like José Guillermo García Cortés, only eat Cuban foods, wear traditional Cuban garb, and/or have a thick Spanish accent.

Despite being able to “pass for White” on first glance, José is discriminated against for other reasons. This shows that the racialization of Latinos does not only occur based on looks, but other factors as well. It is for this reason that my brother with fair skin, straight brown hair and green eyes is not considered White, but instead Latino because of his name, the types of food he eats, the way he styles his hair, and his wardrobe. All of these characteristics are racialized in way that separates him from Whiteness, regardless of his skin tone.

Where they came from

In 2005, the Latino population of the United States became the largest minority group within the country and is estimated to comprise approximately one-third of the entire U.S. population by 2050 (Bergad & Klein, 2010). While the presence of Latinos in the United States has a long and detailed history (Takaki, 2008), only in the last thirty years has this group of people’s importance grown (Bergad & Klein, 2010). This can partially be explained by the growth rate of the Latino population in the United States, as well as how these people racially self-identify on government forms. We must examine Latino history to understand Latinos in the present.

Any history of Latinos is going to include holes, especially around what we consider to be the beginning of Latino history as it is very fragmented. However, the history of Latinos has less to do with evidence than with the history of politics and Latinos (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). Delgado and Stefancic (2011) state that “*the name by which a person of Latin descent identifies him or herself – Hispanic, Latino/a, Spanish, Chicano/a, Mexican, Mejicano/a, Mexican-American – will turn on their understanding*

of the past.” Latinos identify so variedly depending on their varied understandings of their past (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011).

Something that remains constant throughout the history of Latinos is the story of their home countries. Latin America was created by conquest (Gracia, 2000; Takaki, 2008). Europeans sailed across the Atlantic Ocean and committed genocide on the indigenous peoples of Latin America (Gracia, 2000). “Racial mixing” occurred when the Europeans raped the Native women and children (Gracia, 2000), as was also the case when European Americans raped Black women surrounding the period of American Slavery (Douglass, 2010; Jacobs, 1988). Latin Americans and Latinos were created at the intersections of Europeans, Native Americans and Africans in the Americas (Gracia, 2000). This racial mixing was very common. In fact, Gracia (2000) writes about how male immigrants from the Canary Islands to Cuba came to be known as *blanqueadores*, or *whiteners*, because of their preference to engage in sexual activity with dark-skinned women, thus *whitening* the population of Cuba. I am not sure, however, if these sexual relations were consensual, especially given the long history of White men raping women of color. These types of forced mixing undoubtedly contributed to the feelings of superiority and dominance of White men over women of color that are still felt in today’s society.

Now that we know some information about how Latino’s home countries were “created,” we can begin to understand the more recent changes in Latino America starting with the acquisition of the American Southwest, which has been and remains to be a center location for Latino presence.

The Republic of Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836 and was annexed into the United States in 1845 (Allatson, 2007; Takaki, 2008). After a small battle in south Texas over the disputed border¹, the Mexican-American War (or as referred to in Mexico, the War of U.S. Intervention) began in 1846 (Allatson, 2007). The United States won the war and proceeded to exploit Mexico. As a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo², which formally ended the Mexican-American War in 1848, the United States annexed approximately one-third of overall Mexican land and the Mexicans who inhabited it (Allatson, 2007; Bergad & Klein, 2010; Takaki, 2008). And to complete their arguable theft of Mexican land, the United States *bought* the southern borders of present day Arizona and New Mexico under the Gadsden Purchase, or as referred to in Mexico, the Treaty of La Mesilla, in 1853 (Allatson, 2007). The total landmass annexed into the United States from Mexico is present-day California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, parts of Wyoming, Oklahoma and Colorado, and all of Texas – or approximately one-half, or one million square miles, of what was once Mexico (Allatson, 2007; Bergad & Klein, 2010; Takaki, 2008). This war transformed the United States into the recognizable shape that it is today and further established a legacy of bitterness and suspicion of US motives in Latin America (Allatson, 2007; Takaki, 2008).

In addition to forced and seasonal Mexican immigration, the United States saw a small, but steadily increasing influx of people from Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic throughout the 19th century (Bergad & Klein, 2010; Torres-Saillant & Hernández, 1998). Until World War II the migration of Mexican workers into the United States remained seasonal, as they usually returned to their homes in Mexico (Bergad &

Klein, 2010). However, after World War II is a different story. The United States saw a rising number of Latin American immigrants choosing to permanently reside in the United States between the 1950's and 1980's because of the lack of jobs available in their home countries, whose economies were failing (Bergad & Klein, 2010). For example, the Dominican Republic once had a very profitable sugar industry in their growing years (Torres-Saillant & Hernández, 1998). However, the United States government had an invested interest in the profits that could be made from the Dominican economy, which led to U.S. intervention and eventually, U.S. control over the Dominican economy (Torres-Saillant & Hernández, 1998). Unemployment rates rose rapidly in the Dominican Republic and many Dominicans left to New York City to find a better life (Torres-Saillant, 1998). This story is not exclusive of the Dominican Republic, but in fact many, if not all, of the Latin American countries that experienced United States intervention in both their economic and political spheres (Grow, 2008). The demise of Latin American countries by the hands of United States foreign policy led many Latin Americans to believe that conditions were greater in the United States (Grow, 2008) and prompted their decisions to immigrate here (Torres-Saillant & Hernández, 1998). These immigration patterns led to the 1976 meeting in Congress that resulted in creating Public Law 94-311, which required Latino identification questions on the U.S. Census, starting in 1980 (Bergad & Klein, 2010; Passel & Taylor, 2009; Taylor, López, Martínez & Velasco, 2012). Hispanics, or Latinos, are defined as “Americans who identify themselves as being of Spanish-speaking background and trace their origin or descent from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America and other Spanish-speaking countries” and their numbers are measured by their self-identification as Latino/Hispanic on the U.S.

Census (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011; Passel & Taylor, 2009). The states with the largest numbers and highest concentrations of Latinos are Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York and New Jersey (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011; Bergad & Klein, 2010).

Space Latinos Occupy in Society

The congressional meeting in 1976 regarding how to categorize Latinos made the 1980's the *Decade of the Hispanic* (Noriega, 1993; Rodríguez, 2000). Latinos, because of their appearances and other characteristics, were racialized but called an ethnicity because of their cultures and language. However, this group is hardly an ethnic group. A study by the Pew Hispanic Center shows that most Latinos do not see a shared culture among U.S. Latinos (Taylor, López, Martínez & Velasco, 2012). While 69 percent said that Latinos in the U.S. have many different cultures, only 29 percent believe that they share a common culture. I am not surprised at these results, however I must say that I agree with both sides. Yes, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Peruvians, etc. all have different cultures. While I call beans *frijoles*, the Puerto Rican or Dominican will call them *habichuelas* and while many Mexican meals consist of Spanish rice and pinto beans as the primary side dishes, Brazilians and other groups will use white rice and black beans. I understand that these different ethnic groups have their own distinct cultures, but that does not take away from the fact that together we occupy the same space in society.

Socially, many Latinos are not treated like members of other racial groups and it is very easy to see. It is no accident that many Latinos have similar jobs, educational attainment levels or live in homogenous communities. Nor is it an accident that when

mentioned in the media, Latinos are never called White, Black, Asian American or Native American. There are certain types of jobs *reserved* for Latinos, there are few spots available for Latinos in education, and the gentrification of land pushes Latinos out of certain communities and into others.

As previously mentioned, when Mexican land was annexed into the United States the United States also received a great number of Mexicans (Abalos, 2007; Takaki, 2008). The Mexicans absorbed into the United States as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe were permitted to remain within the United States or to move across the new southern border. If they stayed, they would be guaranteed “*the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution*” (Takaki, 2008). While a majority stayed on the land that they had been living on for many years, generations even, they were not treated as promised (Takaki, 2008). The Mexican diplomat, Manuel Crescion Rejon, predicted, “*Our race, our unfortunate people will have to wander in search of hospitality in a strange land, only to be ejected later*” (Takaki, 2008). Judging by the treatment of Latinos as discussed in Chapter 3 and the immigration practices of today, Rejon’s prediction seems to be all too true.

Beginning in 1948, the Mexican/Latino community suffered from a continuous and conscious strategy of marginalization in educational, economic, political, and social spheres (Abalos, 2007). The exploitation of Mexicans was justified with a racist rationale: “*Who cares? They are only Mexicans*” (Abalos, 2007). Those who resisted Anglo (read: White) power were lynched (Abalos, 2007).

Educational Discrimination

Abalos (2007) writes that prior to 1940, only one percent of Latino children growing up in the Southwest were enrolled in school because they were seen as a permanent source of cheap and docile labor, much like today. In Texas, a superintendent of schools explicitly stated as to why Mexicans were not to be given an education by stating, *“If a man has very much sense or education either, he is not going to stick to this kind of work. So you see it is up to the White population to keep the Mexican on his knees in an onion patch”* (Abalos, 2007). While there is no denying that there are numerically more Latinos being educated in the U.S. education system than seventy years ago, the fact remains that Latinos are still underperforming in comparison to their White counterparts (Webley, 2011). Webley states in her article, *“the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that while scores have gone up for both [Whites and Latinos], Hispanic students lag by the same amount today as they did in 1990, which means that the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has been largely unchanged for the past two decades.”* The numbers do not lie. This problem must be addressed soon as this group is expected to become thirty percent of the national population by 2050, as previously mentioned.

Economic Discrimination

Much like what the United States did to the economies of Latin America, similar practices have been occurring domestically targeting the Latino population, among others (Abalos, 2007). Latinos were consciously reduced by an Anglo attitude of superiority and economic policies that were trying to create a perpetually illiterate and unorganized work

force (Abalos, 2007). Judging by the education and wealth gaps in today's society, we can see that these policies worked the way they were supposed to. It is no accident that in 2009, 31 percent of Latinos were reported to be of zero or negative net worth whereas only 15 percent of Whites were in the same position (O'Connell, 2011).

The cultivation and foundation of the American Southwest relied heavily on Mexican/Mexican American labor. As the Texas superintendent stated, Latinos were purposefully kept uneducated so that they can do the dirty and backbreaking work, such as farming, constructing railroads and mining (Takaki, 2008). Across these occupations, Whites discriminated against Mexicans and Mexican Americans alike, regardless of their citizenship status, because they were seen as competitors for their jobs (Takaki, 2008). This rhetoric has not changed as we have all heard about how Latino immigrants are "taking our jobs" and "damaging our economy." The truth is, however, that Whites have been the ones to have historically damage Latino and Latin American economies.

Political Discrimination

The theft of the American Southwest was committed because the United states wanted to expand slavery and the only method of doing this was to take the lands away from the Mexican people who stood in the way of American Manifest Destiny as the U.S. stretched itself from sea to shining sea (Abalos, 2007). It was this same idea of Manifest Destiny that "justified" the United States' hostile takeover of Native land (Takaki, 2008), making conquest a similar theme for both groups.

Politically, the United States has been a racial dictatorship for most of its life as a country (Omi & Winant, 1994). In fact from 1607 to 1865, a period of 258 years, non-

Whites were firmly eliminated from the political arena (Omi & Winant, 1994). Then, after the Civil War there was the Reconstruction period that was more lenient, but that was terminated in 1877 and followed by almost a century of legally sanctioned segregation and denial of the vote (Omi & Winant, 1994). Not to mention that Puerto Rican congressmen currently cannot vote on legislation and Puerto Ricans cannot vote for president – eliminating three million voters from the electorate.

Although the social treatment of Latinos and other minority groups seems to have changed over time we still occupy the same space. The education of Latinos is still not valued. The monetary wealth and worth of Latinos is still undervalued and exploited. And politically, the Latino voice is still muted. In Chapter 4 I will further explore racial identity and the politics of race.

Chapter 4 – Identity and Politics

To better understand the concept of racial identity, one must first study the social construct that is race. This would include knowing the difference between racial location and racial identity, terms coined/defined by Karen Brodtkin in her book *How Jews Became White Folks: And What That Says About Race in America* (1998). Because the United States is founded on race and racism (Omi & Winant, 1994; Takaki, 2008), as illustrated throughout U.S. history with the transatlantic slave trade and other ways that people have been exploited on the basis of their race, one's racial identity is particularly important as their position and treatment in society is dependent on whom they are racially, what they look like, and other group memberships (age, class, gender, etc.) that they possess. That being said, one's racial self-identification is not completely dependent on what they look like, but rather the various experiences they go through and how they come to understand their sense of self in relation to their racial location. The difference between one's racial location and one's racial self-identification is not quite as puzzling when one takes a step back and examines the differences between these concepts from an academic reference point. An individual's racial location is the socially constructed classification assigned to them by others based on their physical markers, surnames, etc. and is commonly used by those with power to advantage or disadvantage the individual in economic, political and social spheres (Brodtkin, 1998). In contrast, one's racial self-identification is the identity they give themselves that does not necessarily have to agree with their racial location (Brodtkin, 1998). For example, while someone with an Asian American mother and a Black father might racially self-identify as biracial – both Black and Asian American, another member of society may racially locate them as solely Black

based on dominant physical features such as skin tone. Or take, for instance, the example of Susie Guillory Phipps. Between 1982-1983, she sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records to change her racial classification from Black, as was indicated on her birth certificate, to White (Omi & Winant, 1994). Living her whole life thinking that she was White and being socially treated as such, she “officially” Black (Omi & Winant, 1994). One can then see how three different identities exist for the same person in the forms of racial self-identification, racial assigned location and government racial classification.

Brodin (1998) emphasizes that although we carry our own racial identity, it is not made in a vacuum. That is, because race is a social construct, our racial self-identification exists in relation to that of others. So while the person previously mentioned has parents from different racial groups, they may choose to embrace their Black identity more than their Asian American identity because of their treatment as a person who is only Black.

Identities are inherently political constructions. The formation of an identity is the result of a process where practical interests, political beliefs, and moral values are brought into the political sphere (Márquez, 2007). On the politics of identity, Abalos (2007) states, “*we need to be aware of the political implication of the names that we use to self-identify. Words are political and carry a message.*” Nothing can be closer to the truth.

Identities are politicized and thus, their histories must also be political. Because Latino came out of a grassroots effort, it represents a development in political consciousness and liberation that stemmed from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s (Abalos, 2007). The transition of being called Hispanic to Latino is analogous to the

Black community, who underwent changes in labels from being Colored, to Negro, to Afro American, to African-American (Abalos, 2007). All these changes are symbolic of a new stage of political consciousness within the group they represent, moving toward a greater acceptance of who they are (Abalos, 2007).

But is the Latino racialized differently than Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans or Native Americans? Is it right to compare Latino political consciousness to that of these other groups? To answer these questions, I examine what constitutes a racial identity and compare this to the self-reported data from the census regarding Latinos answers to their racial self-identification. I believe my research population, Latinos, to have very strong nationalistic, cultural and ideological frameworks within their community that differ greatly from the mainstream model of the United States that excludes them. The predominant governmental interpretation of racial groups in the United States is simply not enough to capture the Latino experience and dare I say that it is arguable that media outlets are more accurate of the social manifestation and interpretation of racial groups. Additionally, using Latino-based identity constructs such as Chicano/Xicano, Mestizo, Indio, etc., to categorize Latinos risks the possibility of the Latino identity not being understood by the majority of those who do not understand these concepts (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). Perhaps this is why there has been such a struggle to even begin to explain a Latino identity from a racial perspective (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). But is this group more appropriately defined as a separate racial category? What is the difference between an ethnicity and race?

We define race as a social construct, not a biological fact. While most people in the United States try to equate race with physical features, they are terribly mistaken

because race is not biological (Ferrante & Browne, 2001). Ferrante and Browne (2001) state that “*perhaps the strongest evidence that race is not a biological fact but a social creation is the different rules for classifying people into racial categories across societies and the shifting rules for classifying people within a single society*” and that “*in the United States, not only have the rules governing classification changed but so have the categories [themselves].*” For over 200 years, the U.S. Bureau of the Census has used a number of racial categories ranging from as little as three to as many as fourteen (Ferrante & Browne, 2001). Indeed, because the census has essentially moved people in and out of White or Black and other options, this proves the government definition of racial categories betrays the popular belief that race is essential, natural or fixed (Allatson, 2007). It is frightening that a shape-shifting construct is viewed as concrete and furthermore, that the political concept of race is used to place people into such limiting categories that leave many people outside and without a politicized voice in what is supposed to be a democratic country.

Following the mandate of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget’s 1997 Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, the U.S. Census Bureau separates the race and Hispanic/Latino origin questions (Humes, Jones & Ramírez, 2011). This is done because race and Hispanic/Latino origin are considered separate and distinct concepts. Still, I do not understand the basis for why they are actually separated. Why not separate race and African or Asian origin? A person’s origin and history is part of the force that dictates their racial group membership, right?

Haney López (1994) defines race as the “*vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology*

and/or ancestry.” Does this not describe Latinos? As Ferrante and Browne (2001) write, “*it is the social significance ascribed to certain physical features and to certain ancestors, such as Africans, Europeans, or Asians, which define races.*” That is, biological race is the illusion; social race is not (Ferrante & Browne, 2001). Adrian Piper stated (as cited in Ferrante & Browne, 2001), “*What joins me to other blacks, then, and other blacks to another, is not a set of shared physical characteristics, for there is none that all blacks share. Rather, it is the shared experience of being visually or cognitively identified as black by a white racist society.*” Can this not be said of Latinos as a group?

Since 1980, the U.S. Bureau of the Census has officially recognized two ethnic categories: Hispanic or non-Hispanic (Ferrante & Browne, 2001; Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011; Taylor, López, Martínez & Velasco, 2012). As previously mentioned, the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” are virtually interchangeable because they refer to the same group of people (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011), but within the context of this paper, I will continue to mainly use “Latino” because of my personal preference for a non-governmentally imposed identity. While in reality there are many more than two ethnicities represented within the United States, there is a peculiar fascination with separating Latinos from everyone else.

Yinger (as cited in Clark and Caffarella, 1999) defines ethnic identity as “*an individual’s identification with a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients.*” As Latinos each have their own cultures and origins, they also have their own ethnicities. The argument that Latinos have a singular

ethnic culture is ludicrous. By using culture to denote the Hispanic/Latino identity as an ethnic identity, the government implies that there is cultural homogeneity with the people this identity encompasses. A singular ethnicity fails to account for the varied backgrounds that Latino people come from (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). This is terribly wrong because the only significant similarity is the Spanish language, which is still incorrect because it does not include Brazilians who speak Portuguese. However, despite their exclusion, there are many Brazilians that still “*unofficially identify as Hispanic due to cultural and political affiliation*” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). There is no way of seriously discussing a common culture if it is only the language spoken that defines that culture. Under that same logic, because most Whites and Blacks in the United States speak English they should be considered an ethnic group and not separate racial groups. It really just does not make any sense to use Hispanic/Latino as an ethnic or cultural marker. As previously stated, each group within the Latino category has their own ethnicity, which is defined by their own distinct cultures. For example, I am ethnically Mexican and my friends are ethnically Dominican, Puerto Rican and Salvadorian. Above that, we are all Latino.

But why are Latinos separated from being a racial group? There is a heavy reliance on the biological or phenotypic notions that racial categories have to be distinct. By explicitly stating that Latinos are a non-racial category, Latinos are then encouraged to identify as White, Black, Asian American or Native American (De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003), people with whom Latinos cannot readily identify with because of differences in social treatments, histories, and origins. While Latinos vary in shape, size, color, history, language, and culture, they all occupy a similar place in society as a

marginalized group from other races. However, the emphasis of culture on Latino identity acts as a distraction from allowing Latinos to mobilize politically (De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003).

Chapter 5 – Contemporary Experiences

In the previous chapter I discussed racial identity and how it is viewed politically and socially. In this chapter, I further examine contemporary instances that I believe put the Latino racial identity in the national spotlight and raise questions about the racial formation of Latinos. Drawing from two recent articles in newspapers about how Latinos are classified, I seek to investigate how Latinos are racialized and provide critique by gathering my personal knowledge and beliefs.

Additionally, I conducted six interviews³ that consisted of hour-long private sessions with Dominican American college students from New York City that attend a number of universities in the Northeastern region of the United States. This population was chosen because of 1) their membership in the Latino group, 2) their spectrum of varying physical features, and 3) their heavy mix of African and European ancestry as Dominicans. These interviews were conducted to gain insight on some individual beliefs and attitudes of Latinos about race and ethnicity in the United States and to gather information about their racial identity. By using the experiences of other college students, I survey the differing views regarding a Latino racial identity.

Case Study 1

On February 26, 2012, a young, Black male by the name of Trayvon Martin passed away after a lethal confrontation with George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch captain (Blow, 2012). Despite the police telling Zimmerman to discontinue his pursuit of Trayvon, he persisted and eventually confronted the 17-year-old boy. There was an alleged physical altercation, which resulted in Zimmerman delivering a fatal gunshot to

Trayvon's chest. While this case is currently under review and Zimmerman is being tried for murder a month and a half after the event, there is a lot of confusion regarding Zimmerman's identity. Is he White, Hispanic, or both?

Mary Sanchez of the Kansas City Star describes Zimmerman as the son of a White father and a Peruvian mother (Sanchez, 2012). Basically saying that he is racially White and ethnically Peruvian – a Latino group. She says that it's correct to call Zimmerman White because "*Hispanics are an ethnicity... they can be of any race.*" However, Zimmerman's father described his son as a "*Hispanic that grew up in a multiracial family*" in a one-page letter written to The Orlando Sentinel (Blow, 2012). What is George Zimmerman's racial identity?

First off, I want to point out that Zimmerman's mother is not raced in Sanchez's article. That is, her Peruvian ethnic identity is marked but there are no markers for her racial identity. I believe this to be a prime example of how Latinos, such as Zimmerman's mother, are often made into racial others and not viewed socially as fitting into the United States racial model. If "Hispanics can be of any race" then why not list what his mother's race is? For all we know, according to Sanchez's definition of Latino racial identity, Zimmerman's mother can be of Black, Asian American or Indigenous backgrounds. However, I am not surprised that her racial identity is not listed because that is the case for many Latinos, as I'll mention later. It is just interesting that by the way Mary Sanchez describes George Zimmerman he inherited his father's race and his mother's ethnicity but not his father's ethnicity or his mother's race.

Secondly, his father, who is described as a White male, views his son as a Hispanic who grew up in a multiracial family, not as a multi-racial Hispanic. George

Zimmerman's own father does not view him as White. In fact, when I saw a picture of him myself I did not see a White man, but a man that looked much like some of my Mexican relatives and community members (Appendix A).

Sanchez (2012) writes that Hispanics have historically been in a sort of racial limbo and that "*sometimes Hispanics are treated with the disdain and segregation that faced African-Americans and sometimes not.*" I find this statement to be incredibly correct and factual as it relates to my own life and experience relatively well. I have felt that at times I have been treated well by Whites and other times I have been treated very badly, most times of which I am certain is because of the way I look. Sanchez raised a great point about Latinos being in racial limbo, but I do not agree with her comments regarding Latino racial identity. However, I will investigate this some more and ask: what characteristics define a White Latino?

William Blain Richardson III, more popularly known as Bill Richardson the ex-Governor of New Mexico and Tufts alumnus, has an interesting family background. His paternal grandfather is described as a White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and his paternal grandmother is Mexican (Tancredo, 2012). Similarly, his maternal grandfather is from Northern Spain, and his maternal grandmother is Mexican (Tancredo, 2012).

While his background has been mentioned in different media outlets, he is always called a Hispanic or Latino without any mention of Whiteness (Tancredo, 2012). In contrast, George Zimmerman is called both a White man and a White Hispanic (Sanchez, 2012; Tancredo, 2012). What constitutes a White Hispanic and how is this identity perceived?

Tancredo (2012) notes that before Zimmerman's father sent that letter to the Orlando Sentinel (Sanchez, 2012) and other conservative news sites, the term White Hispanic had actually never been used. He notes his experience of typing in "White Hispanic" and "Zimmerman" into Google and receiving over 1,200 stories and finding it strange that when he removed "Zimmerman," there were only 50 stories – all of which were indirectly referring to Zimmerman (Tancredo, 2012). Despite approximately 36 percent of Latinos racially identifying as White (Taylor, López, Martínez & Velasco, 2012), they have never been raced as White in the media until now. Instead, Latinos have been raced as a group separate of Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans and Native Americans, as was the case when describing Zimmerman's mother (Sanchez, 2012).

Additionally, when investigating the usage of the term 'White Hispanic,' which is supposed to be a person who is racially White and ethnically Hispanic, Tancredo (2012) found that the New York Times had only used the term only five times before Zimmerman. Tancredo (2012) feels that the current media shift in identifying Zimmerman's race from White to "complicated" is an attempt to play down the fact that he is Latino or a White Latino. However, I think they are calling it complicated because that is exactly what it is. They want to call him Latino while also wanting to call him White, but feel that calling him both just isn't right. Socially, Whiteness is not something associated with or attributed to Latinos/Hispanics. His identity is complicated because the Latino identity has not yet been defined as a race, which conflicts with the general consensus that Latinos are racially different from Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans and Native Americans.

Case Study 2

A White man attacked a Boston College freshman on two consecutive evenings in April 2012 (Uduma, 2012). The student, Paige Yeager Rojas, stated that she is “*of biracial decent, of Chilean and German decent and was called a ‘dirty Spic’ by [her] attacker*” (Uduma, 2012). Is Paige actually biracial? Also, if Latinos were an ethnicity, would this hate crime be considered racial profiling?

Obviously, Paige was targeted because she is a Latina as her attacker called her a “*dirty Spic.*” Paige also claims biraciality, attributing this to her German and Chilean background. Now, neither German nor Chilean are racial categories, but I believe that she was alluding to having a White parent and a Latino/a parent. Again, only one of these is a race in the U.S. racial model. However, I believe that her Latino identity was racialized and led to her being attacked. This case is definitely categorized under racial profiling because her attacker did not choose her based on her Chilean ethnic group membership specifically, but rather because she is a Latina.

Furthermore, the student body was uninformed about this incident for quite some time and when they were notified, the security advisory left out descriptions of Paige’s race, describing her just as “*a female student*” and failed to mention that she was targeted because of her Latina group membership (Uduma, 2012). Additionally, the president of the campus group called the Organization of Latina American Affairs sent out a mass email acknowledging the racial bias that took place and calling for campus wide discussion on this and similar events (Uduma, 2012).

There is a general unwillingness to talk about race, especially in association with hate crimes. Not only are they evidence that we are not in a post-racial society, but they

also draw attention to the delusion that racial harmony exists at places like universities that claim diversity and understanding.

Case Study 3

All six participants of my research were from either the Bronx or Manhattan, two boroughs of New York City. Additionally, all six participants are Dominican American and have spent over one half of their lives in the United States. The participants were asked to locate themselves racially by answering Questions 8 and 9 of the 2010 Census and then explain their rationales for identifying the way they did. Furthermore, they answered questions about their families, neighborhoods, and their opinions about recognizing Latinos as a separate racial category.

Racial Self-Identifications

While every participant answered Yes to Question 8, his or her answers to Question 9 varied greatly. Two participants checked off “Some Other Race,” one participant checked off Black, and three checked off both White and Black.

Those who checked off “Some Other Race” had similar rationales for identifying as such: the categories listed did not provide them with the appropriate response to how they saw themselves. One of the participants added, *“I just do not affiliate myself with any of [the races listed here]. I am not Chinese, I am not Black, I am not White... and I’m not American Indian either... I mean, I can go into one of these sociology classes and be yelled at for doing that because it depends on the person’s definition of race. Some people say race is color; others say it is what you identify yourself as.”* I find it very

interesting that they spoke of race being equated with skin color and how both of these participants went against the norm and intentionally chose to identify as a racial category not listed.

The one student who answered that they were racially Black explained by saying, *“I like to recognize within myself the African origin based on my culture, which is very heavy on the African influence and my physical features. I have features like those of African descent: My nose is wider, my lips are fuller and my hair is a little curlier... I didn't put the option 'White' because it's not how I would define myself under the current implications of what being White is [in the United States].”* This, too, is very interesting in that the participant recognized Blackness as a fusion of biological and cultural characteristics that influence his Dominican-ness.

The three students who answered that they were racially both Black and White explained their answers in a similar manner. All of them cited that they have mixed Black and White parents and that although they themselves may “look White” or “not look Black,” it would be *“wrong to ignore the African history in the Dominican Republic.”* What I found significant is that all of these students used some sort of biological argument as to why they answered the way they did. This speaks as to how race is viewed by some Latinos in the United States.

Families

All of the participants stated that their parents would identify first as Dominican when asked about their identity. Furthermore, most participants stated that if forced to pick between White, Black, Asian American, or Native American, their parents would

choose White because “*No one wants to be Black*” – even though the participants themselves viewed their parents as not White. Some participants included that if their parents were asked verbally without listing racial categories from which to choose from, they would answer that they are Latinos.

Neighborhoods

All students stated that they lived in communities of “*mostly Blacks and Latinos.*” Additionally, all of them lived in neighborhoods where their culture was visible in the forms of the people that lived there, the restaurants, markets, and other stores that were present in the area. One participant went so far as to say, “*They had the whole shebang, even people selling fruits and stuff in the streets in front of stores. It wasn’t the same [as when I lived in the Dominican Republic], but it was definitely a good feeling... It was something that I enjoyed.*” This is remarkable because even for students who lived in communities where they were not a minority, they still saw differences between Latinos and Blacks, Asian Americans, Whites, and Native Americans.

Latino Racial Category

Here are two quotes from the participants regarding whether or not a Latino racial category should be recognized:

- “*I would really love a Latino category... I would really like it if they put it there. Why is everything else here, but that? Why are [all of us] considered Black?*”

- *“I have to say yes. I think it would make things easier for a lot of people because there is so much difference between Latinos and other groups that are on the Census. There are a lot of problems with the race question.”*

The rest of the participants were likeminded in that they held similar beliefs. All six interviewees believe that Latinos should be recognized as a racial category because the Latino experience cannot be measured with the current U.S. racial model. When asked if they would check off Latino if it were listed on the census as a racial category, all students said yes. These quotes help give voice to what Latinos are thinking when they are confronted with the question about their racial identity and how they view race as a system that invalidates their experiences.

Conclusion

As seen in the media examples and the students I interviewed, Latinos are viewed as, and thought to be, a racial group. Students with a Latino and non-Latino parent consider themselves biracial (Udama, 2012) and, in particular, those with Latino and White parents are viewed as Latinos by others, not White (Sanchez, 2012; Tancredo, 2012; Udama, 2012). This may even allude to the “one-drop rule” that posits that anyone with “one drop” of non-White blood is considered not White (Omi & Winant, 1994). Or perhaps this suggests how Whiteness is viewed based off of some notion of purity and that the addition of anything non-White is the pollution of White blood (Omi & Winant, 1994). Moreover, the students I interviewed showed how and why a Latino could identify as White and/or Black when given a paper that only lists those options, then almost completely go back on their choice if they had the option to choose Latino. These are

very powerful findings in that Latinos actually do feel some sort of forced response urging them into picking a racial category they do not readily associate or identify themselves with.

Chapter 6 – Literature Review

While many authors have written about the Latino identity and have acknowledged its difference from other social groups, it has *never* been in terms of race. More often than not, an author will claim Latinidad as an ethnic identity or ambiguously as some identity that some people possess, but never in the absolute clarity to settle any disputes. Throughout months of research, I have yet to come across any author that has made a serious approach to supporting this group as a racial identity. For this chapter I will begin by introducing authors of various professional backgrounds and their arguments stating that Latinos are not a racial group. I then offer my own counterarguments to each author, expressing my personal and academic beliefs as to why Latinos are a racial group by both pulling information from previous chapters of this paper and using logical inferences.

Bergad and Klein

Laird W. Bergad is a Professor in the Department of Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies at Lehman College and the Ph.D. Program in History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (Bergad & Klein, 2010). Herbert S. Klein has written about twenty books on Latin America and comparative themes in social and economic history (Bergad & Klein, 2010). Neither of the authors located themselves racially or ethnically within their book, *Hispanics in the United States* (2010), something that I find interesting for scholars writing about race and ethnicity.

Bergad and Klein (2010) argue that the Latino population is not a homogenous ethnic or racial group as perceived by non-Latinos, but is instead made up of “*several*

subgroups that arrived in the United States at different time periods for different reasons.”

They do recognize, however, that many second, third or later generations have embraced the concept of a collective Latino identity, but that their nationalities are always stressed first (Bergad & Klein, 2010).

I agree with their argument that Latinos are not racially or ethnically homogenous. They possess many cultural differences and there are those that are racialized as White, Black, or Asian American. However, I believe that most Latinos that are racialized as White, Black, or Asian American are also racialized as Latinos because of their names, accents and other personal attributes. That is, they are not racialized as a single race, but often viewed as biracial for one reason or another.

Additionally, just because many Latinos stress their nationality first does not mean that they do not support, or actively oppose, a collective Latino identity. This is indicative of the existence of a strong ethnic bond, not the absence of a racial bond. In my own experience, many Latinos are hesitant of calling themselves Latinos because it is viewed as an ethnic identity competing against their Mexican, Puerto Rican, Guatemalan, etc. ethnic identities. I can see how if a person calls himself or herself a Latino (as an ethnic identity), they might feel like they are turning their backs on the country of their heritage. If asked for my ethnicity, I would say I am Mexican, not Latino. This is because my culture cannot be defined as Latino – an identity that is not characteristic of culture, but instead of a race/social category. Also, for those Latinos that do actively oppose using the term “Latino” as a personal identifier, I believe that this is done in order to reject an identity that is uncharacteristic of their culture.

Lew Rockwell Blog, <http://www.lewrockwell.com>

Ryan McMaken and David Kramer are columnists for the Lew Rockwell website, a conservative anti-war, anti-state, pro-market web-blog. Neither columnist is located racially or ethnically within their articles.

Ryan McMaken of the LRC Blog argues that “*according to anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, and census takers, "Hispanic" or "Latino" is not a racial designation. It is a term that denotes ethnicity. Hispanics can be of any race. There are white Hispanics, black Hispanics, and even Asian Hispanics. Examples would be former Mexican president Vicente Fox, Cuban musician Ibrahim Ferrer, and former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, respectively. There are also, of course, mestizo Hispanics, such as Benito Juarez*” (McMaken, 2012). And to a certain point, I agree with him. I, too, believe that there are White Latinos, Black Latinos, Asian Latinos and Native American-Latinos. However, I would not consider these people to possess a singular racial identity. Instead, I would say that these people are multiracial, possessing more than one race. For example, my own experience with Asian Latinos is that they are raced both as Asian Americans and Latinos. Some people may view them just as Asian or just Latino, but many Asians or Latinos will not view them in terms of monoraciality. That is, Asian Americans do not view Asian Latinos as *just* Asian Americans and Latinos do not view them as *just* Latino.

Another claim from McMaken (2012) is that the usage of terms such as White or Hispanic are often misused, which “*betrays just how completely ignorant most reporters and talking heads are about even the basics of ethnicity and race in this country.*” But what exactly separates the reporters’ ignorance from his?

McMaken says that along with White, Black, and Asian Latinos there are also *mestizo* Latinos. Mestizos are a mixed race individual of White/Spanish and Indigenous backgrounds. Mestizo is also a Latino-based racial category that does not fall within the United States racial model (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001). It literally makes no sense to even reference this term in relation to other U.S. racial groups because they do not occupy the same social spheres. By mentioning mestizos, this shows that McMaken himself is unfamiliar with how race is constructed within the United States.

Additionally, McMaken (2012) defines Latinos as “*simply a person raised in a culture in which Hispanic cultural elements are a dominant or influential factor in one's life.*” He is very careful, however, to abstain from explicitly commenting on their place in U.S. society. That is, that Latinos are treated and viewed differently from Whites, Blacks, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

On the same web-blog, David Kramer (2012) comments on George Zimmerman (of Case Study 1), “*So how come the man who is accused of wrongfully shooting Trayvon Martin, George Zimmerman—who is half-Latino (Peruvian, to be precise)—is being depicted as a "White" man? He sure looks Latino to me. I don't see half-White Barack Obama ever being depicted as a White man (probably because he looks Black).*”

I find it interesting that within the same conservative organization, these people have differing views. While McMaken claims Latinos to be of any race, Kramer (2012) treats Latinos as a separate racial category despite his claims that they are not. Regardless of his hypocrisy, Kramer conceptualizes an appearance that Latinos fall under and thus signifies that difference between Latinos and other groups exist.

Clara E. Rodríguez, *Changing Race* (2000)

Clara E. Rodríguez is a Professor of Sociology at Fordham University's College at Lincoln Center (Rodríguez, 2000). She describes herself as a "light-skinned Latina with European features and hair texture" (Rodríguez, 2000). In her book, *Changing Race* (2000), she argues, "*Hispanics are neither a race nor a racially homogenous group. Rather, they are a diverse array of multiracial ethnic groups.*" She adds, "*making Latinos a race and eliminating a separate Latino identifier would not allow individuals to respond that they were, for example, both Latino and Black.*"

I believe that the basis for Rodríguez's argument relies on a notion of singular raciality as the only way of existing. That is, someone cannot racially be a Latino because for some unknown reason it would prevent him or her from being Black. This is completely wrong! Even government forms as flawed as the U.S. Census allowed respondents to choose more than one race. In fact, over nine million people responded with two or more races on the 2010 Census (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Instead, making a Latino racial identifier would urge Latinos to not have to pick White on these forms and instead pick a label made by the people it encompasses.

Jorge J. E. Gracia

Jorge J. E. Gracia identifies as a Cuban American man and is a Professor of Philosophy and the State University of New York at Buffalo. In his book, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (2000), he argues, "*There does not seem to be any race that can properly be called Hispanic... What would be the characteristics of a Hispanic race? ...There is in fact no identifiable property, or set of*

properties, that one can identify which is shared by those people one would want to call Hispanics.”

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, Latinos have many shared characteristics and properties. They have shared histories of oppression and social treatment in economic, education and political spheres – that is an undeniable truth for Latinos. Maybe, though, Gracia is basing his argument off of looks, in which case I would have to agree with him. As I stated earlier in Chapter 4, Latinos vary in shapes, color and size, but their history is constant across the different ethnic groups that are comprised under the Latino identity. However, to say that there is no identifiable set of properties that helps define what and who a Latino is ignores the history of these people.

David T. Abalos

David T. Abalos identifies as a Mexican/Latino man and is a Professor of Religion and Sociology at Seton Hall University (Abalos, 2007). In his book, *Latinos in the United States: The Sacred and the Political* (2007), he states, “*We know that Latino/as can be members of any race and this is obvious for anybody who travels to Latin America or enters the barrios of this country.*”

First off, I am not sure how traveling to Latin America will make any sense of the racial model in the United States. If anything, this is just another example of the fluidity of racial constructs as they are not concrete across national boundaries. Secondly, I think referencing the racial constructs of other countries makes a biological assumption that equates race with phenotypic features rather than the supporting the social reality that race is the way people assign meaning to a phenotype.

In regards to ‘entering the barrios of this country,’ and seeing how Latinos can be members of different races, I do not believe this. I have spent my entire life in a disenfranchised community that would be considered a barrio by most standards and the Latinos that live there are by no means of different racial groups. There may be a terrible case of skin tone bias, but those with lighter skin are not White and those with darker skin are not Black. Aside from the Rio Grande Valley, I have also spent time in Boston, Massachusetts, New York, New York, and Richmond, California, all places that have barrios. It does not take an insider to see that Blacks, Whites, and Asian Americans do not see Latinos as their own.

Common Themes

Many arguments against a Latino racial identity focus on two things. The first is that Latinos are an ethnic identity, which I have argued to be false as there is no common cultural component. The second being that Latinos do not look enough alike to be a racial group, which relies too heavily on race being a biological construct. Socially and historically, Latinos are a distinct group in the United States and this needs to be recognized, accepted, and internalized.

Conclusion

We saw in my own experience how an individual Latino can struggle with their racial identity and later saw how other Latino students would answer this question of racial identity under similar situations to my own. It is fascinating to see that different people view race in different ways. The amorphous characteristics of race are what keep this concept so difficult to understand and/or accept. While we know that racial categories and the people they encompass have changed over time, as seen with Jews, Italians and Irish, we can infer that race is not static or concrete. The fact that racial models are not uniform across the time and place is enough reason to throw out the biological argument about the origins of race.

In regards to Latinidad as an ethnic identity, most arguments rely on there being a central Latino culture, which is not an acceptable argument as there is actually no common culture between the people that the term Latino encompasses. Moreover, literature by Latino scholars and non-scholars indicate how even professionals with advanced degrees will still make the argument that Latinos are not a race because they do not share a common set of physical features. But as Ferrante and Browne (2001) stated, *“biological race is the illusion, social race is not.”* Latinos do not have to look alike to be a racial category because their histories and the politics of their identity transcend their physical characteristics and stand in the space they occupy in society.

Aside from all of this, one could still ask why a Latino racial category even matters. Why do I care about this so much and why should both Latinos and non-Latinos care about the creation of a Latino racial category? My research only scratches at the surface of the answers to these questions because the Latino identity itself requires much

more analysis, but nonetheless I will use the information I have gathered. As I have stated throughout this paper, race is a social construct rooted in both history and politics. I cannot stress enough how important this definition of race is. One cannot ignore the history of oppression and conquest of Latinos or the social policies that have historically excluded Latinos from educational, economic or political spheres.

I care about this issue because I have already gone through the struggle of figuring out and defining my racial identity and I know how hard it can be. I also know that other people have gone, are going, or will go, through similar struggles. Racial identity development is not just a mere headache for those left outside of the U.S. racial model, but it is mentally damaging and harmful to the overall identity of an individual. Additionally, I did not spend so much of my time on this project because I simply want a box to check off when I answer surveys like the census – it *so much more* than that. Problems with racial identity are not indicative of problems within the individual, but structural problems within the United States racial model.

I believe that formally recognizing Latinos as a racial category has the potential to create a unifying effect that would provide great strength in the sheer numbers that Latinos possess and continue to build on. Because the Latino identity is not consistent across social and political platforms, there is great confusion regarding whom and what the Latino identity encompasses which in turn weakens the bond between those who should embrace Latino membership and those that already do. Moreover, this bond can give Latinos the voice they need to positively change their situation as a disenfranchised minority group. Their education, their economic and cultural capital, and their political representation is at stake. This is why I think that Latinos should care about this topic. As

a historically marginalized group that is more often than not denied racial group membership in any of the four recognized categories, Latinos in their current state of 'racial limbo' are nothing more than a increasingly large group of people with no voice, which further places them in a position to be used as a tool for Whites to sustain White supremacy in this country. Latinos have the power to assist with dismantling the clout that Whites hold in the broader United States society by banding together and challenging Whiteness and the status quo. A Latino racial identity would have vast implications for economic, educational, and public policy. However, the implications of a Latino racial identity are not guaranteed to be positive. While I would hope that Latinos would form together a cohesive group, united in their goals and ambitions, it is undeniable that it is also very possible that this group of people might actually strengthen White supremacy with the new category.

Who is to say that Latinos, because of their current state in which they are thrown into and enticed by Whiteness, will not become an 'honorary White' group? What is stopping Latinos from denying or rejecting the creation of a new racial category? For example, the creation of the Asian American racial category was not necessarily met with great acceptance. In fact, even today there are a lot of people who reject the Asian American racial category and support the Model Minority Myth (Takaki, 2008) that juxtaposes them to Blacks and Latinos, which ends up pitting Asian Americans against Black and Latinos and vice versa. Additionally, Latinos that could 'pass for White' might reject their Latinidad and gravitate toward Whiteness more so than they do now, an act with potential to further fragment this group. But of course, these are only the best and worst-case scenarios. We cannot posit that the effects of creating a Latino racial category

will be so polarized. A middle ground in which Latinos become more fragmented, but actually have a politicized voice and agenda is arguably better than the current state of fragmentation without political clout. When it comes down to it, I would personally rather be part of a group that can and will fight for their rights than a group that has no collective identity or plan of action.

The power of Latinos is measured in the political and economic power they have the potential to gain. For example, data collected in the U.S. Census is used “*to fill a variety of legislative and program requirements*” such as the redistricting process carried out by each of the states and in monitoring local jurisdictions’ compliance with the Voting Rights Act (Humes, Jones, & Ramírez, 2011). Humes, Jones and Ramirez (2011) also state that, “*The data on Hispanic origin and race are critical for research that underlies many policy decisions at all levels of government.*” This is further proof of the great social and political importance that Latinos *become* a racial group. This potential unified Latino identity could actualize the political power of Latinos and strengthen their bond rather than continue on the assimilatory path to dilution that is necessary for Whites to stay dominant.

I want to believe that there is hope for Latinos. Yen’s article in the Huffington Post titled, “*Many Resist Race Labels in U.S. Census,*” includes excerpts of an interview with the U.S. Census Bureau. Future modifications to the Census discussed by their focus groups included the possibility to “*treat Hispanics as a mutually exclusive group to the four main race categories*” (Yen, 2012). This response is not new, though. For over twenty years, there has been talk about including Latinos as a racial category because of the problems that government forms pose. The first example of contemporary

documentation of this discussion began after the data collection of the 1990 census. In particular, what makes the 1990 census special is that it was the second year where census forms were allowed to be self-reported, mail-back forms (Rodríguez, 2000). What had happened in the 1990 census that sparked discussion on Latino racial identity actually happened with the previous census as well. Large numbers of Latinos in both 1980 and 1990 checked off some other race, but it was not until the 1990 census that it was marked (Rodríguez, 2000). Rodríguez (2000) states that the general assumption regarding the massive number of Latinos that answered against the expectation was that they had difficulty with the question or just plainly misunderstood the question. This causes one to wonder if the situation would have been handled differently if the issue was not regarding race. Imagine this: forty percent (or more than nine million people) responded “Some Other Gender” instead of Male or Female. Would the United States Bureau of the Census assume that people had difficulty with the question? Would they assume that people misunderstood the question? I think not. I really doubt that the peoples’ intelligence would be in question and instead, the bureau would launch a real investigation on the issues surrounding the way that this identity is perceived and lived in order to provide better and more appropriate responses. Nothing is wrong with the people, but something is definitely wrong with how the census categorizes these people. This can be seen in how the introduction of self-identification in the census caused the proportion of White Hispanics to drop from 93.3 percent in 1970 to 57.7 percent in 1980 (Rodríguez, 2000). While Latinos were told what race they were up to the 1970’s, once the 1980’s came around they took a stance by refusing to identify in a racial model that excludes their experiences.

The drastic change in Latino racial identification from 1970 to 1980 is very interesting. We see that there are Latinos who want to be White and others that refuse to be White. Those that lean towards Whiteness would probably strongly oppose the new racial category while those who reject Whiteness would most likely heavily support the new category. Additionally, just because 57.7 percent of Latinos in 1980 chose White does not necessarily mean that they actually see themselves as White, but possibly that they do not know what else to put. The general Latino mentality on racial self-identification that I have gathered from my own life experiences is such, "*I am definitely not Black, Asian American or Native American, so that must mean I'm White.*" I am certain that if Latinos could list that they were ethnically Mexican and racially Latino, they would not feel so forced into Whiteness, a category unbecoming of what many Latinos experience in the United States. As for those that do identify as White, we see that while the Census reported 57.7 percent in 1980 (Rodríguez, 2000), the Pew Hispanic Center found that only 36 percent self-identified as White in 2011 (Taylor, López, Martínez, & Velasco, 2011). These statistics indicate that there has been a declining association between Latinos and Whiteness over the past thirty years. This gives me reason to believe that Latinos do not prefer the illusion of Whiteness to the reality of their identity. For many that come from this group whose identity is focused around community and family, their allegiance is to their *gente*, not to the favorable treatment linked to Whiteness. There will continue to be intragroup discrimination as there is today, but I do not think that it would negatively impacted by the creation of a Latino racial category.

Again, this is not only an issue for individuals nor is it an issue only for Latinos as an entire group. Non-Latinos have much to gain from the establishment and recognition of a new racial category. As previously mentioned, it is possible that Latino unity would challenge the status quo of White supremacy and superiority in society. But this is not the only way that non-Latinos can benefit from a Latino racial category. If instituted correctly, I believe that Latino unity would foster more positive feelings toward Blacks, Asian Americans, and Native Americans as well. The addition of this Latino racial category would acknowledge the history and politicization of Latinos, bringing out the similarities in the histories of these different racial groups, which would further allow for a greater understanding amongst these racial groups. When people know that they are not so different after all, there is less reason to discriminate against them and more reason to appreciate them. However, I believe that this positive impact on Latino opinions toward other groups is more likely to occur if this racial identity is created in conjunction with the inclusion of Latino history in the education system, as seen in the documentary *Precious Knowledge* (Sargent, 2011), which shows how students in the Mexican-American Studies program in the Tucson School District were more likely to be accepting of other racial groups.

One would hope that the U.S. Census Bureau would finally add the Latino racial category to the census. What makes this difficult is that the structure of the U.S. racial model has been unbending. Whites, as the dominant racial group in the U.S., want to continue to stay in power and part of doing this requires that Latinos and other groups of color buy into Whiteness. By forcing Latinos into racial categories that do not fit them,

this is a large population that whose political voice is silenced, making them easier to control.

As a group that is raced differently across social and political spheres, we are going to continue to see racial classification issues persist among those in the Latino category, which may in turn be a reason for the substantial number of the Latino population that is being categorized as Some Other Race. I want to note that this paper is not a call for Latinos to join together and draw hatred toward Whites for things that have happened in the past or present, but to embrace their identity by understanding the past and present as a means to have a voice and more effectively join the political discourse of this country to positively impact their future. Additionally, this is not a call for multiracial people to embrace their Latinidad over their other racial identities, but to embrace their Latinidad to the same degree of their other racial identities. May this research inspire others to explore their racial identity as a Latino and urge the larger society to recognize us for whom we are, rather than force us into boxes we do not fit into.

Appendix A – George Zimmerman, image from Associated Press



Appendix B – 2010 U.S. Census Questions 8 & 9, retrieved from Google Images

http://farm5.static.flickr.com/4068/4442280946_4e484fc565.jpg or

<http://www.nathangibbs.com/2010/03/17/census-2010-what-race-should-latinos-choose/>

→ **NOTE: Please answer BOTH Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races.**

8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — *Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.* ↴

9. What is Person 1's race? Mark one or more boxes.

- White
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ↴

<input type="checkbox"/> Asian Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Japanese	<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian
<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Guamanian or Chamorro
<input type="checkbox"/> Filipino	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese	<input type="checkbox"/> Samoan
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian — <i>Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.</i> ↴	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Pacific Islander — <i>Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.</i> ↴	

- Some other race — *Print race.* ↴

Appendix C – U.S. Census Racial Categories from 1890-1990, from Rodríguez, 2000

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
White	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Black		■	■	■							
Negro					■	■	■	■			
Black/Negro									■	■	■
Mulatto	■		■	■							
Quadroon	■										
Indian	■	■	■	■	■	■					
American Indian							■	■			
Indian (Amer.)									■	■	■
Aleut								■		■	■
Eskimo								■		■	■
Asian or Pacific Islander											■
Chinese	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Japanese	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Filipino					■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Hindu					■	■					
Korean					■	■			■	■	■
Hawaiian								■	■	■	■
Part Hawaiian								■			
Vietnamese										■	■
Asian Indian										■	■
Guamanian										■	■
Samoan										■	■
Mexican					■						
Other			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Source: Adapted from Sharon M. Lee, "Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census: 1890–1990," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16 (1) (January 1993): 78.

Appendix D – Email Recruitment Form

Hello,

My name is Justin Pequeño and I am a senior at Tufts University. I am currently seeking participants for my Senior Honors Thesis titled, *Shades of Latinidad: A Perspective of Latino Racial Identity Development*. Participation would include an in-person interview at a location agreed upon with the participant, including at or near their home campus. The interview will consist of questions regarding the participant's attitudes and perceptions of their racial identity. Upon request, no identifiers (name, university attending, etc.) will be used in my write-up and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. While there are no direct benefits to participants in this study, there are also no risks or potential harm. If the participant feels uncomfortable at any time during the interview, they reserve the right to discontinue, although I do not believe this will be necessary.

The participants of my study must meet all of the following criteria:

- Dominican American
- College student
- Raised in New York City (for at least half of their life)

If you think you may know anyone that fits these criteria, please forward this email to them and ask them to reply to justin.pequeno@tufts.edu if they are interested in participating.

Thank you!
Justin Pequeño

Appendix E – Interview Consent Form

TUFTS UNIVERSITY
AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
STUDY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Justin Pequeño, A'12.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: (956) 605-8677 Email: justin.pequeno@tufts.edu

IRB Administrator: Lara Sloboda

Tel: (617) 627-3276 Email: lara.sloboda@tufts.edu

STUDY TITLE: The Racialized Experience of Dominican American College Students

PURPOSE AND DURATION: This study involves research on human development. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to investigate the experience Dominican Americans had growing up, especially in relation to racial self-identification and self-perception. I expect that it will take approximately 1 hour of your time.

PROCEDURES: I will ask you several questions regarding your experience growing up in New York City and write down your answers. Topics will include family life, experiences at school and racial identity. For transcription and reference purposes, the audio for this interview will be recorded, although you may continue participation without being audio-recorded.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORT: There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort associated with this study, however if you do experience discomfort you are more than welcome to withdraw from the study (see the end of this form).

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to you besides the educational experience of participating in this study. However, I expect that the results of this study will add to the body of knowledge on human development and racial identity development.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The results of this study may be published in a scholarly book, journal, my Senior Honors Thesis, presented at professional conferences, or used for teaching purposes. However, your name and other identifiers will not be used in any publication or teaching materials. In addition, the recordings processed today will not be

heard by anyone but the research staff and only the principal investigator will have access to these files.

COMPENSATION: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

REQUEST FOR MORE INFORMATION: You may ask more questions about the study at any time. Please e-mail the principal investigator at justin.pequeno@tufts.edu or telephone (956) 605-8677 with any questions or concerns about the study. In addition, you may contact Lara Sloboda, IRB administrator of the Tufts University Social, Behavioral, and Educational Institutional Review Board, at (617) 627-3276.

WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary. Should you decide at any time during the study that you no longer wish to participate you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation.

SIGNATURE: I confirm that I understand the purpose of the research and the study procedures. I understand that I may ask questions at any time and can withdraw my participation without prejudice. I have read this consent form. My signature below indicates my willingness to participate in this study.

Consent to participate:

Participant Signature

Date

Consent to be audio-taped

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Appendix F – Interview Questions

Preliminary questions before interviewing:

Name:

School:

Class Year:

Birthdate:

Birthplace:

Current City of Residence:

Actual Interview:

- Where in New York City are you from?
- Would you say that you did a majority of your growing up in NYC (at least half)?
- How long would you say your family has lived there?
- Are both of your parents Dominican? Born in the Dominican Republic or the USA?
- Are there a lot of Dominicans where you live (based on visibility)?
 - Are there Dominican restaurants nearby? Markets? Other stores?
 - Is your culture visible in your city?
- What about at the schools you went/go to?
 - Elementary:
 - Middle School:
 - High School:
 - College:
- Can you describe your closest friends? (Look for answers around:)
 - Gender:
 - Race:
 - Similar interests/backgrounds:
- What do you know about other Latino groups (Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc.)?
 - Are they different from you? Similar? If so, in what way(s)?
- Were you ever friends with anyone that belonged to these groups?
 - Can you describe them? (Personality, appearance, best friend, regular friend, acquaintance, etc.)
 - How long were you friends with them? Are you still friends with them?
- If given this (show them a census page asking about race/ethnicity), what would you check off?
 - If they choose only Latino/Hispanic+Dominican, ask why?
 - If they choose Latino/Hispanic+Dominican+White, ask why?
 - If they choose Latino/Hispanic+Dominican+Black, ask why?
- What would you say is your race?
 - Does it feel assigned or is this how you see yourself?
 - Have you always felt this way? (Would have said this 5 years ago?) What caused this change, if any?
 - What race do you think your family members view themselves as?
 - What race do you think strangers view you as?

- What is good about people in your race? (This does not have to reflect your personal beliefs)
- What is bad about people in your race? (This does not have to reflect your personal beliefs)
- What are some characteristics of people within your racial category?
- Do you fit these characteristics?

- Does your family ever talk about your race?
 - What do they say?
- Does your family ever talk about other races?
 - What do they say?
- Do you believe racism still exists?
- Have you ever been a target of racism/discrimination? If so, what race was the perpetrator? Can you recall the first time you were a target?

- Do you believe Latinos should have their own race?
 - Why or why not?

- If you have any other comments or remarks on these topics, please use this time to converse with me.

Appendix G – Debriefing form

The Racialized Experience of Dominican American College Students

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study was to gather your attitudes and perceptions of racial identity and determine whether or not your racialized experiences are characteristic of prevalent Black or White racial identity development models. I hypothesize that Dominican Americans, like other Latinos, possess different racialized experiences than those described by these models and thus deserve a modified or completely new model. This study may contribute to a larger body of information surrounding the racial identity development of Latinos.

I would like to take this time to remind you that upon your request no identifiers will be used in my final product. All information remains confidential – any and all information gathered today will not be discussed outside of an academic setting. Please refrain from discussing the content and material of the interview with others that may be participating in this study until you are certain that their participation is complete.

Background information on theories of racial identity development can be read in Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum's book, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria?* and Janet Helms' book, *A Race Is A Nice Thing To Have*.

If you would like more information about the results of my study, please feel free to contact me at Justin.Pequeno@tufts.edu after April 19, 2012.

Principal Investigator
Justin J. Pequeño González
Justin.Pequeno@tufts.edu

Faculty Advisor
Jean Wu
Jean.Wu@tufts.edu

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Footnotes

1. The United States argued that the southern border of Texas was the Rio Grande River whereas Mexico argued that it was the Nueces River, approximately 150 miles north of the Rio Grande. The United States sent army troops into the disputed area and after a small confrontation with Mexican troops, the U.S. declared war on Mexico because “American blood was dropped on U.S. soil.”
2. The document that formally ended the U.S.-Mexico War in 1848, this treaty resulted in the annexation of one-half of Mexican land into the United States. This is responsible for a large number of Latinos being present within the United States.
3. The Interview Process: Participants were recruited over email and word-of-mouth. Recruitment emails were sent to Latino cultural organizations at select universities with similar populations and demographics. The presidents and chairs of these organizations then forwarded the email to those that fit the exact demographic requested: Dominican American college students who have grown up in New York City. “Grown up” is defined as having spent over half of their life in New York City and is reinforced by the participants’ self-identification with having grown up there. Those who were interested were given the option to volunteer their participation. Before the interview commenced, each participant was given a consent form detailing the extent of their participation, what was required of them, the topic of my research (no deception was used), potential personal benefits, risk or discomfort (or lack

thereof), and information regarding their withdrawal from participation. After reading the form, the participant was given the option to consent to participate and consent to be audio-recorded. The interview began with biographical questions before moving into questions regarding their racial attitudes and belief systems. To introduce the questions about race, I Finally, the last questions I asked were, “Do you believe “Latino” should be a racial category listed on the Census? Why or why not?” When the interview concluded, each participant was given time to ask questions regarding my own beliefs and attitudes. If and when their questions were complete and answered, they were given a debriefing form with book suggestions and contact information if they so choose to inquire about the results of my research.