

1 How Immigration Changes Concepts of Race

SITTING ON THE FRONT STEPS OF HIS STUCCO HOUSE IN SANTO DOMINGO, Agustín is surrounded by the bustle of activity.¹ His house serves as an informal gathering place for neighbors, his teenage children, and volunteers for the various political activities he organizes. The group huddled around him today, awaiting direction for the latest campaign event, looks like a cross-section of the Dominican population: there are people with light skin, dark skin, African features, European features, and almost every mixture in between. Later, Agustín confidently describes the racial categories that exist in the Dominican Republic:

Here there's a mix of *negro* and *blanco*—that's the majority, the ones that are *mulato*. There are some that are a minority, which is a minority that almost doesn't exist, which are the *sambos*. . . . The ones they call *sambos* are Indian and *negro*. . . . You can find some in some regions of Yamasa, around there, and Sabana Grande de Boya, some individuals that have Indigenous and *negro* characteristics.

He concludes that there are primarily three races in the Dominican Republic today: *mulatos*, *blancos*, and *negros*. In the past, there used to be *mestizos*, those who are a mixture of White² and Indigenous, as well as *sambos*, but these races barely exist now because the Indigenous race was wiped out by European colonizers. The vast majority of Dominicans today—more than 80 percent of the population, he estimates—are *mulatos*.

A 53-year-old man with dark skin and African features, Agustín places himself within that *mulato* majority. He explains, “I understand that I'm a mix of *blanco* and *negro*, of Spanish and African origin. . . . [I'm] *mulato*, . . . not totally

negro but instead a mix.” For him, the term *mulato* represents any mixture of White and Black heritage, and so it incorporates people with a wide variety of appearances. In fact, without hesitating, Agustín classifies the people around him as *blanco*, *negro*, and *mulato*. But almost everyone, whether light or dark, he labels as *mulato*. “Dominicans are a mix of races,” he claims, and anyone who has any visible evidence of racial mixture can be considered the same race.

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Raquel was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to New York when she was a young adolescent. Now in her mid-30s, she is an assistant principal in the Dominican enclave of Washington Heights. Amid the cinder-block walls and fluorescent lighting of her small high school office, Raquel’s decorations—a screen saver of a tropical beach with clear blue water and palm trees, and paintings of the flowering red *flamboyant* trees common in the Dominican Republic—allow her to dream of escaping from her urban routine. Raquel has pale, light skin, straight black hair, and looks mostly European. At first glance, many people in New York would probably see her as White. Yet Raquel identifies her race as Black. She explains how she came to understand what race means and how to classify herself and others:

There was a confusion, at least for [me] . . . about what race is, what ethnicity is, what nationality is. So, for me, it was an experience like an epiphany one day when I found out that there are only three races . . . and you have to decide which you belong to. So not only by the color of the skin, but there are a lot of other factors. . . . There would be your ancestry—you need to look at your grandparents, your great-grandparents. You need to look at the shape of your mouth, the size of your ears, how your nose is, the texture of your hair. There are a lot of other things: the color of your eyes, the color of your hair, all those things. But in the Dominican Republic, as soon as you’re a little light or medium light, already, you can’t say that you’re Black. No, that’s like a sin. So, after you educate yourself and after you accept that there are either three or, if you want to be more specific and talk about the Indigenous people . . . then there would be four [races], but you need to choose one of these three or four. You can’t invent a new one. So I don’t have any other option than choosing Black because I’m not White or Asian. So I must be whatever is left.

Q: Could you say a little about your epiphany? How did that happen? . . .

I was in college . . . taking a sociology class. I was reading in the book and it said that there were three races: Asian, White, and Black. I kept looking for my

race because there wasn't a race for me. And I was talking with my teacher and so, during the conversation, he explained it to me. Sincerely, I tell you, with all the experience that I had, before that day it was one thing and after that day is another.

Before this experience, Raquel might have identified her race as White. But because she feels that the texture of her hair and some of her features reveal some African heritage, she realized that she did not have the option of choosing White. Now she sees others this way too, even people back in the Dominican Republic. Through her experience in college, Raquel now adopts a more historically "American" way of classifying race—that anyone with any Black ancestry should be seen as Black.

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Isandro, a 38-year-old Puerto Rican man with medium-brown skin, works as an income tax auditor in San Juan. He identifies his race—and that of practically everyone around him in Puerto Rico—as Latino:

To me, I'm Latino. A lot of people say that Latino doesn't exist as a race. In case that one day it's defined or it's excluded [as a race], then I'd be Black. But I understand that I'm Latino because I'm . . . neither White nor Yellow. I'm Latino.

Q: And what is the Latino race? What does it include?

Okay, the Latinos, I think . . . they're not Whites, but they would be something like the mix of maybe White and Black. They tend to usually be shorter in height than the Whites. They tend to have features . . . that are more lengthened, features that are finer than those of Blacks. . . . If someone asks me what I am, I say that I'm Latino . . . because I don't consider myself Black or White, or Chinese, I mean Oriental. And so I understand that the fourth option would be that one.

Isandro has never lived outside of Puerto Rico, but he has so many relatives and friends in the mainland U.S. that he is always aware of what's happening *allá* (over there). His father moved to New Jersey when Isandro was three, shortly after divorcing his mother, and married a Mexican American woman. He now has several half siblings born in New Jersey, as well as a brother who moved there seven years ago and married a woman from Ecuador. Isandro estimates he has between fifty and a hundred relatives in the mainland U.S., and he talks with someone there at least every month. These connections have influenced his view of race. Isandro admits that as a child he used to identify as

Black, but now he hears everywhere about how Latinos are a different group from Blacks and Whites:

My family has commented that they've noticed the difference. . . . Over there the issue about race is . . . like the extremes, [you're] either too *blanco* or too *negro* or *trigueñito*³ [a little brown] and Latino. And that's where the Latinos fall. Which is actually another [reason] why I think that maybe we're a race, because we aren't either with the Whites or with the Blacks, but in the middle.

In conversations with his relatives, in news reports and movies—much of it coming from the United States—Isandro frequently hears the word “Latino” used to describe a separate group. As a racial category, “Latino” is not very useful for distinguishing one person from another in Puerto Rico. But Isandro’s classifications are not meant to reference only Puerto Rico; they are very much in dialogue with the society at the other end of a migration path.

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How does immigration affect the way people think about race and classify themselves and others? That is the question at the heart of this book. These three cases illustrate many of the central themes I explore to answer that question. First, there are many different ways of classifying race. *Mulato*, Black, and Latino are three different ways that Agustín, Raquel, and Isandro, respectively, think about the same racial mix. Different nations and cultures often have their own ways of dividing the world into racial categories and deciding how to assign people to each one. Second, as the experience of Raquel shows, individuals can change which set of categories or rules for sorting people they use, and while there are many factors that may influence this change, immigration is a significant one. Do immigrants to the United States come to adopt an “Americanized” way of viewing race? Or do they change American notions, like a racial melting pot, to create new concepts out of the immigrant experience? Third, the question of how immigration shapes concepts of race is one that affects many people whose lives are touched by immigration, whether they have moved to a new society or not. Isandro’s case shows that even someone who has never immigrated can be influenced to think of race in a new way by the experiences of those who have. How, then, does immigration change concepts of race for the immigrants, for their host society, and for those who stay in the countries they left behind?

For decades, people who study immigration have focused on whether or not immigrants assimilate to the culture of their new society. This type of cul-

tural assimilation—what is known as acculturation—focuses on whether immigrants adopt the language, dress, and traditions of their new country. But beyond basic issues of outward appearance and practices, acculturation is also about immigrants’ ways of behaving and interacting every day, their strategies for how to act in different situations. We expect immigrants’ behavior to change over time as they become more accustomed to their environs and pick up new ways of understanding social patterns such as gender roles, family dynamics, or workplace interactions. Ultimately, immigrant acculturation is an issue of cultural change, something that should be of interest to scholars of culture.

Race is also an aspect of culture. Just as different societies have different ways of understanding race and different ways of determining what races exist, concepts of race are one aspect of the cultural change that immigrants may experience in a new society. We can think of the example of Raquel above as a case of *racial acculturation*. In the Dominican Republic and other countries of the Hispanic Caribbean, many believe that the category “Black” is reserved for those whose ancestry is only African, with no racial mixture. The United States, by contrast, has long had a history of a “one-drop rule,” a principle of hypodescent, which allows African ancestry to trump everything else and lead to a Black designation, regardless of how distant that ancestry may be.⁴ Raquel’s shift is not just about her own identity; it is also about her way of seeing the world and other people in it. It is a cognitive shift that affects who she feels a connection to and how she behaves toward others. Recently, scholars have called upon researchers to integrate theories of race and culture.⁵ In this book, I consider how we can think of race within a cultural framework to better understand how it is transformed by the process of immigration.

These issues are especially relevant because of current debates about how Latin American immigration is changing the United States and the centrality of race in those discussions. The Latino population has grown tremendously in the last few decades, due in large part to immigration. In 1950 less than 3 percent of the U.S. population identified as Hispanic or Latino; in 2010 that percentage had increased to more than 16 percent.⁶ The Latino population had a growth rate more than four times that of the U.S. population as a whole in the 1990s.⁷ In 2003, headlines trumpeted an important shift in American demographics: Latinos were now the largest U.S. minority group, surpassing Blacks for the first time.⁸

Accompanying these demographic shifts has been a range of policy initiatives, political debates, and public concern over the growing Latino presence in America. In 2004 Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington described

large-scale Latino immigration as a cultural threat to the nation in his book *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. Warning that Latino immigration could “change America into a country of two languages, two cultures, and two peoples,”⁹ Huntington saw Latino immigrants as essentially unassimilable because of fundamental differences between their culture and an Anglo-Protestant American identity. In 2006 and 2007, the U.S. Senate voted on amendments to immigration legislation to designate English as the national language.¹⁰ English-only policies are seen to target, and predominantly affect, Spanish-speaking communities.¹¹ In 2010 Arizona passed a controversial immigration law, SB 1070, allowing police to detain anyone they suspect of being in the country illegally.¹² Should the law survive its court challenges, it will likely require American police officers to judge who “looks illegal,” or in other words, who “looks Latino.”

These events reflect a perception—and sometimes a fear—that Latino immigration is transforming American society, and some of that fear is racial. In many of these discussions, Latinos are treated as a race, one that can be visually picked out on the street. Latinos are seen as changing the racial character of the nation, a sentiment captured by Richard Rodríguez in his description of “the browning of America.”¹³ Predictions that within a few decades minority groups will be the majority of the population can produce a sense of racial group threat, a fear that rapidly growing groups like Latinos will challenge the privileges that others have long held.

All of these issues, present every time we pick up a newspaper, involve judgments about race—who is Latino, who is White, and so on. These are the types of judgments we make every day, and they reflect our understanding of racial classifications in the United States. That understanding has been shaped by American history, and it has produced a racial structure that has traditionally been divided into White and Black. Latinos, though, seem to challenge that division. What is central, if often unstated, in these political debates and media coverage, is the question of how Latinos fit into the U.S. racial structure. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the department responsible for setting standards of federal data collection, such as the U.S. Census, stipulates that Latino or Hispanic is not a race but rather an aspect of ethnicity. According to this “official” classification system, Latinos may be of any race—meaning the ones the OMB enumerates in federal data: White, Black, Native American, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Yet many Latinos do not see themselves fitting within these official classifications; on the 2010 Census, 37 percent of Latinos identified themselves as “Some other race.”¹⁴ Many schol-

ars interpret this response as indicating a Latino or Hispanic racial identity and a rejection of the existing racial categories of the United States.¹⁵ Others note that the majority of Latinos identify themselves as White, and suggest that they should be considered White rather than as members of a racial minority.¹⁶

Accordingly, scholarly debates over where Latinos will fit into the U.S. racial structure in the future have offered several differing predictions. Some see Latinos forming a new racial group of their own, separate from White and Black and falling hierarchically between the two.¹⁷ Others argue that Latinos are socially closer to Whites—they tend to live near them and to intermarry—and suggest that the definition of Whiteness will expand to include Latinos, just as it did for Irish, Jewish, and other ethnic groups in earlier times.¹⁸ A third prediction holds that a tri-racial stratification system will emerge, with a “pigmentocracy” that ranks groups and individuals based on their skin color. While some assimilated White Latinos will join the privileged White group, most light-skinned Latinos will remain in an “honorary White” middle tier, and those with dark skin will join a collective Black category at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.¹⁹ To get a handle on these possibilities, it is crucial to understand how Latinos see themselves fitting into American racial classifications, and how they are seen by others. And since approximately 40 percent of Latinos are born outside the mainland U.S.,²⁰ that brings us back to the question of how migration from Latin America affects the way people—both Latinos and non-Latinos—think about and classify race.

In this book, I set out to address these questions, drawing on an in-depth study of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, both those who migrate to New York and those who stay behind in Santo Domingo and San Juan. Often when people think of large-scale migration from Latin America, they think first of Mexicans and South Americans. But the experiences of people from the Hispanic Caribbean offer a particularly useful window into issues of racial classification and acculturation. The slave trade was especially developed in these former colonies, and widespread racial mixing between European colonizers, African slaves, and the Indigenous Taíno group produced a contemporary population that spans a continuum from White to Indigenous to Black.²¹ While there are some Afro-Latino populations in Mexico and South America, especially in certain regions,²² a less advanced slave trade there has resulted in a population whose range of appearances more commonly spans from White to Indigenous.²³ Many Dominicans and Puerto Ricans have remarked on the experience of arriving in the mainland U.S. and being seen as Black, a less common experience among Mexicans or South Americans. Because Puerto Ricans and

Dominicans fall on both sides of the Black-White divide in the United States, scholars have long asked whether skin color will lead some to be seen as White or Black while those who do not fit clearly into either category become seen as racially Latino.²⁴ The position of these groups, straddling existing racial categories, gives us particular analytical leverage to consider how appearance, or immigrants' visual "fit" with existing categories, influences how these Latinos are seen and see themselves in the United States.

Puerto Ricans are often excluded from research on immigration, and thus tend to be under-studied.²⁵ As U.S. citizens by birth, they are usually not considered immigrants. Puerto Rico has been part of the United States since it was annexed as a protectorate in 1898, and in 1952 the island nation was established as a Free Associated State. In English, Puerto Rico is frequently called a Commonwealth, but this nomenclature is misleading. Legally, as well as culturally, Puerto Rico is a separate country, albeit one "associated" with the United States.²⁶ For this reason, some claim that the label "immigrants" is appropriate,²⁷ although their affiliation with the United States also makes their resettlement resemble internal migration within a country.²⁸ On a social and cultural level, however, Puerto Ricans' integration experiences are quite similar to those of Dominicans and other immigrants. Most Puerto Ricans consider their island a distinct nation and distinguish themselves culturally (and racially) from *los americanos*.²⁹ First-generation Puerto Ricans in the mainland U.S., especially those from lower-class backgrounds, often have limited English abilities. I include Puerto Ricans here because my focus is primarily on social and cultural integration, and I refer to both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans who have moved to the mainland U.S. as "migrants."³⁰

Comparing Dominicans and Puerto Ricans

Because Puerto Ricans are overlooked in immigration studies, they also tend to be excluded from comparative research. In some ways their experiences are unique among Latinos; they are the only group that does not need a visa to move to the United States. Yet in other ways, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans make an ideal comparison for a study of changing concepts of race. Their colonial histories, populations, and cultures resemble one another in many ways. Only about 75 miles apart, both societies were populated by the Indigenous Taíno people when colonized by the Spanish conquistadors, at approximately the same time.³¹ Although the slave trade was more widespread in the Dominican Republic, leading to a more prominent African influence in the contemporary population there, both colonies experienced widespread miscegenation

and a blending of Taíno, European, and African roots. Under Spanish rule, the nations came to share a common language, religion, and customs that blended together the cultures of these three origin groups. In particular, both societies recognize a continuum of racial types, adopt a complex terminology to describe them, and employ these terms in similar ways in their everyday lives.

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are also the two largest Latino migrant populations on the East Coast of the United States, and migration from both societies has historically been concentrated in the same receiving city: New York.³² The vast majority of Puerto Rican and Dominican migrants over time have settled in New York City, which has become the primary site of the communities' political and social institutions in the mainland U.S. Even as the communities begin to disperse geographically to other parts of the country, New York remains the largest concentration of each group at the start of the twenty-first century. There are sometimes tensions between these nationalities both in New York and in San Juan, where a large number of Dominicans have also settled. But many also recognize their shared cultural heritage on a broader level.³³ Culturally and socially these societies have much in common.

The two groups are also united by a similar experience of transnational migration. Transnationalism is "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement."³⁴ Puerto Ricans and Dominicans do not simply settle in their host society and immerse themselves in a new way of life. They actively link their home and host societies through a range of involvements and continued participation in the societies they left behind.³⁵ The geographic proximity of their home countries to New York, the availability of inexpensive transportation, and improved technology and infrastructure all facilitate back-and-forth movement, frequent communication, and continuing involvement in the political, economic, and civic life of those communities.

Migrants' continued involvement changes their sending societies, not merely through the financial remittances they send back but also through new concepts that they communicate to the people who have never left.³⁶ Part of understanding how immigration affects concepts of race and classification, then, is understanding how transnational activities, ties, and the general globalization that often accompanies such international connections affect those concepts. Just as migrants' lives are increasingly spanning national boundaries, processes of identity formation are also shaped by the cyclical give-and-take as ideas are exchanged. Concepts of race and ethnicity are challenged and re-created in this transnational space, as new ideas about race that migrants adopt or create are

communicated back to non-migrants. As migration continues, it creates an on-going cycle, in which new migrants arrive having already incorporated—pre-migration—concepts of race that have been created by the experiences of earlier migrants. Dominicans' and Puerto Ricans' transnational lifestyles thus help to reveal how race and ethnicity can be transformed by migration simultaneously in both sending and receiving societies.

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans also differ in important ways that may shed light on processes of identity formation. Most significantly, they differ in their political status. Puerto Rico's affiliated status creates strong institutional ties with the United States and allows its citizens to move freely between the island and the mainland. The U.S. government and private capital have also played a significant role in the development of the Dominican Republic, but Dominican migration is restricted by immigration laws, and many Dominicans enter the country illegally. Although the privileges of citizenship have not necessarily eased Puerto Ricans' socioeconomic integration, they do permit ease of physical movement in and out of the mainland U.S., which may affect what the immigrants communicate to those who stay in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Ricans' and Dominicans' identifications on national surveys may reveal how they see themselves fitting into American racial structures. In the mainland U.S., Puerto Rican migrants are about equally likely to identify as White or Other race (Table 1). That pattern did not change much, even as they

Table 1. Racial identification of Latinos in the mainland U.S.

	<i>White, alone</i>	<i>Black, alone</i>	<i>Other, alone</i>	<i>White and Black</i>	<i>White and other</i>	<i>Black and other</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% of all Latinos</i>
1990								
Puerto Rican	45.8	5.9	47.1				2,632,326	12.1
Dominican	28.2	27.3	43.2				516,891	2.4
All Latinos	52.2	2.9	43.2				21,836,851	100.0
2000								
Puerto Rican	47.2	5.9	37.9	0.8	3.9	1.3	3,400,527	9.7
Dominican	22.7	8.9	58.4	1.1	4.0	2.2	796,724	2.3
All Latinos	47.8	1.8	42.6	0.2	4.2	0.5	35,204,480	100.0
2006								
Puerto Rican	45.9	5.3	41.1	1.1	2.5	1.3	3,985,058	9.0
Dominican	24.0	7.3	63.9	1.5	1.4	1.0	1,217,160	2.7
All Latinos	52.3	1.4	41.2	0.3	2.0	0.3	44,298,975	100.0

SOURCES: 1990 Census 5% PUMS; 2000 Census 5% PUMS; 2006 American Community Survey. PUMS data compiled by Steven Ruggles, Matthew Sobek, Trent Alexander, Catherine A. Fitch, Ronald Goeken, Patricia Kelly Hall, Miriam King, and Chad Ronnander, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 4.0* [Machine-readable database] (Minneapolis: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2008). Available at <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>.

were allowed to mark more than one race starting with the 2000 Census. Puerto Ricans' identification patterns roughly resemble those of all Latinos in the mainland U.S., although they are slightly more likely to check "Black" than are Latinos overall. By contrast, Dominicans were much more likely to identify as Black in 1990. Specifically, 27.3% of Dominicans checked "Black" as their race, compared to 5.9% of Puerto Ricans and 2.9% of all Latinos. This is particularly striking because the Dominican Republic has systematically deemphasized its African heritage, in part to distinguish itself from neighboring Haiti. In the country of origin, most Dominicans reject a Black label and government institutions promote the view that Dominicans are a non-Black population.³⁷ In the 1980 Dominican census, only 11% of the population was classified as *negro*, while 16% was classified as *blanco* and 73% as *indio*—or mixed.³⁸ On their national identification cards, Dominican government officials classify 90% of the nation as *indio*.³⁹ Despite rejecting a Black label back home, it would seem that many Dominicans in 1990 felt they should check "Black" in the United States.

Dominicans' racial identifications have also changed dramatically in a relatively short period. The proportion that identified as Black alone decreased from 27.3% in 1990 to 8.9% in 2000 and 7.3% in 2006. Meanwhile, the proportion that identified as Other alone increased from 43.2% in 1990 to 58.4% in 2000 and then 63.9% in 2006. Some of this pattern undoubtedly reflects changes in the order and wording of the questions. But it is unlikely that this shift is entirely a matter of questionnaire effects, because no similar change occurred across Latino groups. The context in which such a change occurred, and what factors contributed to it, is part of what this comparison will explore.

Compared to Dominican migrants, Puerto Rican migrants are much more likely to identify themselves as White. But compared to those back in Puerto Rico, Puerto Rican migrants are much more likely to choose "Other" as their identification. In 2000, the first time a race question was asked on the island of Puerto Rico in 50 years, 80.5% of those in Puerto Rico identified as White, while 8.0% identified as Black and only 6.8% identified as Other.⁴⁰ These simple survey questions cannot capture the full range of complexity in how people understand race or even their own racial identity. But they do suggest that, as a general pattern, migrants' experiences in the United States lead each nationality toward checking the "Other" box, albeit to different extents. By exploring their experiences at home and abroad, this research can help us understand why. The similarities as well as the differences between these groups make for a particularly revealing comparison of how widespread movement to a new society can shape not just individual identities but also a cognitive mapping of race.

Racial Schemas

In the past, race was seen as a given—something objectively defined and obvious. As concepts of race have moved away from seeing it as a biological reality and toward viewing it as a way of dividing up and stratifying individuals, it becomes more important to focus on the process of racial categorization and classification. I define race as a cognitive structure that divides people into hierarchically ordered categories on the basis of certain physical or biological characteristics, commonly revealed in appearance, that are believed to be inherent. Although biological characteristics are referred to in delimiting a racial group, deciding which characteristics define the race—whether skin color, eye color, height, or any number of other features—is a social rather than a biological construction.⁴¹ It is also something that societies, each operating with different cognitive structures, may do differently.

As scholars have moved toward viewing race as socially constructed, there has been increased recognition of the cognitive processes—including perception, memory, and judgment—that go into determining a person's race or ethnicity.⁴² Around the same time, sociologists have focused attention on cognitive approaches to the study of culture. Paul DiMaggio has written that “individuals experience culture as disparate bits of information and as schematic structures that organize that information.”⁴³ In this book, I try to provide the third link in this triangle: that race and ethnicity are aspects of culture.⁴⁴ We can view race as a cognitive process that is part of a shared culture in a society.⁴⁵

Schemas are among the central concepts in cognitive science. These are mental structures that represent knowledge and process information. Schemas are not just groups of categories, but a complex of information about the relationships among them. They involve rankings of the categories, leading some to be treated as subordinate to others. They also guide perception and recall when faced with a new experience that must be interpreted. Like a set of mental rules that help people recognize and process new people, events, or stimuli, schemas treat such information as new instances of an already familiar category.⁴⁶

I focus throughout this book on the concept of *racial schemas*—the bundle of racial categories and the set of rules for what they mean, how they are ordered, and how to apply them to oneself and others. The categories within racial schemas are relational—they inhere in their relationship to one another, in who is defined as inside or outside the group and what that means for how those people are treated within a society.⁴⁷ Racial schemas are necessarily cognitive phenomena, because they are mental processes that shape our knowledge. But they are also cultural. There are different concepts of what racial categories

exist and how they are ordered in the United States, Latin America, and other regions around the world. There are also differences within nations and communities in the racial schemas that people use. Their racial schemas may not match official classification systems in each nation, since people often develop their own taxonomies for everyday use or bend the meanings of official categories in unofficial directions.⁴⁸ Understanding the variations in racial schemas, how migrants and others affected by migration acquire new schemas or cease to use old ones, and what circumstances or situational cues invoke different schematic understandings are among the central concerns of this study.

Most sociological research on race and immigration focuses on racial identity—for instance, how immigrants identify their own race and whether this changes over time. Recently, prominent sociologists have called for a move away from a narrow focus on identities.⁴⁹ The term “identity” is used so broadly that its meaning is often ambiguous and it loses a sense of who is doing the identifying. It also tends to be treated in scholarly work as an end in itself, rather than a process that leads to sociologically relevant outcomes. Racial identity is an important aspect of racial categorizations, and it can be helpful in revealing the nature of the schemas that people use. But it says less about people’s understanding of what races are and which ones exist, which is central to understanding race as an aspect of culture.

Racial schemas, like all cognitive schemas, do not exist just within people’s heads. They are shared representations that are partly independent of individuals’ beliefs;⁵⁰ this is why there is overlap between those held by different people. In part, they are publicly shared because of the way that schemas and classifications are institutionalized. Institutions like the state, schools, workplaces, families, social movements, and bureaucracies of various kinds play a role in creating and conveying racial schemas.⁵¹ Studying how racial schemas are used helps us connect what happens at the individual level to what happens at the macro level, or how individuals share and are influenced by a common culture of race.⁵²

An important advantage that comes from thinking of race in terms of cognitive schemas is the recognition that people can hold multiple racial schemas at any given time. People acquire new schemas throughout their lives, some of which are inconsistent. But some schemas are more salient and available than others, which leads individuals to activate them more easily and frequently.⁵³ We typically have more racial schemas than we use at any given time. The multiple racial schemas that people know about and can access are stored within a cognitive *racial schema portfolio*. Like an artist’s portfolio, this is where people

mentally store the different racial schemas within their repertoire, selecting and activating different ones in different contexts, when cued by triggers in particular situations.

A racial schema may seem to some like a core concept—something people would use consistently—especially in the United States, where race so fundamentally structures many aspects of life. And for those who have little interaction with other cultures, that may be the case. But immigration is a social process that adds new racial schemas to societies' cultural repertoires. As immigrants interact with others in their host society, they typically learn new racial schemas that predominate there.⁵⁴

Viewing race as an aspect of culture to which immigrants may assimilate reframes our understanding of racial acculturation. From this perspective, what racial acculturation really means is not that immigrants entirely drop an old racial schema associated with their country of origin and replace it exclusively with a new one representing their new country. Rather, it is a change in the frequency and facility with which they use a set of new racial schemas as opposed to others. Old schemas are rarely lost; they may still be used in some situations. But immigrants who are most acculturated use the schemas associated with their new society most often and in most contexts, while their old schemas atrophy and fade into the far recesses of their minds from disuse. Acculturation in general resembles a cognitive rewiring, leading people to choose new concepts and strategies more easily and more often.

Immigrants can also reinterpret new schemas, blending them with old concepts, or infusing them with new meaning. How they use racial schemas, and the variants they create, may also influence the native-born around them. The very presence of large populations of newcomers may lead the native-born to reconceptualize some of their existing schemas to account for and position those new groups within a shifting racial hierarchy. This “melting pot” scenario views immigrants and the host society as changing one another, adding new racial schemas to the society's cultural repertoire. When enough people follow suit, this process creates macro-level changes in racial repertoires, and native-born Americans, like the immigrants, have access to additional schemas as well.

A more challenging issue is how and why *non*-migrants' use of racial schemas changes. These, after all, are people who do not move to a new society, who do not interact with a new culture on a daily basis. To the extent that non-migrants in the sending societies also access new racial schemas, it is because transnational migration practices, and the globalization processes that typically accompany large-scale mass migration, produce a cultural diffusion of racial

schemas. Culture, including concepts of race, is diffused in large part through social networks, the mass media, and institutions.⁵⁵ The diffusion of racial schemas does not mean that non-migrants necessarily enact those concepts. It simply adds a new understanding and categorization of race to their portfolios, which they can select and activate for different purposes.

Many studies assume that culture is organized around nations or subgroups within those nations, and is enacted in similar ways across different types of situations.⁵⁶ In fact, as I hope to show, it is not. At the macro level, at any given moment, there are multiple racial schemas within a society. There are existing schemas, new schemas brought in by immigrants, amalgams as immigrants change existing schemas, and so on, all of which make up the society's racial repertoire. There are also official classification systems and the bundle of knowledge, rules, and hierarchies that they invoke. And there are more unofficial schemas as many people simultaneously, through their everyday usage, challenge and reinvent those official systems. Within each society these various schemas are distributed across individuals, who may be more or less likely to evoke a given schema on a somewhat regular basis because of the different situations they tend to find themselves in.⁵⁷ The processes of immigration, transnationalism, and globalization that I detail in this book change which racial schemas individuals use more frequently than others. And as migrants, their host society, and non-migrants more or less simultaneously begin to use these new forms of race more and more often, a macro-level cultural change occurs in both sending and receiving societies.

Measuring Racial Schemas

Assessing how immigrants and others conceptualize race is a methodological challenge. One approach is to look at how Latinos self-identify their race on the census or other surveys to determine if they are adopting an American concept of race—i.e., by checking “White” or “Black”—or are rejecting American notions of race by checking “Other.” The problem, though, is that some people in Latin America do think of themselves as *blanco* or *negro*, although not necessarily the same people Americans would see as White or Black. Are the Latinos who check “White” on the U.S. Census adopting an Americanized understanding of race or a Latin American one? We cannot tell from their self-identifications alone.

To shift the focus away from self-identification and toward racial schemas, I use photo elicitation. I developed a set of photographs representing the range of racial appearances that is typically found in the Hispanic Caribbean (see images

following page 22). I asked respondents to identify the race of the person in each photograph in open-ended terms—whatever terms they would normally use. I gave no other instructions about the kind of categories they should use; instead, I allowed the photographs to evoke a set of categories that respondents employ in their daily lives.⁵⁸ To move beyond the categories and toward the relations between them, I used respondents' classifications of the photographs to initiate an in-depth discussion of how they decide what labels to apply, what those categories mean, how they relate to one another, what implications they have for daily life, and how the respondents understand race more generally. Such topics are often awkward and difficult to evoke in an interview setting, yet the exercise of identifying the photographs opened the door to discussing the respondents' thought processes.

Because the photographs depict real people, they allow respondents to think about how they would classify individuals they might actually see during the course of their day and to choose for themselves what to focus on in attributing race.⁵⁹ Also, unlike open-ended racial self-identification questions, the photographs let all subjects classify the same objects—rather than having each person identify a different object (herself)—and thus permit comparison across different samples and sub-samples.

Of course, respondents' classifications of the photographs reveal only one racial schema. It may not be the schema that each person uses most often across different settings, but the interview provides a standard context to compare the schemas that different respondents use in this one setting. I also asked respondents to classify the race of the friends they listed in their social network, again with no guidance as to the racial categories they should use. This exercise again allowed them to apply their own labels, but with more context for who these people are and how they have thought of them in the past.

To examine respondents' knowledge of and use of additional racial schemas, I asked more directed questions during the interviews about their understanding of different racial terminology, and how race is understood in the U.S. and their society of origin. For example, the scholarly consensus maintains that race in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is understood as a continuum, with a wide range of terms like *trigueño*, *indio*, and *moreno* describing different racial types. Late in the interview, I asked respondents to recall all the terms like this that are used in their home society, and then I showed them a list of these terms (see table on page 19) and asked them to define those that are used there. If they had not already used these terms to identify the photographs, I asked them to go through the photographs a second time, using terms from the list

or other similar terms used in their country to classify the people in the photographs. I also asked respondents how they would identify themselves using such terms, and several follow-up questions about what these categories mean, when they are used, and how they relate to one another. Combining opportunities for open-ended and closed-ended classifications provides a rich exploration of the range of schemas that respondents maintain within their racial schema portfolios; it captures not just the schemas they use, but also the bits of cultural knowledge that they have internalized but may not use.⁶⁰

Mapping the Racial Schema Portfolio

If people operate with a number of different cognitive schemas of race, then what are the different racial schemas used by the Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in this book, both those who migrate and those who do not? Much of the literature on the Hispanic Caribbean and Latin America depicts a particular understanding of race: what I call the continuum model, which views race as a fluid continuum of racial mixtures between Black and White. However, many people in these countries also use a schema based on a racialized concept of nationality or regional origins, and some are also influenced by the common concepts of race used in the United States. I identify three general types of schemas based on these cultural models of race⁶¹—what I call the *continuum racial schema*, the *nationality racial schema*, and the *U.S. racial schema*—as well as some of the variants within them (Table 2). These schemas, applying to the range of phenotypes between Black and White,⁶² dominate the range of ways that both Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants and those who remain in their countries of origin talk about race.

Although people in a given society may use one schema more often than others—creating the idea of an American or a Latin American concept of race

Table 2. Variants of racial schemas

Continuum racial schema	Includes intermediate racial terms between Black and White, such as those in Table 3 (e.g., <i>trigueño</i> , <i>indio</i> , <i>mulato</i>)
Nationality racial schemas	
Basic nationality schema	Includes only nationalities and ethnic groups (e.g., Puerto Rican, Dominican, Italian, American)
Panethnic nationality schema	Includes nationalities and ethnic groups, as well as the panethnic terms Latino or Hispanic
U.S. racial schemas	
Binary U.S. schema	Includes only the categories White and Black, with any racial mixture classified as Black
Hispanicized U.S. schema	Includes the categories White, Black, and Latino/Hispanic

as part of that society's culture—even within that society people differ in the schema they use in a given context, and may switch between schemas in a single conversation. Rosaria provides an example of how this occurs. A middle-aged Puerto Rican woman with dark skin and a fourth-grade education, she lives in public housing in a barrio on the outskirts of San Juan and does temporary clerical work at the local school. While we talk at the table of her small apartment, she seems to switch between different sets of categories when talking about race. She describes her own race and those of her daughters as “*negra*” and insists, “for me there are only two races . . . *blanco* and *negro*. Well, I am *negra* [laughs]. They tell me, ‘no you are *browncita* or *trigueña*,’ but the *trigueño* is a *negro* race.” Asked to describe the race of various friends and acquaintances in her social network, she identifies them all as *blanco* or *negro*. But when I ask her to classify the race of the people in the set of photographs, she switches to different categories and identifies them by their nationality. She classifies each one as Mexican, Dominican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban, referring to their facial features and the “look” of each person. Later on, I ask her to view the photos again, but this time I say, “If I told you that all these people are Puerto Ricans and if you saw them here on the street, how would you describe their race?” Rosaria switched her classifications again, this time identifying the same individuals as *trigueñito*, *clarito*, *prieto*, *jincho*, *blanquito*, and *jabao*.

An initial reaction might be that Rosaria is confused or does not understand what race means. It seems inconsistent to say that the only races are White and Black, but to later use a variety of other categories. Yet subsequent discussions with Rosaria reveal that she understands all these labels in racial terms. They are simply different types of schemas that she uses in different ways. The context of the interview, including my presence as an American, and the different ways that she is prompted to think about race throughout our conversation, are the stimuli that trigger which racial schema she evokes. Although these stimuli influence her answers, no one schema that she uses is more “right” than another, tapping into what she “really” thinks about race. The context and the way questions are asked affect the answers, but for Rosaria and others, these contexts trigger different schemas of race, all of which are used in different ways in their daily lives.

Racial Continuum

Scholars describe race in much of Latin America, including Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as a continuum from Black to White.⁶³ Harry Hoetink characterized this model of race in the Hispanic Caribbean as “an interweaving

of European, African, and Amerindian strands. These multiple influences were reflected in a local conceptualization in which physical traits ranged from 'dark' to 'light,' different 'types' of which could well manifest themselves within a single family. 'Pure' types gave way to a racial continuum.⁶⁴ The continuum model includes a wide variety of labels, assigned to the numerous points along the racial continuum. In an ethnographic study of a San Juan neighborhood, anthropologist Jorge Duany identified at least nineteen different racial categories commonly used in Puerto Rico (Table 3).⁶⁵ Many of these same terms are used in the Dominican Republic, although there are regional differences.⁶⁶

In the United States, while people typically focus their daily classifications on indicators like appearance, dress, or accent, the historical basis underlying racial distinctions is knowledge of a person's racial ancestry, for which appearance serves as a proxy. For instance, a person who looked White but whose parents or grandparents were Black would traditionally have been considered Black.⁶⁷ In the continuum model, however, the basis for racial distinctions is not ancestry but phenotype and social factors. A child of a Black and White

Table 3. Racial terms used in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic

<i>Term</i>	<i>Approximate meaning</i>
<i>Negro(a)</i>	Black
<i>Azulito(a)</i>	Blue-Black; very dark with African features; used primarily in Dominican Republic
<i>Prieto(a)</i>	Dark-skinned; usually derogatory
<i>Grifo(a)</i>	Dark-skinned with kinky hair; usually derogatory
<i>Moreno(a)</i>	Dark-skinned; usually dark mulatto
<i>De color(a)</i>	Euphemism for Black; usually meaning Black
<i>Cenizo(a)</i>	Literally, ashy; skin that looks gray or faded, traditionally from deposits due to bathing in river; used primarily in Dominican Republic
<i>Mulato(a)</i>	Mixed-race, frequently the mixture of Black and White
<i>Trigueño(a)</i>	Literally, wheat-colored or brunette; usually light mulatto; most common in Puerto Rico
<i>Mestizo(a)</i>	Mixed-race; traditionally the mix of White and Indian but also used as the mix of any two races
<i>Indio(a)</i>	Literally, Indian; brown-skinned with straight hair; widely used in the Dominican Republic
<i>Piel canela</i>	Literally, cinnamon skin; tan or brown-skinned
<i>Café con leche</i>	Literally, coffee with milk; tan or brown-skinned
<i>Blanco(a) con raja</i>	Literally, white with a crack; white with some visible black features; used primarily in Puerto Rico
<i>Jabao(a)</i>	Fair-skinned with curly or kinky hair
<i>Colorao(a)</i>	Redheaded, reddish skin
<i>Rosadito(a)</i>	White, with rosy cheeks or skin tone
<i>Rubio(a)</i>	Blond
<i>Cano(a)</i>	Blond or gray hair, fair-skinned
<i>Jincho(a)</i>	Pale-skinned, lacking color; may imply illness or unattractiveness
<i>Blanquito(a)</i>	Literally, little white; figuratively, elitist, upper-class
<i>Blanco(a)</i>	White

Adapted from Jorge Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Used by permission of the publisher.

interracial couple who appears White would probably still be classified as Black in much of the United States, whereas in Latin America, scholars describing the continuum model claim, the child would be considered White.⁶⁸ Phenotype considerations include not just skin color but also hair texture and color, eye color, and facial features. The classification of full siblings reveals the distinction between the U.S. model based on racial ancestry and the continuum model based on phenotype: in the United States, siblings have the same racial classification, reflecting their parents' races; in Latin America, full siblings often have different races.

Social considerations also influence racial classifications in the continuum model. Greater socioeconomic status, prestige, or social networks can lead to a lighter classification, giving rise to the common expression that "money whitens." In his study of prominent Puerto Rican families in the 1950s, Raymond Scheele asserted that "[a]nyone who is accepted into the upper class is considered non-Negro, despite his physical appearance."⁶⁹ Some claim that a Black person in Puerto Rico can become White by achieving the friendship of Whites.⁷⁰ Rather than racial roles being ascribed at birth, in the continuum model they can be achieved, or changed by accomplishments later in life.

These racial terms are relational, based on interactions and implicit comparisons. Someone who is dark or has African features may refer to a man of medium skin tone as *blanco*. But that same man might be described as *trigueño* by someone of light color who has European features. In both Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, it is common for a child to be nicknamed *la blanquita* or *el negrito*, not because she or he is objectively White or Black but because she or he is the lightest or darkest in the family. Similarly, the same person may identify a woman as *trigueña* at one moment and as *morena* at the next, even in a single conversation, based on the context or the implicit comparison.⁷¹

Specific racial terms can also have different meanings when used in different ways. The same racial label can be used as a term of endearment, an insult, or a sexualized come-on. Racial terms may serve as euphemisms, to avoid negative associations; the terms *indio* and *trigueño*, for example, are often used to avoid describing someone as *negro*. A darker person might be called *trigueño* out of deference, but in an argument or brawl he might have the epithet "Dirty negro!" hurled at him. Terms are often selected, perhaps even subconsciously, according to the meaning a person wishes to convey. Much like the semantic distinction between using the informal *tú* or the formal *usted*, racial continuum terms can be used to treat people with respect or disrespect, to create solidarity, to include or exclude.⁷²