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*Changing Race: Latinos, the Census, and the History of
Ethnicity in the United States*

Clara E. Rodríguez

CLARA E. RODRÍGUEZ

CHANGING RACE

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Latinos in the U.S. Race Structure

ACCORDING TO DEFINITIONS common in the United States, I am a light-skinned Latina with European features and hair texture. I was born and raised in New York City; my first language was Spanish; and I am today bilingual. I cannot remember when I first realized that the color of one's skin, the texture of one's hair, or the cast of one's features determined how one was treated in both my Spanish-language and English-language worlds. I do know that it was before I understood that accents, surnames, residence, class, and clothing also determined how one was treated.

Looking back on my childhood, I recall many instances when the lighter skin color and European features of some persons were admired and terms such as *pelo malo* (bad hair) were commonly used to refer to "tightly curled" hair. It was much later that I came to see that this Eurocentric bias, which favors European characteristics above all others, was part of our history and cultures. In both Americas and the Caribbean, we have inherited and continue to favor this Eurocentrism, which grew out of our history of indigenous conquest and slavery (Shohat and Stam 1994).

I also remember a richer, more complex sense of color than the simple dichotomy of black and white would suggest, a genuine aesthetic appreciation of people with some color and an equally genuine valuation of people as people, regardless of color. Also, people sometimes disagreed about an individual's color and "racial" classification, especially if the person in question was in the middle range, not just with regard to color, but also with regard to class or political position.¹

As I grew older, I came to see that many of these cues or clues to status—skin color, physical features, accents, surnames, residence, and other class characteristics—changed according to place or situation. For example, a natural "tan" in my South Bronx neighborhood was attractive, whereas downtown, in the business area, it was "otherizing." I also

recall that the same color was perceived differently in different areas. Even in Latino contexts, I saw some people as lighter or darker, depending on certain factors such as their clothes, occupation, and families.² I suspect that others saw me similarly, so that in some contexts, I was very light, in others darker, and in still others about the same as everyone else. Even though my color stayed the same, the perception and sometimes its valuation changed.

I also realize now that some Latinos' experiences were different from mine and that our experiences affect the way we view the world. I know that not all Latinos have multiple or fluctuating identities. For a few, social context is irrelevant. Regardless of the context, they see themselves, and/or are seen, in only one way. They are what the Census Bureau refers to as *consistent*; that is, they consistently answer in the same way when asked about their "race." Often, but not always, they are at one or the other end of the color spectrum.

My everyday experiences as a Latina, supplemented by years of scholarly work, have taught me that certain dimensions of race are fundamental to Latino life in the United States and raise questions about the nature of "race" in this country. This does not mean that all Latinos have the same experiences but that for most, these experiences are not surprising. For example, although some Latinos are consistently seen as having the same color or "race," many Latinos are assigned a multiplicity of "racial" classifications, sometimes in one day! I am reminded of the student who told me after class one day, "When people first meet me, they think I'm Italian, then when they find out my last name is Mendez, they think I'm Spanish, then when I tell them my mother is Puerto Rican, they think I'm nonwhite or black." Although he had not changed his identity, the perception of it changed with each additional bit of information.

Latino students have also told me that non-Latinos sometimes assume they are African American. When they assert they are not "black" but Latino, they are either reprovved for denying their "race" or told they are out of touch with reality. Other Latinos, who see whites as other-than-me, are told by non-Latinos, "But you're white." Although not all Latinos have such dramatic experiences, almost all know (and are often related to) others who have.

In addition to being reclassified by others (without their consent), some Latinos shift their own self-classification during their lifetime. I have known Latinos who became "black," then "white," then "human

beings," and finally again "Latino"—all in a relatively short time. I have also known Latinos for whom the sequence was quite different and the time period longer. Some Latinos who altered their identities came to be viewed by others as legitimate members of their new identity group. I also saw the simultaneously tricultural, sometimes trilingual, abilities of many Latinos who manifested or projected a different self as they acclimated themselves to a Latino, African American, or white context (Rodríguez 1989:77).

I have come to understand that this shifting, context-dependent experience is at the core of many Latinos' life in the United States. Even in the nuclear family, parents, children, and siblings often have a wide range of physical types. For many Latinos, race is primarily cultural; multiple identities are a normal state of affairs; and "racial mixture" is subject to many different, sometimes fluctuating, definitions.

Some regard *racial mixture* as an unfortunate or embarrassing term, but others consider the affirmation of mixture to be empowering. Lugones (1994) subscribes to this latter view and affirms "mixture," *mestizaje*, as a way of resisting a world in which purity and separation are emphasized and one's identities are controlled: "Mestizaje defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts . . . the mestiza . . . has no pure parts to be 'had,' controlled" (p. 460). Also prevalent in the upper classes is the hegemonic view that rejects or denies "mixture" and claims a "pure" European ancestry. This view also is common among middle- and upper-class Latinos, regardless of their skin color or place or origin. In some areas, people rarely claim a European ancestry, such as in indigenous sectors of Latin America, in parts of Brazil, and in the coastal areas of Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, and Panama (see, e.g., Arocha 1998; De La Fuente 1998). Recently, some Latinos have encouraged another view in which those historical components that were previously denied and denigrated, such as indigenous and African ancestry, were privileged (see, e.g., *Moro: La Revista de nuestra vida* [Bogota, Colombia, September 1998]; *La Voz del pueblo Taino* [The voice of the Taino people], official newsletter of the United Confederation of Taino People, U.S. regional chapter, New York, January 1998).

Many people, however—mostly non-Latinos—are not acquainted with these basic elements of Latino life. They do not think much about them, and when they do, they tend to see race as a "given," an ascribed characteristic that does not change for anyone, at any time. One is either

white or not white. They also believe that "race" is based on genetic inheritance, a perspective that is just another construct of race.

Whereas many Latinos regard their "race" as primarily cultural, others, when asked about their race, offer standard U.S. race terms, saying that they are white, black, or Indian. Still others see themselves as Latinos, Hispanics, or members of a particular national-origin group and as belonging to a particular race group.³ For example, they may identify themselves as Afro-Latinos or white Hispanics. In some cases, these identities vary according to context, but in others they do not.

I have therefore come to see that the concept of "race" can be constructed in several ways and that the Latino experience in the United States provides many illustrations of this. My personal experiences have suggested to me that for many Latinos, "racial" classification is immediate, provisional, contextually dependent, and sometimes contested. But because these experiences apply to many non-Latinos as well, it is evident to me that the Latino construction of race and the racial reading of Latinos are not isolated phenomena. Rather, the government's recent deliberations on racial and ethnic classification standards reflect the experiences and complexities of many groups and individuals who are similarly involved in issues pertaining to how they see themselves and one another (U.S. Department of Commerce 1995; U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995, 1997a and b, 1999; these deliberations will be reviewed in chapter 8).

Throughout my life, I have considered racism to be evil, and I oppose it with every fiber of my being. I study race to understand its influence on the lives of individuals and nations because I hope that honest, open, and well-meaning discussions of race and ethnicity and their social dynamics can help us appreciate diversity and value all people, not for their appearance, but for their character.

"OTHER RACE" IN THE 1980 AND 1990 CENSUSES

It was because of my personal experiences that I first began to write about race (Rodríguez 1974) and that I was particularly sensitive to Latinos' responses to the censuses' question about race. The U.S. Census Bureau's official position has been that race and ethnicity are two separate concepts. Thus, in 1980 and in 1990, the U.S. census asked people to indicate their "race"—white, black, Asian or Pacific Islander,

American Indian, or "other race"—and also whether or not they were Hispanic. (The two questions used in the 1980 and 1990 censuses are shown in figures 1.1 and 1.2). As table 1.1 shows, Latinos responded to the 1990 census's question about race quite differently than did non-Latinos. Whereas less than 1 percent of the non-Hispanic population reported they were "other race," more than 40 percent of Hispanics chose this category. Latinos responded similarly in the previous decennial census (Denton and Massey 1989; Martin, DeMaio, and Campanelli 1990; Rodríguez 1989, 1990, 1991a; Tienda and Ortiz 1986). Although the percentages of the different Hispanic groups choosing this category varied, all chose it more often than did non-Hispanics (see table 1.1, which shows a wide range in the proportion of Hispanic-origin groups choosing "other race" in the 1990 census).

In addition, the many Hispanics who chose this category wrote—in the box explicitly asking for race—the name of their "home" Latino country or group, to "explain" their race—or "otherness."⁴ The fact that these Latino referents were usually cultural or national-origin terms, such as Dominican, Honduran, or Boricua (i.e., Puerto Rican) underscores the fact that many Latinos viewed the question of race as a question of culture, national origin, and socialization rather than simply biological or genetic ancestry or color. Indeed, recent studies have found that many Latinos understand "race" to mean national origin, nationality, ethnicity, culture (Kissam, Herrera, and Nakamoto 1993), or a combination of these and skin color (Bates et al. 1994:109; Rodríguez 1991a, 1992, 1994a; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzmán 1992). For many Latinos, the term *race* or *raza* is a reflection of these understandings and not of those often associated with "race" in the United States, for example, defined by hypodescent.⁵ Studies have found that Latinos also tend to see race along a continuum and not as a dichotomous variable in which individuals are either white or black (Bracken and de Bango 1992; Rodríguez and Hagan 1992; Romero 1992).

This does not mean that there is only one Latino view of race. Rather, there are different views of race within different countries, classes, and even families. Latinos' views of race are dependent on a complex array of factors, one of which is the racial formation process in their country of origin. Other variables also influence their views of race, for example, generational differences, phenotype, class, age, and education. But even though there is not just one paradigm of Latin American race, there are some basic differences between the way that

4. Is this person _____? Fill in one circle.

<input type="radio"/> White	<input type="radio"/> Asian Indian
<input type="radio"/> Black or Negro	<input type="radio"/> Hawaiian
<input type="radio"/> Japanese	<input type="radio"/> Guamanian
<input type="radio"/> Chinese	<input type="radio"/> Samoan
<input type="radio"/> Filipino	<input type="radio"/> Eskimo
<input type="radio"/> Korean	<input type="radio"/> Aleut
<input type="radio"/> Vietnamese	<input type="radio"/> Other—specify _____
<input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.) Print tribe _____	

7. Is this person of Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent? Fill in one circle.

No, not Spanish/Hispanic.

Yes, Mexican, Mexican-Amer., Chicano.

Yes, Puerto Rican.

Yes, Cuban.

Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic.

FIG. 1.1. Two Questions about Race and Hispanic Origin on the 1980 Census

PERSON 1

Last name _____

First name _____ Middle initial _____

Please fill one column → for each person listed in Question 1a on page 1.

4. Race
Fill ONE circle for the race that the person considers himself/herself to be.

If Indian (Amer.), print the name of the enrolled or principal tribe. _____

If Other Asian or Pacific Islander (API), print one group, for example: Hmong, Fijian, Laotian, Thai, Tongan, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on. _____

If Other race, print race. _____

- White
- Black or Negro
- Indian (Amer.) (Print the name of the enrolled or principal tribe.) _____
- Eskimo
- Aleut
- Asian or Pacific Islander (API)**
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Hawaiian
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Japanese
- Asian Indian
- Samoan
- Guamanian
- Other API _____
- Other race (Print race) _____

7. Is this person of Spanish/Hispanic origin?
Fill ONE circle for each person.

If Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic, print one group. _____

- No (not Spanish/Hispanic)
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican-Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, other Spanish/Hispanic (Print one group, for example: Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.) _____

FIG. 1.2. Race and Hispanic-Origin Questions on the 1990 Census

Table 1.1
Racial Self-Classification by Selected Hispanic-Origin Groups, 1990

	White	Black	NAI	API ^a	Other
Mexican	50.6	0.9	0.6	0.4	47.4
Puerto Rican	46.4	6.5	0.3	1.0	45.9
Cuban	83.8	3.7	0.2	0.4	12.0
Other Spanish ^b	52.4	6.5	1.0	2.1	38.0
Dominican	29.26	29.96	1.02	c	39.76
Ecuadoran	50.81	1.90	1.68	c	45.62
Colombian	64.46	2.33	1.34	c	31.87
Guatemalan	42.95	0.89	1.67	c	54.48
Salvadoran	38.53	1.27	1.10	c	59.10
Panamanian	32.97	35.50	2.94	c	28.59
Total Hispanic	52.1	3.0	0.7	0.9	43.5
Non-Hispanic	83.1	12.9	0.8	3.1	0.1
Total population (millions)	199.5	29.8	2.0	7.2	9.7

Rows sum to 100% except for rounding.

^a API = Asian and Pacific Islander; NAI = Native American Indian.

^b Includes both those who gave a Latino referent and those who identified themselves only as Hispanic.

^c These two categories were combined because of small numbers.

Source: 1990 PUMS (Public Use Micro Sample) 1% sample. (These numbers may not be identical to tables based on the 100% census survey or the 5% PUMS because of sampling variability.)

Latinos view race and the way that race is viewed overall in the United States.

In the United States, rules of hypodescent and categories based on presumed genealogical-biological criteria have generally dominated conceptions of race. Racial categories have been few, discrete, and mutually exclusive, with skin color a prominent element. Categories for mixtures—for example, mulatto—have been transitory. In contrast, in Latin America, racial constructions have tended to be more fluid and based on many variables, like social class and phenotype. There also have been many, often overlapping, categories, and mixtures have been consistently acknowledged and have had their own terminology. These general differences are what Latinos bring with them to the United States, and they influence how they view their own and others' "identity."

Although Latinos may use or approach "race" differently, this does not mean that "race" as understood by Latinos does not have overtones of racism or implications of power and privilege—in either Latin America or the United States. Indeed, the depreciation and denial of African

and Amerindian characteristics are widespread.⁶ Everywhere in Latin America can be found "a pyramidal class structure, cut variously by ethnic lines, but with a local, regional and nation-state elite characterized as 'white.' And white rules over color within the same class; those who are lighter have differential access to some dimensions of the market" (Torres and Whitten 1998:23).

Even those countries that subscribe to a racial ideology of *mestizaje*⁷ often maintain racial and class hierarchies that favor upper-class interests and political agendas, privilege European components, ignore racialisms, and neutralize expressions of pluralism by indigenous or African-descended groups (Martínez-Echazábal 1998). That the awareness of these issues is increasing is evidenced by Torres-Saillant's appeal to Dominican historians to embrace a narrative that "privileges the many rather than the few" (1998:140). As one Jamaican student traveling in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean noted, the attitude there toward race is similarly destructive but strikingly different from that in the United States. Unfortunately, time has not altered the fact that "color" and its associated connotations continue to convey and determine the treatment that many receive in the Americas and the Caribbean.

When they migrate to the United States, some Latinos become more aware of the racism existing in their own country of origin, and other Latinos begin to question their conceptions of ethnic, racial, and national identities. Identities often thus become "a terrain of ideological contestation" (Duany 1998b:149; Foner 1998; Oboler 1995; Omi and Winant 1995; Torres-Saillant 1998). It was this ideological contestation that was manifested when Latinos checked the "other race" category and wrote in their national origins, ethnicity, and so forth on the decennial census forms. Thus, most of the 40 percent of Hispanics who marked the "other race category" and wrote in a Latino referent were asserting that they were "none of the above." Others—non-Latinos—might fit them into one or more of the groups listed on the basis of color, phenotype, or biological or ancestral knowledge of "race" origin, but culturally or politically these Latinos did not see themselves as "white," "black," or "Asian or Pacific Islander"—or just one of these (Rodríguez 1992). According to their own, more culturally defined perspective of race, the "race" groups listed on the census were "social groups" but did not include their own social group. This is why many Latinos still mark "other" on census forms and fill in the space specifying their national origin. Still others disagree with the race structure mirrored in the cen-

sus's race question and choose the "other race" category because they are *more* than "one of the above" race categories; that is, they are *mestizo*, *mulatto*, *black Latino*, or another mixture (Davis et al. 1998a; Rodríguez 1992; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzman 1992; Rodríguez et al. 1991).

Although the remaining 60 percent of Hispanics chose one of the census's standard race categories, this does not necessarily mean that they all have assimilated or adopted the United States' racial classification system. Rather, some Latinos believe that this is how they are seen and will always be seen in the United States and accept or understand that this is their race in this country. Others, however, choose one of the standard categories because that is what they are considered in their country of origin. As one Bolivian respondent explained in an interview conducted by the census, "I chose 'white.' I am considered white in my country" (Davis et al. 1998a:III-19).⁸ Still others are aware of the "official" pressure to mark one of the standard categories. As one Hispanic respondent in a census study indicated, "I do not consider myself white, but this is what the government says I am." Another respondent said, "I don't belong to any of these groups: probably I can be in 'Some other race' and say 'Hispanic'; but I decided to use 'White.'" Still another checked the white category but added, "I am a *Hispanic white*" (Davis et al. 1998a:III-20-21). These responses suggest that even though some Hispanics choose a standard race category, they believe that they also have other, or multiple, identities.

Other Hispanics choose the standard race categories for the same reasons that members of other groups do. They determine that "biologically," or in terms of "blood quantum," they fit into a particular category (Davis et al. 1998b:48 ff). Finally, some Hispanics do not want to be (or admit to being) "other than white," "other than black," or "other than *indio*" (i.e., a member of an indigenous nation). That is, they identify culturally and/or politically with members of a particular category.

Latinos' responses to the census are discussed in more depth later. Suffice it to say at this point that in my many years of research in this area, I have noticed in my and others' work that "race" is a recurring, sometimes amusing and benign, and sometimes conflictual issue.⁹ For Latinos, responses to questions of race are seldom as simple and straightforward as they tend to be for most non-Hispanic whites (Rodríguez et al. 1991).

These "other race" responses presented a problem to the Census Bureau because they differed from previous responses and therefore

could not be easily fit into the existing race structure. What was to be done with the nearly 10 million Hispanics who answered the race question in this way? In what category were they to be placed? How were they to be reported or tabulated? In short, how was this group to be understood? When analyzing these results, references to this "data quality" problem were couched in terms of responses in "the other race" category. But the overwhelming majority (97.5%) who chose this category were "Hispanic," and they accounted for 40 percent of the total number of Hispanics (U.S. General Accounting Office 1993:26). How, then, was this "other race" group (or Hispanic component) to be understood or accommodated in a country that for most of its history had employed an overarching dual racial structure with four presumed major color groups, that is, white, black, Asian or Pacific Islanders, and Native American Indian?

This group, moreover, represented a growing number of people. In 1990, those who had checked the "other race" category represented the country's second-fastest growing racial category (after Asian and Pacific Islanders) (Rodríguez 1991b:A14; U.S. General Accounting Office 1993). In addition, the population of Latinos was growing seven times faster than the population of the nation as a whole. Between 1980 and 1990, it had increased by half while the white (non-Hispanic) population increased by only 6 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1991:table 1; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993c:2).¹⁰ By 1999, the number of Hispanics in the United States (30 million) was greater than the total population of Canada.

As we will see, the search for solutions to this and other problems has contributed to a radical reexamination of the concept of race by the U.S. government. This reexamination included numerous hearings, conferences, and massive studies of hundreds of thousands of households and resulted in the decision to reverse the Census Bureau's two-hundred-year policy. For the first time, in the 2000 census, respondents were allowed to choose more than one racial group when answering the question about race.

Demographic and Other Changes

Also contributing to the question about the nature of race are broader demographic trends, such as immigration and the concentration (and consequently greater visibility) of racial and ethnic minorities

in populous states and metropolitan areas (Edmonston, Goldstein, and Tamayo Lott 1996). Added to this is the wide range of physical types of many immigrant groups, for example, Middle Easterners and Latinos, as well as the trend toward racial and ethnic intermarriage, particularly between those of high socioeconomic status (Edmonston, Lee, and Passel 1994; Kalmijn 1993; Rolark, Bennett, and Harrison 1994; Spickard 1989).

These new trends contrast with past patterns, in which those in interracial unions were usually marginal, foreign born, or part of exploitative slave relationships (Berry 1963; Williamson 1984). Conversely, many of the children of these modern unions are attending university and will undoubtedly assume leadership positions in the future, in which their positions on multiracial identities will carry the weight of their class positions. The percentage of interracial marriages rose from 0.4 percent in 1960 to 2.2 percent in 1991 (Rolark, Bennett, and Harrison 1994), and the number of births to parents of two different races tripled, from 1.2 percent of all births in 1971 to 4.4 percent in 1995 (Atkinson, MacDorman, and Parker 1999).¹¹ Indeed, the seriousness with which the proposal to include a multiracial category was received suggests that these forces have already influenced the way that race and ethnicity are viewed (see chap. 8).

In addition to these demographic trends, the greater affirmation of a mixed-race identity and the increasing use and acceptance of self-identification instead of observer identification have produced a more heterogeneous and more tenuous concept of race (Edmonston, Lee, and Passel 1994; Root 1992b, 1996) in the census and elsewhere. In this regard, it is interesting that in 1990, half (50.6%) the children of interracial unions were classified as "white" on the census form by their parent(s) (Bennett, McKenney, and Harrison 1995:table 5), whereas in the past, census takers would most likely have classified such children according to the race of the nonwhite parent.¹² These trends are changing the "face" of the United States and will intensify in the twenty-first century, contributing to the growing trend to view race as many Latinos already do, as race-ethnicity.

Blurred Boundaries

As increasing numbers of physically heterogeneous groups—such as Latinos—have become more concentrated and/or more visible,

questions of what constitutes "whiteness" and nonwhiteness have surfaced. Can individuals seen as white and those seen as nonwhite be members of the same race group? Where does whiteness—or blackness—begin? These questions have led to a reanalysis of whiteness and fundamental reconsiderations of race and ethnicity. (See, e.g., the following works, which examine how whites see themselves, how whiteness has been—or has not been—achieved by certain groups in American history and law, and how race and ethnicity are being rethought: Brodtkin Sacks 1994; Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Ferrante and Brown 1998; Frankenberg 1993; Gallagher 1999; Haney López 1996; Ignatiev 1995; Waters 1990.)

More and more native-born Americans see that many people's racial/ethnic definitions of themselves are at variance with others' definition of them. For example, white-appearing, third-generation Latinos, who sometimes no longer even speak Spanish, may insist they are "not white" or declare themselves to be "brown," "black," or "other." Government officials, office managers, criminal justice administrators—that is, those who are responsible for counting race and ethnicity, are increasingly realizing that individuals—particularly the growing numbers of new and existing minorities—often define their "race" quite differently than they would be defined by others.¹³

THE PROPOSAL TO MAKE LATINOS A RACE

In July 1993, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget announced that it would review the racial and ethnic categories used to collect government data (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1997a). A number of proposals to amend the current categories were made. One proposal that received quite a bit of media attention was to add a "multiracial" category. Another proposal, even though it involved greater numbers of people, received considerably less attention: to make Hispanics a race.¹⁴ This proposal was subsequently referred to as "the combined question" because it would list "Hispanic" as a category along with the other race categories. That is, it would reclassify what the census had considered an "ethnic group"—in which Hispanics could be of any race—to a "race" group in which all Hispanics were of one race.

What made this proposal curious was that Hispanics did not wholeheartedly initiate or support it, in contrast to other proposals con-

sidered at the time.¹⁵ Even more striking was the fact that evidently few Latinos noticed the lack of a Hispanic constituency. Although three Hispanic organizations were occasionally cited as supporting the proposal (del Pinal 1994; Wright 1994), a close look at their statements shows this was not exactly the case. Rather, their statements indicated reservations, questions, support for relabeling the race question "race/ethnicity," and a need for more research (National Council of La Raza 1995; U.S. House Committee 1994k, 1994p).

As the final chapter in this book makes clear, Hispanics were a significant but silent presence in the process, which was extraordinary given the striking population growth of Latinos in the United States. In March 1997, the Latino population was "officially" 29.7 million, or 11 percent of the total U.S. population (Reed and Ramirez 1998:table 1). This figure did not include, however, the 3.6 million Hispanics who lived in Puerto Rico (*Hispanic Link*, March 6, 1995, p. 1; Rodríguez 1994b) or those Hispanics who lived in the United States but were not counted.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently decided in favor of total counts for the 2000 census, and not statistical sampling. The debate surrounding this highly politicized issue did not clearly explain the discrepancies that exist in each group with regard to the undercount.¹⁶ After Native Americans on reservations, who had an undercount rate of 12.2 percent, Hispanics had the highest undercount of all racial-ethnic groups, or 5.0 percent in the 1990 decennial census. African Americans followed with 4.4 percent, and non-Hispanic whites had an undercount rate of less than 1 percent (or 0.7%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1997:4). Moreover, about 4 million people, "most of them affluent whites living in suburbs that tend to vote Republican" were counted twice (Holmes 1999:24; and see app. A for a discussion of the undercount issue).

But despite the undercount, the growth of the Hispanic population has been dramatic. Hispanic youths already outnumber black youths (Vobejda 1998:A2). Indeed, the U.S. Census projects that the Hispanic population will surpass the African American population by 2005, and it is expected to be about a quarter of the total U.S. population by 2050 (Day 1996:63,13; Larmer 1999). However, if immigration and birthrates continue to climb, some of these changes may occur much sooner than that.

Notwithstanding the lack of support by this substantial and growing group, the proposal to make Hispanics into a separate race persisted

and became one of the primary propositions that the Office of Management and Budget examined in its extensive review between 1995 and 1997. The proposal was eventually dropped, however, when it became evident that making Hispanics into a separate race would result in fewer being counted—and in fewer whites being counted (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996a, 1997).

MULTIRACIAL AMERICANS AND LATINOS

The insistence on self-definition—particularly within one's own linguistic and philosophical framework—is central to the challenges to racial construction in the United States today. The insistence on identity in one's own terms is a major nexus between the issues raised by the multiracial movement and those raised by Latinos. Both groups seek, or have, definitions of self and their group that are often outside the biracial structure created in the United States. Furthermore, those who are "white" are dominant and thus determine who is "nonwhite" or "other." Many Latinos, and many in the multiracial movement, are challenging these rigid categorizations, along with the implied racial hierarchy.

Hispanics and those in the multiracial movement are often seen and defined as distinct groups, yet there are interesting overlaps. "Multiracial" Americans and those who go by the terms *interracial*, *mixed race*, and *biracial* are defined as "persons who identify with more than one race group" (Bennett, McKenney, and Harrison 1995:1). (Race group refers only to white, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, or Native American groups.) The census defines as "Hispanics" those who classify themselves as being of Hispanic or Spanish origin on the census, adding, "Hispanics may be of any race." (The census defines *origin* as the ancestry, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of a person or his or her parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States [U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993b:B-12].)

Yet many Hispanics claim a multiple "racial" ancestry. Indeed, in recent census tests, more Hispanics chose the "multiracial" category (6.7%) than did non-Hispanics (less than 1%), and about one-third of all those in the multiracial category were Hispanic (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1996a:13 and table 12). In addition, because many Latinos see race as a cultural construct, some consider themselves Latinos and "multira-

cial" because one parent is white, black, Asian, or Pacific Islander and the other is Hispanic or because each parent has a different Hispanic national origin.

HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTS

An analysis of U.S. decennial census classifications shows the clear historical progression toward a more definitive bipolar structure. Although the taxonomy of race has changed, we can see in historical and legislative documents the evolution of two fundamental and socially constructed polarities that place "whites" at one end and "other social races" at the other. Although each of these polarities has been and continues to be fluid, this basic dichotomous structure has prevailed throughout most of the census's two-hundred-year history. It is with this historically evolved bipolar structure that groups who have not been "quite white" or "quite black" have contended in the past, and it is in this structure that Latinos and other groups are entangled today.

Although this bipolar structure has been overarching, providing the basic racial structure of the various "racial" groups, there is and probably always has been a great deal of heterogeneity within the two polarities. Moreover, the boundaries between these polarities have always been ambiguous and shifting. Finally, alterations of group and individual classifications have been both unofficial and legal and bureaucratic.

For some people throughout U.S. history, the labels applied by the census and the identities created or used by the individuals and groups themselves have always differed. Furthermore, these externally created labels and identities have changed, so, for example, the Mohawks of the Hotinonshonni Confederacy refer to themselves—and recognize that they are also referred to—as "Iroquois," "Native American," or simply "Indian."

IMMIGRANTS AND THE RACIALIZATION PROCESS

In the past, new immigrants immediately underwent a racialization process, which conveyed an implicit hierarchy of color and power. The two elements of this racialization process were (1) the acceptance of and participation in discrimination against people of color (Bell 1992; Du

Bois 1962:700 ff; Morrison 1993) and (2) negotiations regarding the group's placement in the U.S. racial-ethnic queue (Jacobson 1998; Rodríguez 1974; Smith 1997; Takaki 1994). Immigrants undergoing this racialization process discriminated implicitly or explicitly against others because of their color and status. Indeed, some immigrants realized that one way to become "white," or more acceptable to whites, was to discriminate against others seen as "nonwhite" (Ignatiev 1995; Kim 1999; Loewen 1971). Kim (1999) reviewed the historical experience of Asian Americans being triangulated with blacks and whites through a simultaneous process of valorization and ostracism. This racial triangulation continued to reinforce white racial power and insulate it from minority encroachment or challenge.

Some immigrants discriminated against blacks and/or other deprecated minorities by not living with "them," not hiring "them" in enclave economies, or articulating prejudices against "them." Institutionalized discrimination and normative behavior aided racialization so that, for example, it became difficult to rent or sell to members of certain groups because of exclusionary practices. Nearly all immigrant groups experienced this seldom-mentioned but indisputable dimension of the Americanization process. Critical to the racialization process was the belief that there was always some "other" group to which one was superior. Indeed, this process has been an effective means of protecting the status quo because it made it difficult to understand and pursue areas of common interest and resulted in divide-and-conquer outcomes.

Imputed and Self-Defined Race for Latinos

Latinos—and many other groups—come to the United States with different views of race and with their own racial hierarchies. The relation of these people's racialization to their hierarchies in the United States has not been widely studied. But it is clear that when they arrive, they too become part of a racialization process in which they are differentiated according to the official perception of their race, which may or may not be the same as their own perception. This racial reclassification immerses immigrants in a social education process in which they first learn—and then may ignore, resist, or accept—the state-defined categories and the popular conventions concerning race (particularly one's own) (Rodríguez 1994a).

The racialization process also includes contradictory views of the way that Hispanics are generally regarded. At one extreme, Hispanics are a Spanish-speaking white ethnic group who are simply the most recent in the continuum of immigrant groups and are expected to follow the traditional path of assimilation. Another view holds that the term *Hispanic*—which has generally been unknown to new immigrants from Latin America—is subtly "colored" by negative and racial associations. For example, the stereotyped image (for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics) of a Hispanic is "tan." Within this perspective, Hispanics are often referred to as "light skinned," not as white. Yet many Hispanics would be seen as white, black, or Asian if it were not known that they were Hispanic. But seeing Hispanics/Latinos as "light" clearly restricts their "whiteness" and thus makes them nonwhite by default, but not a member of other race groups. Thus, many Hispanics entering this country become generically "nonwhite" to themselves, or to others, regardless of their actual phenotype or ancestry.

The United States' racialization process affects all groups' sense of who they are and how they are seen, in regard to color and race. There are few studies of this concerning Latinos, but some autobiographies suggest that the racialization process has had a significant impact (see, e.g., Rivera 1983; Rodríguez 1992; Santiago 1995; Thomas 1967). Whether this has been a dissonant impact and has affected Latinos' mobility and the quality of life has not yet been determined.

Some Latinos, influenced by movements such as the Black Power movement, Afrocentrism, Pan-Africanism and African diaspora philosophies, and the celebration of negritude, have come to see themselves, and sometimes their group, as black. Terms like *Afro-Latino*, *black Cuban*, and *black Panamanian* are now common, and some Latinos celebrate their African roots. Others focus on their Amerindian or indigenious component, while still others see themselves only as white or mixed or identify themselves only ethnically.

A Dominican student of mine told me that each of her and her husband's children claimed a different identity. So they had one black child, one white child, and one Dominican child. Each of the children had different friends and tastes. Many variables contribute to and interact with the racialization process to determine how individuals decide on their group affiliation. Generation, phenotype, previous and current class position, and the size and accessibility of one's cultural

or national-origin group, as well as the relative size of other groups, all affect how individual Latinos identify themselves.

DISCRIMINATION

Most Latinos believe that they are discriminated against as a group. In one of the largest and most comprehensive surveys of Latinos, 80 percent of Mexicans, 74 percent of Puerto Ricans, and 47 percent of Cubans reported "a lot" or "some" discrimination against their own group, a general perception that appeared to be unrelated to skin color (de la Garza et al. 1992:94–95). Falcon (1995), for example, found that Puerto Ricans' phenotype was not related to their perception of group discrimination.

Thus, although darker or more visible Latinos may experience more direct discrimination, looking white or light does not substantially alter their perception of discrimination. Indeed, it may sometimes have the opposite effect. That is, lighter Latinos may more often be in a position to observe discrimination. They may be assumed to be white and consequently be better able to see how others are treated or that they are treated differently from those who are darker. Moreover, all Latinos, regardless of color, may experience discrimination, for Hispanicity is based on more than skin color. Other clues, such as accent, residence, surname, or first name, can reveal that a person is Hispanic. Thus, despite an individual's physical appearance as "white," knowledge of this person's Hispanicity often causes a readjustment of status. The perception shifts from "I thought you were one of us" to "You're an other"—and even an accent is heard where it was not before. This type of redefinition or reclassification may be imposed more often on lighter Latinos and may make them just as conscious of discrimination as darker Latinos are. Therefore, even though "color" or phenotype is significant in an individual Latino's experience, all physical types can and do experience discrimination.¹⁷

Considerable evidence shows that the discrimination Latinos perceive is very real, for example, disparities in judicial treatment (Díaz-Cotto 1996:416–417; Haney López 1996:138–139, 252–253) and evidence of housing discrimination (Denton and Massey 1989; James, McComings, and Tynan 1984; Massey and Denton 1990; Yinger 1995). In New York City, black and Hispanic immigrants—particularly those from the

Dominican Republic—continue to live in the least desirable housing, pay among the highest percentages of income for rent, and have the lowest rates of home ownership compared with European, Russian, and Asian immigrants (Hevesi 1998; Schill, Friedman, and Rosenbaum 1998). Moreover, because of where they live, Hispanics and blacks in New York City—whether they are foreign born or native born—have less access to medical care, higher crime rates, and greater concentrations of poverty and housing-code violations (Rosenbaum et al. 1999).

Individuals who are clearly identified as "Hispanic" by their names, résumés, accents, and, sometimes, stereotypical looks experience greater job discrimination than do equally qualified whites (Bendick 1992; Cross et al. 1990; Fix, Galsten, and Stryk 1993). Also, Hispanics experienced greater employment discrimination as a result of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (Bendick 1992; U.S. General Accounting Office 1990). With the passage of legislation sanctioning employers for hiring undocumented workers, many Hispanics who are citizens or legal residents were not hired for jobs for which they were qualified because employers thought they might have been in the United States illegally. Given these findings, it is not surprising that a review of judicial cases involving employment discrimination based on national origin found that most of the litigation pertained to Hispanics (del Valle 1993).

Studies of employer preferences in hiring also suggest that discrimination against Hispanics is widespread in the labor market (Holzer 1997; Hossfeld 1994; Moss and Tilly 2000). In these studies, the employers interviewed had definite beliefs and preferences concerning the suitability of different groups for different jobs, including "negative attitudes" toward "workers of color" (Moss and Tilly 2000). According to Darity and Mason (1998:81), employers "set up a racial/ethnic gender ranking of potential hires" that favored white men and women workers over Hispanics and blacks. These studies underscore the disadvantages that race/color (and ethnic) markers can bring to employment and hiring practices (Darity and Mason 1998:81).

The literature on the effect of labor market discrimination on earnings and occupational attainments has yielded a complex array of findings that reflect not just differing theoretical perspectives but also variations in sampling and methodology (Meléndez and Rodríguez 1992; Meléndez, Rodríguez, and Barry Figueroa 1991:293).¹⁸ More recently, the focus of labor market research has moved beyond measuring the