

## Black, Honorary White, White: The Future of Race in the United States?

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*"We are all Americans!"*) That, we contend, will be the racial mantra of the United States in years to come. Because of the deep history of racial divisions in the United States, many analysts believe this prospect implausible, but nationalist statements denying the salience of race are the norm all over the world. Yet this new "E Pluribus Unum" cry ("Out of Many, One") will not signify the beginning of true racial democracy in the United States. Instead, it will signify, as we hint in the title of the chapter, the reshuffling of racial matters in a way that preserves white supremacy by other means.

Our overall claim is that racial stratification in general and the rules of racial (re)cognition in the United States in particular are slowly coming to resemble those in Latin America. By this statement we mean two things: first, that the biracial system typical of the United States, which was the exception in the world-racial system (see Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Mills 1997; Winant 2002), is evolving into a complex racial order.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, we argue the United States is developing a loose triracial stratification system with *whites* at the top, an intermediary group of *honorary whites* (similar to the middle racial strata in Latin America and the Caribbean), and a nonwhite group, or the *collective black*,<sup>3</sup> at the bottom. As we suggest in Figure 3.1, the white group will include "traditional" whites; new "white" immigrants; and in the near future, assimilated Latinos, some multiracials (light-skinned ones), and individual members of other groups (some Asian Americans, etc.). We predict the intermediate racial group will comprise most light-skinned Latinos (e.g., most Cubans and segments of the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities) (Rodríguez 1999), Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Asian Indians, Chinese Americans, the bulk of multiracials (see Rockquemore and Arend 2004), and most Middle Eastern

Figure 3.1 Preliminary Map of the Triracial System in the United States

Whites	Collective Black
Whites	Filipinos
New Whites (Russians, Albanians, etc.)	Vietnamese
Assimilated white Latinos	Hmong
Some multiracials (white-looking ones)	Laotians
Assimilated (urban) Native Americans	Dark-skinned Latinos
A few Asian-origin people	Blacks
	New West Indian and
Honorary Whites	African immigrants
Light-skinned Latinos	Reservation-bound
Japanese Americans	Native Americans
Korean Americans	
Asian Indians	
Chinese Americans	
Middle Eastern Americans	
Most multiracials	

Americans. Finally, the collective black will include blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, and maybe Filipinos.

Our racial cartography is heuristic rather than definitive and thus we include it as a guide of how we think the various ethnic groups will line up in the emerging racial order. We acknowledge, however, that (1) the position of some groups may change (e.g., many Chinese Americans, Asian Indians, and Arab Americans may end up in the collective black); (2) the map is not inclusive of all the groups in the United States (for instance, Samoans, Micronesians, and other groups are not in the map); and (3) at this early stage of our project and given some serious data limitations, some groups may end up in a different racial strata altogether (e.g., Filipinos may become "honorary whites" rather than another group in the collective black strata).

The second component of our Latin Americanization thesis is that color will increase in significance in a host of social transactions and interactions (Herring, Keith, and Horton 2004; Hochschild 2003). This shift will involve categorical porosity as well as "pigmentocracy," making the map useful for group- rather than individual-level predictions. The term "categorical porosity" refers to individual members of a racial strata moving up (or down) the stratification system (e.g., a light-skinned, middle-class black person marrying a white woman and moving to the "honorary white" strata), and pigmentocracy refers to the rank ordering of groups and members of groups according to phenotype and cultural characteristics (e.g., Filipinos being at the top of the "collective black" group, given their high level of education and income as well as high rate of marriage with whites).

We recognize that our thesis is broad (attempting to classify where everyone will fit in the racial order) and hard to verify empirically with the available data (there is not a single data set that includes systematic data on the skin tone of all Americans). Nevertheless, it is paramount to begin

pushing for a paradigm shift in the field of race relations, and we consider this chapter as a preliminary effort in that direction.

### ■ Alternative Racial Scenarios to Latin Americanization

We are not alone in making predictions about the racial future of this country. There are at least four alternative readings of what may happen in the future. First are racial optimists who argue that the United States is slowly moving toward a more perfect racial democracy. I have addressed the problems with this claim elsewhere (Bonilla-Silva 2001). Second come those who contend that the increasing racial diversity in the United States will lead to balkanization and cultural bastardization (Huntington 2004a). This argument is predicated on outdated Anglo-Saxon arguments and empirically flawed (the United States has always had racial and ethnic balkanization). Third are those who postulate that the various racial minorities will secure their own place in the US racial pentagram. Cedric Herring (2002), for instance, proposed the niche as a model to better capture US racial dynamics in a recent symposium on my thesis in *Race and Society*; many other analysts agree with him (e.g., Vaca 2004). This argument has some similarities to ours, but as we shall see, ours includes the possibility of cross-racial and ethnic solidarities and even identities (but see Bonilla-Silva 2004a). Last come those who argue that the biracial stratification order will remain in place because Asians and Latinos will join the white group. Because this is the subject of Chapter 4 in this volume, we take some time here to discuss that claim and why we do not think it will materialize.

The argument of our colleagues George Yancey, Tukufu Zuberi (2001/2003), and Herbert Gans (1999) deserve full consideration as a plausible alternative to ours. It is true that many Latinos and Asians self-identify as white. It is also true that historically many "non-yet-white" Europeans (Roediger 1999) who were viewed as unworthy candidates for assimilation and citizenship were later incorporated into the white family. Hence, if the aforementioned groups become white, the old "black/nonblack divide" will be maintained (Yancey 2003c).

Although the arguments of our colleagues are meritorious and we agree with them on many points (we too believe that many Latinos and Asians will become white), we contend that their overall claim is unlikely for the following four reasons:

1. Latinos and Asians are not "new immigrants." They have been in the United States since at least the nineteenth century! Therefore, if they were going to become white, that process should have started in the 1830s (for Mexican Americans) and 1840s for (Chinese Americans). The fact that it has not happened (we acknowledge that some Asians and Latinos, like

light-skinned blacks in the past, became white through passing) suggests that the racialization of these groups is different from that of people of European descent. It is possible that a new racialization is occurring, making all these groups white, but the available data do not suggest it.

2. All racial categories are historico-political constructions and therefore always exhibit malleability and porosity. However, the incorporation of groups into the US white category has shown, so far, to have some epidermic boundaries; that is, groups and individuals added to the category have looked European. Hence, groups lacking epidermic capital (such as Latinos and Asians) will have more trouble getting admission into whiteness. Yet, the fact that Armenians and Iranians were incorporated into the white category in the past suggests that the boundaries of US whiteness may be more flexible than one thinks.

3. The kind of assimilation process experienced by some groups (e.g., Mexican Americans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, etc.) seems different from that of European immigrants in the early part of the twentieth century. Thus, analysts now use the term "segmented assimilation" to refer to the variety of outcomes of these groups (Rumbaut and Portes 2001b).

4. The class and cultural distance between the masses of Mexican, Central American, and some Asian immigrants and whites is such that it is unlikely that most of them will be able to become white. The Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican barrios and the Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese towns across the nation differ from the temporary ethnic ghettos of the past. Some of these neighborhoods boast more than 100 years of existence, a very long time to be regarded as "transition neighborhoods."

We repeat that many of these new immigrants, as well as many from older minority groups, will either become white or near-white (honorary white). Our main difference with Yancey and others is that we believe that most of these people will not become white and will join blacks in a large, loose group at the bottom of the racial hierarchy (hence, blacks will not be alone at the bottom).

### ■ Why Latin Americanization Now?

The reasons for the Latin Americanization of race and race relations in the United States are multiple. First, the demography of the nation is changing. Racial minorities comprise up to 30 percent of the population today and, as population projections suggest, may become a numeric majority in the year 2050 (Bean and Stevens 2003; Saenz and Morales 2005; US Bureau of the Census 1996). And these projections may be slightly off: data from the 2000 Census suggest that the Latino population was about 12.5 percent of the population, almost 1 percentage point higher than the highest projection,

and the proportion of whites (77.1 percent white or in combination) was slightly lower than originally expected (Grieco and Cassidy 2001).

The rapid darkening of the United States is creating a situation similar to that of Puerto Rico, Cuba, or Venezuela in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In both historical periods, the elites realized their countries were becoming "black" (or "nonwhite") and devised a number of strategies (unsuccessful in the former and successful in the latter) to whiten their population (Helg 1990). Although whitening the population through immigration or by classifying many newcomers as white (Gans 1999; Warren and Twine 1997) is a possible solution to the new US demography, for reasons discussed below, we do not think such a solution is likely. Hence, a more plausible accommodation to the new racial reality is to (1) create an intermediate racial group to buffer racial conflict; (2) allow some newcomers into the white racial strata; and (3) incorporate most immigrants into the collective black strata.

Second, as part of the tremendous reorganization that transpired in the United States in the post-civil rights era, a new kinder and gentler white supremacy emerged, which Bonilla-Silva has labeled elsewhere as the "new racism" (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Bonilla-Silva and Lewis 1999; Smith 1995). In the post-civil rights United States, the maintenance of systemic white privilege is accomplished socially, economically, psychologically, and politically through institutional, covert, and apparently nonracial practices. Whether in banks or universities, in stores or housing markets, "smiling discrimination" (Brooks 1990) tends to be the order of the day. This new white supremacy has produced an accompanying ideology that rings Latin America all over: the ideology of color-blind racism. This ideology denies the salience of race, scorns those who talk about race, and increasingly proclaims that "We are all Americans" (see Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Third, race relations have become globalized (Lusane 1997). The once almost all-white Western nations have now "interiorized the other" (Miles 1993). The new world-systemic need for capital accumulation has led to the incorporation of "dark" foreigners as "guest workers" and even as permanent workers (Schoenbaum and Pond 1996). Thus today, European nations have racial minorities in their midst who are progressively becoming an underclass (Castles and Miller 1993; Cohen 1997), have developed an internal "racial structure" (Bonilla-Silva 1997) to maintain white power, and have a curious racial ideology that combines ethnonationalism with a race-blind ideology similar to the color-blind racism of the contemporary United States (Bonilla-Silva 2000).

This new global racial reality, we believe, will reinforce the Latin Americanization trend in the United States, as versions of color-blind racism will become prevalent in most Western nations. Furthermore, as many formerly

almost-all-white Western countries (e.g., Germany, France, England, etc.) become more and more diverse, the Latin American model of racial stratification may surface in these societies too.

Fourth, the convergence of the political and ideological actions of the Republican Party, conservative commentators and activists, and the so-called multiracial movement (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002a) has created the space for the radical transformation of the way we gather racial data in the United States. One possible outcome of the Census Bureau's categorical back-and-forth on racial and ethnic classifications is either the dilution of racial data or the elimination of race as an official category (for more on the multiracial "movement" and its implications, see Chapter 11 in this volume). At this point, Ward Connerly (president and founder of the American Civil Rights Institute, a member of the University of California Board of Regents, and one of the most strident opponents of affirmative action) and his cronies lost the first round in California's Racial Privacy Initiative (see Chapter 9 in this volume), but we believe that they may be successful in other states.

Last, the attack on affirmative action, which is part of what Stephen Steinberg (1995) has labeled as the "racial retreat," is the clarion call signaling the end of race-based social policy in the United States. The 2003 Supreme Court decision *Grutter vs. Bollinger*, hailed by some observers as a victory, is at best a weak victory because it allows for a "narrowly tailored" employment of race in college admissions, imposes an artificial twenty-five-year deadline for the program, and encourages a monumental case-by-case analysis for admitting students that is likely to create chaos and push institutions into making admissions decisions based on test scores. Again, this trend reinforces our Latin Americanization thesis because the elimination of race-based social policy is, among other things, predicated on the notion that race no longer affects minorities' status. Nevertheless, as in Latin America, we may eliminate race by decree and maintain—or even increase—the level of racial inequality.

### ■ Objective Standing of "Whites," "Honorary Whites," and "Blacks"

If Latin Americanization is happening in the United States, gaps in income, poverty rates, and occupational standing between whites, honorary whites, and the collective black should be developing. The available data suggest that is the case. In terms of income, as Table 3.1 shows, "white" Latinos (Argentines, Chileans, Costa Ricans, and Cubans) are doing much better than dark-skinned Latinos (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc.). The apparent exceptions in Table 3.1 (Bolivians and Panamanians) are examples of self-selection among these immigrant groups. For example, four of the largest

**Table 3.1 Mean Per Capita Income<sup>a</sup> (\$) of Selected Latino and Asian Ethnic Groups Versus That of Whites and Blacks, 2000**

Latino Mean Income	
Mexicans	9,467.30
Guatemalans	11,178.60
Puerto Ricans	11,314.95
Salvadorans	11,371.92
Costa Ricans	14,226.92
Panamanians	16,181.20
Bolivians	16,322.53
Cubans	16,741.89
Chileans	18,272.04
Argentines	23,589.99
Asian American Mean Income	
Hmong	5,175.34
Cambodians	8,680.48
Laotians	10,375.57
Vietnamese	14,306.74
Koreans	16,976.19
Filipinos	19,051.53
Chinese	20,728.54
Taiwanese	22,998.05
Japanese	23,786.13
Asian Indians	25,682.15
White Mean Income	17,968.87
Black Mean Income	11,366.74

Source: US Bureau of the Census 2003.

Note: a. We use per capita income. Using family income distorts the status of some groups (particularly Asians and whites) because some groups have more people than others contributing toward the family income.

ten concentrations of Bolivians in the United States are in Virginia, a state where just 7.2 percent of the population identifies as Latino (US Bureau of the Census 2001b).<sup>4</sup>

Table 3.1 also shows that Asians exhibit a pattern similar to that of Latinos. Hence, a severe income gap is emerging between honorary white Asians (Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, and Chinese) and those Asians we contend belong to the collective black (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotians). Substantial group differences fitting our thesis are also evident in the occupational status, poverty rates, and wealth of the groups (see Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2004).

### ■ Subjective Standing of Racial Strata

Social psychologists have amply demonstrated that it takes very little for groups to form, to develop a common view, and to adjudicate status positions

to nominal characteristics (Ridgeway 1991; Tajfel 1970). Thus, it should not be surprising if gaps in income, occupational status, and education among these various strata contribute to group formation and consciousness. That is, honorary whites may be classifying themselves as "white" and believing they are different (better) than those in the collective black category. If that is happening, this group should also be in the process of developing "white" racial attitudes befitting their new social position and differentiating (distancing) themselves from the collective black.

In line with our thesis, we expect whites to be making distinctions between honorary whites and the collective black, specifically exhibiting a more positive outlook toward honorary whites than toward members of the collective black. Finally, if Latin Americanization is happening, we speculate that the collective black should exhibit a diffused and contradictory racial consciousness, as blacks and Indians do throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (Hanchard 1994).

### *Social Identity of Honorary Whites*

*Self-reports on race: The case of Latinos.* Historically, most Latinos have classified themselves as "white," but the proportion of Latinos who self-classify as such varies tremendously by group. Hence, as Table 3.2 shows, 60 percent or more of the members of the Latino groups we regard as honorary white self-classify as white, but less than 50 percent of the members of the groups we regard as belonging to the collective black do so. As a case in point, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Central Americans are very likely to report "Other" as their preferred "racial" classification, whereas

**Table 3.2 Racial Self-Classification by Selected Latin America Origin (percentage), 2000**

	White	Black	Other	Native American	Asian
Latino Ethnic Groups					
Dominicans	28.21	10.93	59.21	1.07	0.57
Salvadorans	41.01	0.82	56.95	0.81	0.41
Guatemalans	42.95	1.24	53.43	2.09	0.28
Hondurans	48.51	6.56	43.41	1.24	0.29
Mexicans	50.47	0.92	46.73	1.42	0.45
Puerto Ricans	52.42	7.32	38.85	0.64	0.77
Costa Ricans	64.83	5.91	28.18	0.56	0.53
Bolivians	65.52	0.32	32.79	1.32	0.05
Colombians	69.01	1.53	28.54	0.49	0.44
Venezuelans	75.89	2.58	20.56	0.36	0.60
Chileans	77.04	0.68	21.27	0.44	0.56
Cubans	88.26	4.02	7.26	0.17	0.29
Argentines	88.70	0.33	10.54	0.08	0.35

Source: US Bureau of the Census 2003.

most Costa Ricans, Cubans, Chileans, and Argentines choose the "white" descriptor. These Census 2000 data mirror the results of the 1988 Latino National Political Survey (de la Garza et al. 1993).<sup>5</sup>

*"Racial" distinctions among Asians.* Although for political matters, Asians tend to vote panethnically (Espiritu 1992), distinctions between native-born and foreign-born (e.g., US-born Chinese and foreign-born Chinese) and between economically successful and unsuccessful Asians are developing. In fact, according to various analysts, given the tremendous diversity of experiences among Asian Americans "all talk of Asian panethnicity should now be abandoned as useless speculation" (San Juan 2000: 10). Leland Saito (1998), in *Race and Politics*, points out that many Asians have reacted to the "Asian flack" they are experiencing with the rise in Asian immigration by fleeing the cities of immigration, disassociating themselves from new Asians, and invoking the image of the "good immigrant." In some communities, this practice has pushed older, assimilated segments of a community to dissociate from recent migrants.

To be clear, our point is not that Asian Americans have not engaged in coalition politics and, in various locations, engaged in concerted efforts to elect Asian American candidates (Saito 1998). Our aim is to point out that the group labeled "Asian Americans" is divided along many axes and to forecast that many of those already existing divisions will be racialized by whites (e.g., exploitation of Asian women by lonely white men in the "Oriental bride" market) (Kitano and Daniels 1995) as well as by Asian American themselves (e.g., intra-Asian preferences seem to follow a racialized hierarchy of desire) (see Tuan 1998).

### *Racial Attitudes of Various Racial Strata*

*Latinos' racial attitudes.* Although researchers have shown that Latinos tend to hold negative views of blacks and positive views of whites (Mindiola, Rodríguez, and Niemann 1996; Niemann et al. 1994; Yoon 1995), the picture is actually more complex. Immigrant Latinos tend to have more negative views about blacks than native-born Latinos. For instance, a study of Latinos in Houston, Texas, found that 38 percent of native-born Latinos, compared to 47 percent of the foreign-born, held negative stereotypes of blacks (Mindiola, Rodríguez, and Niemann 1996). This may explain why 63 percent of native-born Latinos versus 34 percent of foreign-born report frequent contact with blacks.

But the incorporation of the majority of Latinos as "colonial subjects" (Puerto Ricans), refugees from wars (Central Americans), or illegal migrant workers (Mexicans) has foreshadowed subsequent patterns of integration into the racial order. In a similar vein, the incorporation of a minority of Latinos as "political refugees" (Cubans, Chileans, and Argentines) or as

“neutral” immigrants trying to better their economic situation (Costa Ricans, Colombians) has allowed them a more comfortable ride in the US racial boat (Pedraza 1985). Therefore, although the incorporation of most Latinos into the United States has meant becoming “nonwhite,” for a few it has meant becoming almost white.

Nevertheless, given that most Latinos experience discrimination in labor and housing markets as well as in schools, they quickly realize their “nonwhite” status. This experience leads them, as Nilda Flores-Gonzales (1999) and Suzanne Oboler (1995) have shown, to adopt a plurality of identities that signify “otherness.” Thus, dark-skinned Latinos are even calling themselves “black” or “Afro-Dominicans” or “Afro-Puerto Rican” (Howard 2001). For example, José Ali, a Latino interviewed by Clara Rodríguez (2000: 56), stated, “By inheritance I am Hispanic. However, I identify more with blacks because to white America, if you are my color, you are a nigger. I can’t change my color, and I do not wish to do so.” When asked, “Why do you see yourself as black?” he said, “Because when I was jumped by whites, I was not called ‘spic,’ but I was called a ‘nigger.’”

The identification of most Latinos as “racial others” has made them more likely to be pro-black than pro-white. Table 3.3, for example, indicates that the proportion of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans who feel very warmly toward blacks is much higher (about 12 percent for Mexicans and 14 percent for Puerto Ricans) than the proportion of those groups who feel warmly toward Asians (the readings in the “thermometer” range from 0 to 100, and the higher the “temperature” is, the more positive are the feelings toward the group in question). In contrast, the proportion of Cubans who feel very warmly toward blacks is 10 to 14 percentage points *lower* than the same for Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Cubans are also more likely to feel very warmly toward Asians than toward blacks. More fitting for our thesis, Latinos who identify as “white” express similar empathy toward blacks and

**Table 3.3 Proportion of Latinos Who Express High Affect Toward Blacks and Asians**

Degrees of Feeling Thermometer	Blacks (%)	Asians (%)
Mexicans		
warm (51–74)	11.9	11.8
very warm (75–100)	34.3	22.2
Puerto Ricans		
warm (51–74)	11.8	9.0
very warm (75–100)	39.5	25.3
Cubans		
warm (51–74)	14.5	9.9
very warm (75–100)	25.1	29.9

Source: Forman, Martinez, and Bonilla-Silva n.d.

Asians, whereas those who identify as “black” express the most positive affect toward blacks (about 20 degrees warmer toward blacks than toward Asians) (see Bonilla-Silva and Glover 2004).

*Asians’ racial attitudes.* Various studies have documented that Asians tend to hold antiblack and anti-Latino attitudes. For instance, Bobo et al. (1995) found that Chinese residents of Los Angeles expressed negative racial attitudes toward blacks. One Chinese resident stated, “Blacks in general seem to be overly lazy,” and another asserted, “Blacks have a definite attitude problem” (Bobo et al. 1995: 78; see also Bobo and Johnson 2000). Studies on Korean shopkeepers in various locales have found that over 70 percent of them hold antiblack attitudes (Min 1996; Weitzer 1997; Yoon 1997).

These general findings are confirmed in Table 3.4. This table contains data on the degree (on a scale running from 1 to 7) to which various racial groups subscribe to stereotypes about the intelligence and welfare dependency of other groups. The table clearly shows that Asians (in this study, Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese) are more likely than even whites to hold antiblack and anti-Latino views (for example, whites score 3.79 and 3.96 for blacks and Latinos, respectively, whereas Asians score 4.39 and 4.46). In line with this finding, they hold, comparatively speaking, more positive views about whites than Latinos and blacks (for a more thorough analysis, see Bobo and Johnson 2000). Thus, as in many Latin American and Caribbean societies, members of the intermediate racial strata buffer racial matters by holding more pro-white attitudes than whites themselves.

**Table 3.4 Relationship Between Race/Ethnicity and Racial Stereotypes of Intelligence and Welfare Dependency of Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Whites in Los Angeles, 1993–1994**

Group Stereotyping	Group Stereotyped			
	Blacks	Latinos	Asians	Whites
Unintelligent				
White	3.79	3.96	2.90	3.09
Asians	4.39	4.46	2.90	3.25
Latinos	3.93	3.57	2.74	2.87
Blacks	3.31	3.96	3.21	3.32
F-ratio	***	***	***	***
Prefer Welfare				
White	4.22	4.08	2.30	2.48
Asians	5.10	5.08	2.52	2.93
Latinos	5.57	4.49	2.77	2.77
Blacks	4.12	4.29	2.67	2.77
F-ratio	***	***	***	***

Source: Forman, Martinez, and Bonilla-Silva n.d.

Notes: Responses were made on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is low stereotyping and 7 is high stereotyping.

\*\*\* F-ratios were all significant at  $p \leq .001$  level.

*The collective black and whites' racial attitudes.* After a protracted conflict over the meaning of whites' racial attitudes (see Bonilla-Silva and Lewis 1999), survey researchers seem to have reached an agreement: "a hierarchical racial order continues to shape all aspects of American life" (Dawson 2000: 344). Whites express and defend their social position on issues such as affirmative action and reparations, school integration and busing, neighborhood integration, welfare reform, and even the death penalty (see Bonilla-Silva 2001; Sears et al. 2000; Tuch and Martin 1997). Regarding how whites think about Latinos and Asians, not many researchers have separated the groups that comprise "Latinos" and "Asians" to assess if whites are making distinctions. However, the available evidence suggests whites regard Asians highly and are significantly less likely to hold Latinos in high regard (Bobo and Johnson 2000). Thus, when judged on a host of racial stereotypes, whites rate themselves and Asians almost identically (favorable stereotype rating) and rate negatively (at an almost equal level) both blacks and Latinos.

Bobo and Johnson also show that Latinos tend to rate blacks negatively and that blacks tend to do the same regarding Latinos. They also found that Latinos, irrespective of national ancestry, self-rate lower than whites and Asians (blacks, however, self-rate at the same level with whites and as better than Asians). This pattern seems to confirm Latin Americanization in the United States because those at the bottom in Latin America tend to have a diffused racial consciousness. Our contention seems further bolstered by their findings that "blacks give themselves ratings that tilt in an unfavorable dimension on the traits of welfare dependency and involvement with gangs" and that "for Latinos three of the dimensions tilt in the direction of negative in-group ratings" (Bobo and Johnson 2000: 103).

### ■ Social Interaction Among Members of the Three Racial Strata

If Latin Americanization is happening, one would expect more social (e.g., friendship, associations as neighbors, etc.) and intimate (e.g., marriage) contact between whites and honorary whites than between whites and members of the collective black. A cursory analysis of the data suggests that is in fact the case.

#### *Interracial Marriage*

Although most marriages in the United States are still intraracial, the rates vary substantially by group: 93 percent of whites and blacks marry within their own group, but 70 percent of Latinos and Asians do so, and only 33 percent of Native Americans marry Native Americans (Moran 2001). More significantly, when one disentangles the generic terms "Asians" and "Latinos," the data fit the Latin Americanization thesis even more closely. Although the

Asian American outmarriage pattern is very complex (groups such as Filipinos and Vietnamese have higher than expected rates, in part due to the Vietnam War and the military bases in the Philippines), it is worthwhile to point out that the highest rate belongs to Japanese Americans and Chinese (Kitano and Daniels 1995) and the lowest to Southeast Asians.

Furthermore, racial assimilation through marriage ("whitening") is significantly more likely for the children of Asian-white and Latino-white unions than for those of black/white unions, a fact that bolsters our Latin Americanization thesis. Only 22 percent of the children of black fathers and white mothers are classified as white, whereas the children of similar unions among Asians are twice as likely to be classified as white (Waters 1997). For Latinos, the data fit our thesis even more closely: Latinos of Cuban, Mexican, and South American origin have high rates of exogamy compared to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Gilbertson, Fitzpatrick, Yang 1996). We concur with Rachel Moran's (2001) speculation that because Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have far more dark-skinned members (see Table 3.2), they have restricted chances for outmarriage to whites in a highly racialized marriage market.

In analyses not presented in this chapter, we found that "Latinos" (there is no systematic data by groups and by phenotype) are more likely than "Asians" to experience residential segregation. Moreover, the Latinos who experience the highest degree of segregation are Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, the darkest of all Latinos in the United States (Massey and Denton 1987; Zubrinsky 2003). These findings mostly fit our Latin Americanization thesis.

### ■ Latin Americanization and Racial Justice in America

We have presented a broad and bold thesis about the future of racial stratification in the United States (see also Matsuda 1996; Oboler 2000; Okihiro 1994; Spears 1999). However, at this early stage of the analysis and given the serious limitations of the data on "Latinos" and "Asians" (most data are not parceled out by subgroups, and hardly any are separated by skin tone), it is hard to make a conclusive case. It is plausible that factors such as nativity or other socioeconomic characteristics explain some of the patterns we have documented.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, almost all the objective, subjective, and social interaction indicators we reviewed fit our thesis. For example, the objective data show substantive gaps between the groups we labeled "white," "honorary white," and the "collective black." In terms of income and education, whites tend to be slightly better off than honorary whites, who tend to be significantly better off than the collective black. Not surprisingly, a variety of subjective indicators signal the emergence of *internal* stratification among racial minorities. For example, some Latinos living in

the United States (e.g., Cubans, Argentines, Chileans, etc.) are very likely to self-classify as whites, but others are not (e.g., Dominicans and Puerto Ricans). These "white" Latinos have therefore developed a racial attitudinal profile similar to that of whites. Finally, the objective and subjective indicators have an interactional correlate. Data on interracial marriage and residential segregation show that whites are significantly more likely to live near honorary whites and intermarry with them than with members of the collective black.

If our predictions are right, what will be the consequences of Latin Americanization for racial justice in the United States? First, political mobilization along racial lines will be harder to accomplish as "honorary whites" grow in size and social importance. They are likely to buffer racial conflict—or derail it—as intermediate groups do in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Second, the ideology of color-blind racism will become even more salient among whites and honorary whites and will also affect members of the collective black. Color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2001), an ideology similar to that prevalent in Latin American societies, will help glue the new social system and further buffer racial conflict.

Third, if the states decide to stop gathering racial statistics, the struggle to document the impact of race in a variety of social venues will become monumental. More significantly, because state actions always influence civil society, if the states decide to disregard race at their level, the *social* recognition of "races" in the polity may become harder. We may develop a Latin American-like "disgust" for even mentioning anything that is race-related.

Fourth, the deep history of black/white divisions in the United States has been such that the centrality of the black identity will not dissipate. Even the "black elite" exhibits racial attitudes in line with their racial group rather than with their potential class/race trajectory (Dawson 1994). That identity, as we argued in this chapter, may be taken up by dark-skinned Latinos (and maybe some Asian Americans) and is being rapidly taken up by most West Indians.

However, we predict some important changes even in the black community. Blacks' racial consciousness will become more diffuse. For example, blacks will be more likely to accept many stereotypes about themselves (e.g., "We are lazier than whites") and have a "blunted oppositional consciousness" (see Bonilla-Silva 2001). Furthermore, the external pressure of "multiracials" in white contexts (Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002a) and the internal pressure of "ethnic" blacks may change the notion of "blackness" and even the position of some "blacks" in the system. Colorism may become an even more important factor as a way of making social distinctions among "blacks" (Keith and Herring 1991).

Fifth, the new racial stratification system will be more effective in maintaining "white supremacy" (Mills 1997). Whites will still be at the top of the

social structure but will face fewer race-based challenges. And to avoid confusion about our claim regarding "honorary whites," let us clarify that their standing and status will depend upon whites' wishes and practices. "Honorary" means that they will remain secondary, will still face discrimination, and will not receive equal treatment in society. For example, although we regard Arab Americans as "honorary whites," their treatment in the post-September 11 era suggests their status as "white" and "American" is very tenuous. Similarly, Asian Americans, regardless of their views and their high level of interaction with whites, are still deemed to be "perpetual foreigners."

But not everything has to be gloomy in a Latin America-like America. All systems of racial domination create fractures and subjects who are likely to fight the system. In a Latin Americanized US, the fracture will be the large contingent of people at the new bottom: the collective black. They constitute the potential "historic bloc" to fight back and, if they solidify as a social group, could be the majority in the country for the first time in history. Even those in the honorary white category exhibit vulnerabilities that, if properly politicized, can be exploited to increase the size of those opposing the new white supremacy order.

Yet, the above scenario of resistance implies systematic politicization, organization, and work, processes that have not been part of the US landscape since the civil rights era. If passivity reigns or if we do not understand adequately what is transpiring, Latin America-like race relations will crystallize, and the United States will become a society with more rather than less racial inequality but with a reduced forum for racial contestation. The apparent blessing of "not seeing race" will become a curse for those struggling for racial justice in years to come. We may become "all Americans," as commercials in recent times suggest, but paraphrasing George Orwell, "some will be more American than others."

## ■ Notes

1. Since September 11, 2001, the United States has embarked on what we regard as temporary "social peace," and the motto, "We are all Americans," has become quite commonplace. Popular parading of the multiracial capture of the country, while continuing to circumvent interracial unions, suggests that "We (may be) all Americans," but we do have our own subnational or racial primary associations. Meanwhile, the inequalities between minorities and whites, men and women, and workers and capitalists remain. In short, this new Americanism, like the old Americanism, is a *herrenvolk* nationalism (Lipsitz 1998; Winant 1994).

2. Our contention is *not* that the black/white dynamic ordained race relations throughout the United States. Instead, our argument is that at the national macro-level, race relations have been organized in the United States along a white/nonwhite divide. This large divide, depending on context, included various racial groups (whites, blacks, and Indians or whites, Mexicans, Indians, and blacks, etc.), but under the white/nonwhite racial order, "whites" were often treated as superior and "nonwhites" as inferiors. For a few exceptions to this pattern, see Daniel's (2000b) discussion of "triracial isolates."



3. We are adapting Antonio Negri's idea of the "collective worker" to the situation of all those at the bottom of the racial stratification system (see Fleming 1984).

4. The Bolivian Census of 2001 reports that 71 percent of Bolivians self-identify as Indian, less than 20 percent have more than a high school diploma, and 58.6 percent live below the poverty line; in contrast, 66 percent of Bolivians in the United States self-identify as white and 64 percent have twelve or more years of education, and have a per capita income comparable to that of whites (Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2002). Thus, the situation of Bolivians in the United States seems like a case of self-selection, that is, they do not represent Bolivians in Bolivia.

5. Survey experiments have shown that if the question on Hispanic origin is asked first, the proportion of Latinos report themselves as "white" increases from 25 to 39 percent (Martin, Demaio, and Campanelli 1990). The same research also shows that when Latinos report belonging to the "Other" category, they are not mistaken, that is, they do want to signify they are neither black nor white. Unfortunately, we do not have results by national groups, but we think this finding does not alter the direction of the overall findings on the self-identification of various Latino groups.

6. Is it color, nativity, education, or class that determines where groups fit in our scheme? It is an empirical question. An alternative explanation of our findings is that "honorary whites" come with high levels of human capital *before* they achieve honorary white status in the United States—thus, class background is key. However, some available data suggest that race/color has an impact on the success of immigrants in the United States. For example, the case of West Indians—who come to the United States with class advantages (e.g., an education) and yet "fade to black" in a few generations—suggests that the "racial" status of the group is independent and also key (Kasinitz, Battle, and Miyares 2001; Model 1991). Also, although some of these groups may do "well" objectively, they often get very little return for what they bring to the fore (Butcher 1994). And, as Mary Waters and Karl Eschbach (1995: 442) stated, "the evidence indicates that direct discrimination is still an important factor for all minority subgroups except very highly educated Asians." Even highly educated and acculturated Asians, such as Filipinos, report high levels of racial discrimination in the labor market. Not surprisingly, second- and third-generation Filipinos self-identity as Filipino-American rather than as white or "American" (Espiritu and Wolf 2001). For a similar finding on the Vietnamese, see Min Zhou (2001) and for a discussion on the indeterminate relation between education and income among many other groups, see Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (1990).

## 4

## Racial Justice in a Black/Nonblack Society

George Yancey

When the Irish came to the United States to escape the great potato famines of the mid-1840s, they enjoyed little respect and prestige in American society. They were not part of the majority but instead were thought of as "niggers turned inside out" (Ignatiev 1995; Waters 2000). Racist stereotyping, residential segregation, and occupational discrimination were common experiences for the Irish. However, over time this ethnic group has become one of the best examples of the dynamic nature of racial identity. Later generation Irish escaped the minority status that plagued early Irish immigrants. As documented by Noel Ignatiev (1995) the Irish began a journey that eventually led to their acceptance into mainstream society and to gaining dominant group status. With the election of John F. Kennedy, the Irish—a group that started out reviled and excluded from "respectable society"—had finally reached the highest levels of prestige in the United States. Today most Americans perceive the Irish as just another group of whites.

Because racial identity changes over time, social scientists have struggled to understand the possible new permutations of race in the United States, creating a very important debate among race/ethnicity scholars. This debate focuses on the fate of nonblack racial minorities. On the one hand, some argue that the transformation of white ethnic minority groups into dominant group members does not predict what will happen to contemporary nonblack racial groups. These theorists argue that contemporary racial barriers are qualitatively different from the ethnic hurdles of yesteryear. They assume that the basic white/nonwhite divide that has characterized race relations in the past will continue to be our society's dominant divide. On the other hand, some argue that the changing nature of race relations will result in the merging of nonblack racial minorities into the dominant culture. They essentially contend that the processes of assimilation that characterize European

# Mixed Messages

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in the "Color-Blind" Era

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