Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, And The Emotional Politics Of Race And Blackness In The U.s.

Shantee Rosado
University of Pennsylvania, shantee.rosado@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations

Part of the American Studies Commons, Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, Latin American Studies Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3479

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3479
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.
Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, And The Emotional Politics Of Race And Blackness In The U.s.

Abstract
Latinos are a large and growing population in the United States, which has prompted race and immigration scholars to theorize about Latinos’ chances at integration as well as their place in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Several researchers have argued that Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latinos are reshaping or changing how race is understood in the country by rejecting common understandings of race in the U.S. I argue that by focusing on racial self-identification rather than on racial beliefs, these claims oversell the ability of Latinos to affect the U.S. racial hierarchy. Instead, I examine Latinos’ racial ideologies, which may be more indicative of a group’s impact on racial stratification, and how these ideologies are shaped by collective emotions in the U.S. In the following dissertation, I examine how collective emotions regarding space and race, language practices, Blackness, and immigration, shape the racial ideologies of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. Data for the study are comprised of 42 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in Central Florida. The interviews addressed respondents’ history of migration, knowledge of racialized terms in Spanish, and emotions concerning racially charged events in U.S. news, such as the Black Lives matter Movement and Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. The findings show that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, far from changing how race operates in the country, adopt collective emotions that are detrimental to marginalized groups, such as anger toward Black protestors in cases of alleged or confirmed police brutality. While respondents were more sympathetic to immigrants, there was a subset of respondents who aligned their feelings with those of collective fear and anxiety regarding immigration. These findings suggest that future research on race should analyze individuals’ racial ideologies, in addition to their racial self-identification. Further, these findings suggest future research should examine how, and under what conditions, racial and ethnic minorities propagate beliefs that perpetuate white dominance in the United States.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
Sociology

First Advisor
Emilio Parrado

Keywords
Blackness, Collective Emotions, Latinos, Politics, Race and Ethnicity, Racial Ideologies

Subject Categories
American Studies | Latin American Languages and Societies | Latin American Studies | Sociology

This dissertation is available at ScholarlyCommons: https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3479
PUERTO RICANS, DOMINICANS, AND THE EMOTIONAL POLITICS
OF RACE AND BLACKNESS IN THE U.S.

Shantee Rosado

A DISSERTATION

in

Sociology

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2019

Supervisor of Dissertation

____________________________

Emilio Parrado
Dorothy Swaine Thomas Professor, Department of Sociology

Graduate Group Chairperson

____________________________

Jason Schnittker
Professor, Department of Sociology

Dissertation Committee

Emilio Parrado
Dorothy Swaine Thomas Professor, Department of Sociology

Grace Kao
IBM Professor, Department of Sociology (Yale University)

Onoso Imoagene
Assistant Professor, Sociology Department
PUERTO RICANS, DOMINICANS, AND THE EMOTIONAL POLITICS OF RACE AND BLACKNESS IN THE U.S.

COPYRIGHT

2019

Shantee Lorraine Rosado

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License

To view a copy of this license, visit

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/
To my mother. Thank you for fueling and supporting my love of education. Pa’lante como el elefante. Pa’tras ni pa’ coger impulso.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my research participants, without whom I would not have been able to complete this project. I appreciate your honesty and your vulnerability. Thank you for welcoming me into your homes and for your kindness and generosity.

I would like to express deep gratitude to my committee members, Emilio Parrado, Grace Kao, and Onoso Imoagene. Thank you for your generosity and your continued support over the years. It has been a long journey, but your words of encouragement got me to the finish line.

Many thanks to the administrative team in McNeil, with a special thanks to Audra Rodgers and Katee Paone-Mankins. Your support over these years has been so important and special to me. Thank you for your guidance and love along the way.

There are many friends I would like to acknowledge here, therefore I will do so by groups. To my sociology graduate student friends, I am so grateful to have shared this journey with you. Phoebe and Tina, I owe you a special thank you for, well, everything. Thank you to my non-sociology Penn friends, particularly Rosanna, Eram, and Jeremy. You helped me to stay focused throughout this process and offered a beautiful model for me to follow at Penn. I love you all. To my Macalester College friends and mentors, thank you for your ongoing friendship. I am so happy I recently got to celebrate this milestone with you. Lastly, a big thanks to the writing group at Williams College. You make Williamstown a bright and joyous place, and for that I am so grateful.

I would like to acknowledge my partner for his emotional support over the past several years. Your support means everything to me. Thank you! I would also like to thank my family for their continued support and love. Mom, I owe you a special thank you for allowing me to stay with you during my data collection. Te amo! I love you, Eddie and Cindy.

Finally, I want to thank the countless other people on whom I leaned for support over the entirety of my time at Penn. I would not have gotten this far without your belief in me. Gracias.
ABSTRACT

PUERTO RICANS, DOMINICANS, AND THE EMOTIONAL POLITICS OF RACE AND BLACKNESS IN THE U.S.

Shantee Rosado
Emilio Parrado

Latinos are a large and growing population in the United States, which has prompted race and immigration scholars to theorize about Latinos’ chances at integration as well as their place in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Several researchers have argued that Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latinos are reshaping or changing how race is understood in the country by rejecting common understandings of race in the U.S. I argue that by focusing on racial self-identification rather than on racial beliefs, these claims oversell the ability of Latinos to affect the U.S. racial hierarchy. Instead, I examine Latinos’ racial ideologies, which may be more indicative of a group’s impact on racial stratification, and how these ideologies are shaped by collective emotions in the U.S. In the following dissertation, I examine how collective emotions regarding space and race, language practices, Blackness, and immigration, shape the racial ideologies of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. Data for the study are comprised of 42 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in Central Florida. The interviews addressed respondents’ history of migration, knowledge of racialized terms in Spanish, and emotions concerning racially charged events in U.S. news, such as the Black Lives matter Movement and Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. The findings show that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, far from changing how race operates in the country, adopt collective emotions that are detrimental to marginalized groups, such as anger.
toward Black protestors in cases of alleged or confirmed police brutality. While respondents were more sympathetic to immigrants, there was a subset of respondents who aligned their feelings with those of collective fear and anxiety regarding immigration. These findings suggest that future research on race should analyze individuals’ racial ideologies, in addition to their racial self-identification. Further, these findings suggest future research should examine how, and under what conditions, racial and ethnic minorities propagate beliefs that perpetuate white dominance in the United States.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT ........................................................................................................ iv

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. v

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... viii

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 3. Becoming Mickey-Ricans and Mickey-Domis: Migration to Central Florida 23

Chapter 4. Feeling ‘Spanish’ in the Sunshine State: Situated Race in Central Florida .... 38

Chapter 5. Emotions and Puerto Rican / Dominican Raciolinguistic Practices ............ 78

Chapter 6. The Emotional Currency of U.S. Anti-Blackness ............................................. 102

Chapter 7. “I’d Rather Have Mickey Mouse for President”: Anxious Citizenship and Government Mistrust During the 2016 Election ......................................................... 120

Chapter 8: Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 151

Appendix ................................................................................................................................. 156

References ............................................................................................................................. 162
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Population by Hispanic or Latino Origin and Race for the United States</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Racial demographics in Osceola County, Florida</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Latinos in Osceola County, Florida, by country of ancestry</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Racial demographics in Orange County, Florida</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Latinos in Orange County, Florida, by country of ancestry</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Racial continuum terms commonly used in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Correct responses to racial continuum terms among respondents (N = 42)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dotted map of racial segregation in Orlando, Florida.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Spanish language use among Latinos by generation in the U.S.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1. Introduction

Latinos constitute a significant and growing part of the U.S. population. Between 2000 and 2010, Latinos made up half of the growth in the country’s population (Passel, Cohn, and Lopez 2011), and by the 2000 Census, Latinos had outnumbered non-Latino Blacks as the largest minority group in the country (Adams 2011) [see table 1]. Concerns have also grown alongside these trends among race and immigration scholars about Latinos’ “place” within the U.S. racial structure (Frank, Akresh, and Lu 2010). Most immigration scholars are concerned with Latinos’ prospects for assimilation in the country, while race scholars have focused largely on the “mismatch” between Latinos’ views of race and existing racial categories in the U.S.—one example being that almost 37% of Latinos stated they were of “some other race” when asked for their racial identification in the 2010 U.S. Census (see table 1). Missing from these scholarly conversations, however, is an analysis of Latinos’ racial beliefs. In other words, aside from how they might identify racially, what are Latinos’ beliefs concerning racial and ethnic differences in the U.S.? And how do we understand these beliefs when they do not correspond with Latinos’ social status as a marginalized, minoritized group?

As an example, in February of 2019, and after a delay caused by a congressional impasse concerning a proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, President Donald J. Trump delivered his state of the union address to Congress. The President invited Elvin Hernandez, a Dominican man, as an official guest. Elvin is a fair-skinned Dominican with features which allude to the African presence on the island. In Dominican Republic, he might have been called jabao—a local term used to describe individuals with fair skin.
and “African” features. In the U.S., with its Black-white racial binary and concept of hypodescent (also known as the “one-drop rule,” which dictates a single drop of “Black blood” makes an individual Black in the U.S.), Elvin might have been racialized simply as Black. And yet, Elvin’s appearance or racial self-identification did not matter, but rather the role he played that evening in advancing Donald Trump’s immigration proposals. Below is an excerpt from the state of the union address in which President Trump introduces Elvin:

Not one more American life should be lost because our Nation failed to control its very dangerous border.

In the last 2 years, our brave ICE officers made 266,000 arrests of criminal aliens, including those charged or convicted of nearly 100,000 assaults, 30,000 sex crimes, and 4,000 killings.

We are joined tonight by one of those law enforcement heroes: ICE Special Agent Elvin Hernandez. When Elvin was a boy, he and his family legally immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic. At the age of eight, Elvin told his dad he wanted to become a Special Agent. Today, he leads investigations into the scourge of international sex trafficking. Elvin says: "If I can make sure these young girls get their justice, I've done my job." Thanks to his work and that of his colleagues, more than 300 women and girls have been rescued from horror and more than 1,500 sadistic traffickers have been put behind bars in the last year.

Special Agent Hernandez, please stand: We will always support the brave men and women of Law Enforcement -- and I pledge to you tonight that we will never abolish our heroes from ICE.

While most viewers of the address have focused on President Trump’s xenophobic rhetoric that evening—referring to them as “aliens,” emphasizing criminal behavior meant to cast all immigrants in a negative light, and juxtaposing Elvin’s “legal” journey to the U.S. with that of “illegal” migrants “threatening” the border—I was more intrigued by Elvin himself. Why would a Latino become an ICE Special Agent? What would be the
impetus for such a career choice? And what beliefs does a person like Elvin hold about immigrants, legal or not, in the U.S.?

This, and other examples, represent a missing link in research on Latinos and their racial integration in the U.S. I argue that scholars have become fixated on issues of identity at the expense of understanding ideology—that is, beliefs in the service of power (Bonilla-Silva 2013). Additionally, I posit that emotions, which are generally regarded as private, individual matters, operate socially, and mediate the space between racial identities and racial ideologies.

In the following dissertation, I examine how members of two U.S. Latino groups—Puerto Ricans and Dominicans—navigate collective emotions concerning race, Blackness, and immigration in the U.S. By collective emotions, I refer to emotions which, to draw from Sara Ahmed’s theorizing, gain value by circulating through the U.S. populace as currency would circulate through an economic system (Ahmed 2004b). Present-day examples of these emotional currencies (Ahmed 2004a), might include President Trump’s rhetoric concerning Central American immigrants and asylum-seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border (e.g., his emphasis on immigrants as “hordes” traveling in “caravans”). Other examples include emotions surrounding racially charged events, such as the murders of unarmed Black people by police officers and armed vigilantes. Examining whether Puerto Ricans and Dominicans engage with—or disengage from—these collective emotions, can help scholars understand the conditions and motivations driving someone like Elvin Hernandez to work for ICE. In short, taking collective emotions seriously helps us bridge the gap between identity and ideology as we attempt to predict the future of race and racism in the U.S.
Table 1. Population by Hispanic or Latino Origin and Race for the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hispanic or Latino origin and race</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td><strong>50,477,594</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td><strong>258,267,944</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One race</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Background Literature

*Latino integration and racial identity in the U.S.*

Research has examined racial identification and racial attitudes among individuals in Latin America (Loveman 2014; Telles and Paschel 2014) and among Latino immigrants in the U.S. (Roth 2012). Given the slowing of Latin American immigration to the U.S. in recent years (Krogstad and Hugo Lopez 2015) and the growing importance of
U.S.-born Latinos (Krogstad and Lopez 2014), though, it is important to focus our attention on the racial beliefs of the second generation. Thus far, studies on the racial ideologies of second generation Latinos have been limited to Mexican Americans (Dowling 2015) who have been racialized in a unique way in the U.S. In contrast, this dissertation examines the racial identity and ideology of Caribbean Latinos, who are oftentimes racialized as Black in the U.S. (Roth 2012). I argue that examining this group’s racial beliefs can illuminate how processes of racial thinking differ for individuals who span the Black-white continuum of race while also identifying as Latino.

A growing body of literature focuses on the importance of Black racial identification in Latin America (Loveman 2014), Latin Americans’ racial attitudes towards Blacks (Peña, Sidanius, and Sawyer 2004), and the importance of Black social movement organizing in the region for understanding these processes (Telles and Paschel 2014). That said, less work addresses how Latinos in the U.S. view Blackness and relate to it both personally and interpersonally. Wright (2015) argues that the U.S. conception of Blackness is tied exclusively to a middle passage epistemology that centers U.S. slavery. This conception narrows our view of the Black experience in the U.S.

Scholarship on contemporary immigration from Africa and the West Indies (Benson 2006; Waters 2001) unsettles these narratives by showing how immigrants from these regions manage and react to their racialization as Black in a U.S. context. The case of Latinos poses a distinct challenge, though. As Candelario (2007) notes, dark-skinned Latinos in the U.S. are also lumped into a “Hispanic” category that, while often racialized as a non-white category, is also widely perceived as a non-Black category.
The literature on U.S. Latinos’ views of race opens possibilities for scholars to challenge commonly held notions of who counts as Black. Roth’s (2012) work on first-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans shows that migrants bring conceptions of race with them to the U.S. where these views tend to shift upon facing a white-Black racial stratification system. She argues that, despite the fact that most Puerto Ricans and Dominicans could “pass as Black” in the U.S., their adoption of a Latino racial identity will eventually cause “Latino” to become a distinct racial group in the U.S. Roth, however, does not address how these changes might occur and with what repercussions. Furthermore, Roth argues that third-generation Latinos with “African features” will be indistinguishable from African Americans in the U.S. In turn, I ask, how do “Black-looking” Latinos in the second generation negotiate these classifications? Further, what does it mean for a Latino to “pass as Black?”

In addition to the issue of racial self-identification among Latinos is the issue of how race impacts this group’s life outcomes. Scholars have found several ways in which skin color and racial self-identification matter for Latinos’ outcomes in the U.S. Through quantitative measures, Telles and Murguia’s (1992) classic study found that Mexican Americans of darker skin tones face wage discrimination in the labor market, while Darity (2002) found that Latinos who self-identified as Black experienced discriminatory losses in wages, regardless of their nation of ancestry. Conversely, Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) found that experiences with discrimination had a significant effect on Latinos’ likelihood of choosing white, Black, or Latino as their race on a national survey. A later study supports these claims—that discrimination impacts racial and ethnic self-identification—while adding several other measures (socioeconomic status and measures
of assimilation) to the potential causal factors driving Latinos’ racial and ethnic self-identification (Stokes-Brown 2012).

Several scholars addressed how these issues might affect darker-skinned Latinos who outsiders may identify as Black. For example, Newby and Dowling (2007) examine how Afro-Cubans navigate their classification as “Hispanic” in Texas, where the term has historically referred to Mexican Americans. One limitation with this study is in its selection of recent Latin American immigrants who already identify as Black, without a comparison group. Given that only 3% of Latinos checked “Black” as their race on the 2010 U.S. Census [see table 1], the authors’ sample is drawn from an especially narrow group of Latinos in the country.

Past research has pointed to the overall lack of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the first generation who choose to identify as Black (Darity, Jr., Dietrich, and Hamilton 2005; Weyland 2009). Some researchers mention the likelihood that future generations in the U.S.—who would be raised in the country and potentially face racial discrimination or animus—would adopt a Black identity (Golash-Boza and Darity, Jr. 2008). If this were the case, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (particularly those with darker skin), would show similar trajectories as the young, second-generation West Indians in Mary Waters’ study (2001), who identified as Black and began to adopt views similar to those of African Americans over time. Another potential outcome is theorized by Bonilla-Silva (2013), who argues that a tri-racial system will develop in the U.S. In this racial hierarchy, Latinos would belong to one of two groups: an “honorary white” group and a “collective Black” group. According to Bonilla-Silva (2013) this stratification would leave most Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the “collective Black” tier of society, given
their skin color, phenotype, and socioeconomic standing in the country. This theory, while plausible, does not account for the agency of Latinos themselves. As has been noted by many scholars, one’s racial and ethnic self-identification does not always match one’s ascribed race (López et al. 2017).

*Studying Racialized Collective Emotions*

The study of emotion and affect has allowed scholars to challenge the assumption that racial beliefs are based in logic and cognitive reasoning. Instead, scholars who study affect and emotions identify the dominant fears and desires in a given context and examine how these become internalized by individuals, oftentimes unconsciously. Jack Katz’s (2001) foundational text *How Emotions Work*, details the conditions under which emotions such as anger, shame, and laughter can be studied sociologically. Katz argues that,

> ...Emotions, which have so often been treated as opposed to thinking, are paradoxically self-reflective actions and experiences. But the self-reflection in emotions is corporeal rather than a matter of discursive reasoning. Through our emotions, we reach back sensually to grasp the tacit, embodied foundations of our selves (7).

Given its ability to eschew the superficial, overly rationalized ways one talks about race, emotions are useful for understanding underlying and often overlooked feelings concerning race. Sociologists of race and ethnicity, including the incipient works of W.E.B. Du Bois in *Philadelphia Negro* (1996 [1899]), have highlighted the “irrational” nature of racism in the U.S. For example, referencing Philadelphia employers’ preference for hiring European immigrants instead of Blacks at the turn of the 20th century, Du Bois states,
One of the great postulates of the science of economics—that men will seek their economic advantage—is in this case untrue, because in many cases men will not do this if it involves association, even in a casual and business way, with Negroes. And this fact must be taken account of in all judgments as to the Negro's economic progress (1996:146).

In contrast, the study of emotions elides this assumption of a rational-thinking subject by allowing space for the push and pull of collective emotions.

Several scholars have begun to address how these corporeal experiences we call emotions relate to racism in particular. Sara Ahmed (Ahmed 2004b) argues that emotions are not simply *internal* phenomena residing in particular individuals, but rather *collective* experiences shaped by images and messages circulating through mainstream media and politics. Hence, she argues that, “Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective” (119). According to Ahmed, these emotions tend to circulate as would money through an economic system—a phenomenon she calls *affective economies*.

Political scientist Paula Ioanide’s (2015) study of public responses to racially charged events in the United States further draws connections between these affective economies and individuals’ identities. She states, "...once these manufactured fears and desires situated themselves in U.S. constituents' affective structures and ideological worldviews, they became uniquely personal and crucial to constituents' sense of identity, to how they organized their purpose, and how they justified their actions” (2015:6). These race-based affective economies are therefore tied to the reproduction of the racial *status quo* in the U.S.
Overall, the study of race-based emotions, and racial ideology more broadly, has focused on how whites in the United States relate to non-whites in the country and abroad (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Ioanide 2015). Less work has focused on how emotions impact relationships between and within historically marginalized groups such as Latinos and African Americans (Berg and Ramos-Zayas 2015; Ramos-Zayas 2012). Can members of these marginalized groups propagate harmful racial beliefs? If so, how? Ioanide argues that people of color and other marginalized groups can help propagate an unequal racial status quo if they fail to challenge the "cultural associations that coalesce into Americanness = citizenship = whiteness" (2015:8). My concern is less with the possibility that Latinos, and particularly Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, are “racist,” which would obscure the importance of political, social, and economic power afforded to non-Latino whites in the United States (Bonilla-Silva 2013). My focus, instead, is on the manner in which Latinos internalize collective emotions concerning race and immigration in the U.S., and the extent to which they might knowingly or unknowingly propagate these ideas.

**Chapter Outlines**

In the following chapters, I examine how 1.5- and second-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans navigate collective emotions regarding race, Blackness, and immigration in the U.S. I draw from semi-structured, in-person interviews with 42 Puerto Ricans and Dominicans living in Central Florida, once a majority-white region that is now majority-Latino. In chapter 2, I describe my sample, methods, and analysis.

In Chapter 3, I provide a broad picture of the causes which led my respondents to move to Central Florida. While this is not a substantive chapter, I privilege these stories
to provide readers with an outline of the varied trajectories that led Puerto Ricans and Dominicans to settle in Central Florida, and the struggles they faced prior to, or during, that transition.

In Chapter 4, I begin implementing my theoretical framework of racialized collective emotions. Here, I examine how my respondents describe their experiences accommodating to life in Central Florida. I also examine respondents’ social circles and that of their parents, as well as their experiences of being racialized by outsiders in Central Florida. Examining Puerto Ricans and Dominicans’ barriers to integration in that region provides us with information concerning why some collective emotions might be “taken up” or challenged by members of these groups. For example, many of my respondents described moving to Central Florida to get away from crime on the islands or in urban centers in the Northeast, such as New York City. Understanding these motivations helps to explain why a respondent might be more likely to favor a politician who frames immigrants as “criminals” or, generally, who espouses a punitive leadership style (e.g., President Trump’s claim that he was the “law and order candidate” during the 2016 election cycle).

In Chapter 5, I analyze my respondents’ racial ideologies through an examination of their emotional responses to racialized terms in Spanish. As stated above, collective emotions can help us explain the gap between identity and ideology. Hence, I begin by examining how respondents react to racialized language concerning identity. Using a list of common racialized terms from Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic, I test which of these terms are still in circulation among my 1.5- and second-generation respondents. I find that respondents were familiar with binary terms such as blanco (white) and negro
(black), as well as one intermediate term, *trigueño* (literally, wheat-colored). Respondents were less likely to recall the meaning behind other intermediate terms common on the islands. I argue this lack of knowledge shows that immigrants’ racial repertoires change over generations and come to reflect U.S. racial norms. Further, I argue that emotions such as shame and disgust mediate my respondents’ language around and view of Blackness in the U.S. and on the islands. I posit that these emotions are far from new—and are rather a continuation of racial norms that privilege whiteness and devalue Blackness in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

Chapter 6 offers a deeper analysis of my respondents’ beliefs concerning Blackness—this time by examining its articulation in the U.S. Here, I analyze how respondents reacted to high-profile shootings by police officers and armed vigilantes of African Americans (e.g., Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and Trayvon Martin). I also examine respondents’ emotional reactions to the protests that emerged in response to these murders under the broad banner of the Black Lives Matter movement. I argue that, while my respondents privileged a “mixed” racial self-identification—the mix being of Spanish, African, and indigenous ancestry—this did not preclude them from espousing and propagating anti-Black narratives concerning these murders and subsequent protests. Instead, respondents used shame and anger to convey their view of African Americans as, at best, too aggressive toward law enforcement officials, and, at worst, guilty for their own murders.

In Chapter 7, I apply my theoretical framework of collective emotions to examine Puerto Ricans’ and Dominicans’ ideologies concerning immigration and citizenship in the U.S. To examine the pull of this emotional currency on my respondents, I analyze
their responses to questions about the 2016 Presidential Election, given that then-
candidate Donald Trump was notoriously campaigning on an anti-immigration platform.
While most respondents showed a positive regard for immigrants, I found that Puerto
Ricans actively worked to distance themselves from Mexicans as a way to reinforce their
own status as U.S. citizens. This finding, which I refer to as anxious citizenship, reflects
how Puerto Ricans remain aware of their marginalized status in the U.S., despite their
citizenship rights on the island. Both Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents reflected a
deep sense of mistrust regarding the U.S. government and emotions akin to political
alienation when asked about the electoral process. I argue that these feelings of mistrust
help explain why many respondents also believed in government-related conspiracy
theories.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize the main findings of the dissertation and
provide an overview of significant developments since conducting my interviews. Two of
these developments—the election of Donald Trump to the presidency and the devastation
of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico—serve as fertile grounds for future research into
Puerto Rican and Dominican racial ideologies. Further, these and other events serve as
reminders of the role of collective emotions in mediating and shaping the racial identities
and racial ideologies of Latinos and other minoritized groups in the U.S.
Chapter 2. Sample, Methods, and Analysis

Sample

Past research on racial identification patterns among Latinos have focused on New York City (Candelario 2007; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2004; Roth 2012). While New York continues to be a site of major Latino concentration, especially for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, fewer studies have focused on Central Florida, a region where the Latino population has increased significantly over the past 25 years.

Florida has long been known for its large Latino population, though this group’s recent growth can be seen in the Central Florida region, alongside continued growth in the Miami region (Krogstad 2015). This dissertation focuses on Puerto Ricans and Dominicans living primarily in two counties of Central Florida: Osceola County and Orange County. The major cities in these two counties are Orlando and Kissimmee, respectively. Both Osceola and Orange have Latino populations that surpass that of African Americans [see tables 2-5], and, in the case of Osceola County, a Latino population that constitutes the largest racial/ethnic group in the county [see tables 2 and 3]. In Central Florida, Osceola County and Orange County are both predominately Hispanic counties, with 45.5% of Osceola’s and 27% of Orange’s population identifying as Hispanic of any race, while only 0.7% of Osceola’s and 21% of Orange’s population identifying as non-Hispanic Black [see tables 2-5]. Studies of Latinos in Central Florida are scant, though reports on the influx of Puerto Ricans to the region do exist (Duany 2012).
Table 2. Racial demographics in Osceola County, Florida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population</strong></td>
<td>268,685</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One race</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3. Latinos in Osceola County, Florida, by country of ancestry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Latinos</strong></td>
<td>122,146</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South American</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central American</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hispanic</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Racial demographics in Orange County, Florida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population</strong></td>
<td>1,145,956</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One race</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5. Latinos in Orange County, Florida, by country of ancestry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Latinos</strong></td>
<td>308,244</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South American</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central American</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hispanic</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Central Florida is a relatively new home for both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans (Duany 2012). Puerto Ricans are the primary Latino group in both of the counties of interest, with Dominicans being the second largest Latino group in Osceola County and the third largest in Orange County. The Latino population in Orlando is visibly segregated from African Americans [see figure 1]. Further, Florida is on its way to becoming the state with the largest Puerto Rican population in the country [see figure 2], given the recent spike in emigration from the island due to its ongoing economic crisis (Krogstad 2015). Thus, Florida is becoming host to a new large Puerto Rican population—which warrants study not only for understanding racial dynamics, but also for the political clout this group will develop in contradistinction to Cubans in Miami. Moreover, Florida’s historical status as a swing state in presidential elections grants this region further importance to researchers.

Dominicans have historically been concentrated in the Miami region of Florida, though recent migrations of Dominicans from the Northeast of the country have increased this group’s numbers in Central Florida over the past decade. In Central Florida, Osceola County is home to over 10,000 Dominicans and Orange County is home to over 20,000 Dominicans. Thus, while this group is far smaller than the Puerto Rican population in the region, it is still noteworthy.
Figure 1. Dotted map of racial segregation in Orlando, Florida


Note: Red is White, Blue is Black, Green is Asian, Orange is Hispanic, Yellow is Other, and each dot represents 25 residents.
Methods

The data are comprised of 42 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Puerto Ricans (n = 24) and Dominicans (n = 18) concerning their views on race, Blackness, and immigration in the U.S. The interviews addressed topics including personal racial and ethnic identification, views on the meaning of Blackness and who counts as Black and/or Latino, the resonance of “Latin American” views of race, racial socialization, and responses to racially charged events in the U.S. The interviews averaged an hour in length and interviewees were offered a $30 gift card for their participation.

To collect the sample of interviewees, I used a strategic snowball sampling method. Initial contacts for interviews were made by approaching individuals in Puerto
Rican and Dominican businesses (restaurants, hair salons, corner stores, etc.) and community events, as well as through local Facebook groups. Subsequent interviews were gathered by asking initial interviewees for references based on the desired characteristics within the sample, though no more than one reference was used for each initial interviewee to prevent potential biases in respondents’ views based on their social networks. I sought variation along various characteristics that are likely to impact respondents’ views on race and self-identification, such as gender, age, skin color, and education. The 1.5 and second generation were identified as individuals who came to the U.S. before the age of 14 or have parents who were the first to migrate to the U.S. and have lived in the country since birth.

I restricted the age of participants to 21-45 years old, given these individuals have lived in the U.S from the time that Latinos have been considered a significant voting bloc in the country. It was only in 2000 that Latinos became the largest “minority” group in the U.S., a gap that widened in 2010, with Latinos making up 16% of the population while non-Hispanic Blacks made up roughly 12% of the population (Adams 2011). In addition, the age of participants could be important in assessing their exposure to political movements related to race in the U.S. For example, the Black Lives Matter movement has been especially reliant on social media for exposure and movement organizing (Dillon 2015). Given that recent surveys show these methods of communication are more commonly used among young adults ages 18-29 (90% of individuals within this group use social media), followed by those ages 30-49 (77% of individuals within this group use social media) (Duggan et al. 2015; Perrin 2015), it was useful to restrict the sample to
this age range to best capture Latinos’ responses to racially-charged events that became
best known through their circulation on social media sites.

Skin color was measured by both the interviewee and myself. I rated
interviewees’ skin tone darkness on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the darkest tone. I also
asked interviewees to use the same scale. Given that past research has highlighted the
importance of seeing race as an “embodied identity” (Candelario 2007), I attempted to
interview roughly equal numbers of individuals who fell in the lighter and darker skin
color categories. In addition to skin color, I also gathered data on participants’ hair
texture and style, clothing, facial features, and other exterior markers that might be
important for understanding how they are perceived and racially categorized by others.

Educational attainment was assessed qualitatively, by asking respondents about
the highest level of education they have reached. My interest here was in having variation
in participants who have received some college education and those with a high school
degree or less. Research on racial identification has noted the importance of the transition
into college as a time when identities are challenged (Wilkins 2014). Thus, having
variation in educational attainment can help control for how interviewees’ racial
ideologies might be affected by exposure to institutions of higher education.

Though the interviews were conducted primarily in English, respondents were
asked to respond to racialized terms in Spanish, and often voluntarily used Spanish to
convey their thoughts. These words in Spanish were preserved and translations for terms
are provided alongside their original spoken form in Spanish. The interviews were audio-
recorded and later transcribed into written form by the author and a transcription service.
Pseudonyms are used to preserve respondents’ anonymity.
Coding and Analysis

Analysis for this dissertation relied primarily on manual coding. The first round of coding categorized responses to the questions posed in the interview. I separated these into five broad codes: migration trajectory, integration in Central Florida, language use, views on U.S. Blackness, and views on politics and immigration. I then examined responses within these five categories for themes and trends in my respondents’ narratives. Lastly, I analyzed these codes by examining whether (and when) salient themes differed across demographic categories such as age, time of arrival in Central Florida, class status/education, skin color, racial self-identification, social circles, and citizenship status.
Chapter 3. Becoming Mickey-Ricans and Mickey-Domis\textsuperscript{1}: Migration to Central Florida

My Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents had a variety of different trajectories leading to their settlement in Central Florida. To simplify these varied journeys, I have categorized respondents into one of four categories:

1. Island-born and Florida-raised
2. U.S.-born and Florida-raised
3. Island-born and northern-transplant
4. U.S.-born and northern-transplant

First, island-born and Florida-raised respondents are those who were born in Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic and moved directly to Florida as a child. Second, U.S.-born and Florida-raised respondents are those who were born somewhere in the continental U.S. (including Florida) and raised from a young age (5 years or younger) in Florida. The third category, island-born and northern-transplant, refers to those who were born on the islands, but spent a significant amount of their lives in northern cities such as New York City and Chicago before moving to Central Florida. Lastly, those categorized as U.S.-born and northern transplant, were born in a northern city and spent some of their childhood there prior to moving south to Central Florida.

These categories facilitate an analysis of migration trajectories leading to Central Florida. The categories do have limitations, though. For one, they fail to account for circular migrants, or those who moved between the islands and the continental U.S. more

\textsuperscript{1} Scholar Jorge Duany refers to recent Puerto Rican migrants to Central Florida as “Mickey-Ricans” (Duany 2012), a reference to the area being the location of Disney World (and its main character, Mickey Mouse). Here, I repurpose the term to describe the influx of both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans to the region.
than once. Several of my respondents moved two or more times before arriving in Central Florida, though some of those moves were within the continental U.S. (e.g., from New York City to Boston, Massachusetts). Secondly, these categories do not address the main distinction between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, that of U.S. citizenship. Given that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens upon birth—regardless of whether they were born on the islands or stateside—it is important to address the specific difficulties and hurdles faced by Dominicans as they personally worked through issues of status and legal citizenship or watched their family members do so. Thus, these four categories should be viewed as guides, and not as all-encompassing signifiers of identity or lived experience. Further, individuals in these categories share many similarities in their experiences moving to, and acclimating to life in, Florida, regardless of their point of origin.

Below, I demonstrate common threads and important distinctions in the migration trajectories of my 1.5- and second-generation respondents. I begin by analyzing departures from the islands—whether these occurred through my respondents or their parents. I then discuss the role of Florida as a site of safety and recuperation for my respondents and their families, regardless if their point of origin was the islands or the northeast.

*Paradise Disrupted: Leaving Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic*

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are largely seen by immigration scholars as economic and family migrants—in other words, they are viewed as individuals moving to seek better employment opportunities or join their family members who are already living in the United States. However, many of my respondents referred to other push
factors driving their families’ exit from the islands. Two of the salient causes for outmigration among island-born Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents were family conflict (i.e., domestic violence and/or divorce) and the ailing health of close family members. Thus, while family was still an important factor in considering the move, why and how family mattered differed from conventional understandings of migration.

When asked why their families decided to move from Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic, several respondents spoke of the role of domestic violence in their eventual move to the states. For example, Alexa, a 37-year-old Puerto Rican, spoke of her family’s socioeconomic background and journey from the island to New York City.

So, we were very poor. My other cousin, they had money, they had gifts, Christmas gifts. We were like, in the side. My father was very abusive to my mom. My mom was in an abusive relationship, so it got to the point that my mom couldn't take it no more. So, when she was working, she was saving some money in the side. That's when she took the airplane tickets and flew me, my sisters, and her to New York and left my father behind. Three months later, my father followed.

Alexa’s story points to the use of migration as a tool of resistance among women in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. While Alexa is careful to point out that her father eventually followed her mother to New York, the story still reflects how women might use their access to labor and movement as escape routes from abusive relationships. Some respondents discussed how their mothers used both migration and family connections to flee domestic abuse. For example, Andres, a 31-year-old Puerto Rican, spoke of his mother’s route to Chicago from the island, which began with a trip to Connecticut. When asked how his family arrived in Chicago, Andres said the following,
My mom had issues with her ex-husband. She went under [sic] domestic violence with him. And she decided to actually catch a plane and move over to, I think it was Connecticut. It was her first state that she actually moved to. So, she was there for about eight months. And from there, she had a sister of hers living in Chicago, so her sister told her, "You know what? Come down here. We'll start a life here...." And that's when she started-- she had her job. She had basically everything. She was independent, completely. [When] my dad met her, he basically didn't have a job. He didn't have anything, not even a car. So, she helped him get back up and stuff. And he had issues with his wife, too, in Puerto Rico, so that's when he moved to Chicago. So, that's how they met. It's kind of a crazy story, but, yeah. That's where they finally fell in love [laughs].

Andres provides a story that shows his mother’s resourcefulness and strength in the face of domestic violence. He shows how Puerto Rican women use their access to migration as means to escape violence directed at them, while also relying on family ties to restart their lives in the continental U.S. Further, Andres points out how his mother not only survived domestic abuse and migrated to get out of this experience, but also how she helped build his father’s life from the ground up. Overall, his story points to the resilience and strength exhibited by his mother despite her difficult circumstances on the island.

Though Andres presented his story as inspirational, given that his parents eventually fell in love in Chicago, other respondents remind us of the dangerous reality faced by women who experience, and attempt to leave, abusive relationships. For example, Victor, a 21-year-old Puerto Rican, spoke of his mother’s use of migration as a means of hiding from an abusive partner.

[My mother] told me before, that she was with this guy. She got married, and he was abusive. At this time, she didn't have us. ...But she basically moved to Boston to get away from him. Get the divorce and then basically move out of Puerto Rico. That's what she told me. That's why she came to Boston. And then from there, I came about.

Victor’s claims that his mother moved out of Puerto Rico to “get away from” an abusive ex-husband highlights the precarious situation face by those being abused in intimate
relationships. These examples, overall, show that women in abusive relationships see migration as a way to leave these relationships. While these attempts are not always successful, as was the case with Alexa’s parents, migration still proves a useful tool when other avenues for seeking safety (e.g., the legal system in Puerto Rico) might not seem as effective.

The above examples, all from Puerto Ricans, can give the illusion that these moves are contingent on access to U.S. citizenship. An analysis of Dominican respondents’ stories of migration prove this is not the case. Dominicans also shared stories of their mothers migrating to the U.S. as a way to leave abusive or unfaithful partners. Joel, a 25-year-old Dominican, shared the following about his mother’s decision to move their family to Orlando from Dominican Republic when he was 12 years old,

…My dad had a lot of money. He worked for a huge company there. The company went bankrupt. So, he definitely didn't know what to do. He was a little abusive with my family, so for us to be able to survive—because he was in the military, as well, over there— …My mother decided that we needed to come here because he had so much control over the military and the police there that anything that would have happened to us by him would have never— he would've never paid for it. So, my mom decided that she wanted to come here. But along the way—I guess she couldn't lose him along the way.

While Joel later disclosed that his father has “calmed down” over time, his painful story points to the limitations facing women when trying to escape abuse. He points to the complicity of Dominican military officials when addressing the actions of abusive military members. In his mother’s case, access to legal recourse for abuse was the underlying reason for migration, along with financial issues after his father losing his job.

The complicity of the Dominican government is hardly unique. First, both my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents discussed the limits of the legal systems in their places
of origin when addressing gendered violence. Second, research shows domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homicide for women across the globe (Salas 2019) and that, on a global scale, about 1 in 3 (or 35%) of women worldwide “have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime” (World Health Organization 2017).

Some respondents pointed to these broader, cultural, issues of gender bias when discussing their personal stories. For example, Anamarie, a 24-year-old Dominican, spoke about the broader patriarchal culture in Dominican Republic that limits women’s ability to escape abusive relationships.

[My mother] came home from school one day, and her husband was cheating on her with the maid, and my mom was like, "I'm done. Peace out. I'm getting out." And so, she took my brother, dropped him off at her mother's house, and came to the United States. And she was like, "I'm going to start over and figure it out and I'll come back for my kid." And that's what she did. So, she wanted to get away from all that. She always tells me that felt like she would never be happy in the Dominican Republic because of the culture and the way that they treat men and how men treat women. Everyone in her life told her to just suck it up and stay with this dude, that it didn't matter. And she was just like, "What? Are you kidding me? This matters to me. I want better for my life. I want better for my kids." So, she got out. And she was very young when she came to the States. I think she was only 25 when she moved to the United States.

Anamarie shared her mother’s story as one of self-reliance and strength in the face of infidelity and cultural norms surrounding gender in Dominican Republic. Similar to Andres’ story above, Anamarie’s mother relied on both migration and close family ties to escape a failed relationship. The fact that these stories come from both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans show that despite potential barriers to migration women rely on migration as a means of accessing greater gender equity.
The second most common response when asked about migration out of Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic was health issues faced by a close family member. These responses came from Puerto Ricans primarily, and point to a disparity in healthcare between the Commonwealth and the U.S. Victoria, a 38-year-old Puerto Rican, explained her family’s decision to leave Puerto Rico due to her father’s ailing health.

I moved here in 1987. Actually, we moved here to this very house. In December of 1987. My dad was a Vietnam vet and…he had a lot of health issues that were service-connected, and so he was having a hard time filing a claim with the VA [Department of Veterans’ Affairs] in Puerto Rico. So, they basically decided to kind of uproot everybody thinking that it would be easier to deal with them from the mainland and he would get better treatment here in the mainland. So that was basically the reason why we moved over here all together.

Victoria was among the earlier arrivers to Central Florida among my respondents. Her response highlights the limitations of healthcare in Puerto Rico and how they extend to military veterans on the island. Similar to Victoria, Joseph, a 22-year-old Puerto Rican, moved out of Puerto Rico due to a cousin’s issues with asthma.

I was eight at the time. So, by that time, I was over there, and I have one brother and one sister from the same mom and dad, which is here, and another brother that's in Puerto Rico. Right? So, all the fighting and all that. So, then we got separated, the three of us. So, I came with my aunt. At that time, I was eight years old. And my aunt had her little son. She had a little son…and he had asthma. So, she decided that the treatment here would be better than the one over there. So that's the reason why we came over here.

For Joseph, the departure from Puerto Rico was precipitated by parental conflict, which led to his aunt getting custody of him, and later by a family health concern. The lack of healthcare resources has been a continuous problem for Puerto Ricans on the island. These concerns have been linked to the widespread privatization of the healthcare system, which made Puerto Rico’s healthcare system very similar to the structure of healthcare stateside (Perreira et al. 2017). Puerto Rico also lacked infrastructure for
attending to special needs students. For example, Darielys, a 35-year-old Puerto Rican, shared her experience of moving to Central Florida due to her sister’s deafness. When asked why her parents moved their family to the area from the island, Darielys stated,

…Probably the biggest reason is because my sister is deaf in one ear, completely, and has about 75% hearing loss in the other one. …We didn't know if it was going to be progressive. …So, we didn't know what was going to happen. So, in Puerto Rico, obviously, it's special education. It's just basically non-existent. Even though my mom put her in private schools and things like that, they didn't know how to deal. So, she dealt with a lot of bullying and things like that. So that's why we moved to Altamonte [Springs] because first, she went to Longwood Elementary, which had a program for deaf kids and things like that. …So that's probably the main reason.

Despite Darielys coming from a middle-class family with enough resources to afford private schooling on the island, her family was still unable to find the resources necessary to accommodate her sister’s condition. Darielys cried while recounting her sister’s experiences, and also mentioned that she became resentful—at the time—that the move was primarily about her sister, given Darielys herself struggled with the relocation to Florida. Some U.S.-born respondents stated they moved to Florida due to health reasons, though these moves were not due to a lack of services in Florida versus other states. For example, one respondent mentioned his parents moving from Chicago because of his father’s arthritis, which was exacerbated by the cold weather. Overall, migration from Puerto Rico to the U.S. due to health issues reflect the disparity in services and the quality of care available in both spaces, despite Puerto Rico’s status as a U.S. territory.

*Florida, Land of the Lost: Relocating to Recover from Personal Misdeeds*

Moving to Florida represented a renewal for many of my respondents. Whether that “fresh start” was personal or for a close family member, the general sentiment was
that moving to a new place, and one so different from the crowded cities in the north and on the islands, would wipe the slate clean for those who had been engaged in negative behaviors (e.g., gang membership and drug use). For respondents who noted this cause for migration, some explained that the change in location had not actually changed their behaviors. Thus, while these moves were made with good intentions, they did not always result in the changes my respondents hoped would occur.

Some respondents pointed to their past behaviors as limiting their ability to progress in urban areas in the north. Juan, a 24-year-old Puerto Rican, pointed to his former life as keeping him from being his true self in his hometown of New Haven, Connecticut. When asked why he moved from Connecticut to Central Florida, Juan stated,

I wanted something different. Like a new start. From being back home, I was just always in the streets and everything. I only go home to sleep. And then early morning, I would be out. There would be times when nobody knew nothing about me for days at end, and, it was just—I wasn’t doing nothing really productive back home. From…let me see, I’ve sold drugs, I sold drugs…. There was a time where I didn’t even wanna finish school, but I finished, I got my high school diploma. Something that everybody thought I wasn’t gonna get. And then, I got into—for a little bit I got into gang activity. I ended up leaving that, as soon as I saw that it wasn’t gonna benefit me. So, I ended up just leaving that. And I just wanted to move to a place where I can be me. And not have to worry about what people know about me. You know? So that’s when [I] decided to come to Florida.

For Juan, selling drugs and being involved in gang activity kept him from progressing in his prior location. His behavior had shaped others’ expectations of him. It was clear from our discussion that, at the young age of 24, Juan had outgrown the “street” lifestyle in which those around him were still embroiled.

In contrast to Juan, other respondents were not the ones making this assessment directly. Instead, their parents noted their changes in behavior at a young age and moved
them to prevent that behavior from worsening. In these cases, Florida served as an attempt to “save” their children from a life of crime. For example, Leo, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican who moved directly to Florida from the island at a young age, explained his parents’ reasons for moving as follows, “It depends on who you ask… My mom says that it was a new start, and then my dad said it was for me not to be in the streets. So, it depends on who you ask.” Similarly, Hector, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican, recounted his move to Florida as follows,

Well, I was raised in Vega Baja from pretty much when I was born till like I was 12. And then [at a] young age, I was already getting into trouble so my parents [said], "We got to go." They tried to get me out, which they did. And we came here. …I just had finished my sixth grade. And I was supposed to go to middle school. And they weren't trying to make me go there because they already knew I was getting into trouble at a young age.

For both Leo and Hector, their environments were seen as the primary culprit impacting their behavior. Their parents’ decision to move was presumably intended to improve their children’s surroundings and social influences, in the hopes of lessening the chances of their children becoming involved in criminal behavior.

Several respondents shared that they moved to Florida due to close family members seeking to improve their environment and stay out of trouble. In these instances, it was notable that such an important decision, many times involving a far move from the north or from the islands, was due to an indirect association with criminal activity. For example, when asked why his grandparents moved to Florida, Javier, a 26-year-old Puerto Rican, stated, “I think probably because my uncle, my mom's brother, he had sort of problems over there with people, so to get away from that and everything.” Javier came from a lower-income family and shared that he moved from a housing
project in Puerto Rico to a housing project in Central Florida, where he still lives to this
day. Hence, the move did little to ameliorate his family’s financial position, though it
might have been successful if it served to protect his uncle from negative outcomes on
the island. While Javier seemed relatively neutral about his move to Florida, other
respondents were not as happy to become entangled in their family members’ attempts to
shield each other from criminal behavior and negative influences. For example, when I
asked Nayeli, a 31-year-old Puerto Rican, to describe her experience moving to Florida
from Chicago, we had the following exchange,

N: I hated our move. …I had just turned 15, and I had my first year of high school
out there. So, I was so upset because I just made all my new friends after I
transitioned out of eighth grade to a high school. And our eighth-grade school was
like an all grade school from pre-school to eighth grade. So I had…all the same
friends, for basically my whole life. …And I was just taken away from all of that.
So, I was upset. We had a very hard time, me and my sister. We were sent out
here first without my mom.

S: To live with your aunt?

N: Yeah, to live with my aunt.

S: And why did your aunt want to move? Do you know?

N: Well, she was tired of living in Chicago. She had two boys, [and was] more
worried about them getting into the wrong kind of lifestyle in Chicago. So, she
moved out here with her boys. …So, my mom followed her and drug [sic] us with
her, but she sent us out here first.

Nayeli was particularly candid about the move to Florida, later describing her loss of
independence in Florida, where she lived in a semi-rural area and where her family
owned one car, making her home bound when out of school.

Other respondents noted they moved not due to the possibility, but rather, the
reality of their family members being involved in crime or drugs. For example, Jean, a
My mom raised four of us by herself while my dad was in prison. He came out when I was, I want to say 11, about 11, 10 years old. And the life over there in New York wasn't-- we lived in the projects in Brooklyn and it was bad. So, when he came out, he actually got into a-- they robbed him. He had gotten a job for Frito-Lay and he was trying to start his life back up. But he still had the same people around him from before he was locked up. Then when he got that job, he got robbed at gunpoint and they tried to kill him. …And then when that happened, he said, "You know what? I got to leave because I'm going to wind up killing somebody here or I'm going to wind up getting in more trouble. And I don't got to deal with these guys messing with me while I'm trying to survive the legit way." So, from there, we came to Florida. …I was about 12 years old when I first came to Florida.

Though Jean’s father missed a significant amount of Jean’s childhood, he presented this story with a very sympathetic tone. Similar to Jean, other respondents pointed to their family member’s engagement in harmful behaviors to their migration. Laura, a 40-year-old Puerto Rican and circular migrant, described her history of migration as follows,

I came back [from Puerto Rico] when I was 18. I lived in Miami for a while by myself. Lived in New York for a while by myself. …Went back to Puerto Rico. Then [my family] decided to move here, to Florida, which is land of the lost, because—honestly, because my brothers both were drug addicts, so they were causing trouble over there…in Puerto Rico. So, my dad was running out of where to put them and what to do with them. So, before they get killed in the street, he brought them here. And when he moved here, there was none—half of this thing was empty lots, so they really had nowhere to go. So, it was keeping them good. But then of course, drug addicts are going to find drug addicts no matter what, so. …They've been living here now since, for I don't know how many years now. …One of them is a pastor now. …The other one has a wife. He's not married legally, but he's with his wife and his kids. And he's working and he's trying to stay clean. But there's always that attraction.

Laura presented these details about her brothers in an empathetic tone, conveying that she did not blame them for her many moves throughout the years. Overall, when this type of move occurred in my respondents’ lives, they were more understanding or neutral if the
one being “saved” was themselves. When the person causing the move was a close family member, including a parent, the moves were described within the context of strained relationships between the respondent and their parents.

*Florida, the Safe Haven: Moving to Escape Dangerous Neighborhoods*

My respondents commonly described their move to Central Florida as an attempt to escape dangerous neighborhoods in urban centers in the northern U.S. One respondent even moved back to Dominican Republic to finish the last two years of high school as a means of escaping gang activity and drug-selling in her neighborhood in New York City. That said, most of these moves were done by those in cities such as New York and Chicago seeking safety in the (then) semi-rural areas of Central Florida. Mario, a 31-year-old Dominican, described his move from the Bronx to Kissimmee as follows,

It was pretty exciting and a little weird because I had all my friends in New York. But then when you’re like a preteen, you don't know what you're doing. So just that transition from New York to Florida, it was completely different. It was like amazing, and then still being a little homesick from growing up and seeing the buildings and stuff, to just seeing green all the time. So, it was a pretty weird transition as a teenager. …I [recently] visited New York. And I'm like, "I will never ever go [back]" just to visit, just to visit, maybe. But it's completely, the lifestyle is completely different. Over there I remember not being able to go outside because it's so very dangerous. I just remember growing up seeing a gunfight. There were shootouts like right in my building. Like, "What the heck?" …Even though there's crime here [in Florida] still, but, the façade of—it looks safe.

Mario acknowledges the sense of safety in Florida is merely a façade, while simultaneously showing how it was enough for him to prefer life there over his previous life in New York.
The notion of “feeling safe” is worth exploring in more detail here. What does it mean for a place to “feel” safer than another, irrespective of actual dangers in either place? What kind of physical environment prompts a feeling of being “unsafe?” I argue this desire to feel safe was behind a lot of my respondents’ decisions to move to Central Florida. Further, this perception of safety might have made respondents more sensitive to potential dangers in their local environment if they were to occur. For example, drawing this example to an extreme would lead us to examine cases like that of Trayvon Martin, the 17-year-old African American boy murdered by neighborhood-watch-turned-vigilante George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida in February of 2012. These perceptions of certain spaces as inherently “safe” and others as automatically “unsafe” can lead to incorrect appraisals of danger at either extreme—either individuals assuming any “outsider” is a threat or, conversely, assuming every person is a threat.

In contrast to Mario, other respondents made this decision on behalf of their children. For example, Alexa, a 37-year-old Puerto Rican, moved her family from New York City to Kissimmee for financial reasons and to shield her children from danger. When asked to describe her migration history, Alexa stated,

Well, I was born in 1979. A month after being born, they took me to Puerto Rico. And there in Puerto Rico I stood all the way until I was nine years old. Nine years old, I went back to New York, and there I lived all my teenage years, everything, until I became an adult. In, let's say 2008, that's when I decided to move down to Florida because New York, it was too expensive and the gangs and everything was bad for my children. So, I came down to Florida and here I am right now [laughs].

Interestingly, Alexa later on decried her children detaching themselves from a Puerto Rican identity because they saw Puerto Ricans as “thuggish” and engaged in criminal behaviors with which they did not want to be associated. Alexa did not view her
children’s beliefs as an extension of her own outlook on crime, but rather as a sad disassociation from Puerto Rican-ness.

**Conclusion**

The out-migration of my respondents (or their parents) from Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic was largely fueled by two underlying causes: the ailing health of a family member and family conflicts, many of which involved domestic violence. For those who migrated from other parts of the continental United States—such as New York City, Boston, and Chicago—as well as some migrations from the islands, the decision to move was prompted by a desire to escape “negative influences” found in urban neighborhoods. These migration trajectories framed Central Florida as both a “land of the lost,” where migrants could escape personal entanglements with the law and crime, and a “safe haven” where others hoped to escape cities where drugs and crime threatened to affect them or their children. The findings push us to understand more about the role of safety as a primary driver of Puerto Rican and Dominican migration both from the islands and within the continental United States. In the following chapter, I explore these issues explicitly by examining the integration process of my respondents and how they navigate the racial landscape of Central Florida.
Chapter 4. Feeling ‘Spanish’ in the Sunshine State: Situated Race in Central Florida

Collective emotions function by attaching significance and meanings to people, places, things, and ideas. When arguing for the futility of logic and reason to fully understand racial and political ideologies, collective emotions grasp at our underlying, at times tacit, understandings of how the world works. To begin uncovering the role of collective emotions in shaping the beliefs of my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents, it is crucial to first understand the contexts in which they navigate their daily lives. Understanding individuals’ context is important for several reasons. First, race and ethnicity are highly contextual and dependent on a person’s surrounding and social milieus. Second, collective emotions can gain value based on contextual information. For example, if a person holds anti-immigrant views, these views might be buffered or exacerbated by sharing social spaces with immigrants. Third, collective emotions might be mediated by local, social experiences such as attending school or, more generally, working to integrate in contexts such as Central Florida.

In the following chapter, I address my respondents’ processes of integration in Central Florida, highlighting the barriers and difficulties they faced while navigating life in a sparsely populated, predominately white American region. Respondents’ paths of integration depended on their migration history. For those moving to Florida from the islands, the primary barriers to integration were a lack of English proficiency and, for Dominican respondents, citizenship and documentation issues. In contrast, those moving to Florida from another U.S. state spoke of their difficulty acclimating to life in a semi-rural area where they stood out among white American peers in school.
Following this analysis is a discussion of respondents’ social circles, including their family, partners, and friends. Here, the primary distinction among respondents was gender. Among the women in my sample, social networks were relatively close-knit and limited in scope (e.g., close and extended family members). In contrast, men in my sample spoke of extended social networks that included family, neighbors, coworkers, and others. Gathering information on respondents’ social networks was crucial for understanding the immediate relationships that may shape their beliefs about race and immigration, among other topics covered in our discussions.

I then examine the neighborhoods where my respondents live, and how they interact with their neighbors and immediate surroundings. Here, the focus is on how my respondents engaged with the racial landscape of Central Florida—more specifically, how they determined where they wanted to live and how they perceived surrounding neighborhoods. Here, I revisit the topic of “safety” I began in Chapter 3 by analyzing how respondents spoke of the safety of their own, and other, neighborhoods. I focus on three types of neighborhoods here: Latino ethnic enclaves, white American neighborhoods, and Black American neighborhoods. How respondents described and understood these neighborhoods helps us understand the role of race and ethnicity in shaping local views on space, community, and safety.

Lastly, I examine the embodied experience of being Puerto Rican and Dominican in Central Florida today—paying particular attention to how Puerto Ricans and Dominicans respond to being racialized by outsiders in Central Florida. This section provides more analysis on the role of context in driving racial ideologies. Given the nature of Central Florida as a region that experienced a quick demographic shift from
majority-white to majority-Latino, we should hypothesize that experiences with being racialized by outsiders might impact the racial beliefs of the individuals interviewed.

Findings and Discussion

Integration in the Sunshine State

Island-born and U.S.-Born respondents differed significantly in their early experiences acclimating to life in Central Florida. For Island-born respondents, barriers to integration centered on citizenship and accessing education as Spanish-speakers. In contrast, my U.S.-born respondents who had relocated from the north to Florida, described their integration as thwarted by the social and physical characteristics of the region, which was predominately white American and semi-rural until recent years.

Moving to a place with a different language always presents difficulties for immigrants. However, these difficulties appeared exacerbated for my respondents as they described moving to an area with few educational resources for Spanish-speakers. For example, Victoria, a 38-year-old Puerto Rican, described her early years in Central Florida after moving there from the island,

…At first it was really exciting 'cause I mean I was nine, so I was thinking, “okay, we're moving to Disney” [laughs]. So, I mean it was great-- after a while—I think the first month or so—it kind of wore off a little bit because all my family was back there [in Puerto Rico], and we were here all by ourselves. And there weren't a lot of people that lived here. Most of these houses weren't around. The white house over there was the only house besides this one... So, it was hard because we were here all by ourselves. And then having to go to school and not knowing the language…was a culture shock for sure [laughs]. …The first school that I was going to they didn't have an ESL program, so I had to end up busing all the way to Davenport, because that was the closest school…that had an ESL program.
…Davenport was probably about 45 minutes from here. So, it was a 45-minute bus ride each way.
Victoria’s experience was relatively common among my island-born respondents. Another respondent who arrived in the early 2000s explained that there was only one ESL-equipped school in each county of Central Florida at the time, which forced Spanish-dominant students to bus long distances to attend school. These experiences added a sting to the migration experiences of my respondents.

Among my Dominican respondents, many described the barriers they faced as recent migrants seeking legal status and proper citizenship documents. For example, Joel, a 25-year-old Dominican who moved to Florida from the island, mentioned the negative emotions he associated with his legal status in the U.S.,

> Because when you have a situation like the one [my siblings and I] had, you don't think you have a future. …All three of us, we really thought that we had no future because that's what we were taught. You're not going to get papers unless you know some way, so you're not going to have a future. That's the thing that I've always thought, too... I had nothing going for me because I didn't think I would ever have a future. So, when I was in high school, I didn't really pay attention so much. It wasn't because of a language barrier, but as well as, "You don't have a future. What's the point?"

Joel’s painful narrative points to the internalization of xenophobia among immigrants to the U.S. (and other “Western” nations). While Joel was able to overcome these feelings through his work and his hobbies, his experience points to the very real consequences of being undocumented in the United States. These personal experiences are often lost in public discourse on immigration, where figures and trends are deemed more legitimate.

Several respondents also noted how lax immigration laws were during their parents’ attempts to enter the U.S. Suleyka, a 27-year-old Dominican living in Tampa at the time of the interview, explained her family’s journey to the U.S. as follows,
My mom left the DR because my grandfather had petitioned her to come over here. He's not blood-related, but he raised my mother. And then my mother asked for my father, at the time they already had two kids with them. I wasn't born, and my sister wasn't born. But my two oldest siblings were already born. So, she brought them over here. …So was it more like she was like, "Okay. It's just now's the time for me to go…” Well, in those times, laws were different, and when one parent would come, they could ask for all their kids, and they would just give them all the kids. A lot of things have changed since then. …It was easy.

Suleyka notes the ease with which her family reached the U.S. and attained citizenship.

Her comments point to an awareness of social change regarding immigration laws in recent years. However, Suleyka’s personal experience of moving to Tampa from Massachusetts as a teenager was largely negative. She stated the following when asked to elaborate on her move down to Florida,

I hated it when I came in high school. I think that had to do a lot with the fact that I didn't graduate. I was miserable. If I would've had friends that went with me through the whole way—you can't just pick up a kid and just move like that. I don't think so, especially when they're in school. …And if you get somewhere and you like it, great, great. But what if you don't? That's exactly what happened to me. I got in trouble, too, with the law. …Yeah. I mean, you're bored. You're going to do stuff. That's exactly what happened to me.

Here, Suleyka highlights the negative emotions associated with moving to Florida among my U.S.-born northern-transplant respondents. These northern transplants commonly noted how underpopulated and withdrawn their neighborhoods were when they first arrived in Central Florida. These moves were frequently to Poinciana, the region just south of Kissimmee that has gone from rural, sparsely populated land to being known by most as “Little Puerto Rico” over the span of 10 years. For example, David, a 23-year-old Dominican, shared his early experiences in Poinciana with a tone of dark humor, stating,

It was far, in the middle of nowhere. Imagine…coming from the Dominican Republic where I have all my family and friends, everybody—I was perfectly fine in DR. We go to New York. Oh, this is my mom trying to better—and then we settled in New York. We got our own apartment. Everybody is doing good,
whatever. And, all of a sudden, we come to Poinciana [laughs]. To me, that was like the middle of nowhere. My sister and I, we used to talk about secretly moving back to New York behind our parents' back [laughs]. …Like, "Yo. Let's just move back. Fuck it" [laughs]. … This is back in 2004. So, Poinciana wasn't like little Puerto Rico like it is today. Back then, it was more like a country, very American place. It took me some getting used to. I finished fifth grade in Poinciana. …In Poinciana, it was horrible. Mind you, we only had one car in the house. So, to go to Publix, we had to wait for my dad, or to do this, we had to wait for my dad, to do everything. …And I had to ride my bike to school for 30 minutes or more because I was like half a mile away from being approved to ride the school bus. …So, in the winter, it was bad. The winter here is not like up north, but it gets—when you got to go to school at 6:00 in the morning, 7:00 in the morning, it can be like 35 degrees. And that's pretty cold. Riding a bike to school, you hate that kind of weather [laughs]. You're like, "Fuck my life."

Though David relayed these experiences in a joking tone, his story highlights how difficult it was for him to acclimate to life in Poinciana. David also struggled with language acquisition after moving to Poinciana, and eventually persuaded his parents to move their family closer to the city of Kissimmee, where the population is more concentrated and there were more Latinos.

*Sticking to Our Own: Parental and Personal Social Circles*

As alluded to above, the places where my respondents reside in Central Florida became Latino enclaves within the past ten years. Thus, most of my respondents were exposed to majority-white American and, to a lesser extent, majority-Black American neighborhoods upon moving to Central Florida. In the following section I assess respondents’ social circles and those of their parents. Asking about parental social circles is a means of understanding which racial and ethnic groups Puerto Ricans and Dominicans encountered and interacted with while growing up. I then examine how these parental social circles align with or depart from my respondents’ own social circles,
which I define as individuals with whom they spend most of their time, such as friends, partners/spouses, and coworkers.

I was not surprised to find that my respondents’ parents had very homogenous social circles composed primarily of close and extended family members and co-national friendships (i.e., just other Puerto Ricans or just other Dominicans). Given that most of my respondents’ parents primarily spoke Spanish, and that many lived in ethnic enclaves in northern cities or among co-nationals on the islands, it follows that their networks would be limited to other immigrant Latinos and their own families. Some respondents highlighted how these limited networks were due to financial constraints, though. For example, Julissa, a 34-year-old Puerto Rican transplant from New York, said the following when asked about her parents’ friendships when she was a child,

My parents are really...they don't have a lot of friends. They don't associate a lot. They're always home. They live on a fixed income, SSI [Social Security], they don't go nowhere. There's no money to go nowhere, there's nothing, so...I mean, pretty much, as far as I can remember...and even in the projects, you go to school, you come home, that's it. Every night. Even when we went somewhere in the holidays, it was to my aunt's house, she lives in the Bronx. It's a whole Puerto Rican family party. …As far as I know, I can't say like I see them hanging out with whites, with blacks, because I never saw that. They're homebodies. And I'm kind of like that in a way, too. I go to work, and I come home.

Julissa’s explanation of her parents’ limited socializing was more common than not among my respondents as a whole. Due to limited financial means, these Puerto Ricans and Dominicans were confined to the home and to family interactions. While Julissa’s parents were on a fixed income, others’ parents were limited by their neighborhood demographics. For example, Amy, a 34-year-old Dominican, spoke of her parents’ change in social circles upon moving from a largely Dominican neighborhood in New
York to a mostly white neighborhood in Boston. When asked how that move affected her parents’ social life, Amy said,

We pretty much stuck to family for a little bit. They didn't always branch out with Puerto Ricans or something like that. Not hanging out. Our generation, me and my brothers, my cousins, started hanging out with other cultures, other ethnicities. Our family's trend is to stick to their own. Except my best friend, I met her in high school. We're still best friends. She moved down here first and then I moved. So, she lives in Sarasota. …And she's full Puerto Rican. And me and her are like absolutely inseparable. …In high school, I had a lot of crazy friends. I had all kinds of friends. In New York, it was mostly morenos [African Americans] because it was New York. Then in Boston, I had a lot of [Puerto] Rican friends, a lot of Rican friends. I've known a lot of Haitian friends. This is my husband. And you see, he's darker skinned.

Amy’s parents went from a somewhat homogenous social circle to a family-only social circle due to their move to Boston. Contrary to this, Amy went from a mostly African American social circle in New York to a Puerto Rican-dominant social circle in Boston. Upon moving to Florida, her friends remained primarily Puerto Rican and family-based. Her comments about her husband, who is a darker-skinned Cuban, could be construed multiple ways. Perhaps Amy was aiming to highlight her diverse social group, or perhaps she was attempting to highlight her lack of prejudice against dark-skinned people.

Generally, my respondents spoke of their exposure to different racial and ethnic groups and how this diversity differed from their parents’ insular social life. For example, Suleyka, a 26-year-old Dominican who lives in Tampa, spoke about her parents’ social circle when they lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts—a Dominican enclave—and how this differed from her own friend groups in the past and present,

Well, growing up in Lawrence, I grew up as a Jehovah’s Witness. So, while I was young, the only people I saw were the people in church, Jehovah’s Witnesses. Jehovah’s Witnesses because people outside were considered worldly people. So, they would hang around with them only. …Dominicans hanging around with Dominicans. Very selective. …When I moved down here, you learn. You learn
that there's more out there than just Dominicans. So, I was kind of forced to-- I mean, living in Miami, you're exposed to Cubans. I didn't even know what a Cuban was living in Lawrence. …So, I'd say I was exposed to Cubans, Colombians. And then Port Charlotte, it was all white and blacks. So that was just a change. I think that change was good though overall. It had a good effect because I was able to filter and kind of figure out what groups of people I wanted to expose myself to the most. ….When it came to white people, I [hung out] with more of the skater, laid back, didn't give a shit [type of people]. And then when it came to the black people, I was just never into hanging out with black, African American, straight black. You had to have some blend—Jamaican, preferably Haitian—I even picked up a lot of the language. …And that's the [people] I related to the most. I was like Haitian, Dominican, we're neighbors. This is all I have. Let me work with it. That's it. But it wasn't my—there was nothing else. …So, you're forced to hang out with people and learn.

Suleyka’s experiences as a Jehovah’s Witness filtered the types of Dominicans she was around while growing up. Her multiple moves after living in Lawrence encouraged or “forced” her to branch out from her closed social networks. That said, her comments point to the ways she continued to limit her social circles to those whose interests aligned with her (as with whites) or whose background most closely matched hers (as with her Caribbean friends). Her distancing from “straight black” people is notable here, considering she lived in several places in Florida that were predominately U.S. white-Black spaces with few Latinos. Her affinity towards other Caribbean people reflects a sharper cultural divide between her and African Americans than between her and whites.

While many of my respondents spoke of their parents “sticking to their own” and having social circles composed of co-nationals, others framed their parents’ social circles as composed of co-ethnics. These friendships were framed as their parents having “branched out” to other groups, though those groups might be seen as relatively close in culture, such as Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. For example, Anamarie, a 24-year-old
Dominican living east of Tampa in St. Petersburg, explained her mother’s social network in New York as follows,

She hung out mostly with Puerto Ricans. So, it emphasized how Dominican I was, her hanging out with Puerto Ricans, because even the way that Puerto Rican parents talk to their kids, the phrases they used when they were yelling at them, were very different. So, I could tell the clear divide like, "I'm Dominican." When people say Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are the same, you're just not because of random, little small things about your culture. So, I felt more Dominican being the only Dominican in the group, and me and [my brother] being the only two Dominican kids in every environment that we ever were in. So, all her friends were definitely Puerto Rican. We lived in a very Puerto Rican neighborhood in New York.

While Anamarie is pointing to the differences between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, her comments reflect the very closed nature my respondents’ parental social networks. Some respondents highlighted how their parents’ insular social networks, while being largely due to language barriers, were also deliberately sought. Brianna, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican transplant from Chicago, explained her parents’ attempts at finding other Puerto Rican friends in Chicago, as well as her own insular networks in Florida today.

B: Growing up as a child, it was mostly Puerto Ricans and African Americans. And then they somehow managed to find the Spanish people. But we were in school, so of course we got a taste of different cultures. But they somehow found their friends. The Puerto Ricans. 'Cause my dad, his first language was Spanish. So, he couldn't really communicate with people who spoke English, so he had no choice but to find people who spoke Spanish. As for my mom, she didn't care. My dad didn't really care either, it was just, communication, being from Puerto Rico, so...

S: So, can you tell me about the people that you interact with on a daily basis, so friends...what background are they?

B: It's pretty much the three of them. All day with the three boys. 'Cause I'm a stay at home mom. We only have one car. So, unless I drive my husband to work, I stay home. If not...I don't really like to go shopping. I'm an introvert, so I don't like to be around people. And sometimes you can't tolerate the people here in Poinciana. It's some crazy people here. But, mostly Puerto Ricans. Hispanic
people, 'cause I don't get out much, so. My neighbors are Hispanic, my family is Hispanic, so mostly Hispanic.

Brianna shows how her parents sought Puerto Rican friends in Chicago while she and her siblings had broader social circles in school. However, her homogenous social network in Central Florida reflects that of her parents in Chicago, despite the lack of a language barrier for her.

While many respondents spoke of their parents’ Spanish-speaking, primarily co-national, friendships on neutral terms (e.g., by stating these friendship circles were necessary due to language barriers and living in Latino enclaves), others were more critical of their parents’ views of other racial and ethnic groups. For example, Jean, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican transplant from New York, spoke about his parents’ anti-Black views and how these views were unspoken until his sister married an African American man.

My mom was actually really racist back then. I don't know why. Because all our friends growing up were black. We lived in a black community. We had nothing but black friends growing up. She didn't show that to us. She never showed it to us. "Oh, you don't talk to black people. You don't—" she never told us that. She just let us do our thing. But I actually found out recently that she was very racist. And when my sister married a black man she was like, "What the, what the—?" …And I got real upset with my mom about it. We got into an argument. And I'm like, "You're a racist. What the—" I seen people's parents that were like that and I'm like, "Stupid asses. They don't know shit." You get mad about it. And then when you hear that your mom—and then I heard that my dad was, too. I mean, it pissed me off. But I know my dad is not like that no more. He changed. And my mom, when that was recent, and we kind of gave her a piece of our own mind, me and my sister, she actually was like, "You know what? You guys are right. It's just the way that I was raised back then." And my mom's young. My mom's only 48 years old. And my dad's 50.

Jean’s surprise at his mother’s anti-Blackness reflects the distinction between allowing children to have diverse friend groups versus allowing diversity into one’s family. Jean’s
statement that his mother “just let him be” also alludes to a larger gendered divide among my respondents. It was more common for my male respondents to have close friendships with African Americans—growing up and/or today in Florida. My female respondents were more likely to have small social circles composed of family members and other Latinos. For example, Amanda, a 24-year-old Puerto Rican who grew up in two separate Black foster homes, explained her social circle as follows,

Right now, [my husband’s] family is my support team. They're all Puerto Rican. I do have—my ex's brother is married to someone that I consider my sister. She is Cherokee and white. I talk to her on the daily. But typically, all the people that I communicate with are Spanish. He has a few friends that will come over that are black. I don't really communicate with his friends. They're a little too ‘hood for me. Yeah. Just a little. … I keep to myself. I'm a homebody person. I stay home with my kids. The only time you catch me out is if I'm with his mom going shopping or something.

Amanda, despite having been raised around Black people and having a husband who socializes often with Black friends, had a Puerto Rican and white friendship network. Her assessment of her husband’s friends as “too ‘hood” for her points to the distance she feels from Black people in the area, while also pointing to the role of gender in shaping one’s social circles. Amanda relies highly on her husband’s family for social support, while her husband has an extensive social network outside of his family.

While many of my respondents encountered primarily white spaces upon moving to Central Florida, their relationships with, and attitudes towards, whites varied. Some respondents pointed out that their friendship circles were almost exclusively white, while others shunned whites in favor of Latino or Black friends. For example, when asked about his closest friends, Brandon, a 29-year-old Dominican transplant from upstate New York, said that his friends were, “Mixed. Mixed. But if it’s like people that I choose to
hang out with, it’s mostly white people.” Brandon had lived in a predominately white area of upstate New York prior to moving to Central Florida. Similarly, Anamarie, the 24-year-old Dominican, also lived in predominately white area of Boston prior to moving to Florida, and also had a mostly white friend group in Florida. She stated,

Here in Florida, everyone I know…is white. I think that's mostly because of the ethnic makeup of St. Pete. They're a very large population of Caucasians here, and the other option is African American. There's not many Latinos here. There's very small pockets of it. So, it's not like Tampa where you have exposure to a lot of different Latinos. So here, all my friends are white. …My other best friends are different types of Latinos. …We're all American, though. So, we're all born here, and we have immigrant parents. So that's the only thing we all do have in common.

For Anamarie, her friend group in Florida aligned with the racial composition of her previous neighborhood, while her close friend group was mostly Latinos who had grown up in the States. Interestingly, Anamarie did not live in a white neighborhood in St. Petersburg, but rather an African American neighborhood. Therefore, her friendships in Florida were not tied to the people living closest to her. Both Anamarie and Brandon were darker-skinned Dominicans—meaning their social networks were also not composed of people who looked like them.

Several respondents, though not many, were either married to, or had dated, white Floridians. One respondent, who was dating a Black Jamaican man, told me of the stares she would get while dating her ex-partner, who was a white man from Alabama. Nayeli, a 31-year-old Puerto Rican transplant from Chicago, was married to a white Floridian at the time of the interview and pointed to how the relationship changed her life experiences.
I'm sure there [is] a big difference between the way my sister and I are because she's married to a Spanish man. So, she's in her same culture. So, I've learned a lot of different things from being married to a white man, like cooking. We cook different. I've taught him to cook my way. He's taught me to cook his way. He can make Spanish food, too, now.

Nayeli framed her interracial marriage as expanding her cultural knowledge. She also noted that, as a stay-at-home mom, she rarely socialized outside of her close family.

Given the dispersed and residential composition of most of Central Florida, the impact of one’s partner on one’s social life might be more pronounced than for individuals living in condensed cities in the north. Thus, accounting for my respondents’ partners and families was crucial to understanding their broader world views.

While Nayeli and other respondents with white social networks were open to these relationships and favored them over connections with African Americans, some respondents gravitated more towards Blacks when in white-Black regions. It is worth noting that these respondents tended to be males and/or to have been raised around African Americans. For example, Andrea, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican who was raised between Florida and Georgia, shared the following about her social networks while living in an area with few Latinos in Georgia,

Because I would hang out with the black kids. But everybody in there was black, and I don't really hang out with white people unless they're—I'm not a racist towards anybody, I just don't hang out with them because it would be super country. Super southern, always hunting, always on their horses. All the white girls in the school would be into the Hollister, all that. And then they would be super, super white. So, I'm just like, "Oh, okay. These [black] people are laid back." And then the Spanish people would hang out with them, the very little Spanish people that there was. So, it's like, everybody would get along.

Here, Andrea highlights how whites’ lifestyle in Georgia did not align with her interests.
horses and wearing Hollister), which might explain her affinity towards African Americans, whom she viewed as “laid back.” Thus, my respondents’ choices for friends were both constrained by their surrounding racial and ethnic demographics and guided by their class backgrounds, which impacted their interests.

While my respondents differed in their affinity towards white and Black friends, they still primarily gravitated toward Latino friends, especially if they resided in one of the Latino enclaves of Central Florida. For example, Darielys, a 35-year-old Puerto Rican who was born on the island and raised in Orlando, described her friend circle as follows,

But my group are Puerto Ricans, Puerto Ricans that don't speak Spanish that were born here, Colombians, Cubans, white people, black people, Chilenos, Costa Ricans. I'm pretty diverse in my group. Most of them are probably Hispanic just because like I said, I love dancing Salsa, I like Spanish music, so maybe just because of our commonality. My interests, my issues [laughs]. I mean like the Puerto Rican status issue, politics, things of that sort that—I look for people that I can talk to those things about, which there aren't many, even here, even young people, even Puerto Ricans.

Darielys was one of a handful of respondents pursuing an advanced degree, in her case a law degree. Her friend circle, which was initially framed as diverse, was primarily Latino. Her description of her friend group reflects how my respondents were able to form friend circles that catered to their specific cultural needs. Overall, the predominately Latino makeup of Central Florida allowed my respondents to “stick to their own.” Interestingly, the extent of diversity in my respondents’ social circles was whether their friends were U.S.-born versus island-born, or whether they came from different Latin American countries.

What role do these primarily Latino social networks play in the everyday lives of my respondents? Some of my Dominican respondents explained how this dynamic led to
their acquisition of another Latino group’s characteristics (e.g., Puerto Rican-accented Spanish) and a lessening or dilution of their Dominican “traits” over time. Karla, a 37-year-old Dominican living near Orlando, described this dynamic as follows,

…The funny thing is, when I moved to Florida it was like going away. I'm like, "I don't feel so Dominican anymore. What's going on here?” But in New York, it just all comes out because I'm more around Dominicans over there than I am here. Here it's just my family. My friends are all mixed. So, it's like I have white friends, I have black friends. So, it's like I'm not—In New York I was constantly around Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. …So, when I'm in New York, I feel it. That's when I'm like…”Okay. I'm Dominican." But when I'm here, it's just like, “Oh. I'm just Spanish, whatever. I'm Latina…”

Karla’s comments show how living in a majority-Latino neighborhood does not necessarily strengthen one’s sense of national affinity. Her story shows how living in an area where various Latino groups live, along with American white and black people, can flatten one’s sense of ethnicity to “just Spanish” rather than “Dominican.” Her interpretation highlights how pan-ethnic identities can be contextual and contingent on the groups present in a given region.

*Poinciana and Buena Ventura Lakes: Life in the New Puerto Rican Enclaves*

This is Little Puerto Rico. When I first moved here, everybody spoke Spanish to me. I walk into the bank, I walk into a store, Spanish, Spanish, Spanish. I was like, "Mom, you got to move here. This is Little Puerto Rico. You'd love this” [laughs]. It's hot and Little Puerto Rico.

-Enrique, 37 years old, Puerto Rican.

The vast majority of my interviewees lived in areas with high concentrations of Latinos, and particularly, Puerto Ricans. What is life like for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in these regions? How do members of these ethnic groups respond to the growing enclaves of co-ethnics in the area? And how do these groups respond to
development in the region and its potential side-effects, such as traffic, crime, and noise pollution?

Residents of the region just south of Kissimmee, Poinciana, were quick to point out the major changes in the area over the past ten years. Poinciana was known by many as Poinci-Rico, given the rapid increase of Puerto Ricans from the island and northern transplants in the area. When asked to speak on these changes, many respondents outlined how the area changed dramatically since they arrived. Jenny, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican, explained these changes as follows,

The whole lane down Cyprus where Wendy's is, wasn't there. Where the storage—none of that was there. Nothing. Burger King was only there. Everything was gone. Not even the Poinciana Medical Center was there. The library was there. And on the other side, there used to be a trailer for the Medicaid people. For the elderly. Now they have a building. But before, it just used to be one trailer. The rest was all land. It was beautiful, but now they're building up. I mean, it helps…It was really just land. All of it just land. My neighbor's house wasn't there. We were one of the first people on our street to buy the land. And we built the house. And then slowly but surely, people started building next to us.

For Jenny, witnessing these modifications in her surroundings led to ambivalent emotions. She points out how “It was beautiful, but now they’re building up.” This acknowledgement that development might be an eyesore or not welcome was mentioned by several respondents, who were both excited to have new services and stores in the area, but who also moved to Poinciana for an escape from the downsides of urban living. Hence, while Jenny notes that these changes have helped, her ambivalence about development in Poinciana highlights the conflicting emotions held by residents in the rapidly developing area.
The influx of new residents, most of whom are Latinos, to Poinciana, has impacted physical movement in the region. While conducting interviews in the area, it was common for me to spend upwards of an hour to make it from the entrance of the region to my respondents’ homes. This was largely due to traffic jams lining major roadways and the two-lane road running through the center of Poinciana. Amanda, a 24-year-old Puerto Rican, explained issues with traffic in the area as follows,

In Poinciana though, there is not very much to do. But now that they have the new Poinciana Parkway, the new road, it puts you out to 27 a lot of faster. …But before there was one way in and one way out. And that way was ridiculous. …Poinciana Boulevard was crazy because it's only a one lane road. …And they've just fixed it to where it's two lanes now, once you hit a certain spot. [Traffic is] the only bad thing about Poinciana, I think. …But Poinciana's getting better. They need to become its own city already.

Amanda echoes the ambivalent emotions concerning development in the region that Jenny exhibited in the previous excerpt. Amanda is careful to mention how the area is “getting better,” while decrying the rise in traffic to get in and out of the area as well as the lack of recreational options in Poinciana. Overall, my respondents who resided in Poinciana seemed excited about recreational developments in the area (e.g., plans to open a new movie theater in the area), while being concerned about the influx of new residents.

How individuals describe their neighborhoods can help us understand their deeper beliefs about race, ethnicity, class, and how these connect with broader concerns around safety, comfort, and community. Further, looking at how residents in these new ethnic enclaves describe their surroundings points to the fault lines encountered by individuals attempting to ascribe racial and ethnic categories in an area where different groups come into contact. When asked to describe the racial and ethnic composition of their
neighborhood, respondents who lived in Poinciana and Buena Ventura Lakes, were quick
to note that the region was “majority Spanish” or majority Latino. Amanda, the young
Puerto Rican woman mentioned above, described her neighborhood in Poinciana as
follows,

Right next door is Haitian people, or at least I think they're Haitian. They're either
Haitian or Jamaican, one of the two. The people right behind us, I think they're
Mexican. Only because I always hear the Mexican music getting played. Right
across is Laura. She is Puerto Rican. I think everyone in her house is Puerto
Rican. Well, her husband might be mixed with white. Because he doesn't look
full-on Puerto Rican. And then we have this neighbor, which I've never met. I just
know about him because he shot his thumb off or something like that a few
months ago. …I guess he was trying to clean his gun or whatever... But they're
Spanish. I tend to stay inside. We do have, right after the wooded area, there was
a house that had a whole bunch of Haitian people. And then the next people are,
they're either Puerto Rican, they could be Dominican. But they're Spanish down
there. I think the majority of this is Spanish. There's one white family that lives
down that way and they are forever yelling at my kids during school years. Yeah.
I don't know why those white people do that.

Amanda’s description of her neighborhood is sprinkled with signs that racial and ethnic
boundaries are murky in this area, even if it is “majority Spanish.” For example, her
claims that she thinks her neighbors are Haitian and her other neighbor “might be mixed
with white” point to the unclear boundaries between racial and ethnic groups in this
enclave. Interestingly, her single mention of a white neighbor was tied to a negative
association—that they yell at her children—while her interpretation of Blackness in the
region is that it is tied to Haitian residents, not African Americans. Thus, while areas such
as Poinciana do have non-Latino residents, these are usually read as outliers (in the case
of whites) or other Caribbean residents (as with Haitians). Further, Amanda’s comment
about the home with “a whole bunch of Haitian people” alludes to broader views of
Haitians—whether they are Haitian or not—as residing in crowded homes due to a lack of resources.

How do residents of Poinciana know the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their neighbors? As noted above by Amanda, these racial and ethnic “cues” can involve music, which signaled to her that a neighbor was Mexican. Other respondents noted the role of language in determining her neighbors’ backgrounds. For example, Laura, a 40-year-old Puerto Rican, described her neighbors as follows,

Around the whole area, you can tell most of them are Puerto Rican. Yeah, most of them are Puerto Rican. You can tell. ...There's a Trump lover down the block. But he's a nice guy. He doesn't—it's not like he doesn't say hi to us or—when he sees me with [my toddler] when we're walking around and stuff. He'll say hi, good morning. He's not like that. And then I know there's a nice couple that just moved in, they're Haitian because she speaks only French. And you know, they all speak French. But other than that, everybody's—yeah, it's a very mixed crowd. But there's more Puerto Ricans than anything there. You can tell because you [see them] hanging out in the garage playing dominoes...

Laura assessed her new neighbors as being Haitian due to their use of French. Interestingly, she noted that her other neighbor was a “Trump lover” because he had a Trump sign on his lawn. Her positive assessment of this neighbor was due to his behavior towards her and that he would greet her while she walked through the neighborhood with her young son. Her claim that “He’s not like that” is rooted in her knowledge that being a Donald Trump supporter was a negative sign to those in the area during the summer of 2016, just months before then-candidate Trump was elected to the presidency. In contrast to this outlier, Laura claimed that “you can tell most of them are Puerto Rican,” in reference to her neighborhood in Poinciana. Her evidence in support of this claim is rooted in the fact that she has seen her neighbors “hanging out in the garage playing
dominoes.” While she stated this with a neutral demeanor, Laura, who is a northern transplant from New York but also spent close to 20 years living in Miami, was intent on calling herself a Nuyorican—the moniker for Puerto Ricans who feel equally as tied to New York as to their family’s Puerto Rican background. Thus, her assessment of the area as Puerto Rican, and her comments about her neighbors playing dominoes, might not be something she feels personally tied to. Here, Laura’s comments highlight the generational divide between recent arrivals and U.S.-raised Puerto Ricans.

The new enclave of Buena Ventura Lakes (BVL) was often described as “Little Puerto Rico,” similarly to nearby Poinciana. While I did not conduct as many interviews in BVL as I did in Poinciana, I did reside in BVL during my stay in Central Florida. The area is a mixture of self-contained communities composed of large single-family homes, most of which had pools in their backyards, and lower-income housing complexes with apartments and duplexes. Andrea, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican, was living in a duplex that was part of a larger complex spreading along a main avenue in BVL. She described her surrounding neighborhood as follows,

Literally everybody around here is Spanish that I've seen, that usually comes out. They're always having parties. Somebody over here in another apartment complex, they're always having parties and stuff. ...I think these are U.S. [Puerto Ricans], but I think the old lady is from the island. And then I know the ones in the front are straight up Dominican. And they're always with their music, like throwback music, Spanish bachata, the old stuff. And I'm like, "Oh my god."

Here, Andrea highlights the relative homogeneity of her surrounding neighbors in BVL. The extent of diversity in this section of BVL is between Puerto Ricans (both island-born and U.S.-born) and Dominicans. Her claim that “they’re always having parties” points to the issues many other respondents claim they moved to Florida to escape. While she
presented these observations with some ambivalence, she also seemed to accept her neighbors, even if somewhat reluctantly. Her comments about her Dominican neighbors, again, point to the cleavages between generations of Latinos in these enclaves.

Changes to the areas of Poinciana and Buena Ventura Lakes were at times linked to a rise in crime in the region. While these comments were not framed as exclusively a “Puerto Rican problem,” it was clear that my respondents were concerned about crime and safety in their neighborhoods as the population in the region increases. For example, Adrian, a 28-year-old Puerto Rican, stated that he liked his immediate neighborhood but that there were “rough” parts of Poinciana. He described the entirety of Poinciana as follows,

A: It's pretty calm for the most part. If you go further down towards San Remo going to Koa, that's just a bunch of Hispanics and drug zones and all that other nasty stuff. Around here, it's pretty much fine for the most part. We really don't have much craziness going on...

S: Is it mostly Puerto Ricans that who live in this neighborhood?

A: No, there's a big mix. If you go down Marigold and you get to Koa, you make a right, the school's going to be on the left and then you have Monterey and New Castle and all that stuff going on that way, that's a big mess. You go down to San Lorenzo, it's a big, hot mess down there, too. You go down to Peabody, there's a bunch of delinquents over there. It's just crazy. You go down to Amiens, when you get to the stop sign, you make a left on Amiens, and you kind of go back up, a bunch of hoodlums over there, too. Bordeaux's pretty quiet now. It wasn't quiet when I was going to high school. There was a lot of stuff going on over there because I used to live on Amiens... And then that's basically it for Poinciana.

While Adrian is Puerto Rican, his claim that a nearby area as composed of “a bunch of Hispanics and drug zones” reflect a distance between himself and fellow co-ethnics. In contrast, his positive assessment of his immediate neighborhood as “pretty calm” was followed by a clarification that it was also racially and ethnically “a big mix.” Thus, his
view of the concentration of Latinos was that it was tied to criminal activity, while he perceived a racially and ethnically mixed neighborhood as calmer and safer. Adrian was not alone in his negative views on Puerto Rican concentration in the region. For example, Hector, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican, described his preference of neighborhoods by stating, “Actually, I lived here in Kissimmee for five years and I was like, ‘We can't do this here.’ …There's too many of us here. And I already know how we can act sometimes.” In contrast to Adrian, Hector decided to move back to a majority-Black neighborhood in Orlando where he had grown up. Thus, despite where they might eventually settle, my respondents showed either ambivalence or negative emotions when discussing the concentration of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in these enclaves. One respondent showed how these negative views of the enclaves might be tied to aspirations for social mobility. Mario, a 31-year-old Dominican, described his neighborhood as follows,

M: I live in a middle-class neighborhood. I own my own house. Recently, so—it was a very—it's an accomplishment for a Hispanic. It's a big thing in the community. But I live in a nice neighborhood, like quiet. I wish it was quieter. …The woods type of quiet [laughs]…

S: You've got to go deep into Poinciana, then.

M: Oh, no, no. I wouldn't go there. A lot of Hispanics over there. Very loud. I don’t like Poinciana. …Just quiet, it's a nice neighborhood.

S: Is it BVL, or—?

M: It's not—tell someone from Mill Run that they're from BVL, they get mad. [They would say,] "No, that's ghetto." Just because more of the [Puerto] Ricans are [in Buena Ventura Lakes]. From the island. Versus over there [in Mill Run]. So over there, there's a mix of people. I live in a cul-de-sac. So, my neighbor is Puerto Rican and Guatemalan. Then my neighbor is my wife's uncle, an Ecuadorian. …And then their neighbor, I believe they're black. Then the neighbor after that…Mike. Cool guy. White guy—Italian. And then there's another guy no one talks to. So, there was a white guy, and then recently, an old Puerto Rican
A couple moved to the other house on the corner. A Dominican guy used to live there with one of my friends, a really cool guy. And across the street from him, in that cul-de-sac is an older Puerto Rican lady...I do not like my neighbors in the back. They're too loud. Loud Puerto Ricans [laughs]. They'll be riding dirt bikes and I'm like, "Yo. Come on, man."

Mario’s aspirations for upward mobility were framed in contrast to the homogeneity of enclaves such as Poinciana and Buena Ventura Lakes. Though his primary complaints about co-ethnics seemed rooted in his love for quiet surroundings, they also reflect an association between island-born Puerto Ricans and “ghetto-ness,” while viewing a racially and ethnically mixed area as higher status. His comments about his loud Puerto Rican neighbors hint at deeper concerns about the future of his neighborhood, which is not too distant from BVL. Overall, Mario’s comments reflect my respondents’ views of these enclaves as lower status, loud, and “ghetto,” while associating racially and ethnically mixed neighborhoods as middle class, quiet, and safe. While these negative associations with Puerto Rican enclaves were not held by the majority of my respondents, they point to fissures in community life as the region acclimates to growing numbers of recent arrivals from Latin America and elsewhere.

_Distant from One’s Own: Life in Black and White American Neighborhoods_

Not too far from these Puerto Rican enclaves were areas that had remained largely African American or white American. These were either larger areas in Orange County, near Orlando, or smaller pockets of Kissimmee. For Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in these areas, there were extra barriers to integration, whether that be concern from others for their safety or actual negative encounters with non-Latino neighbors.
Hector, a 32-year-old Puerto Rican and electrician, told me about his decision to settle with his family in a predominately Black neighborhood west of Orlando called Pine Hills. He described how outsiders view his neighborhood as follows,

…A lot of people say, "Oh, Pine Hills is crazy over there. It's too ghetto. A lot of things happen." I don't see it. I mean, it's crazy everywhere if you ask me. Depends on what you're doing. You be in the street and doing what you're not supposed to, of course, you're going to get in trouble. But my life now is more like work, church, and home. And school now. I stay occupied doing other things.

Hector’s comments point to the general view in the Central Florida of Pine Hills as a downtrodden neighborhood with a crime problem. His perspective was likely influenced by a lifetime of living in the area and seeing what actually occurs there, as opposed to outside perceptions of it. Census numbers show that almost 70% of Pine Hills identifies as African American or Black, while only 13% of the area is Hispanic of any race. Given the well-documented, and racist, association of Blackness with criminality, we might read this view of Pine Hills as tied to issues of race and class—wherein the concentration of poor and Black bodies is read as an indicator of crime.

In a smaller pocket of Kissimmee, Javier, a 26-year-old Puerto Rican born on the island, shared his views on the predominately Black neighborhood where he grew up and still resides,

Yeah. It's over there on Main Street and Michigan but it's called the hood. …It's all black people. All black people. That's the hood. And I lived there and to be honest, I have no problem with nobody. I went to school with half of them too, so. …It's hidden but once you go in, you already know you're in. You're going to be like, "Oh, this is the projects right here” [laughs].

Interestingly, Javier described his neighborhood as familiar to him and noted that he has “no problem with anybody” there, while simultaneously presenting the area through a negative lens. His statement that “it’s called the hood” reflects an internalization of
outsiders’ perception of the neighborhood, while his comment that it is “all black people” highlights the evidence undergirding these outsider designations. Are only black neighborhoods deemed “the hood?” Not quite, as noted above, some respondents read areas with concentrations of island-born Puerto Ricans as “ghetto.” However, there is a clear demarcation of any Black concentration as being “hood,” while Puerto Rican concentration was seen as “hood” only when it was tied to a high number of recent arrivals from the island.

In contrast to this conception of Black neighborhoods as “hood” or “ghetto,” predominately white areas of Central Florida were often framed as dangerous for Latinos given the racism of their inhabitants. At times, respondents brought up these areas without prompting, and even warned me about going to certain regions due to the racism I might face there. The area that came up most during these discussions was Saint Cloud, an area just south of Buena Ventura Lakes and east of Poinciana, the two main Latino enclaves in Osceola County. For example, Betsy, a 26-year-old Dominican, shared her apprehensions about Saint Cloud as follows,

There are certain areas, even here, that I stay away from because of the lack of diversity. …Country places. It's more like the cities where it's mostly white, country people. Saint Cloud. I don't go there. And my cousin lives there. I just—I stay away.

Betsy’s interpretation of Saint Cloud as “mostly white, country people” serves as evidence that it is a hostile area for people like her. Her view that the area “lacks diversity” is interesting given her view of white towns as being homogenous, but not Latino enclaves. While she does not explicitly say that people in these areas are violent, her fear of visiting the area implies it. Similar to Betsy, other respondents viewed Saint
Cloud as a racist, hostile space, but rooted these perceptions in lived experience as former residents of the town. For example, Jorge, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican and transplant from Connecticut, shared his experiences moving into Saint Cloud as follows,

And then we moved. From the hotel, we moved to some crazy rural white people area at Saint Cloud, Florida. ...And you see KKK crosses all over the place, and rednecks wearing rebel flags calling us niggers. And I actually got into a bunch of fights in Saint Cloud because of the whole racial thing. And then, it's crazy, man. Pick-up trucks, people going mudding, and fires, and Ku Klux Klan. And there's one store out there called-- it's all Ks, it's called the Koffee Kup Kafe. [Sarcastic tone] Well, we don't know what they meant. So, I walked in there one day because it was a coffee shop...and it was like a movie. The whole store got quiet. Everybody looking at me like, "I think he's lost. What is he doing in here?"

Jorge’s experiences highlight how outsiders’ perceptions of Saint Cloud are not entirely untrue. Some parts of his story were overstated—for example, the café he mentions dropped the K from “Kafe” after the establishment was bought by someone from outside of the town. However, his experiences visiting the café and being stared at aligned with others’ sense of the town as a whole. Though I did not find many respondents who had direct experience living in Saint Cloud, I was able to interview one woman who had recently moved there from another town in Central Florida. Kimberly, a 38-year-old Dominican who was born on the island but raised in New York City, replied as follows when asked why she chose to move to Saint Cloud,

I wanted to move to Poinciana actually, but they only have one way in, one way out. And the traffic is so crazy, so we were like—I didn't want Kissimmee, because it was already too much Latin there. It's a lot of like, people. We, together, are too loud, you know? So, our first option was Poinciana, but it was too much—the traffic—and so Saint Cloud was the second option. My daughters loved it. I said, "Okay. Let's go." It was a quiet place. ...There is a lot of Puerto Ricans here. Yes, they are. There are more Puerto Ricans than white people, Americans, white Americans. ...I think Dominicans, probably three or four, including us. That's it.
At first glance, Kimberly’s story shows that even Saint Cloud is not impervious to the influx of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos to Central Florida. While a handful of other interviewees mentioned the area was becoming more Latino, Kimberly was the first to provide evidence of these changing demographics. Her view of Kissimmee as “too Latin” and “too loud” aligns with other interviewees’ views of their co-ethnics in enclaves, while her view of Poinciana points to issues expressed by many who actually live in the area (e.g., the problem with high traffic). Interestingly, later in the interview Kimberly disclosed her issues with racism in the town where she resides. When asked whether she had ever been treated negatively due to her background or her appearance, Kimberly said the following.

…I can tell you this, never in all my life [have I] felt discriminated until I moved to Florida. Yes. …A lot of old people, especially here in Saint Cloud, they are very racist. They are. It doesn't matter if you're Puerto Rican or Dominican. Yeah. They are racist to dark skin and they are racist for Latin. They are. And I felt it [for] the first time in all my life. I remember I started working at Publix at nights, on customer service, and that was my first experience. …I remember I was at the counter and one of my colleagues were talking to me in Spanish. She was saying something, and I was serving him, and I told him, "Give me one second." and I turned back and answered her in Spanish. He flipped. He was [like], "What you talking that crap? Spanish. You're in our country, whatever, whatever." I really ignored him, but I was like, "This is incredible." …And then after that, there was this guy. He was a very nice guy. He probably didn't know I was Latin, so he wanted to talk. He start talking. "All these Latin people. They're coming here, just taking. We have to pay taxes." The whole story. I was like, "Okay." I didn't say anything, not because I was ashamed. It was because I didn't want to start [something]. … But that's how I felt here in Florida. Never in New York. I lived New York, Bronx, everywhere, and because there was a lot of people from different places probably, you never feel it. But here, yes. I can tell you that.

Kimberly’s account supports several themes throughout this dissertation. First, the acknowledgment that, as a dark-skinned Dominican, Kimberly was subject to both racism and xenophobia in Central Florida, which shows the impact of intersectionality for
understanding her lived experiences. Second, her comments about the “very nice guy” who “probably didn’t know” Kimberly is Latina, reflect the embodied nature of race—her appearance signaled to whites that she was not Latina—as well as the unique lived experiences of Afro-Latinos. And lastly, her response to these slights in Saint Cloud point to the real fear among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the face of interpersonal, and explicit, racism and xenophobia just months before Donald Trump was elected president. If there were fears of the rise of racism and xenophobia once Donald Trump was elected, these fears were already being actualized in predominately white towns in Central Florida prior to the election.

_Being Dominican and Puerto Rican in Central Florida: Navigating Outsiders’ Racial Ascriptions_

In this final section, I explore the daily lived experience of race among my respondents. As stated previously, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are particularly well-suited groups to examine racial boundaries in the U.S. precisely because they do not fit neatly in pre-established racial categories. Among my respondents, there were individuals who “passed” as a number of different racialized groups in Central Florida, including white, Black, “mixed,” and Brown/Latino. These last two categories require some explanation. Given that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans tend to span a white-Black spectrum in skin tones and physical features, many are racialized as being “mixed,” which in the U.S. refers to a recent mixture deriving from white American and Black American parents. Thus, while my respondents often repeated the belief that all Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are “mixed,” this outsider classification is meant as a reference to non-Latinos who are biracial or multiracial. Scholars have also pointed to the
racialization of Mexicans and other Latinos as “Brown” (López et al. 2017). This
classification refers to those who are read as having indigenous, or a mix of indigenous
and Spanish, ancestry. Thus, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans who are read as “Brown” or
Latino, are being racialized as neither white nor Black, but as some intermediary category
associated with Mexicans and other Latino groups with a strong indigenous presence.

Among my respondents that were racialized as white, I noted a sense of
ambivalence surrounding the category. Most respondents who were racialized as such did
not mind the ascription. Others found issue with it because it caused distance between
them and other Latinos. Andrea, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican, shared the following about
her experiences being racialized as white,

I think I went to the doctor, and they were speaking in Spanish, and since I didn't
say anything in Spanish, they just assumed I didn't know. They weren't saying
nothing bad or anything, but when I went up, I had spoke in Spanish…and she
was like, "Oh my god. I swear, I did not know you spoke Spanish." And I was
like, "I'm Puerto Rican. What did you think? We live in Florida.” This was recent.
And she's like, "Wow. Es que [It's that]—You look too white. Tu te miras muy
blanca [You look too white].” And I'm like, "Okay, but I'm not, so. I speak
Spanish. I get what you're saying."

Andrea’s account shows the frustration Latinos feels when they are not seen as fitting the
stereotypical characteristics of a Latino. Andrea’s claim to Latinidad was further
tempered by her lack of Spanish-accented English, leading outsiders to assume that,
because she does not fit the racial and linguistic characteristics of a prototypical Latino,
she must not be a member of the pan-ethnic group. While Andrea’s story highlights how
cophone ethnics might mischaracterize Puerto Ricans as white, other respondents showed how
white Americans hardened the boundaries of whiteness to avoid their incorporation into
that group. For example, Adrian, a 28-year-old Puerto Rican who is often racialized as
white, shared the following about his interaction with white American bosses in Central Florida,

So, I started working at [an auto parts company] and my boss was full-blown American. He was born and raised here in Florida, down south in Fort Myers. …Well, he never had any issues with me. Within six months, I learned how to use the machine. I eventually ended up getting hired permanently. But then it turned into one of those ordeals where he was still taking care of his boys. They were making 20 something dollars an hour. I was making 12 dollars an hour. And then when I asked for a raise because I was doing the same kind of work they did, I got pushed back. Well, I left that job, went to another job making more money… But I mean, all jokes aside, because we used to crack about racism and stuff like that because they're white and I'm Hispanic. I heard it all. But I mean, he apologized, and he flat out told the guys and said, "Man, I messed up. I shouldn't have let him go." But I mean, hey, I quit on my own, but I quit because he wasn't willing to pay me more money.

Adrian’s story was related in an indignant, yet sad, tone. His interpretation of this instance of workplace discrimination was to take his own labor elsewhere for better pay. That said, his belief in his own agency almost tempers his view of the discrimination as unfair (i.e., saying “hey, I quit on my own”). Overall, my respondents who “passed” as white experienced questions from co-ethnics and racial animus from white Americans.

My respondents were less likely to self-identify as Black than as white, which aligns with research on Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Latinos as a whole. Only 3% of Latinos self-identified racially as Black alone in the last decennial census [see table 1]. Despite this, there were many respondents who were racialized by outsiders as Black in Central Florida. For example, Anamarie, a 24-year-old Dominican living in a predominately Black neighborhood in St. Petersburg, described how others interpreted her race and ethnicity as follows,

90% of the time I don't get identified as Dominican. Dominicans are the only ones, and other pockets of Latinos, are the only ones who know I'm Dominican. Everyone has this assumption that, depending on where I am, I'm either black or
I'm Middle Eastern or Indian. And also, it depends on—my hair’s straight most of the time because it's easier for me to manage. …But people automatically assume I'm black or I'm Indian every single time. And [some of those are] people who know my last name is Ramirez.

Anamarie’s comments about her hair show how modification of one racial signifier, can lead to differing racial ascriptions of an individual by outsiders. Scholars have shown how these modifications are often meant to change outsiders’ interpretations of one’s body as being one race or another (Candelario 2007). While Anamarie’s experience is different from that of Dominicans living in Latino enclaves, they point to the commonality of being “misread” by outsiders that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans often describe. When asked how she felt about being racialized as Black, Anamarie stated,

> And the reason that I move away from being called black is because you're erasing who I am as a person by trying to shove me into all these other assumptions that you have about what it's like being black. And then, at the end of the day too, I can’t identify being black because if you're in my neighborhood, I don't have anything in common with these people. And it's not a bad thing. It’s most of them are Baptist. I'm Catholic. I've never heard a Catholic Mass in English. I don't know the prayers in English. I don't. If you send me to church, I don't know what I'm doing if we're doing it in English because my being Catholic has been a Latino thing for me. So, all my prayers are in Spanish and I know how to read the Rosary in Spanish, but I literally don't know any of the words in English. So, it's like little things like that, that even in the smallest ways, I can't relate…

Anamarie’s interpretation of Blackness is that it is tied to certain linguistic and religious customs she does not share. She is echoing narrow views of Blackness espoused in the U.S. that frame the Black experience as being rooted in the United States, not in Latin America. For my 1.5-generation respondents who were racialized as Black, their Spanish-language use often mediated these outside ascriptions of Blackness. For example, Joseph,
a 22-year-old Puerto Rican, said the following when asked how others interpreted him racially,

Well, they knew that I was, so they—honestly, they would be like, "Oh, you're black. …Black or Dominican. Black or Dominican." And then when I spoke, they were like, "Oh, you're Mexican." …Yeah. Just by the way I spoke since I didn't know no English. I had to learn English from zero, basically. I would try to talk, and it didn't come out right. So Mexican. That was what I was, and I really wasn't. I used to get mad. …I used to tell them, "I'm Puerto Rican. I'm not black or Mexican."

Joseph’s description of being seen as “black or Dominican” reinforce the common view among Latinos that Dominicans are dark-skinned. While this assumption is rooted in the reality of a heavily African-descended society in Dominican Republic, it belies another reality—that all Spanish-Caribbean islands, and many other areas of Latin America, have had a strong African presence in their societies. Further, the automatic association between being a Spanish speaker with being Mexican alludes to broader stereotypes of Latinos as a whole. When asked whether he had ever been treated negatively because of his ethnicity or his appearance, Joseph shared the following,

I don't know. But I guess just people judging me, I guess, by tattoos and my skin color. They just, "Oh, he's probably a títere [hoodlum]." Like he's probably bad. He's probably going to come rob or steal some shit. Just because of the way I look just physically. …I think I'll be judged if I was the way I am now. Because I know that if I to go a lot of places right now, they probably wouldn't even interview me for a job just because I have tattoos. I mean, this doesn't mean nothing. It’s just ink. It doesn't change who I am. …But I think that's just depending how you look. …If you look like you're a good person, they're not going to tell you nothing. But if you look black—…like [if] you're white, you might have more chances getting something than being black. I can't do nothing about it. You can't do nothing about it. It's just how it is.

Joseph’s understanding of racism as “just how it is” is as realist as it is saddening. His earlier description of being discriminated against because of his tattoos points to the importance of different markers for understanding discrimination. For Joseph, the
combination of his dark skin and his tattoos leads others to assume he is a hoodlum. Conversely, he explains how tattoos paired with light skin would not lead to the same level of scrutiny. Thus, Joseph has come to understand his Blackness as the root of others’ discrimination towards him. He is, in other words, reading between the lines when he is denied a job due to his tattoos.

Many respondents pointed to their dark-skin and other features as being racialized as biracial, or “mixed.” These experiences were often described as involving a level of fetishization or curiosity from white Americans or other non-Latino groups in Central Florida. For example, Alex, a 32-year-old Dominican, shared the following when asked about how others racialize him in Central Florida,

I remember one time I went to Epcot and I was with my ex at that time, and for some reason we went to the Morocco section, and then there was a show going on. Aladdin. And then some woman who worked there, she was selling something, she was like, "Hey you." And then I went towards her and she was like, "Where are you from?" And I'm like, "I was born and raised in Miami," and then I'm like, "No, where are you from?" And I'm like, "I'm Dominican," and [she’s] like, "Oh, I thought you were from Morocco," And I'm like, "Why?" And [she’s] like, "You know somebody from there, you could work here." And then I didn't realize it until I walked into the restaurant—they had a restaurant in there also—I look at the people, they look at [me], and I'm like “Oh, I almost look like them” [laughs]. And that was the first time where somebody thought that I was from another country. Here in Orlando. Because in Miami, they would say I'm Cuban because it's a Cuban community. …But here, it's when people from other countries start saying, "Are you black or a mix of black and white or you're Asian and black?" It's usually everything but Dominican.

Alex describes his experience being mis-read as Moroccan as an interesting, somewhat neutral, experience. It struck me as interesting given how his racial ambiguity could be mobilized financially through employment at places like Epcot, a Disney theme park. Though he seemed exasperated at never being correctly identified as Dominican, he also qualified this misidentification with comments about the contextual nature of racial and
ethnic ascriptions. The enclave in which he grew up in Miami was predominately-Cuban, leading others to identify him as Cuban by default. In contrast, Orlando is a racially and ethnically mixed area with sizable African American and Latino populations, leading others to take guesses at his racial and ethnic makeup. Another respondent echoed Alex’s story of being offered remuneration based on his racially ambiguous appearance. Joel, a 25-year-old Dominican, shared the following about his experiences at two separate jobs in Central Florida,

I used to be a bartender in Celebration at the wine bar there. And I remember sometimes, since it’s a mostly white area, sometimes the people would say, "Why do you have a black man—" I was like, "I'm black and Hispanic." But they would say, "Why do you have a black man working at a mostly white bar?" And honestly, I ended up quitting because it got-- the owner was an Irish man straight from Ireland. He would defend me as much as he could…Because even people that worked there, they said, "This is not going to bring us money." …So, I ended up quitting. So, it went from that to now, I work here [at a hotel], and they're like, "Wow, the way you look is going to bring people—" that's what people automatically say. …That's what the managers say.

Joel’s drastically different experiences at these two jobs points to how race is mobilized in the search of profit. These examples of racial capitalism (Leong 2012) differ because of the type of clientele being served in either job. At the bar in Celebration, a predominately-white and affluent town near Orlando, Joel’s appearance as a “mixed,” yet African-descended, person was hurting the profit-seeking goals of the bar—even though he carefully points out that the owner of the bar sided with him. In contrast, in his work selling timeshares at a hotel, managers privileged workers that can appeal to a diverse clientele, for which racial ambiguity could be an asset, rather than a drawback.

Given they were not seen automatically as Latinos, these “biracial-passing” respondents often encountered questions about their backgrounds in school settings upon
first arriving from the north or the islands. For example, Victoria, a 38-year-old Puerto Rican, shared the following experiences when asked to recount an experience during which she felt her Puerto Rican-ness.

Yeah, when I moved here. It was weird because nobody knew what I was. People knew that I wasn't Mexican and I'm sitting here with my curly hair and frizz everywhere. People used to ask me all the time if I was mixed and I'm like, “kind of yeah, ‘cause my mom is light-skinned and my dad is dark-skinned, but, but, we're—” “But you don't speak English where are you from?” “I'm from Puerto Rico, I'm Puerto Rican.” So, that was the first time that…it ever occurred to me. I just thought that everybody was like me [laughs].

Victoria’s story points to her confusion upon being asked whether she was “mixed.” This confusion was likely tied to the hegemony of mestizaje in Puerto Rico (Chavez-Duenas, Adames, and Organista 2014), where race is supposedly overruled by nationality, making everyone simply Puerto Rican. Thus, the question “are you mixed?” is likely met with confusion by individuals who are taught to demarcate groups by nationality rather than by racial ancestry. Her comments also reflect how racial differences are not completely alien to my respondents. Rather, it reflects the racial repertoires (Roth 2012) of Puerto Ricans on the island.

For my respondents who were read as “Brown” or simply Latino, there were still moments of frustration where they incorrectly identified as Mexican or another Latino group. For example, Ana, a 26-year-old Puerto Rican, and I had the following exchange when I asked her to recount a moment where she felt her Puerto Rican identity more acutely,

A: I guess it was when I went to the Puerto Rican parade in New York. So, it was years ago. I really paid no attention to what I was. I always considered myself American. I was born here.
S: But you have a [Puerto Rican] flag [tattooed] on your arm, and you have a *coquí*.

A: …I just do this, because I don’t like when people ask me if I’m Mexican. So, if I have it tattooed on me, there’s no reason to ask me. I’m showing you what I am, you know what I’m saying? I don’t like being compared to Mexicans or Dominicans.

Ana’s accounts reflect a common practice among Puerto Ricans—that of tattooing cultural symbols, such as the flag or the national animal, the *coquí* frog, on their bodies as a way to signal their ethnic pride or simply to ward off questions about their background. Interestingly, Ana’s described her primary identity as “American,” despite being of Puerto Rican ancestry and having these cultural markers on her body.

A more common occurrence among my respondents, was that of being identified as Puerto Rican by outsiders. These instances were framed as understandable considering the concentration of Puerto Ricans in many Central Floridian towns and cities. For example, Zoe, a 29-year-old Dominican, shared that she was often identified incorrectly as Puerto Rican due to her curly hair and light skin. After stating that she is not offended by these instances, she explained why they happen as follows,

Because they believe that Dominicans are dark-skinned. …And they think that Puerto Ricans are light skinned with curly hair, and Dominicans are dark-skinned with straight, coarse hair. So, when they see me, they automatically think I’m Puerto Rican. They can never imagine I'm Dominican. Also, they say Dominicans are rough when they speak, and I'm not. They also say Dominicans are loud when [they] speak, and I'm not. So, when they speak to me, or even in Spanish—even Spanish people, they always think I'm Puerto Rican. Even Puerto Ricans think I'm Puerto Rican [laughs]. And I don't know, because I don't have a real Dominican accent. Because we pronounce our words different and our accent's different.

Zoe’s claims here show how ethnicity can be interpreted as a combination of physical cues (e.g., hair and skin tone) and linguistic or behavioral traits. Her statements also show
how Dominicans living in Central Florida can come to adopt Puerto Rican traits, such as one’s accent in Spanish.

Regardless of how they were being racialized by outsiders, my respondents’ stories show how racial confusion can turn to animus when encountering white Americans in the area. These instances of racial discrimination, racism, and general marginalization highlight why enclaves can serve as buffers for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. They also show that, while Puerto Ricans and Dominicans might have dreams of upward mobility in Central Florida, that journey is often marked by racial boundaries protecting and favoring U.S. whiteness. For example, Nayeli, a 31-year-old Puerto Rican married to a white American man, recounted her experiences of being read as simply Latina by other whites in the area.

We were at the store, and I was waiting in the line to be taken care of at the customer service desk. It was a Publix. And the Publix right there is in a wealthy neighborhood. …Well, we're right in the middle of two Publix's, but we usually go to that one because it's more quiet. My husband's white. He feels more comfortable. He feels the other one's more ghetto. So, we always go to that one. So, I was in line…and there was this lady in line waiting to be taken care of. So, they were being taken care of by them, and the [Spanish] lady took care of me because I had something fast to do. And she had something like Western Union, so hers was going to take longer, and I just had two items. And she was like, "Well, I was waiting in line longer than her." And then at the end of her arguing with the lady, she was like, "Oh, it's funny that you take care of your kind of people first." And she was white. And I got upset, and I was like, "What do you mean by your kind of people?" And she was like, "Oh, you're the same kind as her." And I was like, "Well, I don't appreciate that in front of my daughter because she's half-white and half-Spanish, and she's here with me. And she doesn't need to hear these kinds of slurs to her, these racial comments, because that's a racial comment." And she just walked out of the store…

Interestedly, Nayeli chose to go to that store upon the suggestion of her white husband, who felt less comfortable going to the presumably more Latino “ghetto” Publix. In
exchange for this consideration of her husband, she encountered a racist comment from a white woman in the “less ghetto” store. While offering these details, Nayeli did not stop to consider that she could avoid this racial animus by going to the other store. Instead, she used her daughter as an excuse to chastise the white woman for her comments, even calling the comments “racial” rather than “racist.” Overall, these instances reinforce the reality that, regardless of their appearance, my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents face racism from whites in Central Florida. However, these instances of racism differ in severity and extent, and individuals differ in their response to such incidents.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the racial and ethnic context in which my respondents navigate their daily lives. Once in Florida, my respondents’ processes of integration were also largely shaped by their generation in the U.S. For those who were born in the U.S. and raised in the northeast, the main issue was acclimating to life in a then semi-rural and predominately white area. In contrast, my island-born respondents were more attuned to issues of citizenship and English-language acquisition. My respondents’ social circles were largely composed of co-ethnics and other Latinos. The size of my respondents’ social circles was somewhat mediated by their gender—with men having more expansive friend networks and women being more confined to the home and close family members.

Regarding neighborhood life, my respondents showed ambivalent emotions when discussing the rapid development of regions such as Poinciana. Middle-class respondents from the second generation shared negative views of life in Puerto Rican enclaves such as Buena Ventura Lakes and Poinciana, while residents of these areas portrayed them in
more neutral terms, as homogenous, but not necessarily undesirable. Lastly, my respondents’ embodied experiences of race differed based on how they were “read,” whether that was white, Black, biracial/mixed, or Brown/Latino. The one commonality that my respondents shared concerning their embodied experiences of race in Central Florida is that they were almost all subject to negative treatment by white Americans in the area. In the following chapters, I analyze how collective emotions shaped my respondents’ views of race and politics as they navigated life in Central Florida.
Chapter 5. Emotions and Puerto Rican / Dominican Raciolinguistic Practices

The Latino population in the United States has grown significantly over the past two decades. In 2000, Latinos outnumbered African Americans to become the largest minority group in the country. This population growth has led scholars to question the place of Latinos in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Research among race scholars has shown that Latinos’ preference for the “white” racial category and the “some other race” category when filling out census and other governmental forms reflects a coming change in how race is understood in the country. Further, ethnographic and interview-based research has argued that Caribbean Latinos, who are often categorized as Black by others in the U.S., are changing how race operates in the U.S. by eschewing racial labels common in the country in favor of nationality (e.g., “my race is Puerto Rican”) or ethnicity (e.g., “my race is Latino”).

My aim in this chapter is to challenge these conclusions concerning Caribbean Latinos’ impact on the U.S. racial hierarchy. The idea that Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are changing how race operates in the U.S. is based on several false premises. First, that the racial hierarchies in the U.S. and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean are fundamentally different. Second, that Latinos’ racial ideologies remain static across generations in the U.S. And lastly, that racialized minorities, and the way they “do race,” has the power to challenge the existing racial order in the U.S. I use empirical data to challenge the first two of these premises, while leaving the third for a later theoretical discussion.

I find that my respondents’ racialized language practices reflect the commonalities of anti-Blackness in the U.S. and Latin America. These racialized
language practices reflect how anti-Black racial ideologies in the U.S. and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean allow for the merging of racial classificatory systems across these regions. Further, I find that my respondents’ loss of Spanish and loss of knowledge concerning racialized terms used in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, provide further evidence that Latinos are not changing how ‘race’ operates in the country, but rather acclimating to U.S. racial norms.

**Background Literature**

*Latinos and the U.S. Racial Hierarchy*

Among studies on Latinos’ racial and ethnic self-identification, the majority of scholars are concerned with the integration and assimilation of Latinos as they accommodate to life in the U.S., a location with a different racial makeup and purportedly different racial stratification system than Latin America (Peña et al. 2004; Roth 2012). Scholars have also been concerned with the effects of a growing Latino population on existing patterns of racial stratification in the U.S., particularly its long-standing Black-white divide (Frank et al. 2010). Several theories have emerged from these works. First, some scholars argue that Latinos will be fully integrated into the white group, causing a Black/non-Black divide in U.S. society (Yancey 2003). These works have been critiqued for assuming that Latinos’ identification as “white” on census and other official forms is indicative of their “acceptance” or assimilation into whiteness (Dowling 2015). A second argument in the literature states that the influx of Latinos will lead to the eventual “Latin-Americanization” of race relations in the country, where a pigmentocratic (i.e., dependent on a gradation of colors) view of race leads to a tri-racial
style of stratification including whites, “honorary whites,” and Blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2013). This body of literature has been critiqued for its treatment of Latin America as a monolith where a singular conception of race is found (Telles and Paschel 2014). A third set of scholars believe Latinos are forming a distinct “Latino” racial group that falls somewhere in the middle of the previous white-Black racial stratification system (Rodriguez 2000; Roth 2012). While these arguments allow us to entertain the intersection of pan-ethnicity and racial stratification, it does little to explain the continued disparities found in the life outcomes of Latinos with different skin tones (Chavez-Duenas et al. 2014; Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity 2006; Lavariega Monforti and Sanchez 2010).

Immigration scholars have focused extensively on assimilation, beginning with the work of Park and Burgess in 1920s Chicago (Alba and Nee 1997). These theories ask the underlying question: is the immigrant group in mind going to achieve seamless integration into the “mainstream” (usually modeled by white, middle-class groups) or will they remain stagnated and blocked from assimilating, as was the case with African Americans (Alba and Nee 1997)? When scholarship on immigration has focused on Blackness, it has usually been with the underlying assumption that integration with this group marks a negative outcome for immigrants and their children. For example, Portes and Zhou, whose work targets the outcomes of second-generation youth, deem the process of assimilating into Black, inner-city circles as “downward assimilation” (1993). Similarly, Mary Waters’ work argues that for first-generation West Indians, ethnicity serves as a protective buffer against assimilation into a Black American group (2001). While these studies highlight how assimilation can take many forms or “paths,” they fail
to acknowledge the underlying processes that keep Black Americans in the lower strata of U.S. society. Further, recent research shows the inability of downward assimilation theory to grasp the local and temporal nature of racial and ethnic identification and possibilities for upward mobility for Black-identifying immigrants (Adekunle and Williams 2013; Smith 2014). For example, Smith (2014) finds that second-generation Mexicans in New York City temporarily adopt a Black identity to achieve upward mobility in the face of negative associations linked to Mexican-ness.

Existing literature has focused on Black racial identification in Latin America (Loveman 2014), and Latin Americans’ attitudes towards Blacks (Peña et al. 2004). That said, less work has addressed how Latinos in the U.S. view Blackness and linguistically negotiate its boundaries.

Raciolinguistics: The intersections of language, race, and power

Raciolinguistics is an emerging field that examines the intersections of language, race, and power (Alim, Rickford, and Ball 2016). Though the field was begun by educational linguists and linguistic anthropologists, it provides useful tools for sociologists seeking to analyze the crucial role of language in constituting racial meanings and structures. One concept developed within this field, and applied in the analysis below, is that of transracializing. H. Samy Alim defines the transracial subject as,

…[O]ne who knowingly and fluidly crosses borders while resisting the imposition of racial categories—calling into question the very existence of the oft-heard question: What are you really? The transracial subject pushes back against the need to know, against the imposition of racial categories as real (Alim et al. 2016:36).
According to this theory, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans who resist outsiders’ racial ascriptions (as being white, Black, or other labels) are transracial subjects. Along a similar vein Benjamin Bailey argues that, “In using language to resist such hegemonic social categorization, the Dominican second generation is contributing to the transformation of existing social categories and the constitution of new ones in the U.S.” (2000:555). What such arguments fail to address, though, are the existing parallels of anti-Blackness and a preference for whiteness across the Americas. These claims elide an analysis of racial power and hierarchy in the U.S. and Latin America and, instead, rely on the racial self-identification of agentic individuals. In essence, they commit the all-too-common mistake of displacing racism with “race” (Fields 2001). While transracializing remains a useful tool for analyzing the raciolinguistic practices of racialized minorities, I refrain from coupling this tool with arguments about its potential impact on the existing racial order.

**Findings and Discussion**

*Being “Spanish” While Losing One’s Spanish*

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans commonly use the moniker “Spanish” to express their difference from non-Latinos of all races in the U.S. (Bailey 2000). This practice, which flies in the face of racial and ethnic identification norms in the U.S., was also common among my respondents. My concern here is with the contrast of this identification as “Spanish” with the reality expressed among my respondents of language loss—either their own or that of their second- or third-generation children.
Language scholars list several reasons why “heritage languages,” such as Spanish, are lost beyond the first generation in the U.S. (Tse 2001). These include: The pull of English, limited exposure to heritage languages, limited chances to learn heritage languages, parental misconceptions about language use, and community and peer influences. Though retention of their heritage language might be more common among Latinos than other groups, there is still a loss of Spanish across generations in the U.S. [see Figure 3]. Polls conducted by the Pew Research Center show that by the third generation, only 30% of Latinos’ are bilingual.

Figure 3. Spanish language use among Latinos by generation in the U.S.
When asked about the importance of Spanish language use as a part of Latino identity, my respondents often expressed that Spanish was important, though not required, to be considered Latino or Puerto Rican/Dominican. For example, Julissa a 34-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, said the following:

S: What about Spanish? Do you feel like people need to speak in Spanish to be considered Hispanic?

J: No, no. I grew up on English. ...I don't know Spanish at all. I mean, I understand a ton of it. 'Cause my parents used to speak Spanish to each other and to me when I was growing up. So, me and my brother listened to it a lot, but we were never taught to...practice, so... But I still consider myself Hispanic 'cause of my blood, you know? But my language...is a different story. ...Anybody could learn Spanish. A Korean could learn Spanish!

Here, Julissa attempts to reclaim her ethnic ties by stating that Puerto Rican-ness is “in her blood,” rather than contingent on her language use. That said, she, and many other respondents, recognize the tendency of co-ethnics to police the boundaries of what counts as Puerto Rican—which oftentimes includes language use. Later in our discussion, Julissa states:

Usually how I describe myself when they ask me where I'm from [is] Nuyorican [laugh]. 'Cause I was born in New York. A lot of people, they also say I'm Nuyorican, 'cause they're like, if you don't speak Spanish and you were born in New York, you're not Puerto Rican. I was like, maybe not [my] language, but my blood is. You know?

Among my respondents, several pointed out the negative language-related experiences they faced in school within the U.S. For example, Ana, a 26-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, shared the following experience she faced as a middle-school student:
S: Do you feel like you’ve ever been treated negatively because of your background?

A: In school. Back in middle school. The, uh, he was a dean. And he used to always want to use me as a translator for other kids that didn’t speak English, but then, if he wasn’t there, and say for instance, one of those kids that didn’t speak English asked me something and I was telling them something, I would get a referral, or I would get in trouble for speaking Spanish. ‘Cause Spanish wasn’t allowed. But when he was there, it was okay. …Yeah, he was Puerto Rican. And then he threw me in ESL and my first language is English. My mom had to go to the school and argue with them.

For Ana, the experience of being “thrown into” ESL courses is framed as a shameful labeling process that both denied her existing language skills and reinforced her status as an outsider. Further, her story of being “used” by a Puerto Rican school dean as a translator, to later be punished for speaking Spanish, reflects the conflicting messages Latinos often receive about their bilingualism in school settings. Ana later stated that she prefers to speak in English more than in Spanish—a response that might be attributable to her negative experiences when speaking Spanish in a school setting.

Respondents who had children often expressed anxiety about whether their children would learn or lose Spanish as a language. Victoria, for example, a 38-year-old 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, described her struggle to “pass down” Spanish to her children:

I try to teach my kids—my oldest, I drilled it into him and I made him take Spanish classes in school, too. ’Cause he didn't, he just didn't want to learn. He wasn't interested in it. But to me that's just part of who you are. That's part of your background, that's part of your culture, so, yeah. …It really is hard [laughs] to teach them a second language. They usually say, ‘Well you should teach them Spanish first and then let them learn English in school,’ and it never works out that way.
Paradoxically, the fear of losing Spanish as a language, did not preclude my respondents from stigmatizing those who primarily speak Spanish. A commonly used term among Puerto Ricans, and some Dominicans, highlights the stigma associated with being a young newcomer from the islands: *mira mira*. Colloquially, a *mira mira* is a recently arrived individual from Latin America who has not yet adopted the cultural or linguistic norms of the U.S. The following examples highlight the stigma associated with the label:

[Describing a *mira mira*] Rat tail, faded mohawk, Honda Civic. Nothing but barely Spanish. When they talk English, it’s crazy. Mostly 19-25 years old.

- Jean, 32-year-old Puerto Rican, 2nd generation

To me, a *mira mira* is a Spanish person, any kind of Spanish person, that is always speaking Spanish [garbled Spanish imitation]. You know like, that’s a *mira mira* to me. That all they say every time they call you is “Mira! Mira!” You know? Those are not my [friends]. I like English.

- Ana, 26-year-old Puerto Rican, 2nd generation

The stigma associated with having Spanish-accented English or being a young newcomer was described as painful by respondents who had been ascribed the label *mira mira*. One respondent, when asked why he felt frustrated at being labeled a *mira mira*, stated firmly, “I’m not a *mira mira*. I’m regular.”

Among the 1.5-generation respondents who avoided being labeled *mira miras*, acceptance by non-Latinos was often paired with ascription along U.S. (i.e., white-Black) racial lines. While this could be interpreted as a positive sign of acculturation or assimilation, these experiences led to internal conflict among respondents, as noted by Leo,
When you're raised over here, it's not around mostly Spanish people. It's around black people. …Because, we aren't rich, so you just grew up around your environment and your environment makes you who you are. That's another problem I have because I have a lot of black friends, so they also see me as less of a Puerto Rican. If you tell my black friend, ‘Leo is Spanish.’ He'll be like, ‘Leo is fucking black.’ That's the first thing he'll tell you. He will argue with you. …Because I'm not a mira mira.

- Leo, 23-year-old Puerto Rican, 1.5-generation

Leo’s description of being raised among U.S. Blacks reflects the importance of context and social circles for understanding racial and ethnic identification. That said, his description of being racially assigned as Black by his friends is referenced as a problem. Leo’s narrative describes the tenuous status of having acculturated enough to prevent classification as a mira mira yet being ‘misidentified’ as Black by outsiders.

‘Trigueno y Indio’: Engaging the Latin American Racial Continuum

Research on race in Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic highlights the use of racial continuum terms on the islands and how these terms differ from the racial binary common in the U.S. (Roth 2012). Racial continuum terms are words used to make distinctions among individuals of different skin tones and features (e.g., hair textures/colors, lip shapes/sizes, nose shapes, eye shapes, etc.) These racial continuum terms refer to the range from what are considered “European” features to those considered more African or Indigenous. Though some racial continuum terms are common across Latin America, such as mestizo and moreno, other terms are regionally specific, such as jabao or jincho.

As part of my semi-structured interviews with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, I read a list of racial continuum terms common on the islands to measure respondents’
familiarity with racialized terms in Spanish (see table 6 for the list of terms read). A quantification of correct responses to these terms reflects a widespread knowledge of binary terms such as *blanco* and *negro* among respondents, and a decreased knowledge of intermediate terms such as *trigueño* and *indio* (see table 7). While these quantified responses are merely descriptive, they point to a wider process of racial acculturation among my respondents. I argue these patterns reflect a loss of Puerto Rican and Dominican racial repertoires (Roth 2012) among respondents.
Table 6. Racial continuum terms commonly used in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Approximate translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negro(a)</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigueño(a)</td>
<td>Wheat-colored; Mixed-race, usually with Spanish and African ancestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanco(a)</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jincho(a)</td>
<td>Pale, pasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosadito(a)</td>
<td>Fair-skinned with rosy cheeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piel canela</td>
<td>Brown-skinned (literally, cinnamon-skinned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café con leche</td>
<td>Tan or brown-skinned (literally, coffee with milk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulato(a)</td>
<td>Mixed-race, usually with Spanish and African ancestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestizo(a)</td>
<td>Mixed-race, usually with Spanish and Indigenous ancestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prieto(a)</td>
<td>Dark-skinned, Black. Can be derogatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreno(a)</td>
<td>Dark-skinned and/or dark-haired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azul / Morao</td>
<td>Very dark-skinned, with blueish or purple undertones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubio(a)</td>
<td>Blond, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorao(á)</td>
<td>Red-headed, reddish skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabao(á)</td>
<td>Light-skinned with ‘African’ features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indio(a)</td>
<td>Brown-skinned with straight, black hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grifo(a)</td>
<td>Dark-skinned with frizzy / kinky hair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7. Correct responses to racial continuum terms among respondents (N = 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on skin color</td>
<td>Based on skin color</td>
<td>Based on skin color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanco (100%)</td>
<td>Trigueño (79%)</td>
<td>Negro (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jincho (41%)</td>
<td>Piel canela (59%)</td>
<td>Prieto (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosadito (12%)</td>
<td>Café con leche (41%)</td>
<td>Moreno (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mulato (26%)</td>
<td>Azul/Morao (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mestizo (12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on skin color + hair</td>
<td>Based on skin color + hair</td>
<td>Based on skin color + hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubio (76%)</td>
<td>Indio (65%)</td>
<td>Grifo (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorao (21%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabao (15%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their narrative responses to racialized terms in Spanish, several respondents interpreted the use of these terms as a way for Dominicans and Puerto Ricans to evade classification as Black:

*Trigueño* is a dark-skinned person that doesn't want to use the word black. Like some people consider black to be like charcoal black. So, I guess *trigueño* is like our color. It's still black! But it's like less black. If that makes sense. And some *trigueños* will get really offended if you call them blacks. I don't. … [When asked about the term *moreno*] Like *trigueño*. I would say it's like a less offensive way to call a black person black. … [When asked about the term *prieto*] Now, *prieto* can be offensive. It can be degrading.

-David, 23-year-old Dominican, 1.5-generation

As someone who had spent part of his childhood in the Dominican Republic, and his teenage years in the U.S., David exhibits an internalization of the U.S. racial binary through his interpretation of these racialized terms in Spanish. He rejects the nuances between the intermediate terms *trigueño* and *moreno* by referring to them both as Black. That said, he still retains an interpretation of *prieto*, a term oftentimes seen as an extreme
or derogatory way to refer to Blackness, as offensive—which aligns with Dominican views on these racial continuum terms.

Another way my respondents interpreted these terms was to explain how their use in Dominican Republic and, less so, in Puerto Rico was part of a practice of seeing Blackness as foreign, or as solely existing in others rather than in the self:

I think it’s funny that a lot of people in the Dominican Republic don’t identify as black, they identify as Dominican. Like mulato. They have the black race like a foreign thing. Oh, Haitianos are black, but we’re not black. Some people. I’m not saying the whole island.

-Betsy, 26-year-old Dominican, 1.5-generation

Betsy’s comments highlight the importance of understanding anti-Haitianism when interrogating beliefs about Blackness in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic shares a complicated and bloody history with Haiti, its neighboring country on the island of Hispaniola. Historians have traced this long, fraught history and argued that the national consciousness of the Dominicans was rooted in its reverence for Spain, in contrast to Haiti, the first self-proclaimed African nation outside of the continent. Thus, it is often common for Dominicans on the island to attribute Blackness to Haitians (Candelario 2007). In contrast, given its status as a commonwealth of the United States, Puerto Rico is a common destination for Dominicans seeking to better their lives by attaining U.S. citizenship. Therefore, in Puerto Rico, it is often common to attribute Blackness to Dominican immigrants, who are perceived as being ‘darker’ than most Puerto Ricans (Sawyer and Paschel 2007).
Blanco y Negro: Engaging the U.S. Racial Binary

All of my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents knew the binary racial terms in Spanish (blanco and negro). That said, many also expressed a discomfort with the term negro that did not exist when using the descriptor blanco. For example, Jenny, a 23-year-old second-generation Puerto Rican, stated that she does not use the term negro because of its potential misinterpretation as the n-word by English speakers. She went on to say, “I don’t want to get beat up if my kid says it in public.”

Given the stigma associated with Blackness in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, many respondents showed their discomfort with the term negro by using the diminutive form of the word (negrito/negrita) or by lessening the “severity” of the term through use of racial continuum terms related to negro. For example, when asked if he had heard the term negro before, Juan, a young 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, responded as follows:

J: I’ve heard it [laugh]. …A negro or a negra is just like, someone dark-skinned. It doesn’t necessarily mean you’re pitch black…

S: I’m a negra?

J: Yeah. It’s just a dark person, you know? Doesn’t mean…you’re freaking African. It just means you’re like a dark—like a darker shade than me! [chuckle]

S: Um, prieto or prieta.

J: Same thing. Yeah, I’ve heard that. I think it’s the same thing as negro or negra, but the way I see it, if you’re like prieto, como un poquito prietita, [like a little bit dark-skinned] you’re dark, but you’re not, dark, you know? …It’s just a way of explaining a shade.

S: Yeah. Would someone who’s prieto be lighter or darker than someone who’s called negro?

J: Lighter.
S: Lighter?

J: I think so. I think it would be lighter. Like you would be like a *prietita*….

‘Cause I’ve seen some really dark Hispanics. And they are out there. Like if you go to Puerto Rico and you go to Loíza, there’s this part in Puerto Rico, everyone there is dark. There, they you would consider, that’s a *negro* [laugh]. They’re *dark*. Puerto Ricans come in all different shades and stuff, so that’s why we say, ‘*oh, ese negro*’ [oh, that black person] or ‘*ese prietito*’ [that little-bit-darker person] you know. It’s like [a] shade.

Here, Juan is engaging in the practice, common in Puerto Rico, of slipping over the use of “Black” as a designator for a Spanish speaker, with the intention of avoiding offensiveness. In his view, *negro* does not mean “Black,” but rather “dark-skinned.”

Further, his statements about “really dark Hispanics” serve to confine Blackness in Puerto Rico to a specific location, *Loíza*, which is often framed as “where black people live” in Puerto Rico. His qualification that *negro* does not necessarily mean African-looking, reflects the common attribution of darkness to undesirability in Puerto Rican culture. That said, his comments, and those of other respondents, were perhaps impacted by their discomfort with a dark-skinned person—the interviewer—asking the question. In Puerto Rican and Dominican culture, it is often seen as rude to address a dark-skinned person as Black. This strategic omission of Blackness, while not signaling a wholesale rejection of it, does reflect an underlying foundation of anti-Blackness on the islands (Quiñones Rivera 2006).

The interpretation of *negro/negra* as offensive or shameful terms was at times gendered by my respondents. For example, Ana, the second-generation Puerto Rican discussed above, stated you could tell who was *negro* (a black woman) by their hair. She continued, “If it’s nappy hair—nappy, dry hair—that’s a *negra*.” In an informal conversation after the interview, I was describing to Ana how I am often identified by
others as Black when she interrupted, “Nah, you don’t look black. Your hair is too
good.” Similarly, David, a 23-year-old Dominican of the 1.5 generation, used a
racialized-gendered interpretation of the term *negra*. He stated that he never uses the term
*negra* to describe a woman because, “I feel like women could be more sensitive [laugh]. I
might get slapped if I called a girl *negra*. I would call her, like, *café con leche.*” By using
an intermediate racial continuum term (i.e., a term for someone who appears racially
mixed), David avoids the potential anger of women who are offended by the descriptor of
*negra*.

In contrast, respondents tended to reserve the use of *negro* to describe African
Americans, while using its diminutive form, *negrito/a* for themselves.

S: [Have you heard the term] *Negro* or *negra*.

V: Black.

S: For African Americans or—

V: [nods]

S: Okay. Usually?

V: Usually. Yeah. I've heard like people say like—I would have people call me
*negrita*, um, but for the most part yeah, I would say [African American].

-Victoria, 38-year-old Puerto Rican, 1.5 generation

Respondents often discussed the labels they were ascribed by outsiders, and many
expressed frustrations at being labeled by others using U.S. racial binary terms. Victoria,
the respondent mentioned above stated the following when asked if she had ever been
identified as something other than Puerto Rican,

---

2 For an in-depth analysis of the importance of hair in the racialized-gendered experiences of Dominican
women, see Candelario (2007).
V: Yeah. Like I said, a lot of people used to think that I was mixed. That I was half-white and half-black. I was like, ‘yeah, kind of, but no’ [laughs].

S: How does it feel to have people ask you, ‘are you mixed?’

V: It never bothered me. It just confused me, ’cause I wasn't sure exactly—’cause I am, in a sense. And I'm like, well I'm not sure what you're getting at [giggle]. Like I never understood why people would ask are you black, are you white? It doesn't matter. I'm Victoria. [laughs]. …They would ask me…mostly, ‘are you black?’ Because they would see my dad. Like when my dad would go and pick me up. They would see my dad and my dad was dark-skinned. And then, you know, ‘oh you have such pretty hair, you have such good hair.’ I'm like good hair? Really? [laughs]. That's a thing? I'm like, ‘I know, I have a frizz-ball on top of my head, but thanks’ [laughs].

Oftentimes, though, respondents deemed the use of negro for African Americans as disrespectful or offensive, in which case, respondents used racial continuum terms such as moreno or prieto to avoid anger from African American listeners. For example, Alex, the 32-year-old Dominican, mentioned his discomfort with the Spanish term for Black, negro. For him, negro means African American, and yet, he said, "I personally wouldn't say negro. ...Because I feel it's like, I don't know, it's just growing up and hearing negro from about slaves and stuff, to me that's.... I feel it's kind of disrespectful towards black people." He later stated that the term moreno was more acceptable, saying, “It's a cleaner word." He then continued, "Negro, it's just too, it's too, it's too rough." I ask if he associates it with its English pronunciation and he says, "Yeah, I do. Because I learned it from school here. And that’s the way white people used it back then, like Negro." Alex’s discomfort with the Spanish term for Black, negro, was linked to the common evasion of this term in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. On these islands, negro is often replaced with “softer” terms such as moreno (dark-skinned or brunette) or indio (having indigenous features). He then drew a connection between negro and the dated
English term “Negro,” which he has learned is an offensive way to refer to African Americans.

**Looking White or Black versus Being White or Black**

When asked if Puerto Ricans and Dominicans could be white or Black, many respondents stated that they could be, while referring to personal experiences confronting institutions in which they were racialized or referencing family members that could be labeled as white or Black. When confronted with institutions, my respondents often spoke about the direct, and often crass, way institutions such as prisons identified them as white or Black.

[Can Puerto Ricans and Dominicans be white or Black?] “Oh yeah. Me. When I went to jail, I was considered white. …There was no Hispanic or Latino, or Asian, or anything of that nature. You were white, you were white. You were black, you were black. Whether you were Asian, Hispanic, Korean, whatever.” I then asked him, according to whom? He continued, “To the jail system. To, I guess you could say, the court system.” I asked if he had seen law enforcement officials making these racial classifications and he stated, "Oh, it said it on my badge." He mentions that it comes down from the government. “There's nothing wrong with that. Because they're keeping it neutral. …At the end of the day, it doesn't matter. You know why? Because you're either white or black. I mean, that's just basically what it comes down to.”

- Adrian, 28, Puerto Rican, 1.5 generation

Here, Adrian is expressing an uncommon personal identification with the U.S. racial binary, which posits that individuals are either white or Black in a U.S. setting. Though he is not bothered by outside identification of him as white, he does not identify primarily as white. Instead, he allows others’ racialization of him to remain “uncorrected,” while viewing himself as primarily Puerto Rican. Other respondents were not as open to being racialized as white by the criminal justice system. For example, Jorge, a 23-year-old
second-generation Puerto Rican stated the following when asked if Hispanics/Latinos could be white:

J: Not necessarily because we come in all different skin tones, man. We should get our own little—we should get our own little letter.

S: Our own letter?

J: Yeah. When you fill that application that says white, black, or other, you know what I’m saying? They should throw an H in there for Hispanic. Latino. …

S: [Do] they really have white, black, other?

J: Yeah. Especially when you get incarcerated, they go by your skin tone. In the legal system's eyes, I'm a white male.

S: How do you feel about that?

J: Personally, I don't care. Because I'm already at a point where it's like screw the system completely. They could think whatever they want. But it's just degrading, really. That's like calling South Korean people Japanese. They're going to flip, you know?

Similar to Adrian, Jorge allows officials in the criminal justice system to classify him as white, though he justifies why he allows this to go uncorrected by referencing his feelings towards the institution as a whole. Jorge balks at jail officials categorizing him as white while dismissing the ‘degrading’ act as normal from an already defective system he dislikes.

In contrast to these institutional encounters with racialization, most of my respondents pointed to members of their own family when thinking of Latinos that could be categorized as white or Black. The following two examples reflect this practice.

[Can Latinos be white?] "Yes, my mom." [Can Latinos be Black?] "Yes, my grandma. I mean, her background is African, but she's from Dominican Republic. Her actual father came from Africa."

-Joel, 25, Dominican, 1.5 generation
[Can Puerto Ricans and Dominicans be white or Black?] “Yeah. I have an aunt, she's Puerto Rican straight from the island, born and raised. She's light-skinned, blond hair, blue eyes. Then I have another family member who's really dark, and you would think that he's African American, so yeah.”

-Brianna, 32, Puerto Rican, second generation

These two excerpts reflect how respondents who were unlikely to personally identify as white or Black, can point to family members who they would racialize using these binary racial terms. Here, respondents were most likely to see themselves as departing from the U.S. racial binary while racializing their family members as white or Black. These acts of racialization, though, were often qualified by statements that reclassified their family members as Puerto Rican or Dominican despite their whiteness/Blackness. For example, Joel’s statement that his grandmother was of direct African descent was qualified with the statement “but she’s from Dominican Republic.” Similarly, Brianna’s claim that her unnamed family member is “really dark” is qualified by the statement that “you would think that he’s African American.” These statements point to my respondents’ assessment of the boundaries demarcating Puerto Rican and Dominican identity from U.S. racial groups. Further, they point to a larger trend among my respondents—the differentiation between looking Black or white from actually being Black or white. This ontological break speaks to how identity is constructed not just by outside ascription, but rather by embodiment of what individuals see as an “essential” Black or white experience in the U.S.

A common response when interviewees were asked whether Puerto Ricans or Dominicans (or Latinos more broadly) could be white or Black was, “Do you mean skin color? Or how they act?” While the ambiguity in my questions was intentional, several
respondents offered comments that expressed their views on race as rooted in both appearance and behavior. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Brandon, a 29-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican:

S: Do you think that Hispanics can be white? …

B: I think…as a person, I’m more white. I behave more white. Like I said, I’m not very loud, I’m very reserved around people. Yeah, I don’t know, I feel like I’m very white [in] behavior. And I have a lot of family members, because of that, that pushed me away, because they were just like …‘Oh you’re so uppity.’ But like, I’m not being uppity, I’m just being a normal human being—you’re trying to be loud, you’re trying to get attention…I’m not trying to do that, but that makes me look uppity. …But then, white skin, my mom is white, like white, white, white, white. Super white. If she didn’t talk, you would think white.

S: So, do you think that Hispanics can be black?


S: Gotcha.

B: Very gangster. Very much from the street. It’s mostly the younger crowd, too. The older guys, no. And then, when it comes to skin color, yeah. My grandfather was—you would think he was black. You would think he was black.

Brandon views race through both the lens of appearance and behavior. The ontological break between looking Black/white and being Black/white is reiterated in his comments. He also brings in the dimension of behavior, by framing “acting white” as being reserved, not seeking attention, and being “normal,” while Black behavior is interpreted as being young, being “gangster,” and being “street.”

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outline the linguistic practices undergirding Puerto Rican and Dominican racial ideologies in a U.S. context. First, I examine the emotions attached to
the usage or non-usage of Spanish among Caribbean Latinos in Central Florida. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have a conflicted relationship with the use of Spanish in a U.S. context. While respondents valued Spanish as a language when it served broader personal and financial interests—for example, to connect with one’s culture or for finding employment—they were less appreciative of Spanish when it was used by those they deemed “unassimilated.” Here, these 1.5- and second-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans centered the importance of acculturating and speaking English vis-à-vis the stereotype of the recently arrived, “ghetto,” mira mira—a trope used to critique young islanders who failed to shed the mores of their country of origin upon arrival in Central Florida. The trope of the mira mira serves as a controlling image (Collins 2004) that recently-arrived Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have to actively work to avoid. I argue that the stereotype of the mira mira offers an image against which U.S. Puerto Ricans and, to a lesser extent, Dominicans, frame their attempts at integration. Further, I argue this trope can only be understood intersectionally, by attending to its links to age, gender, race, and class—and not just to language use. In other words, the mira mira is not simply an unassimilated, Spanish-speaking islander. A mira mira is all of this while also being primarily male, poor, “urban,” and young.

This linguistic policing of recently arrived Puerto Ricans and Dominicans operates in contrast to the sense of loss second-generation respondents expressed when discussing their children’s lack of Spanish-speaking skills. In this respect, my respondents treasured their bilingual status while bemoaning the monolingualism of their children.
In this chapter, I also analyze the emotions prompted by different racial continuum terms unique to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, as well as racial binary terms in Spanish and English. When confronted with a list of racialized terms from the islands, my 1.5- and second-generation respondents could recognize the binary terms easily (*blanco* and *negro*) while struggling to define intermediate terms unique to Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic (e.g., *jincho, jabao, azul*). I argue these findings reflect a process of racial acculturation (Roth 2012) among my respondents—a process that shapes Latinos’ racial ideologies as they spend more time in the U.S. What I add to this discussion is an analysis of the emotions underlying the use or non-use of certain racialized terms. Members of the 1.5- and second-generation use a simplified version of racial-continuum terms used on the islands and fuse these with U.S. racial-binary terms, relying on the experienced or desired emotional register in a given space and time. For example, the use of racial continuum terms to speak about African Americans is tempered by fears of being hurt by African Americans who might be offended by terms such as *negro*. Conversely, male respondents’ use of racial continuum terms when speaking to women is prompted by a fear that these women might be offended by binary racial terms such as *negra*.

Overall, I find that collective emotions surrounding the use of racialized descriptors shapes their usage among my respondents. Living in a U.S. context leads my respondents to lessen their need for racial continuum terms and highlights use of a small subset of these—primarily *trigueno* for use among co-ethnic peers and *moreno* or *prieto* to refer to African Americans.
Chapter 6. The Emotional Currency of U.S. Anti-Blackness

A recent report from the Pew Research Center states that almost a quarter of U.S. Latinos identify as Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean, or of some other African descent (López and Gonzalez-Barrera 2016). This report, which draws from a 2014 survey of 1,520 U.S. Latinos, also states that, among those who identified as Afro-descendant, only 18% chose “Black” as one of their racial designators, while 39% chose “white” as one of their racial designators. The findings, while prompting the authors to claim that Afro-Latino is a “deeply rooted identity among U.S. Latinos” (López and Gonzalez-Barrera 2016), begs the question, what does “Black” mean for these Latino respondents? And how might one explain the seeming disjuncture between Black and Latino as two identities in a U.S. context, particularly when the Latinos in question identify as being of African descent? This chapter analyzes how Puerto Ricans and Dominicans engage with (or disengage from) collective emotions regarding Blackness in the U.S.

My analysis draws from Sara Ahmed’s theory of affective economies, which argues that emotions operate collectively, rather than individually, and are shaped by messages transmitted through mainstream media and politics. These emotions then circulate through the populace, as would money through an economic system, and impact the collective perceptions of different groups in the country. I argue that responses to recent activism against police brutality, most clearly seen in the Black Lives Matter movement, are a salient emotional currency in the U.S. today. That is, activism seen in the movement and the responses to this activism have influenced public perceptions of Blackness and of those who identify as Black. By examining how 1.5- and second-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans engage this affective economy, I assess
whether these two Latino groups internalize, challenge, and/or propagate the dominant ideologies surrounding these racially charged moments. My findings show that while Puerto Ricans and Dominicans often see themselves as connected to Blackness either through their appearance or ancestry, these ties do not translate into a challenge against dominant anti-Black emotional currencies in the U.S.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Blackness as Conditionally Accepted**

Although research has found that Latinos as a whole are reluctant to identify as black, my respondents often expressed that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans are, in fact, Black. These assertions, though, were often qualified with comments about Puerto Rican and Dominican racial mixture. Therefore, respondents’ identification with Blackness was expressed by stating that “African” is one of their three ancestral ties, the other two being European and *Taino* (indigenous). The following excerpt illustrates this finding:

When I ask Alexa, a 37-year-old Puerto Rican, if she has experienced discrimination, she says, "Even here in Saint Cloud. People look at you like [negatively]...because I'm Puerto Rican. Because, yes, we're Puerto Rican, but they [white people] see us as black at the same time." I ask why she thinks that's the case. "Cause we got mixture with black. We not white. We got this color." Later in the interview, I ask her if Hispanics can be white or Black. She replies, "We're all mixed. We're all mixed. We're mixed with the African. So, there's a lot of real dark, dark, dark Puerto Ricans that could be passing for como Africano [like African] or black from NY or whatever, but they're Puerto Rican. Once they talk to you in Spanish, like *wepa*! You speak Spanish? Let me be careful what I say beside you. *Pero, este*, [But, um,] no, we're all mixed. We are mixed with white, we are mixed with the Indians, and we're mixed with the Africans."

Here, Alexa, who is light-skinned, is drawing from long-standing views of race in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, which tend to value the idea of racial mixture involving
three ancestral roots: Spanish, Indigenous, and African. While her view of Puerto Ricans as “all mixed” seems to contradict her statement about dark-skinned Puerto Ricans, Alexa is privileging the notion of national origin over skin tone in determining one’s race—what Roth (2012) calls the “nationality racial schema.” On the other hand, Alexa’s interpretation of racial mixture emerges when discussing how she has encountered discrimination from whites in the town of Saint Cloud. Thus, her ideas of racial mixture help her make sense of why she faces disdain from white Americans, while further strengthening her view of Puerto Ricans as connected by nationality and language.

Folded into Alexa’s statements are the fact that Puerto Ricans can be “mistaken” for a Black person “from NY,” or an African American. These cases of “mistaken identity” were discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

According to Alex, a 32-year-old Dominican, “there are Hispanics who look black, just because of their skin color.” When I ask him if there is a way to distinguish a Dominican who “looks black” from an African American he states, "Dominicans, they have this bronze, that bronze skin color. That's why it's easier to tell, because African Americans are more...charcoal, I guess (laugh).” He continues, "It's easy to tell [the difference] because of their features, their face, their hair. You could just tell. It's different.” Alex’s view here is that the difference between African Americans and darker skinned Dominicans is obvious given “their features, their face, their hair.” That said, Alex (as well as other interviewees) struggled to define these distinctions. To distance Dominicans from African Americans, he claims that African Americans’ skin color is more “charcoal,” while Dominicans are more bronze-colored. Yet, as with most
interviewees, his claims of these differences directly contradict his statement that “there are Hispanics who look black.”

My Puerto Rican and Dominican interviewees oftentimes privileged the idea of “racial mixture” even as they made race-like distinctions for their own identity or for their entire ethnic group. For example, when filling out the 2010 Census question on race that I included as part of the interview [see Appendix], Julissa, a 34-year-old Puerto Rican, said, “I should put in the race: black, African...Indian. I should ‘cause Puerto Ricans, that’s the difference, it’s a mix...I should put black, but....” Julissa, who was light-skinned, proceeded to fill out that she was ethnically Hispanic and racially white. Betsy, a 26-year-old Dominican, said, “We’re a mixed culture.” Later clarifying, “That mix is Taino, European, and African.” When I asked Betsy whether Dominicans can be white or Black, she said, “In DR, the north is lighter-skinned, in the south they are darker-skinned, and in the east, they are more mixed. You can trace your family and see whether there has been a mix, and if not, then yes, you can say you’re white or you’re black. But I’m sure, doesn’t matter where you go, there has been a mix at some point.” In these statements, you can see the struggle that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans face in translating race as it is conceived in Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic through the hegemonic concept of hypodescent (i.e., the “one drop rule”) in the U.S. While in the U.S. a single instance of racial mixture with a Black person would make one Black, for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, “that’s the difference,” as Julissa put it—the frequency and constant nature of racial mixture makes everyone “mixed.” While these claims might seem to highlight racially progressive views in Latin America and among Latinos, it is
important to keep in mind the continued devaluation of Blackness and Black people in Latin America and the U.S.

**Shame: Respectability Politics and Linked Fate with African Americans**

Among my dark-skinned respondents, several mentioned the behavior of African Americans as negatively impacting how they themselves would be viewed by outsiders. These examples of linked fate (Sanchez 2008) between dark-skinned Latinos and African Americans were often presented using the language of respectability politics (Higginbotham 1993). Respectability politics highlights the perceived *personal* failings of marginalized or oppressed individuals as needing reform. In turn, these individual changes can supposedly lessen or eliminate racial discrimination, racial violence, and racism (Obasogie and Newman 2016). In short, my Puerto Rican and Dominican interviewees highly valued “respectable behavior,” and pointed to its shameful absence among African Americans. For example, David, a 23-year-old Dominican, stated,

>I personally get bothered when black people behave in certain ways. 'Cause I feel like, I'm like black, at the end of the day. ...Like if I show you a picture of baseball teams I've played for, especially here in Celebration, like all the kids were white. I was the only dark-skinned kid on the team. So, when I'm in that picture, they don't look at me, as one—as like a white kid, I'm black. They don't know I'm Dominican, I'm black. ...So, when I see a black person doing stupid shit, it bothers me 'cause eventually someone is going to judge me because of other black peoples' actions. But that's me. I don't say I'm black like I'm *African American black*, but my skin color is not white.... So, I know where I stand. Like...I'm Dominican for sure, but my skin color—I’m dark-skinned, so....

David, who was one of only five interviewees who identified solely as Black when asked to identify his race, expresses annoyance at African Americans for “doing stupid shit,” given it might impact how he is viewed by others. His underlying fear is that he will be judged by others who might see him as a member of this group. Thus, while he
accepts membership in the “Black” racial group and shows a keen understanding of the U.S. racial hierarchy (e.g., “I know where I stand”), he still uses the politics of respectability in hopes of changing the collective perception of Black people by outsiders.

While David self-identifies as Black, Brandon, a 29-year-old dark-skinned Dominican, did not. Yet, both respondents shared similar sentiments about African Americans’ behavior as linked to their own outcomes. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Brandon that illustrates this point:

S: Have you ever been identified as something other than Dominican?
B: Yes. In Albany.
S: In Albany.
B: As black.
S: Yeah? And how did that make you feel?
B: Angry, surprisingly. But not at them. Which is weird. A lot of people think that’s weird. I actually got mad at black people.
S: Oh, hm.
B: Yeah, because...I feel like I don’t think like other people think. I think outside of the normal box. And it made me more mad that I felt like I’m being profiled, but I’m not even being profiled by the best version of [me], because you’ve made yourself not the best version of you. So, it wasn’t like I was being profiled as like, oh, a good black kid. It would always be that I’m bad. But why is it that I’m being profiled as bad? It’s because everybody already profiles you as bad. So, it made me mad.... If someone were to profile me as white, if I was light-skinned, they would never do anything about it. They’re like, ‘Oh! You’re white. Oh, okay.’ There’s no bad associated with it. But, when someone socially profiles me as black, then situations change, everything’s different. ...I wouldn’t care as much if I was being profiled and it just be normal, but I’m being profiled as bad when I’m not bad.
While David used respectability politics to try and change collective perceptions of Blackness, here Brandon uses it as a tool to separate himself from African Americans altogether. Brandon equates whiteness with a lack of discrimination, or a “normal” life, while Blackness is seen as universally “bad,” given African Americans’ failure to be the “best version” of themselves. Immediately after this, though, Brandon gave an account that pointed to his feelings of linked fate with African Americans, despite his self-identification as non-Black:

I worked at a Big and Tall once. And this woman was, uh, you know, like showing me the ropes and stuff like that, and she found out I was Spanish. And she was like, ‘Oh, thank goodness. I thought you were black.’ And I was like, ‘oh no, no, no, I’m Spanish.’ And then she goes, ‘Oh, well, then I can tell you this, because I wasn’t gonna say it when I thought you were black.’ She was like, ‘If you see any black people come in, you know, they have a lot of baggy clothes and stuff like that, so always make sure that you watch them when they go into the changing rooms and stuff.’ And I think that hit me hard. Then I was like, you were actually going to have me here as an employee, but you’re pretty racist. You’re pretty racist. But then once [you] found out that I wasn’t that race you were willing to then just come out and say it, so that means you’re really racist [laugh]. ...So yeah, I quit that job. No, I couldn’t take that. ...But that right there tells me that when people see me like that, that’s the kind of treatment that I have to expect. And that sucks. That sucks.

Brandon’s interaction with his coworker at Big and Tall reflects his distancing from Blackness (e.g., “oh no, no, no, I’m Spanish”) as well as his sense of linked fate with African Americans (e.g., “when people see me like that, that’s the kind of treatment that I have to expect”). Interestingly, Brandon states that he quit the job due to his coworker’s racist comments. His actions allude to a sense of personal connection to the comments made. That is, though he does not identify as Black, he feels the discrimination against Black people as if it were also directed at him.
Black Panic: Caribbean Latinos’ Discomfort with Being Racialized as “Black”

As discussed in Chapter 4, my respondents often found themselves being racialized by others as fitting the racial binary terms “white” and “black.” In the following section, I discuss how my respondents understood and felt outsider’s identifications of them as Black, in particular. Several respondents mentioned being shocked that they were identified by others as Black. These personal cases of “mistaken identity” often led to internal turmoil, bordering on panic, and questions surrounding the interviewee’s “true” identity. For example, Micaela, a 28-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican stated,

Majority of [Dominicans] are mixed, not all, but majority of us are mixed. Then, how do you put yourself in a box, when you're both? It's, I have a very hard time with that. Um, but yeah, some people, some Hispanics that are white, they say they're white. I mean, there's nothing wrong with it. And the ones that are black, they don't want to be black. They want to be Hispanic, which is a different shade or whatever. For example, I applied for my citizenship last month and there were few options in race. It was white, black, or Asian, or something like that. Somebody else was filling out the paperwork [sic] for me. ...And she's like 'Oh, you're black.' I'm like, 'Hold up, am I black?' And then she said, 'Well, you're not white. So, you're black.' I'm like [frozen expression]... It was like, a shock. 'Cause I never identified myself as black, neither white, you know. But, I, uh, it was tough for me to accept that I was being put in a box.... I was really upset. And like, we should have more options, like, I'm not just this.

Here, Micaela alludes to larger trends in racial self-identification among Latinos. First, she highlights how white Latinos identify as white and sees no problem with this choice. She then points to Black Latinos’ tendency to evade identification as Black by saying they are simply Hispanic, which she sees as symbolizing “a different shade.” Despite this incisive observation, Micaela struggled when being racialized as Black by an outsider. Interestingly, Micaela noted that the person doing the racializing, the person helping her fill out her immigration paperwork, was another Dominican. Hence, Micaela’s shock at
being perceived as Black was perhaps exacerbated by the fact that the person doing the racializing was a co-ethnic peer. I argue this shock was not only due to the fact that she did not see herself as Black, but also due to the perception of what “Black” means in a U.S. setting as well as in Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic.

When discussing racial identification in Dominican Republic, some respondents noted this evasion of Blackness as funny or interesting. For example, David, the 23-year-old Dominican who identified as Black, echoed Micaela’s sentiments when explaining how the term negro is viewed on the island:

In Dominican Republic, there's a lot of Dominicans that hate to be called negros, like, 'No, yo soy trigueño, yo soy canela, yo soy chocolate,' [no, I’m wheat-colored, I’m cinnamon, I’m chocolate,] like, they'll make up all this thing. Like bro, you black [laughs]. But I guess, when you come to the states, like your brain just grows. 'Cause in DR, you got the Haitians, which are very, like they're blacks. And then you have the dark Dominicans. If you call a Dominican a Haitian, that's a problem. And it's the same color. But I guess it's just, como se dice, eso es de ignorancia [how do you say it, that’s from ignorance].

David’s explanation here points to the importance of nationality for understanding race in Dominican Republic. Historically, Dominican government officials tasked with building the nation chose to distance Dominicans from Haitians, who, despite sharing the same island, were emerging as a proudly Black society. The result of these efforts was the formation of a collective perception, among Dominicans, of Haitians as Black and of Dominicans as not Haitian, and therefore, as not Black (Sawyer and Paschel 2007).

Here, David finds it funny that Dominicans ridicule Haitians for being Black while evading self-identification as Black. I argue this response to racial ideologies in the Dominican Republic signal a shift in my respondents’ own racial ideologies to more closely resemble those in the U.S. Within the U.S., where the hegemonic racial
demarcation is between whiteness and Blackness, individuals who are of any African
descent are automatically grouped within the “Black” category by outsiders. Further,
those who fail to uphold and celebrate their African ancestry are often ridiculed or
ostracized by others within this category. These respondents’ reactions to Dominican
racial ideologies are indicative of their adoption—to some extent—of a U.S. racial
ideological worldview in which Blackness is automatically assigned to those of African
ancestry and where Blackness is perceived as needing to be upheld personally and
politically as a source of pride.

Both Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents mentioned the commonly held
notion that Dominicans were, as a whole, darker than Puerto Ricans. While these
respondents rarely referred to Dominicans as “Black” when making this distinction, this
pattern reflects long-standing relations of citizenship and racial hierarchy between the
two islands. As mentioned above, Dominicans often see themselves as not Black in
relation to Haiti. In Puerto Rico, though, it is Dominicans who are often seen as the dark-
skinned, often undocumented, “other” (Sawyer and Paschel 2007). The following
example highlights these distinctions made between the groups:

Julissa, a 34-year-old Puerto Rican, argued that every time she sees a Dominican,
“They’re always dark (laughs awkwardly). Even though, my cousin Katrina, she’s
like your color [darker skinned]. So no, I can’t distinguish [between Puerto Ricans
and Dominicans] by color.” Later in the interview, Julissa spoke about strangers
incorrectly identifying her as Cuban, Mexican, and Peruvian, “One guy asked if I
was Dominican. And I looked at him like... (confused look). I didn’t take it as a
diss, but I go back to this whole Dominican [equals] dark-skinned, I don’t know
why. And I thought in my head, do I look dark? I didn’t get offended. We’re all
people, we all have our cultures and stuff.”

Though Julissa claims she was not offended by being mistaken as Dominican, her
comments reflect an internal concern with being seen as dark by outsiders. Interestingly,
her concerns do not seem rooted in a sense of ethnic loyalty to Puerto Rico, but rather a fear that others might perceive her as dark-skinned.

Jenny, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican, echoed Julissa’s comments by stating that the Puerto Ricans she knows tend to be light-skinned. She relayed the story of a man she had once dated, saying, "He said he was Puerto Rican, but he was really dark-skinned." She asked him, "Are you sure you're not Dominican? I don't mess with [i.e., date] Dominicans, I mess with Puerto Ricans." She continued, "But he was really dark. Like, I'm not with that. I don't like too dark. I like a little bit lighter. Like, my baby is white. He looks so white (laugh).” She later mentioned that her sister tried to set her up with a white man and she said "pass," clarifying that she likes her partners to be “light-skinned but with some Spanish in them” because "If you can't cook me some rice and beans, I don't want to mess with you." Jenny was one of few interviewees that explicitly stated a preference for lighter-skinned partners. Her mistrust of a dark-skinned Puerto Rican shows how race is often mapped onto nationality on the island, and how these ideas transfer and are deployed by the second generation in the U.S. Further, her desire for a partner who is light skinned but “Spanish” or Latino, reflects how privileging whiteness over Blackness does not necessarily equate to privileging white Americanness.

Anger: Engaging the Emotional Currency of U.S. Anti-Blackness

Though my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents conditionally accepted Blackness as a part of their ancestry or background, this did not preclude them from engaging with, and perpetuating, dominant anti-Black narratives common in the United States. This became particularly salient when I asked respondents for their views on the
high-profile shootings of African Americans and subsequent protests under the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which began in 2012.

Leo, a 23-year-old Puerto Rican who was born on the island but raised in Central Florida reacted as follows to the mention of the Black Lives Matter movement,

That's just another way to stereotype, but through Black people, because not all cops are like that. Not all cops is gonna shoot someone that's black." There are cases when white people get shot and "nobody said shit about it! It ain't been on the news. But there's white people that get shot all the time. It depends on your attitude. You know, you got cops that are dick heads, you have cops that are racist, you have cops that, you know, are great but they might have had a bad day. You push their buttons—it's not like the black people were innocent. I'm not saying, you know, black—I'm talking about the people that died. It's not like they were innocent. You know, they did something for the cop to come up to them. Or they did something, or they looked suspicious or a certain way for the cop to even approach them. If I'm standing there doing nothing, a cop's not going to approach me. The most they're going to say is, 'what are you doing?' I'm just standing here.' You don't have to give a 'you don't have to fucking worry about it, officer.' You know, if they give a straight answer, 'oh okay.' They [the cops] go about their business.

Leo’s perceptions of the movement were relayed in an angry tone, showing his lack of patience with the social movement. Though Leo had a heavy tan, his blue eyes, facial features, and Floridian accent often led to him being identified as white. His interpretation was both an example of respectability politics (e.g., “it depends on your attitude”) and a sense of empathy toward with the police officers involved in these cases (e.g., “they might have had a bad day”).

The underlying sentiment in many of the interviewees’ statements about BLM was that African Americans are “too aggressive” or “violent” towards law enforcement officials. For example, Adrian, a 28-year-old Puerto Rican who was also raised in Central Florida, referenced the case of Kajieme Powell, a mentally ill black man killed by police officers in St. Louis:
He comes out of a convenience store and he decides to go ahead and go head on to a police officer with a knife in his hand. You think you're not gonna get shot? Being that stupid? The cop doesn't know you. He doesn't know you on a first name basis. ...You come at me with a knife, I don't care who you are, I'm gon' put two, three bullets in you, because if I don't do that, you gon' take my life. [Speaking about BLM protestors] You got them saying ‘well our lives matter as much as the white lives matter.’ Well, you don't see white people waving around knives in front of cops. You don't see them acting a fool at Walmart. ...Or trying to fist-fight the cop right then and there. You don't see none of that stuff.

Some respondents pointed out the injustice in these shootings yet qualified this with statements about African Americans’ “feistiness” towards police officers. For example, David, the 23-year-old Dominican, lamented that “187 people have died from police this year... That's more than Pulse [Nightclub]. ...They have to get tougher on cops and how they use their guns.” Later in the interview, though, he states,

A lot of these cases, too, these people have been very feisty with the cops. It doesn't give the cop an excuse to shoot somebody, of course, but they could have cooperated a bit more. But I think, being black, they feel like they're being discriminated against already and they get all feisty and.... I would just help [the cops]. They want whatever they want. Like they wanna get me? Get me. But I'm not gonna fight with a cop and get shot.

Similarly, Joel, a dark-skinned 25-year-old Dominican from the 1.5-generation, stated,

African American people are not—are good. They're good people. But a lot of them don't respect authority. Not all of them, not everybody. But a big majority act a certain way, and I would never act to a cop like I've seen other people act." He continues, "It's not fair, because honestly, a lot of Caucasian people act the same with cops, they act disrespectfully, and they don't get the same treatment. It upsets me. That pisses me off. ...But if you know you're in a situation where you can't be condescending, calm down. Your life is not worth you fighting or arguing with somebody who could make a decision...and kill you. You know? Relax.

Both Joel and David’s sentiments here reflect broader beliefs about Blackness as tied to “bad behavior” and aggression. These sentiments were expressed by many of my respondents, as they often interpreted race through the lens of behavior, rather than simply as appearance or ancestry. Examining these perspectives highlights the needs for
my respondents to justify the outcomes faced by African Americans who have faced police brutality. For light-skinned respondents, their distance from the victims of these shootings allowed them to interpret African Americans as automatically warranting police officers’ fear or suspicion. In contrast, among dark-skinned respondents, a sense of linked fate with the African Americans in question led to a different interpretation of these events. Here, instead, respondents saw African Americans as the victims of police overreach while at the same time critiquing their behavior as “too aggressive” or “feisty” toward police.

“Mixed Feelings”: Trayvon Martin and the Redirection of Respectability Politics

The Trayvon Martin case brought up mixed feelings for my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents. Seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was murdered by an armed vigilante on February 26, 2012 in Sanford, Florida, mere miles from where some of my respondents were living at the time. The case differed from other instances of police brutality, in that it involved a vigilante, rather than a police officer. It was also complicated by the fact that George Zimmerman, the man who shot and killed Martin, is half-white and half-Peruvian. While the interviewees expressed dismay at the case, and often viewed Martin as having been murdered, they also saw Zimmerman as guilty only after accounting for his subsequent bad deeds—Zimmerman had appeared in court several times after his acquittal in the Martin case for other gun-related charges. In other words, they shifted the lens of respectability from Martin to Zimmerman. My interview with Juan, a 24-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, also illustrates how respondents often deflected attention from the shootings of African Americans by connecting them to other topics:
J: ...Trayvon Martin, that was the kid that got shot by what’s that guy’s name, Zimmerman? Is it Zimmerman? You know, and how there was like, really no justice there? Which, I think he should have got so much longer. That’s just the world we live in. Just like recently with the Pulse shooting, right? Okay, the guy shot himself, the killer shot himself. If you read the news of the people that died, about 90% of those people were Hispanic.

And I don’t really play the race card. Like, I’m not the type of person who’s, ‘Oh, you’re doing this because you’re black,’ or stuff like that. Because it can happen to anybody. Like, so, people make an uproar when a black kid gets shot and stuff, but not a lot of people make an uproar when a white peop—when a white kid gets shot. Or it could be the opposite way as well, you know? It’s just, it can happen. But, we are—we do live in a society where it’s kinda crooked.

S: It’s crooked?

J: Yeah, it’s crooked.

Juan’s conflicting statements reflect both a lack of understanding of the details of the case—for example, claiming that Zimmerman should have gotten a longer sentence when he was in fact acquitted—and a desire to evade issues of systemic racism with colorblind rhetoric (i.e., “I don’t really play the race card”). He follows this with a commonly held maxim among detractors of the Black Lives Matter movement—that people “make an uproar” when a black person is killed but not when a white person is killed. Juan’s account shows that, in the absence of facts about a case, individuals may resort to the emotional currency of U.S. anti-Blackness, even if those racialized emotions run contrary to, or exist in conflict with, their personal experiences—this is evidenced by Juan’s statement that, “we do live in a society where it’s kinda crooked.”

Ana, a 26-year-old Puerto Rican, mentions Zimmerman’s subsequent court cases explicitly:

S: So, what about the Trayvon Martin case? Let’s talk about that one.
A: Um, I think that was murder. I don’t feel it was accidental. I feel like he was targeted ‘cause he was black. And, that guy just wanted to kill someone. I don’t know.

S: Do you know anything about his background?

A: That Looney-Tune? [Zimmerman]

S: Yeah.

A: No, but I know that he’s been in the news plenty of times for other crimes ever since then. So, I don’t know. It’s a rent-a-cop. I think it was a security guy, wasn’t he?

S: I think they labeled him as like a community-watch sort of guy.

A: Oh that. So, a wannabe cop. Who took it too far. Yeah, I think it was murder.

Similarly, Alexa, a 37-year-old Puerto Rican, stated, “I had mixed signals on that one. …Zimmerman, he's a jerk. …[Because right after the case] “he kept on getting in trouble. If he was innocent, you would get off the radar.” She then mentioned that the other cases Zimmerman was involved in had to do with guns as well, “So, obviously, he was trigger-happy. …There's a lot of people that like to play cop. Zimmerman was trying to play cop that night. He was a trouble-maker.”

These excerpts show my interviewee’s assessment of Zimmerman as lacking legitimacy. This same legitimacy was often automatically granted to police officers as a collective. In framing Zimmerman as a “wannabe cop,” though, my interviewees were able to use his individual failings and behavior as signs of guilt. In this case, Zimmerman was innocent until proven guilty, while most African Americans were seen as provoking their own murders at the hands of legitimate and rightfully threatened police officers.
Conclusion

This chapter maps out the individual and collective emotions influencing Puerto Ricans and Dominicans’ views of Blackness in a U.S. context. Interviewees from both ethnic groups were hesitant to identify as Black, instead claiming African ancestry as one of three ancestral roots (the others being Spanish and Indigenous). While some were comfortable with racial designators in the U.S., many others expressed discomfort with the binary view of race in the U.S. Instead of adopting the U.S. concept of hypodescent, my 1.5- and second-generation interviewees privileged a mixed racial identity. Despite the incorporation of African ancestry in this mixed racial self-identification, most of my interviewees worked to highlight the differences between themselves and African Americans. These distinctions were framed through the lens of respectability politics—as critiques of African Americans’ behavior. These distinctions were highlighted even further when asked to comment on police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement. Here, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans often repeated commonly held views of African Americans as “too aggressive” towards police officers. The exception to this was with the Trayvon Martin case, where my interviewees labeled Zimmerman as guilty due to his bad behavior after the murder trial.

The propagation of anti-Black sentiments among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans has several ramifications. First, it further marginalizes African Americans and normalizes their systemic mistreatment by the state (e.g., by police officers). It might also harm coalition-building efforts for racial justice across racially marginalized groups, including Latinos. These anti-Black sentiments reflect and build upon the privileging of light skin in Latin America, which is oftentimes paired with a colorblind ideology that makes it
more difficult to fight racial inequalities. Thus, the preference for a mixed racial identity, while not an issue in itself, obscures the devaluation of dark-skinned people in Latin America and within Latino groups in the U.S. When Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the U.S. hold anti-Black views, they also harm those within their own ethnic groups who are dark-skinned, regardless of whether those individuals identify as Black.
Chapter 7. “I'd Rather Have Mickey Mouse for President”: Anxious Citizenship and Government Mistrust During the 2016 Election

In early 2019, the United States endured the longest partial government shutdown in the country’s history due to disagreements concerning spending on border security between Republicans, led by President Donald J. Trump, and opposing Democrats. The government shutdown harkened back to the 2016 Presidential Election, during which then-candidate Donald Trump’s proposed wall along the U.S.-Mexico border became a central campaign promise. The 2016 Presidential Election was deeply divisive not only along party lines, but also along lines of race, ethnicity, gender, and citizenship status. Studies have yet to pinpoint what led to the historically low voter turn-out in the 2016 election, during which investigations have since shown Russian hackers sought to interfere with the election in attempts to sow discord among the electorate and favor Donald Trump’s campaign.

This chapter analyzes the political emotions and attitudes of 1.5- and second-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans on the eve of the 2016 Presidential Election. I draw on theories of political engagement and alienation, as well as theorizing on racial policy attitudes, to analyze respondents’ views on the candidates, the electoral process, and the topic of immigration in particular. Findings show that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans had overall favorable views of immigration, but that Puerto Ricans sought to distance themselves from Mexicans in attempts to emphasize their status as legal citizens in the U.S., a sign of what I call anxious citizenship. Further, I found that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans lacked trust in the U.S. government and the electoral process, which led
many to become disengaged from the politics and led some to adhere to government-involved conspiracy theories.

**Background Literature**

*Race, Emotions, and U.S. Electoral Politics*

Scholars seem to be in relative consensus that racism and xenophobia play a significant role in U.S. electoral politics. Historical analyses show how race was pivotal to the shift of the Democratic party from a southern political party linked to wealthy white slaveowners to its current popularity among racial and ethnic minorities and immigrants. Specifically, scholars show how Civil Rights activism in the 1960s led leaders of both major parties to “take sides” on issues of racial equality, leading whites to move from the Democratic party to the Republican party over time (Parker 2016). Research on recent political trends supports this racial shift in partisanship. For example, Hajnal and Rivera (2014) find that race and partisanship have become closely aligned over time in the U.S. Their study finds that white Americans who display anti-immigrant views or hold negative beliefs about Latinos are less likely to identify as Democrat and to vote for Democratic candidates.

The role of race in electoral politics has become increasingly notable in the realm of news media and advertising. According to Hutchings and Valentino (2004), “The evidence suggests that race still serves as a sharp wedge in modern campaigns via news coverage and political advertising” (385). Scholars have shown how racial and ethnic “cues” provoke emotional responses among the electorate and influence political actions. For example, Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) find that news media focusing on the
costs—rather than the benefits—of immigration play a significant role in provoking anxiety and stoking fears among white Americans regarding immigration and, further, that these fears motivate political action among this group. They argue that,

…while news emphasizing the costs of immigration boosts the perception that immigration is harmful, ethnic cues strongly condition emotional reactions to this news. Stigmatized out groups, in this case Latino immigrants, trigger negative emotions when costs are emphasized. This emotional trigger matters. Even when citizens in our study perceived the harmful consequences of immigration identically, hostile attitudes and actions flared only when group cues elicited anxiety (975).

Put differently, Brader et al. (2008) find that, while emphasizing the costs of immigration leads to a negative perception of immigration regardless of the immigrant group, the evocation of Latino immigrants in particular led white Americans to hold hostile anti-immigrant attitudes.

These findings contrast with literature that provides a less race-centric explanation of anti-immigrant attitudes. For example, some scholars have found that an important factor in assessing views on immigration aligns with the type of immigrant in question (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015). They argue there exists a “hidden consensus” among citizens of all ideological leanings that favors the influx of highly skilled and highly educated immigrants who speak English. I argue that studies such as this miss the proverbial elephant in the room. Race has and continues to be central to the operation of electoral politics in this country. Further, color-blind rhetoric does little in the way of explaining the rise and success of Donald Trump’s presidential bid, despite his xenophobic remarks prior to the election.

Studies of electoral politics emphasize that political alienation is associated with low political engagement (Pantoja and Segura 2003; Schildkraut 2005). Among Latino
voters, scholars have argued that Latino representation among political candidates can decrease feelings of political alienation (Pantoja and Segura 2003). In this chapter, I examine how collective emotions concerning Latinos and immigration led to political alienation among Latinos prior to the 2016 election. My findings also show how political alienation can shape Latinos’ belief in government-related conspiracy theories.

Existing literature is inconsistent in determining the causes driving individuals to subscribe to conspiracy theories. Some scholars argue that having extreme political beliefs (whether right- or left-wing) is associated with a belief in conspiracy theories. Other scholars argue that conspiracy theorists are motivated not by a lack of political knowledge, but rather wider beliefs in “unseen, intentional forces and an attraction to Manichean narratives” (Oliver and Wood 2014:952). When measuring adherence to conspiracy theories across ethno-racial groups, one study in New Jersey found that African Americans and Latinos were more likely to hold these beliefs than white Americans (Goertzel 1994), though several recent studies show these beliefs are held by up to half of the American populace at any given time (Oliver and Wood 2014).

**Latinos and Electoral Politics**

Existing literature on Latinos and U.S. electoral politics has centered on the role of group consciousness in driving Latinos’ political engagement (Sanchez 2006; Schildkraut 2005; Stokes 2003). While some scholars find that Latinos who identify with their pan-ethnic group are more likely to become politically engaged (Stokes 2003), others argue that Latinos who identify strongly as American are more politically engaged (Schildkraut 2005). Some studies find that this political engagement is mediated by the
type of issues salient in a given election—that is, if the policies being addressed in a given election are related to Latinos in particular (e.g., bilingual education or immigration), Latinos who identify strongly with their group are more likely to become politically engaged (Pérez 2015; Sanchez 2006).

Another important topic in the literature on Latinos in electoral politics is that of voter turnout. Findings here show that Latino voter turnout is low relative to non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic Blacks (Jackson 2003). While some scholars argue low voter turn-out among Latinos is partially due to the significant number of immigrants found in this group (Michelson 2005), others find that contextual factors such as age, voting rights, state-level immigration policies, and Latino representation among politicians, are more predictive of Latinos’ likelihood of voting (Jackson 2003; Logan, Darrah, and Oh 2012; Pantoja and Segura 2003).

Few studies have addressed the affective dimension of political attitudes for Latinos in particular (Krysan 2000). Existing studies have looked at the effect of xenophobic rhetoric on Latinos’ political behaviors (Pérez 2015). For example, Pérez (2015) shows that high rates of xenophobia are associated with a sense of political alienation among Latinos. This study also shows that when Latino voters are well-informed, the presence of xenophobic rhetoric can lead to an increase in political engagement. Thus, while xenophobia might lead Latino voters to experience political alienation, being well-informed can convert this alienation into political engagement.
Findings and Discussion

My Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents differed in their attunement to the 2016 election during the summer preceding the election. As the summer progressed, though, respondents were more likely to have developed opinions on the final candidates in the presidential race. When asked whether they had been following news about the election and the candidates, respondents mentioned three candidates and their merits (or lack thereof) for occupying the oval office: Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders.

Laughter as a means of dissipating anxiety about Donald Trump

When asked for their opinion on the candidates for the 2016 Presidential Election, my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents almost always responded with laughter. Far from being humorous, the election and remaining candidates seemed to provoke worry and anxiety among my respondents—feelings they attempted to dissipate using laughter and banter. My respondents’ responses to Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were a mixture of disdain, condescension, and mistrust.

When asked about Donald Trump, respondents often referred to him as “a joke” or “ridiculous.” The reasons underlying these negative characterizations differed, though. For example, Brandon, a second-generation Dominican stated,

I think he’s a joke. It’s the best way to say it. I think it’s a joke. …We’ve allowed the presidential election to become a popularity contest, like we’re in high school. And it’s someone using fear to, to get votes. And, the threat’s real. The threat is real, because I’ve said multiple times that I believe that society is getting to the point now where we feel so unsafe, the media…has made the world feel so unsafe that we’re willing to give up our rights to feel safe. …And a lot of people are
getting to that point and I feel like people that are voting for Trump are like that. They’ve gotten to the point where they’re like, there’s nothing that I’m gonna do that’s ever going to change how the world is now, and the best way to protect yourself, you just build a wall around the problem. And let’s start with the south [laughs].

While Brandon offered a nuanced interpretation of the reason Donald Trump was selected the Republican candidate for the presidency—that Americans are afraid and willing exchange their rights in exchange for a false sense of security—other respondents were less detailed. For example, Victoria, a 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, simply framed the election as choosing between the “lesser of two evils”:

S: So, the last thing I'll ask about the news, is about the presidential election. [laughs]. Everyone always laughs when I say that. I'm sensing a pattern. Can you tell me, have you followed any of the coverage, what are your thoughts on the candidates?

V: I'd much rather have Mickey Mouse for freaking president. I swear to god. You know, I've been voting since I was 18 years old and this is the first year that I can honestly say that I'm thinking of not even going out to vote, because it's just—it's sad. I mean, talk about having to choose between the lesser of two evils [laughs].

Among my respondents, many mentioned a desire to “sit out the vote” given their disenchantment with the remaining candidates. For example, Andres, a 31-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, showed disdain for Trump and a reluctance to vote given the remaining presidential hopefuls:

I think if Obama ran again, I would vote for Obama [laughter]. Yeah. But Hillary, yeah. She's more with the Latinos. Donald Trump, I don't know what he's on right now. I don't know. He's a nutcase. Yeah. But a lot of people here, especially the [inaudible] Orange County Latinos, I know that they're voting for Hillary. Yeah. But I think this here, what I'm going to do is probably sit out on the vote maybe. I don't know. Unless something big happens with Hillary.
Other respondents expressed they would vote for Hillary explicitly to prevent Donald Trump from holding the office. Zoe, a second-generation Dominican, stated, “…Basically, I'm voting for Hillary. I can't go for Trump. Trump said so many bad things about the Hispanic community.” Zoe displayed a form of resistance rooted in a sense of pan-ethnic solidarity with other Latinos. Her comments reflect a sense of linked fate with all Latinos, despite her own position as a U.S.-born Latina.

My respondents generally felt a lack of quality among the choices of presidential candidates. A sense of helplessness was obvious among many responses that were rooted in a frustration with the electoral process itself or with the racial tensions highlighted during the candidates’ campaigns. According to Joel, a 1.5-generation Dominican here on DACA, the presidential election was equivalent to “choosing your poison.” He stated that, “Either you want a poison that will kill you in the long run or a poison that's going to kill you right away [laughter]. Which one do you want?” When asked which ‘poison’ or candidate would kill you right away, he responded, “Trump.” In a more nuanced response, Enrique, a second-generation Puerto Rican, pointed to the racial animus undergirding Trump’s campaign and popularity in the country:

E: He's an idiot, I think [laughter]. Everybody knows he's an idiot. I just think a lot of people who will vote for him are Caucasian males.

S: Yeah. And what do you think leads people to want to vote for that? What do you think is driving his—

E: Race.

S: —popularity?

E: Race. Race.
Aside from the salient issue of racism obvious through Trump’s statements and campaign speeches, other respondents pointed to the issue of class and wealth inequality in the U.S. as driving their personal dislike of the presidential candidate. According to Arlene, a 1.5-generation Dominican,

I’d rather not talk about him [laughter] because I know for a fact, if he becomes president, he’s not going to do anything for anybody. Only for rich people. Whether they’re black or white. Only for rich people. And I’m sorry but this country is not run by rich people. This country is run by the poor people because we’re the ones that get up every day and we’re the ones that pay taxes and we’re the ones that run this world. Rich people sit at home and do nothing all day probably because they have the resources. We don’t. You’re not going to do nothing for middle class and poor people. He’s not…He’s a joke. He’s a freaking joke. He’s a joke. And I honestly think this world is so upside down that he probably wins. And we’re really going to be in trouble. That’s what I’m afraid of. I was like, “I’m not voting.”

Here, Arlene displays a pointed critique of Trump as a wealthy candidate who would perhaps not cater to the needs of poor people in the country. Rather than convert this interpretation into action at the ballot box, Arlene stated it led her to decide not to vote.3

Donald Trump’s campaign promise to build a tall concrete wall along the southern U.S. border became central to his base of supporters. Among my respondents, reactions to this proposed wall were almost unanimously that it was a “ridiculous” proposal that would not be built or would not be an effective deterrent to immigration if built. For example, Nayeli, a 31-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated,

You’re going to put these walls up. There’s still going to be people that find a way. When somebody wants something, they’re going to do it anyways. So, he can

3 It is important to note that I did not explicitly ask respondents for the citizenship status in the U.S. due to potential safety issues. Therefore, there is a chance that Arlene was not legally able to vote. Here, I choose to take Arlene and other respondents’ word when they state their voting preferences or speak on their legal status.
build all the barriers up in all the world that he wants to, but if somebody wants to
find a way, they will.

Other respondents, when asked about the proposed wall, used it as an opportunity to
voice their disbelief toward Latinos who were Donald Trump supporters. Zoe, a 29-year-
old, second-generation Dominican, claimed,

The wall thing is ridiculous. I don't even know exactly what he says, because it's
to the point when I heard about the wall thing, I completely…stopped listening to
everything he had to say. I didn't want anything to do with him. He's racist. How
can people not see that? He's very racist, especially towards Mexicans and
Spanish people and Hispanics. And when I see Hispanics all for him, “…I love
Trump.” Like, come on. How do you love Trump and he's not for you? He doesn't
want you here. He don't want you in your country, in this country.

Overall, my respondent’s rejected Donald Trump’s views on immigration and his
proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, and they used laughter and
condescension as means of dissipating their fears of a Donald Trump presidency.

*Puerto Ricans and Dominicans’ mistrust of Hillary Clinton*

When discussing the possibility of electing Hillary Clinton as president, some
respondents spoke of her as the “lesser of two evils” while others shared their varied
reservations about Hillary Clinton’s ability to carry out the job effectively. Several of
these responses reflected deeper misgivings about women’s capacity to lead the country,
as well as critiques about Hillary Clinton’s response to her husband’s (former president
Bill Clinton) infidelity while he was in office. According to Juan, a 24-year-old, 1.5-
generation Puerto Rican, Hillary Clinton simply lacked integrity:

I mean, it’s been proven that she can get bought out. So, it’s like, you’re gonna do
all these promises, but if someone offers you X amount of money, that’s it, you’re
gonna turn your back on everything. So, it’s like, you can’t be trusted.
Along a similar vein, another respondent pointed to Hillary Clinton’s lack of consistent messaging over time. According to Joseph, a 22-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican,

And Clinton, I’ve seen so many videos of her lying. I see videos [from] 2002, her saying, “Oh, I hate gay marriages. It'll never happen.” [In] 2009, “Gay marriage is okay. I'm happy with it. I support you guys.” Three years ago, you said, “No, there's no way.” I see mad videos of her saying stuff and then years later changing the thing completely.

Conversely, other respondents mentioned Hillary Clinton’s Benghazi “scandal,” which fueled many right-wing arguments against her candidacy, as well as Donald Trump’s famous chant, “lock her up.” For example, Leo, a 23-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated,

Because Hillary Clinton, I have no problem with women being the leader, but I have a problem with her being a leader. I have a problem with people that are too scared to talk to terrorists for people, for our American people. You know what I mean? When she was Secretary of Defense [sic] and she let those people die but she didn't want to negotiate with the terrorist. So, you let Americans die because you don't want to talk to a terrorist?

Some respondents did not shy away from explicit sexism when explaining their misgivings about Hillary Clinton. For example, David, a 23-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican, mentioned women’s inability to lead due to their ‘hormones,’

I feel like women have too much hormones, mood swings. And based on their hormones, their freaking bodies—I'm sorry. And I feel I'm afraid that she being a—she could get easily convinced or she can get—I feel like she can be softer. …But I feel like she would at least keep us out of a freaking world war.

Though not explicitly the same, other respondents mentioned the sexual indiscretions of Bill Clinton as lessening Hillary Clinton’s legitimacy as a presidential candidate. These statements, without further development, assume that a woman who is cheated on is not
“in control” of her life, and would be a questionable leader. For example, Ana, a 26-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following about Hillary Clinton,

And she’s an idiot. She’s stupid. I mean, why, who would vote into office a woman who, while her husband was in office was like cheated on and, all this stuff went down, impeachments and all this stuff for your husband. You really think the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree? Same shit’s gonna happen now. So…it’s not worth my time or my vote.

Here, Ana is both using Bill Clinton’s cheating as a reason to dislike Hillary Clinton, and a reason to not vote in that November’s election.

Another trend in my respondents’ initial sentiments about the presidential election, was a sense of disengagement due to the candidates’ inability to connect with Latinos as a pan-ethnic community. For example, Anamarie, a 24-year-old, second-generation Dominican, pointed to the candidates’ neglect of Latino voters:

So, it makes for a very difficult election season because again, it's like no one cares about us in a positive way. They care about Latinos in a way like, "We need to get rid of them or stop them from coming in." But not in a way like, "Look at all these great Latino representations." And Hillary had a lot of Latinos at the DNC talking all these wonderful things about her, but there's no actual effort or proof or anything that she's done in her lifelong career to show that she's actually there for the Latino community. She's only there when it's election season. So, it just feels like if we go one way, Latinos are just going to get ignored for four years. And if we go another way, then you're probably all just going to get deported.

While Anamarie points to the lack of connection between the candidates and Latino voters, she presumably leaves the door open for other non-Latino candidates who might have connected with the Latino community. Other respondents, though, claimed the disconnect between the candidates and Latinos could only be remedied by a Latino
candidate. Alex, a 32-year-old, second-generation Dominican, exemplified this when stating the following:

The elections, that doesn't interest me at all. I mean, I've read a few articles. Saw some news about Trump and Clinton. I don't know, I feel that they can't talk about the Hispanic culture because they're not from there, they don't know. They just don't know. You have to either be born into it or grew up Hispanic, in order to know what’s really going on. Somebody could explain it to them, but they're not going to fully understand.

Here, Alex shows a general sense of helplessness about the existing candidates given their ethnic background. Though this was not a widespread sentiment, it is important to note given the focus in the literature on the role of racial representation in politics and how it might be tied to voter engagement.

“Bernie Bros” and a desire for free education

Several of my respondents pointed to the candidacy of Bernie Sanders as a hopeful alternative to Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Some explicitly voted for Bernie Sanders during the Democratic Primary and those who were drawn to Bernie Sanders’ campaign but failed to vote in the primaries. Among both groups were Puerto Ricans and Dominicans that were hopeful about Bernie Sanders’ promises to fight for free education and student loan forgiveness programs. Given my respondents were between 21-45 years old, many experienced trying to access affordable education or dealt with burdensome student loans from their time in college. For example, Andrea, a 23-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, stated, “I was going to vote for Bernie, but I really wasn't paying attention to the news. And then I was like, ‘No, Bernie wants peace. I'm
with the peace. I'm going to stick with the peace. And I need free college.” Similarly, Enrique, a 37-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated,

I think there would be more people in college and universities if it was free. And then, the economy will be better because there'll be more working people, more educated people. It makes sense. If France, and Iceland, and all those countries could do it, why can't we do it?

Other respondents reflected on why Bernie Sanders lost during the Democratic Primary, positing that it had more to do with Americans’ greed than the candidate’s campaign platform. Jean, a 32-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican man, stated the following about Bernie Sanders:

He wants to help out so many people that people start saying, "Oh, well that's not free, people. We're going to have to pay for it. But just so we don't got to pay for it and help the less fortunate, we want to get a president that's going to give us more. Yes. We're going to get more. But screw these people." That makes me sick to my stomach. I'm all about helping people.

Jean’s reflection points to the position of the less fortunate in the U.S., as well as the misguided, selfish efforts of the electorate to “get more” at the expense of the poor. He also highlights the common arguments directed at progressive leftist candidates who advocate for government expansion, “how will we pay for that?” Jean’s feelings of disgust indicate an underlying disappointment with his fellow citizens for what he sees as their collective greed.

“The news is too depressing”: Relying on social media for information about the election

Many of my respondents decried the saddening nature of conventional TV news programs and expressed their preference of avoiding them in favor of news shared on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This finding, while perhaps
not interesting on its face, is especially worrisome given the recent investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election, most of which occurred via social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. To date, results from this investigation state that Russian intelligence agents engaged in a wide-spread effort to suppress African American votes through false social media accounts posting about the futility of voting in the 2016 election. While no information has been released about the potential targeting of Latino voters, my respondents’ preference for getting their news through social media sites would have made them prime targets for misinformation and voter suppression attempts via social media sites.

According to several respondents, conventional news was “too depressing” to consume daily. For example, Amanda, a 24-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated, “I don't really watch the news. The news gets depressing. …Facebook is where I hear everything. That's my news channel right there.” Similarly, Brianna, a 32-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, said,

Honestly, we don't watch the news. The news is too depressing. And nowadays the news is not really news. ‘Cause there's some weird stuff that they put on the news. And, I only see what’s on social—like, whatever is on my timeline on Facebook, whenever I do go on Facebook. Umm, I dunno, I wish Obama could run for a third term [laugh]. I honestly love him, I think he did an amazing job. Umm, I don't, I don't know. From what I've heard, Trump is racist. Umm, I guess Hillary is a liar or a criminal or something. I don't know.

Brianna’s statements elucidate how respondents who did not watch the news and relied on social media had a limited understanding of the candidates and their platforms just months before the presidential election. Instead, she and other respondents repeated simplified opinions about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Mya, a 23-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, echoed Brianna’s sentiments when stating,
I'm not going to lie, I don't even really get into that. I don't. My social media, that's pretty much where I see [news]. … [on Trump] He's very racist. I feel like the world's going to fall apart if he becomes president. But then again, I don't listen to all of the debates or anything like that, so I really don't even like commenting on it because I really don't know.

Other respondents clarified that they had been following the election coverage until their preferred candidate(s) conceded to their opponents. For example, Enrique, a 37-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated, “I was [following] until Bernie Sanders dropped out. …So ever since then, not much [laughs]. Not much. Whatever I get on Facebook or on Twitter here and there.” Some respondents even pointed to the preponderance of “fake news” or deliberate misinformation on social media sites regarding the presidential candidates. For example, Jean, another second-generation Puerto Rican, stated that he followed the election “Mainly on Facebook videos.” He continued, “I see people make videos and turn it into a full video [and] it's not even what they said. They take the words in sections and—I’m not stupid. I'm not a stupid person. I mean, I hope I'm not.” His attention to these attempts at misinformation are a cause for hope, though research has shown that internet users are not always privy of false information they encounter on the internet (Lazer et al. 2018). Further, some studies show that the average American encountered one to three fake news stories in the months leading up to the 2016 election (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017), a finding scholars argue might be an undercount (Lazer et al. 2018).

*The hard-working immigrant: Challenging negative emotions surrounding immigration*

As either immigrants or the children of immigrants, my Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents had, overall, positive attitudes towards immigration and
immigrants. One common sentiment was the perspective of the U.S. as a “nation of immigrants.” For example, Juan, a 24-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following about Donald Trump,

Well one of the things he said was, like deportation…and this great wall he wants to build. It’s like, dude, USA was made off immigrants. Like, who built the railroads? Immigrants. Chinese immigrants and stuff. …I just can’t take him seriously. His views on everything. It’s like, he talks and all I hear is bullshit come out his mouth.

Comments about immigration were most common when asked about Donald Trump and his policies, with most commenting on the role of immigrants in helping our economy by providing cheap labor in the U.S. For example, Adrian, a 28-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican stated,

From whites, I hear it all the time about the Mexicans. “Oh well, they're coming over here and taking over our jobs.” They're not taking over your job. You choose not to clean that gutter for $7 an hour to whereas him, he's got a family that he wants to support, so he’s going to go ahead and do it. But he's stealing your job? No, that's a job that you don't want to do.

Some of my respondents were less keen on the role of immigrants in the U.S. labor market. They viewed low-skilled immigrant workers as undercutting their own wages in a limited job market in Central Florida. For example, Jorge, a 23-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican stated,

Man, I don't know nobody hustle. You got to come down here [to] live a better life? Do what you got to do, man. But don't be staying over here doing my job that I get paid $9 an hour for…to take like 5 [dollars an hour for]. You know what I'm saying? Damn. I mean I ain't got no problem to it, man. Everybody wants [to do] better for themselves. I know I do.
Here, Jorge seems conflicted with the role of immigrants in the local labor pool, but also acknowledges the legitimacy of immigrants seeking a better life than they have in their country of origin.

My Puerto Rican and Dominican respondents repeated well-known tropes about immigrants, and particularly Mexican immigrants, being ‘hard-working.’ Many stated that Mexican immigrants were more hard-working than Puerto Ricans and Dominicans.

For example, Kimberly, a 38-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican, stated,

*We built this house from scratch, and every time I came, it was full of Mexicans, working in the sun. I didn't see no Dominican. I didn't see no Puerto Rican. I didn't see no white people. It was Mexican. So, don't tell me that they don't work. Yes, we have a lot of people that are criminals. Yes, it's true. We have a lot of people that-- like all the cultures in the world, you will have in every country a lot. White people, what you say about white people? They're not the best. Every time there's a shooting who is the responsible? Do you see black? Do you see Latin? No, you see a white.*

Here, Kimberly positions Mexicans as the most hard-working among several racial and ethnic groups, including her own. She also resists negative representations of Mexicans by highlighting the role of whites in recent mass shootings—here, she uses white mass shooters as a contrast to Trump’s characterization of Mexicans as “criminals.”

Another resistance tactic used by my respondents was to point out Donald Trump’s hypocrisy concerning immigration given his own wife was once an “illegal immigrant.” For example, Anamarie, a 24-year-old, second-generation Dominican, highlighted his hypocrisy as follows:

*They [Trump and Clinton] both have immigration policies that are designed to not create a better world for people trying to become American. And Trump's idea is like-- he has horrible policies on everyone. He hates everyone of any color, which is really funny because I always joke that his wife came here as an illegal immigrant and his kid is an anchor baby. And his marriage is a green-card marriage because she lived in this country 10 years before she married him and...*
didn't become an American until a year after marrying him and after the kid was born. ...And so, I get really annoyed because you can see that it's okay if it's a white immigrant. That's where it's okay.

Anamarie’s comments reflect a keen understanding of racism and xenophobia as they intersected in Donald Trump’s campaign and proposals. Thus, while many of my respondents highlighted the hypocrisy of trump’s xenophobia given his wife’s former status as an undocumented immigrant, only some connected this to the intersection of racism and xenophobia. This link is crucial to examine how immigration policies are enacted in the U.S. In short, Donald Trump was not simply against “immigrants” as a broad group, rather, he was against non-white and non-Christian immigrants.

“Come the right way:” Engaging anti-immigrant collective emotions

Despite a general disdain for Donald Trump among my respondents, there was a small contingent of respondents who saw merit in his proposals and who wanted to decrease undocumented immigration to the U.S. While some framed these beliefs as self-interested, others stated they wanted immigrants to come to the country “the right way.”

For example, Karla, a 37-year-old, second-generation Dominican, favored immigrants that seek citizenship “the right way.” She stated,

If you want to come here, fine. You should come the right way or whatever. I get that because we've all—I mean, but we're all immigrants. All of our parents are immigrants. They all came here, did what they needed to do and became citizens. Not all immigrants that are here are bad. ...My whole thing is, fine, if you're going to become a—obviously, there is rules and there is a law for you to come here and blah, blah. Then you do it the right way. ... But for those that are not doing it that way, you can sit there and say, yes, there are some bad immigrants. But you can't say that they're all the same because they're not.
Here, Karla’s challenges the negative portrayal of immigrants as “bad” by countering this with examples of immigrants that did things “correctly.” Her view of immigrants still contributes to a binary perspective on immigrants, while simultaneously resisting a wholesale negative perception of immigrants.

In contrast to Karla, Jenny, a 23-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, presented her opposition to immigration as a matter of self-interest. She stated,

[Trump] is a businessman. He knows what's right and what's wrong, but I don't think he should be putting up walls. Granted, we will have more money to ourselves. We will be by ourselves. If you think about it, when people come onto American soil illegal or not illegal, they get free healthcare. They get free money. They get free housing. Where does that come out of? Our working people that we can barely survive. We need to help us before we help people that come in.... So, whether you do it the right way or the wrong way, we should help the people here first.

While Jenny was against the creation of a new border wall, there were others who saw the wall as an appropriate deterrent to undocumented immigration and a necessary tool for securing their interests as U.S. citizens. Suleyka, a 27-year-old, second-generation Dominican, stated,

Listen, I feel as Trump [does] with immigration—this might blow you away—I am very selfish when it comes to that because I live in America. And as an American, it is in my best interest that they build the wall, keep them out. You know why? My mother-in-law and my father-in-law are here, and they came in legally. We did it the right way. We paid the fees, we did it the right way, and it was done. We're not keeping you out. We just want you to come in right. We want you to pay taxes because we need to pay taxes…

Suleyka conveyed her sentiments in an angry tone, seemingly exasperated by immigrants who sought the “easy path” to citizenship by entering the country undocumented.

Several other respondents were not explicitly anti-immigrant but were angered when compared or confused by others as being immigrants or being Mexican.
Respondents framed these moments of being “read” as Mexican through the lens of citizenship. In short, these respondents’ anger was rooted in being compared to a group that has been portrayed as “illegal” in the U.S., not simply because they had ethnic pride in being Puerto Rican or Dominican. For example, Leo, a 23-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican who was born and raised in Central Florida, stated,

I don't give a damn about nothing else, but once you call me Mexican, don't confuse my race. I'm not a Mexican. We're Puerto Rican. We're legal. We don't to have take no damn boat from over [there]. We don't need a green card. Once you're born wherever, you're born in Puerto Rico or you're born here, it's the same crap. You're an American citizen. That's one thing I just can't stand. …It's not even confusion. People do it on purpose because I know people that know I'm Puerto Rican and they've said it before, knowing I'm Puerto Rican. …It's like saying, "You're still Spanish. You ain't shit." You know what I mean? That's the way I look at it because you're comparing me to a Mexican. And, like I say, I have no problem with Mexicans.

Here, Leo distances himself from Mexicans as a way to evade negative treatment from outsiders. As he notes, he has been deliberately called Mexican by others and sees it as an offense from those who should know about his legal status in the country.

Several respondents were bothered by those who “read” them as Mexican, rather than Puerto Rican or Dominican. While Leo’s comment above was perhaps the most forthcoming about the reasons behind this discomfort, others framed it as a matter of dignity. For example, Amy, a 34-year old, second-generation Dominican, spoke about being subject to negative comments from those who assumed she did not speak English. She stated,

Or how many people think I don't speak English and they say things around me. And I turn around, “Let me correct you real quick.” They're like, “Oh.” “Yes. We're not all illiterate from an island. We're not all immigrants. A lot of us came here with papers. A lot of us were born here. A lot of us make your guys’ nation
wonderful. A lot of us have the jobs that a lot of you refused to have. But then you're fighting for these jobs and you think we're taking jobs away from you and Mexicans are taking jobs away from you. You want to scrub the toilet for $5 an hour, go right ahead….”

Amy reclaims her dignity from those who assume she does not speak English, while also highlighting the role of low-skilled immigrants in our economy. That said, it is debatable whether Amy is simply offsetting the negative perceptions others have of her onto unskilled immigrant workers.

Anxious citizenship in the Trump Era

Among many of my respondents, and particularly those of Puerto Rican ancestry, the stability of U.S. citizenship was challenged by Donald Trump and his policy proposals. In the time leading up to the election, a series of rumors began circulating over the internet that Donald Trump would seek the deportation of all Latinos, regardless of citizenship or nativity in the U.S. These rumors, though unfounded at the time, caused anxiety among my respondents, and particularly so for Puerto Ricans. While Puerto Rico is a U.S. Commonwealth, and all Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship upon birth, Puerto Ricans in my sample were keenly aware of their second-class status relative to non-Latinos in the U.S. For example, Ana, a 26-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated,

Um, this election, I ain’t voting. I don’t like none of the people running, so I’m not gonna waste my time to go vote for an idiot. Especially not Donald Trump, who said Puerto Ricans are the lowest Mexicans, which, like I said before, I don’t like to be called Mexican, and you just put me in that category? And then you say you’re gonna deport Puerto Ricans back to Puerto Rico. How you gonna deport us? You can’t.

Similarly, Alexa, a 37-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated:
Trump? Oh, hell no. Oh, hell no. …I can't stand him, especially when he was talking about us Puerto Ricans saying that we are not American, and he was going to try to make us have a passport to come to America. No. Between both of them, I would vote for Hillary.

Many respondents tied their anxieties of deportation to clarifications that they are in the country legally and, again, working to distance themselves from Mexican immigrants.

For example, Andrea, a 23-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, stated,

But if Trump becomes president, I don't know what I'm going to do. Because I'm scared that he's going to try to send us off. I know I'm not Mexican, but—and I'm not illegal, but I just don't want somebody to come and take over and then start deporting everybody. Like, “Oh, you're Puerto Rican. You go back to Puerto Rico. You were born there.” That would be crazy.

Similarly, Joseph, a 22-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican stated,

Trump wants to deport all the Mexicans and restrict Muslims from coming to the United States. I mean, that right there I could agree with, but the rest—I’m not going to go back to Puerto Rico. If he sends them, he might send us, too. He sends Dominicans to the DR, Cubans to Cuba. Everybody going back to where you came from. What am I going to do? Everybody's not going to fit back in Puerto Rico [laughs].

Here, Joseph and Andrea echo earlier comments from Puerto Ricans seeking to distance themselves from Mexicans. The irony lies in how these Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens upon birth, exhibit anxiety at the thought of an anti-immigrant president. These sentiments reflect a sense of linked fate between Puerto Ricans and undocumented Latino immigrants, as well as a broader, tenuous sense of citizenship among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. In the U.S., Puerto Ricans both belong and are excluded from the body politic. This nebulous status between the island and the continental U.S. makes notions of citizenship seemingly unstable for my respondents.

In contrast to these Puerto Rican respondents, my Dominican respondents often shared a more explicit sense of linked fate with other Latino immigrants. For example,
Micaela, a 28-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican, said the following when asked what she thought of the presidential candidates:

Well, I am applying for my citizenship, because I want to vote this year, so if my voice matters, I think this is a time to make it matter. And I am a Hilary supporter. I'm a Democrat. And yeah. When I heard Trump say, “build the wall,” “Mexicans are rapists,” or “drugs,” or all these things, I'm like, you walk in the room and you're Hispanic, white people think you're Mexican. Or qualify you as a Mexican. That's how it was when I was in school. All the Mexicans over there, and we were Puerto Ricans and Dominican in our table, but we were called as Mexicans. So, it hurt me, …because it basically hit[s] every person that is Hispanic—that people qualify as Mexican. It's like you are putting us in a bubble and saying, "Here is your bubble, you've got to be kicked out because you're this." …So, I'm hoping, and I'm pretty sure, that he's not going to win. He's not going to win [laughs].

Other Dominican respondents, in addition to expressing their fears of deportation given Trump’s threats of deportation toward other Latino groups, challenged Trumps’ conceptions of belonging and citizenship. For example, Amy, a 34-year-old, second-generation Dominican, stated,

I told my husband, “We need to buy a house before Trump becomes president because he may just take rights away from us.” He said he's taking rights away from Puerto Ricans from being Americans no longer. …He said he's sending all immigrants that came here back. So, my parents would go back. And because I'm attached to them, I have to go back. But I'm not from there. Then my kids have to go because of me. So, you're going to empty the United States. You're emptying it. You do realize this? You're not really leaving anybody here. Because even the pretty little white people are from Ireland, are from Switzerland, are from Greece. They're not pure. What are you looking for, mini-Hitler? By the way, the first one on that boat is your wife. And I heard that your grandmother is from the Netherlands so let's go. Pack your stuff up, too.

Similarly, Angelica, a 30-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican, stated the following when asked what she thought about Donald Trump:

A: He's an asshole…

S: Yeah? What do you think about his views on immigration?
A: He needs to get his behind sitting on a table and check his wife, first of all, because she's illegal. So, if we got to leave this country, his wife got to leave, too. … Him as a president, the United States is going to go down.

Here, Angelica counters Donald Trump’s desire to deport Latinos by pointing to the candidate’s wife, who was once an undocumented immigrant herself.

While most of my respondents expressed anxieties related to their citizenship in the country, others feared their status as women in the country, and their multiple oppressions as dark-skinned Latinos. These examples are featured here to show that anxious citizenship can occur through the intersection of various identities. For example, Kimberly, a 38-year-old, 1.5-generation Dominican, expressed worry at the thought of Trump’s potential election, stating,

What happen if he gets into the White House? What's going to happen to women? You know what I mean? That's my question. What's going to happen to us? He's going to start saying, "Oh, no." He is going to be like the Muslim. The Muslim, the radical ones. Like women can't talk. Women cannot drive. You know?

Ironically, Kimberly compares Trump’s desires to those of radical Muslims—a contingent he was explicitly campaigning to restrict from entering the U.S.

In contrast, Anamarie, a college-educated second-generation Dominican, expressed anger at being discriminated against for both her presumed immigrant status and her race. She recounted the following incident:

So, I was working once, and I said something to a lady and she said, "I'm sorry. I don't speak Spanish." And I was like, "I'm not speaking Spanish." And I was confused for a minute because I was like, "Did I say something in Spanish?" and I looked to my coworker and I'm like, "I'm speaking English" [laughter]. … And she's like, "Do you have an American that can help me?" …And I was like, "Ma'am, I am American." And she's like, "Not like a new American, but a real American." And I was like--Do you need my green card? What do you want? So, I had this lady blame me literally in her head for not understanding words coming out of my mouth because of the assumption that I'm a Latino immigrant. And I
find that that's when people are the meanest to me, when they assume [that] I'm an immigrant. Because there's this assumption that being Latino means being an immigrant. And it's very bizarre. … It's been so many things throughout my whole life that eventually it does add up. And it's very hard because, as a dark-skinned Latino, as an Afro-Latino, you get both ends of the racism all the time. You don't get to be excluded from any kind of racism, you get to experience all of it.

In addition to showing the prejudice and discrimination my respondents faced in Central Florida, Anamarie’s story reflects where my respondents might be getting narratives about citizenship—from white Americans who discriminate. The white woman’s assertion that she needed a “real American” to help her reflects broader racist views of American citizenship as being measured by one’s whiteness. Anamarie’s story also reflects the impact of being a member of several marginalized groups—in her case, being a woman, being perceived as a Latina immigrant, and being discriminated against due to her dark skin and features.

*Government mistrust and the adherence to conspiracy theories*

A significant portion of my respondents held a deep sense of mistrust for the U.S. government and expressed that they were wary of voting due to this mistrust. One respondent claimed that the election winner was “already planned,” alluding to their view of U.S. elections as rigged. Another claimed that members of both parties were all “crooked.” Others viewed the election as pointless given the structure of the U.S. government (e.g., the system of checks and balances involving Congress) or the U.S. electoral system (e.g., the electoral college). For example, Adrian, a 28-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following when asked about his views on the election:

I don't follow any of that stuff because at the end of the day, the president is no more than just a face. He's a face for the people to go ahead and point their fingers
to. President has no control. President is nothing. He is nothing. He is a body that is put there to go ahead and dictate and say, "Okay, well, I want to go ahead and pass that. We're going to go ahead and deny that." Your backbone, which is Congress, they're the ones that run the show.

On the more cynical end, respondents such as Karla, a 37-year-old, second-generation Dominican, viewed the entire election as a sham, stating the following,

Again, I don't trust our government, period. I don't care who's president. At the end of the day, to me, the president is just a puppet. There's somebody behind the president. Okay. So, at the end of the day, ...they're going to elect whoever they feel needs to be there, no matter who's voting. No, I'm not voting. ...To be honest with you, I don't feel like our votes really do matter because like I said, again, at the end of the day, they're going to choose who they want up there, which is sad.

Here, Karla positions herself as completely helpless relative to “somebody behind the president” making the actual decisions. While Karla did not elaborate on her feelings of mistrust, it was clear these feelings kept her from participating in the electoral process.

Existing research links an adherence to conspiracy theories with a sense of government mistrust. Conspiracy theorists can differ by level of education, class background, and occupation. Studies show that, at any given time, approximately half of the U.S. electorate holds one or more beliefs categorized as conspiracy theories (Oliver and Wood 2014). Overall, my respondents seemed to adhere to government conspiracy theories that were linked to shadow governments (e.g., the new world order) and gun rights.

On the issue of the election, some respondents tied their mistrust of the electoral process to a conspiracy known as the “new world order.” Julissa, a 34-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following when asked about her views on the 2016 presidential election:
They're trying to make the new world order type of thing. One currency, cashless, you know, they've been trying to work on that for years. …Like, for example, Obamacare, right. …If Romney would have won, it would have been Romney-care. They already had that Obamacare thing in place. It was just, they needed to, you know, put the president there and then, boom. …Even if Trump does become president, which I don't think so, but he might, either way, there's still gonna be one agenda. Either Hillary is gonna push, like she's gonna win, it's still gonna be the same. …They want people to vote so they can think that they have a say in what's really going on, that's my opinion.

Here, Julissa is using the conspiracy theory to make sense of similarities between Obama’s and Romney’s proposed healthcare reforms and to cast doubt on the entire electoral process.

Another conspiracy theory mentioned by several respondents linked the Pulse Nightclub shooting—which occurred earlier the same summer in Orlando, Florida and resulted in the deaths of over 50 clubgoers, most of whom were LGBT Latinos—and government attempts to implement more stringent gun control laws. For example, Leo, a 23-year-old, second-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following when asked about his thoughts on the mass shooting:

That's something that I think was more of a government conspiracy than…a terrorist attack because, from what they're saying, that guy was gay, too. So, then why you going to pledge allegiance to being a Muslim when you're also gay? That makes no sense. So, you're going to kill a bunch of gays because you're gay? … I think that that's just for them to have a reason to take away our Second Amendment rights, the right to bear arms. That's what I think. I think they're trying to take away that right because all this bullshit gun control when technically, they can't do that because it says in the Second Amendment that we have the right to sell and to have all the ammunition, all the weapons we need to make sure that we don't get abused by other people in different countries and our own government.

Here, Leo uses a conspiracy theory to make sense of what might be called a senseless crime. Given the murkiness of the details provided by law enforcement about the
shooting, and the lack of clarity concerning the shooter’s motives, Leo used what information he did have—that shootings have often led to national discussions of gun control—to make sense of the shooting. Along a similar vein, Adrian, a 28-year-old, 1.5-generation Puerto Rican, stated the following when asked about the shooting:

I mean, me, personally, on situations like that, because it seems to be happening more and more often, [I think] it was a controlled event. People talk a lot about the guy because the guy believed in the Muslim ways or whatever. But at the end of the day, he passed that background test to achieve or to obtain a firearm just like any other American citizen would. Now, that he chose that spot or whether he chose another, don't really matter. But at the end of the day, it all coincides back to the government. …At the end of the day, that was something that the government did so that way they could get the support of the country to go ahead and do what they did. …The same deal's happening now because they're talking about gun control, now let's go ahead and put a shooting. Let's go ahead and promote that gun control law so now we can go ahead and get things under control. And the problem is that they take millions of lives because we don't matter. We're pawns at the end of the day.

Adrian’s belief that regular U.S. residents are “pawns” to the government directly links his conspiracy theory to a deeper sense of mistrust in the government.

**Conclusion**

To assess whether, and how, my respondents engaged with collective emotions regarding immigration to the U.S., I asked them about the 2016 election, including their views on the top three candidates, their view of the electoral process as a whole, and their views on undocumented immigrants, which was one of the most salient topics of the election cycle.

While asserting their views on Donald Trump, my respondents used laughter and condescension to quell their deeper fears concerning life under a Donald Trump presidency. Their overall views of Donald Trump were that he was a racist, xenophobic
candidate that would only work to further the interests of the rich. When discussing the eventual Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton, my respondents engaged many of the sexist tropes leveled on Hillary Clinton in public forums, including that she was “too weak” for the position. The Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in my sample were overall sympathetic toward the second most popular Democratic candidate, Bernie Sanders, and expressed hope while discussing his proposed plans to make college education free for all. In addition to these findings, my respondents also expressed how they resorted to social media to get news about the presidential candidates, given they found mainstream news to be “too depressing.” These findings reflect a need for future research on the political engagement techniques of young Latinos, as well as on the impact of Russian interference on Latinos in particular.

Puerto Ricans and Dominicans were overall likely to support immigration to the U.S. and shied away from the xenophobic rhetoric that became central to the 2016 election. When discussing the issue of immigration, many of my respondents showed fear and anxiety concerning the potential election of an anti-immigrant president, Donald Trump in this case. For Dominicans, fear and anxiety were paired with explicit solidarity with other immigrant groups in the country, and particularly with Latino immigrants. In contrast, Puerto Rican respondents dealt with these anti-immigrant anxieties by distancing themselves from Mexican immigrants and emphasizing their legal status in the U.S. These examples of what I call anxious citizenship, underscore the impact of xenophobic rhetoric on the everyday feelings of Latinos in the U.S. The fact that these feelings existed regardless of respondents’ legal status in the country reinforces the role
of emotion in understanding citizenship. It is not enough to simply be a citizen if one does not feel like a citizen.

Lastly, respondents showed an overall sense of mistrust regarding the U.S. government and its electoral processes. My findings show how a sense of mistrust concerning the government was linked to feelings of political alienation and a view of voting as futile. Among some respondents, government mistrust was also tied to a belief in one or more conspiracy theories. These beliefs ranged from a belief in a “new world order” to beliefs that mass shootings were orchestrated by the government to strip citizens of their right to bear arms. While a belief in conspiracy theories is not unique to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, these findings show it is linked to broader feelings of political alienation.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Research on Puerto Ricans and Dominicans highlights how members of these groups might be changing how race operates in the U.S. through their insistence of culturally specific understandings of race that do not conform with the Black-white binary common in the U.S. Further, studies on these groups and on the racial identification and integration processes of Latinos have largely ignored the role of affect and emotions on how these processes unfold. The findings in this dissertation show that Latinos, and especially those from countries with a Black-white continuum of race, like Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic, share more similarities than differences with the United States in their racial ideologies. The privileging of whiteness and devaluation of Blackness that are salient in the U.S. are present in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and converge with U.S. understandings of whiteness and Blackness for 1.5- and second-generation Puerto Ricans and Dominicans living in the continental United States.

But what is the role of collective emotions in shaping processes of integration and racial self-identification for Latinos in the U.S.? The findings in this dissertation show that collective emotions mediate the relationship between identity and ideology for Latinos. In other words, to understand the link between how one views one’s own race and how one understands others’ race, we need to understand how race operates through collective emotions. In a country where collective emotions surrounding Blackness attach it to criminality and bad behavior, Latinos who adopt these emotions are unlikely to self-identify as Black. In other words, it would take a deliberate refusal of these anti-Black emotions to view oneself as Black and self-identify as such. Similarly, if one were to adopt collective emotions in the U.S. that frame immigration as a crisis produced by
undocumented Latinos, it is unlikely that one would stand in solidarity with Latino immigrants and self-identify as part of this group. Hence, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, by adopting certain collective emotions and refusing to adopt others, engage in a process of linking their self-identification with their racial ideologies. These processes are not automatic nor driven solely by one’s social status, as implied by Eduardo Bonilla Silva’s theory of the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva 2002).

What predicts whether Latinos, and in this case, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, will adopt collective emotions that reproduce white dominance in the U.S.? My findings show several answers as well as questions for future research. First, given the role of power in propping up racist collective emotions, my findings reflect how challenging these emotions requires a preponderance of evidence. For example, this was the case for respondents who viewed George Zimmerman—the white-passing man who killed unarmed Trayvon Martin—as a murderer. Respondents came to this conclusion after seeing that Zimmerman had been brought to court several times after his acquittal in the Martin case for other gun-related charges. Zimmerman was also an armed neighborhood watch member, and not a police officer, which made my respondents question his legitimacy. Thus, challenging collective emotions surrounding presumed Black criminality requires the delegitimating of those who marginalize Black people. Given that the marginalization of Black people in the U.S. is often state-sanctioned, challenging collective emotions regarding Blackness will first require concerted efforts on the part of social movement organizers and policymakers.
On the issue of immigration, my findings show Latinos are more likely to adopt racist and xenophobic collective emotions when they are U.S. citizens themselves and when they fear losing their own rights in the country. Puerto Ricans and Dominicans expressed fears of being deported irrespective of their legal status. Thus, future research must address how these fears impact civic engagement and whether they help explain solidarity between Latinos with U.S. citizenship and those without.

*The Calm Before the Storms—Addressing Collective Emotions Post-Trump and Post-Maria*

Since the data for this dissertation were collected in 2016, two major events have produced conditions that warrant the attention of race and immigration scholars—the election of Donald Trump and the devastation of the Category 5 Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. These events have had an impact on Central Florida as well as on Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the region and beyond.

The election of Donald Trump to the presidency left many in the U.S. confused and angry. Polls leading up to the 2016 presidential election predicted that Hillary Clinton would win and, while she did win the popular vote by over 1.5 million ballots, Donald Trump eventually beat her in the electoral college. Since the election, Donald Trump’s presidency has been beset by a series of scandals and racist/xenophobic policies including: the role of Russian hacking and interference in our electoral process, the implementation of a ban on any travel from seven (and later on, five) majority-Muslim countries, the separation of children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border, the long-term detention of children in “camps” at the U.S.-Mexico border with insufficient food and unsanitary conditions, and a two-year-long Special Counsel investigation on
potential collusion between the Trump Campaign and Russian intelligence to influence the outcome of the 2016 election.

As race and immigration scholars attempt to make sense of this administration and its policies, it is crucial to understand how such a chaotic presidency is impacting the life outcomes of minoritized groups. It is also important to understand how Trump’s presidency has shaped the racial ideologies of those in marginalized groups. For example, we might ask, how has Trump’s presidency impacted Latinos’ views on immigration, whether documented or undocumented? Has Trump’s presidency impacted Latinos’ views on Blackness and Black people in the U.S.? Has his presidency increased the potential for solidarity between minoritized groups, or not?

Less than one year after Donald Trump’s inauguration, Puerto Rico witnessed one of the worst hurricanes in its known history. Hurricane Maria, which landed in Puerto Rico on September 16, 2017, resulted in a widespread devastation of homes and infrastructure on the island. The hurricane and its aftermath resulted in the deaths of almost 3,000 islanders, making it one of the deadliest storms in United States history. The response from the Trump administration was found to be negligent, as millions of islanders struggled to access water, food, and safe shelter after the storm. Proper funding to address the devastation of the storm did not arrive until early 2019, when Democrats and Republicans in Congress finally agreed to include money for disaster aid for Puerto Rico in their annual budget.

While it is too early to know the depths of the impact of the storm, those in Central Florida immediately felt its secondary impacts. Reports state that over 160,000 Puerto Ricans left the island and resettled in the states after Hurricane Maria. Of those
migrants, one third, or roughly 65,000 Puerto Ricans resettled in Florida (the majority in Central Florida), making it the state with the highest number of Puerto Rican resettlements (Center for Puerto Rican Studies 2018). Throughout my interviews prior to the storm, I found that the concentration of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans was viewed by co-ethnics as markers of low status and a lack of assimilation. Future research should examine the impact of Hurricane Maria and outmigration from the island to Central Florida on the Latinos who were already living in the region. To what extent did the storm impact relations between U.S.-born Latinos in the area and their recently arrived counterparts? Also, what impact did the storm (and the U.S. government’s negligent response) have on Puerto Ricans’, and to a lesser extent, Dominicans’, sense of citizenship in the U.S.? And, overall, what impact have Donald Trump’s presidency and Hurricane Maria had on racialized collective emotions in the U.S., as well as Latinos’ likelihood of adopting these emotions?

As we study the impact of recent events on the future of racial stratification in the U.S., we should aim to better understand how marginalized groups and their racial ideologies work for or against white dominance in the country. While white supremacy continues to be the underlying foundation of racial inequalities across the Americas, factoring in the role of emotions in mediating racial identity and racial ideologies provide researchers a more nuanced understanding of how white dominance persists in the U.S. despite the growth of minoritized populations in the country.
Appendix

Interview protocol

1. Informed consent form

2. Demographics:
   - Age
   - Current job
   - Where were you born?
   - Mother’s place of birth
   - Father’s place of birth
   - Education
   - Mother’s education
   - Father’s education
   - Marital status
   - Children (how many)?

3. Migration history:
   - Trace your migration history for me, from the time you were born until living here in Central Florida/Philadelphia.
   - Parents’ migration history (if not mentioned yet). Tell me about your parents’ journey to the U.S.

4. Socialization:
   - Tell me about how your closest family members look, compared to you.
   - What was/is your parents’ relationship like with people of other racial/ethnic groups?
   - Tell me about the first time you became aware of being Puerto Rican or Dominican.

5. Group boundaries:
   - How can you tell when someone is Puerto Rican? Dominican?
   - Can Latinos/Hispanics be white? Can Latinos/Hispanics be black?
▪ How important is speaking Spanish to being Latino/Hispanic?

▪ Have you ever heard the term “mira mira”? What does it mean for you?

6. Puerto Rican and Dominican terms:
▪ I’m going to share a list of terms that are commonly used in Puerto Rico and/or the Dominican Republic to talk about how people look.

▪ When I say each term, I want you to tell me if you’ve heard the term, and how you would describe someone who falls under that term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigueño(a)</th>
<th>Azulito(a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Café con leche</td>
<td>Grifo(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreno(a)</td>
<td>Piel canela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jincho(a)</td>
<td>Mulato(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indio(a)</td>
<td>Mestizo(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubio(a)</td>
<td>Negro(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prieto(a)</td>
<td>Blanco(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaba(o)</td>
<td>Colora(o)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Interpersonal race relations:
▪ Tell me about the people you interact with on a daily basis (e.g., your co-workers, friends, romantic partners). What are their backgrounds?

▪ Tell me about your neighborhood. Is it mostly people of your same background living there? What’s your relationship like with your neighbors?

▪ Have you ever been identified as something other than [preferred identity]? Tell me about one of these instances. How did that make you feel?

8. Perceived discrimination:
▪ Have you ever been treated negatively because of how you look or your background?

9. Events in the news:
There was a mass shooting in Orlando recently at a club called Pulse.
- Did you hear about the shooting? What are your thoughts on it?

Over the past several years, including recently, there have been a number of high-profile cases involving shootings of African Americans, leading to protests by BLM.
- Have you heard of any of these cases? How do you feel about them?
- How do you feel about the protests that have come out of them?

Over the past year there has been a lot of attention paid to the presidential election in this country. How do you feel about the candidates?
- What are your thoughts on Donald Trump in particular?
- The issue of government assistance tends to come up during presidential election seasons. What are your thoughts on government programs such as welfare and food stamps?

(Questions continue below)
10. Census forms:
   - Present respondents with the 2010 Census ethnicity and race questions (Census Question I). Ask them to identify the choices they would make for themselves.

Census Question I:

![Census Question I](image-url)
Present respondents with the proposed 2020 Census ethno-racial combined question (Census Question 2). Inform them the forms look alike but are different. Ask them to identify the choices they would make for themselves.

Census Question II:

- Which form do you feel more accurately represents how you see your own identity? Why?
11. Skin tone:
   ▪ Assign a number to your skin tone. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being the darkest person you can think of and 1 being the lightest person you can think of, which number would you assign for your own skin tone? _____

13. Audio release form

14. Post-interview questions:
   ▪ Is there anything else you’d like to say before we end?
   ▪ Were there any questions I asked you that you’d like to ask me?
References


