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Reconstructing Racial Identity

Ethnicity, Color, and Class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico

by

Jorge Duany

When people move across state borders, they enter not only a different labor market and political structure but also a new system of social stratification by class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Migrants bring their own cultural conceptions of their identity, which often do not coincide with the ideological constructions of the receiving societies. As a mulatto Dominican colleague told me recently, she "discovered" that she was black only when she first came to the United States; until then she had thought of herself as an india clara (literally, a light Indian) in a country whose aboriginal population was practically exterminated in the 16th century.

For most Caribbean immigrants in the United States, race and color have played a crucial role in the formation of their cultural identities. Two different models of racial hegemony are juxtaposed in the process of moving from the Caribbean to the United States. On one hand, Caribbean migrants—especially those coming from the Spanish-speaking countries of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico—tend to use three main racial categories—black, white, and mixed—based primarily on skin color and other physical characteristics such as facial features and hair texture (Seda Bonilla, 1980). On the other hand, the dominant system of racial classification in the

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United States emphasizes a two-tiered division between whites and non-whites deriving from the rule of hypodescent—the assignment of the offspring of mixed races to the subordinate group (Harris, 1964; Winant, 1994). This clear-cut opposition between two cultural conceptions of racial identity is ripe for social and psychological conflict among Caribbean migrants, many of whom are of African or mixed background and are therefore defined as black or colored in the United States (Kasinitz, 1992; Safa, 1983).

I will argue that the massive exodus from the Dominican Republic has culturally redefined the migrants' racial identity. Whereas North Americans classify most Caribbean immigrants as black, Dominicans tend to perceive themselves as white, Hispanic, or other (including the folk term indio, to be discussed later). This contradiction between the public perception and the self-concept of Dominican migrants is one of their key problems in adapting to North American society. In Puerto Rico, although the traditional system of racial classification is similar to that of the Dominican Republic, most Dominican immigrants are viewed as blacks or colored (in local lore, prietos, morenos, and trigueños). Thus, in both receiving countries, Dominicans face the intense stigmatization, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination to which all people of African origin are subjected.

The argument is organized in four main parts. First, I will briefly review the extensive literature on race relations in the Caribbean and the United States, with special attention to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. This background will help to clarify the different ideological constructions of racial identity in the sending and receiving countries. Second, I will summarize two field studies I directed among Dominican immigrants in the United States and in Puerto Rico. These studies will provide empirical support for the claim that migration has restructured the cultural conceptions of racial identity among Dominicans living abroad. Third, I will compare the Dominican communities of Washington Heights in New York City and Santurce, Puerto Rico. The data will reveal different patterns of racial and ethnic segregation, prejudice and discrimination, cultural adaptation, and identity, despite the similarity of many of the migrants' socioeconomic characteristics. Finally, I will assess the incorporation of Dominicans into North American and Puerto Rican societies and its potential impact on the Dominican Republic. My main thesis is that the racialization of Dominican immigrants in the United States and Puerto Rico has reinforced the persistence of an ethnic identity against the prevailing racial order and has largely confined them to the secondary segment of the labor and housing markets.

The theoretical framework for my argument owes much to the discussion of the racial formation of the United States by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994). According to these writers, race is not a fixed essence, a
concrete and objective entity, but rather a set of socially constructed meanings subject to change and contestation through power relations and social movements. Hence, racial identity is historically flexible and culturally variable, embedded in a particular social context (see Winant, 1994, for a recent attempt to reconceptualize the study of race relations from a Gramscian and poststructuralist perspective). I would argue that the dominant racial ideologies in the United States, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico categorize and interpret race in different ways. Consequently, Dominican immigrants in the United States and Puerto Rico tend to be treated as blacks, although most of them do not define themselves as such.

My comparative analysis of the Dominican diaspora is also informed by recent thinking on transnationalism (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc Szanton, 1992; Rouse, 1991). For present purposes, Schiller, Basch, and Blanc Szanton (1992) provide the most useful definition of transnationalism as the process whereby migrants establish and maintain sociocultural connections across geopolitical borders. The migrants' social relations, cultural values, economic resources, and political activities span at least two nation-states. Such transnational links are often sustained by a constant back-and-forth movement of people facilitated by rapid transportation and communications systems. As a result, migrants have multiple identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation. Transnationalism interacts with ethnicity, race, class, gender, and other variables, complicating the process of identity formation. Among other consequences, transnational migration often transforms the cultural definition of racial identity.

In this context, the wider significance of the Dominican experience in the United States and Puerto Rico is twofold. On one hand, the reconstruction of racial identity among Dominican immigrants confirms that all systems of racial classification are arbitrary and contingent on varying forms of cultural representation. As a terrain of ideological contestation, the perceived racial identity of individuals and groups does not necessarily coincide with their self-perception (Omi and Winant, 1994). On the other hand, the racialization of Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico is part of a larger phenomenon affecting Caribbean communities in the diaspora. The prevailing definition of these migrants as black and colored tends to exclude them as biologically different from and culturally alien to the receiving societies (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994). To the extent that Caribbean migrants are racialized, their efforts to become integrated into the host countries face more obstacles than those of other ethnic groups that are not so labeled.
CARIBBEAN VERSUS
U.S. RACE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Much of the academic literature on Caribbean race relations is now several decades old (but see Oostindie, 1996, and Carrón, 1997, for recent collections revisiting the topic). The pioneering essays of the 1950s (Wagley, 1958), 1960s (Harris, 1964; Hoetink, 1967), and 1970s (Lowenthal, 1972; Mintz, 1974) contrasted the social construction of race in the Caribbean, the United States, and other countries of the Americas. The clearest picture emerging from these classic studies is that Caribbean societies tend to be stratified in terms of both class status and color gradations ranging from white to brown to black. Color distinctions in the Caribbean involve a complex inventory of physical traits such as skin pigmentation, hair form, and facial structure (Lowenthal, 1972; see also Smith, 1984). Phenotype and social status rather than biological descent define a person’s racial identity, especially in the Spanish-speaking countries.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Historians have shown that the present-day population of the Dominican Republic is the result of the intense mixture of peoples of European, African, and, to a lesser extent, Amerindian origin. By the end of the 18th century, the majority of Dominicans were classified as colored—that is, mulattoes and blacks or, in contemporary parlance, pardos and morenos. Free blacks and mulattoes displaced creole whites, African slaves, and Taínos as the leading sector of the colony of Hispaniola (Moya Pons, 1986; Franco, 1989). Today, informed sources agree that approximately 75 percent of the Dominican population consists of mulattoes, with about 10 percent black and 15 percent white (compare Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1994; Ferguson, 1992; Black, 1986; Wiarda and Kryzanek, 1982). Like all racial statistics, these estimates reveal more about the official views of race than about the actual extent of racial mixture or the presence of blacks in the country.

Regardless of the exact demographic composition of the Dominican Republic, the dominant discourse on national identity defines it as white, Hispanic, and Catholic. Scholars have traced the origins and development of a racist and xenophobic ideology in the Dominican Republic since the mid-19th century. This ideology has produced an idealized view of the indigenous elements in Dominican culture, a systematic neglect of the contribution of African slaves and their descendants, increasing animosity toward Haitians and other black immigrants (such as the so-called cocolos from the eastern Caribbean), and a marked preference for Hispanic customs.
and traditions (Hoetink, 1994; Sagás, 1993; 1997; Alcántara Almánzar, 1987). As in other Hispanic Caribbean countries, racial prejudice and discrimination have been central features of the conventional wisdom on Dominican identity.

Under Rafael Trujillo's dictatorship (1930-1961), the pro-Hispanic and anti-Haitian discourse became the official ideology of the Dominican state. The Cibao region—with its traditional peasantry, popular music, Hispanic folklore, and "white" physical appearance—became the romantic symbol of an "authentic" Dominican culture (Hoetink, 1994). Thus, the Dominican merengue, particularly in its Cibao variant, became a powerful icon of national identity (Duany, 1994a). Meanwhile, Dominican politicians and intellectuals associated with the Trujillo regime defined Haiti as the antithesis of the Dominican Republic. If Dominicans were supposed to be white, Haitians were black; if Dominicans were Hispanic, Haitians were African; if Dominicans spoke Spanish, Haitians spoke Créole; and if Dominicans were Catholic, Haitians were voodoo practitioners. This binary opposition represented Haitians as the other—as inferior, foreign, and savage. The category "black" disappeared altogether from the official and popular discourses on race in the Dominican Republic, except in reference to foreigners (Baud, 1996; Charles, 1992; del Castillo, 1984).

Nowadays, even the darkest-skinned Dominican is considered not black but indio oscuro (dark Indian) or trigueño. As a result of this cultural conception, most Dominicans are declared to be white (blanco), Indian (indio), or a mixture of the two races (mestizo); only Haitians are considered "pure" blacks. A recent essay by Peter Roberts (1997) has analyzed the importance of the concept of indio for the construction of national identity in the Dominican Republic, as well as in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Stressing the indigenous roots of the Dominican nation helped to distinguish it from the Spanish metropolis as well as from neighboring Haiti. According to Ernesto Sagás (1993), the Dominican government now classifies the majority of Dominican citizens as indios. Thus, the term has become an official racial category in the Dominican Republic. The equivalent term mulato, referring to a mixture of white and black, is rarely used.

The academic literature contains numerous studies on the hostile relations between the Dominican Republic and Haiti (see the extensive bibliography in Lozano, 1992). The key historiographic issue has been the impact of the Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo (1822-1844) on the formation of the Dominican nation-state (Moya Pons, 1992; Franco, 1989). Whereas most historians traditionally considered this period a traumatic collective experience, Harry Hoetink (1971) emphasized the positive impact of the Haitian occupation on Dominican race relations and cultural identity. One of the
recurring themes of the sociological literature is the massive migration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic and their slavelike working conditions on the sugar and coffee plantations (see Báez Evertsz, 1986; Lozano and Báez Evertsz, 1992). An invidious system of occupational segregation has isolated Haitians in the worst-paid and least desirable jobs, such as cane cutting and construction work. In both instances, directing racial and ethnic prejudice at a foreign enemy—Haitians—helped to define and consolidate a Dominican nationalist project conceived by the dominant elite and filtered down to the popular sectors.

Although many Dominican intellectuals in the post-Trujillo era have rejected the myth of Haitian inferiority, the popular sectors continue to repudiate Haitian immigrants and Haiti in general. Lower-class Dominicans attribute all kinds of social problems and negative situations to the Haitian “invasion,” including racial “degeneration.” According to a young Dominican cook living in Puerto Rico, “All Dominicans were blonde and blue eyed before they got dark and mixed with the Haitians.” The Haitian has acquired a mysterious and legendary status in Dominican folklore as a practitioner of obscure rites such as black magic and cannibalism. It will take time to eradicate firmly held beliefs and practices that exclude Haitians (and, by extension, blacks) from the accepted definition of national identity in the Dominican Republic (see Torres-Saillant, 1992-1993; 1997; Sagás, 1993; 1997). Anti-Haitianism pervades the dominant discourse on Dominican identity, from popular religion, music, and literature to economic affairs, public policies, and party politics. One of the main problems faced by the presidential candidate of the Dominican Revolutionary party, José Francisco Peña Gómez, has been his Haitian origin and black appearance. Although racism was not the only reason for Peña Gómez’s defeat in 1996, it played a key role in the electoral campaign.

In sum, the Dominican system of racial classification has two peculiar features in a comparative Caribbean context. First, it does not identify local blacks as a separate category within the color spectrum but instead reserves that category for Haitians. Second, it blurs the distinctions among creole whites, light coloreds, and mulattos, thereby creating the impression of a predominantly white and Indian population. Through these discursive strategies, the system fosters the racial and cultural homogenization of the Dominican Republic vis-à-vis Haiti. Thus, the social construction of race and ethnicity is characterized by a strong reactive or oppositional identity. It is this sense of national pride and rejection of their own negritude that many Dominican migrants bring with them and must reevaluate when they confront the U.S. model of racial stratification.
PUERTO RICO

The best empirical study of Puerto Rican race relations remains Eduardo Seda Bonilla’s pioneering fieldwork, conducted in the late 1950s and 1960s, although several essays have dealt with the racial question on the island and the U.S. mainland since then (see Sagrera, 1973; Zenón Cruz, 1974; Ginorio, 1979; Picó de Hernández et al., 1985; Díaz Quiñones, 1985; Rodríguez-Morazzani 1996; V. Rodríguez, 1997). Seda Bonilla (1973) argued convincingly that most Puerto Ricans use phenotype rather than hypodescent as the main criterion for racial identity. Puerto Ricans tend to think of three main physical types—white, black, and mulatto—defined primarily by skin color, facial features, and hair texture (see also C. Rodríguez, 1989). Furthermore, whereas North Americans pay close attention to national origin in defining a person’s ethnic identity, Puerto Ricans give a higher priority to birthplace and cultural orientation.

Thus, when Puerto Ricans move to the U.S. mainland, they confront a different construction of their racial identity (Seda Bonilla, 1980). In the United States, Puerto Ricans are often grouped together with black and colored people. Those with mixed racial backgrounds lose their intermediate status in a white-nonwhite dichotomy. Light-skinned immigrants are sometimes called “white Puerto Ricans,” whereas dark-skinned immigrants are often treated like African Americans. Most are simply classified as “Pororicans” as if this were a distinct racial category. Like other ethnic minorities, Puerto Ricans in the United States have been thoroughly racialized (see V. Rodríguez, 1997; Rodríguez-Morazzani, 1996).

Statistically, the majority of the Puerto Rican population is white by local standards. Estimates of the white group on the island range from 73 percent (Seda Bonilla, 1980) to 80 percent of the population (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1994), with an additional 8 percent black and 19 percent mulatto in Seda Bonilla’s count. These statistics are open to debate because of the fluid definition of racial groups as well as the lack of recent official data on the island’s racial composition. (In 1970, the Census Bureau dropped the racial identification question for Puerto Rico.) However, the available figures confirm that most Puerto Ricans perceive themselves as white rather than as black or mulatto.

In any case, study after study has shown that blacks are a stigmatized minority on the island, that they suffer from persistent prejudice and discrimination; that they tend to occupy the lower rungs of the class structure, and that they are subject to an ideology of progressive whitening (blanqueamiento) through intermarriage with lighter-skinned groups and a denial of their cultural heritage and physical characteristics (Seda Bonilla, 1973;
Zenón Cruz, 1974; Picó de Hernández et al., 1985). Thus, the main difference between the Puerto Rican and North American models of racial stratification is not the treatment of blacks—who are accorded a subordinate status in both societies—but rather the mixed group. In Puerto Rico, light mulattos often pass for whites, whereas in the United States, this intermediate racial category does not even exist officially. The symbolic boundaries among whites, mulattos, and blacks seem more porous in Puerto Rico than in the United States.

New York-based Puerto Rican sociologist Clara Rodríguez reports that many members of the so-called Neo-Rican community resist being classified as either black or white and prefer to identify themselves as “other.” In the 1980 Census, 48 percent of New York’s Puerto Rican population chose this category, including alternative ethnic labels such as Hispanic, Spanish, and Boricua (C. Rodríguez, 1989; 1992; Rodríguez and Cordero-Guzmán, 1992). Hence, many Puerto Rican migrants and their descendants continue to employ a tripartite rather than a bipolar system of racial classification. Contrary to Seda Bonilla’s (1980) prediction that the Neo-Rican community would split along color lines, most migrants reject their indiscriminate labeling as members of a single race (see also Ginorio, 1979). Rather than dividing themselves into white or black, most Puerto Ricans recognize that they are a multiracial or—to use Rodríguez’s (1989) apt image—a “rainbow” people.

In sum, the Puerto Rican model of race relations has several distinguishing features. In contrast to North Americans, most Puerto Ricans consider racial identity not primarily a question of biological descent but rather one of physical appearance. As a result, a person of mixed racial background is not automatically assigned to the black group in Puerto Rico. Rather, racial classification depends largely on skin color and other visible characteristics such as the shape of the mouth, nose, and hair. Puerto Ricans have developed an elaborate racist vocabulary for referring to these characteristics. Socioeconomic variables such as occupation and education can also affect a person’s racial identity. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans usually distinguish between blacks and mulattos, whereas North Americans tend to view both groups as colored or nonwhite. Finally, because of the proliferation of multiple and fluid physical types, Puerto Rico has not established a two-tiered institutionalized system of racial discrimination such as that of the United States. For example, neither the occupational nor the residential structures of Puerto Rican society segregate its members exclusively by color. As we shall see, the island’s system of racial classification has distinct implications for the racial identity of Dominican migrants.
THE UNITED STATES

The preceding discussion has already alluded to the key features of the dominant model of racial formation in the United States. Scholars have debated whether this model resembles a caste system, especially as it operated in the Old South prior to the abolition of the Jim Crow laws in the 1950s. In any case, the North American system is unusual (comparable to South Africa’s apartheid) in its terminological simplicity and intense separation between subordinate “racial” minorities and dominant ethnic groups. Historically, the black/white division has been rigidly defined in the United States through the rule of hypodescent (Omi and Winant, 1994). North American race relations have been characterized by institutionalized discrimination against so-called racial minorities such as African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians, defined partly by their skin color and partly by their geographic origin.

The dominant racial discourse in the United States assigns an upper status to white groups of European origin and a lower status to black and brown groups from other regions, including the Caribbean and Latin America. Racial minorities such as Haitians and Chinese are stereotyped and marginalized more acutely than other ethnic groups in North American society. As a result, the social distance between such groups is much greater than that between, say, the Irish or Italians and English or Germans, who are all defined as “white ethnics.” The racialization of Caribbean immigrants has slowed their structural and cultural assimilation into North American society. Recent studies have coined the terms “segmented assimilation” and “oppositional identity” to refer to the fate of racially defined minorities in the contemporary United States (see Portes, 1994, for a conceptual discussion and empirical data focusing on second-generation immigrants).

Residential segregation is a fundamental aspect of racial and ethnic relations in the United States (Massey and Denton, 1993). Black Americans have been subjected to the highest degree of racial segregation in major urban centers over the past five decades, and so have most Caribbean immigrants, who tend to be considered black or colored (Kasinitz, 1992). Recent studies have shown that Latinos, especially Puerto Ricans and dark-skinned immigrants, suffer from a similar disadvantage in the housing market of metropolitan areas such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Hartford (Santiago and Wilder, 1991; Santiago, 1992). Some scholars have even predicted that Latinos will become a “middle race” between whites and blacks in the United States (Domínguez, 1973).

Until now, no empirical study has systematically examined the impact of the North American system of racial stratification on the Dominican diaspora.
The major publications have neglected the cultural redefinition of the migrants' racial identity in the United States (see Guarnizo, 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Portes and Guarnizo, 1991; Georges, 1990; Georges et al., 1989; del Castillo and Mitchell, 1987). An exception to this trend is Virginia Domínguez's (1973; 1978) comparative assessment of Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans in Washington Heights during the 1960s. One reason for this oversight may be that researchers have usually focused on Dominican migrants as lower-class workers rather than as members of a "racial" minority. Most studies have underestimated a key variable in the incorporation of Dominican immigrants into the secondary segment of the U.S. labor and housing markets: their public perception as blacks, colored, or nonwhite.

STUDYING DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS
IN THE UNITED STATES AND PUERTO RICO

The fieldwork reported in this article was conducted in three census blocks, two in Barrio Gandul in Santurce, a central city subdivision of the metropolitan area of San Juan, Puerto Rico, studied in 1990, and one in Washington Heights in upper Manhattan, the main borough of New York City, studied in 1993. (The research summarized here followed the guidelines for an alternative enumeration developed by the Center for Survey Methods Research at the U.S. Census Bureau; see Brownrigg, 1990; Brownrigg and Fasler, 1990; for more methodological details, see Duany, Hernández Angueira, and Rey, 1995.) These blocks were selected because of their high concentration of Dominican residents, primarily residential use, and safety. The samples included all housing units and persons residing within the three blocks at the time of the fieldwork. The two blocks in Puerto Rico contained 325 persons, whereas the New York block contained 352 persons. Both sites were ethnically and racially mixed urban neighborhoods with a predominantly Hispanic population, primarily of Puerto Rican and Dominican origin.

Race, a matter of considerable unease among Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, was observed rather than asked of each respondent. Many informants would consider it offensive for someone to even question their racial identity. We therefore decided to rely on our own impressions of the residents' phenotypes. In San Juan, we classified each person's physical appearance as white, black, or mulatto (a mixture of black and white). In New York, we added a fourth category, mestizo (a mixture of Indian and white). Following our informants' practice, this classification was primarily based on the person's skin color. Although this method is not scientifically valid as a
measure of biological descent, it offers an approximate assessment of the residents' racial identity.

At the beginning of our fieldwork in Santurce, we sought to elicit our informants' own constructions of their racial identity by asking them what race they considered themselves to belong to. Responses to this seemingly innocuous question ranged from embarrassment and amazement to ambivalence and silence: many informants simply shrugged their shoulders and pointed to their arms, as if their skin color were obvious. When people referred to others' race, they often used ambiguous euphemisms ("He's a little darker than I") without making a definite commitment to a specific racial label. In North American racial terminology, most of our subjects would probably classify themselves as "other," that is, as neither white nor black. For the purposes of this fieldwork, it seemed culturally appropriate to collect data on racial identity based on consensually validated impressions of people's phenotypes as coded in Hispanic Caribbean societies such as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Following this procedure, the Santurce sample had a larger proportion of white and black people, whereas the New York sample was predominantly mulatto (Table 1). This trend reflects the higher incidence of racial segregation in New York than in San Juan. With regard to ethnicity, two-thirds of the Santurce sample were of Puerto Rican origin, whereas four-fifths of the Manhattan sample were of Dominican origin. One-third of the residents in San Juan were born in the Dominican Republic compared with more than half of the residents in the New York site. Again, foreign immigrants were more highly concentrated in New York than in Santurce.

**COMPARING THE TWO COMMUNITIES**

**SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

The two samples were similar in their lower status occupational composition, with an overrepresentation of service and blue-collar workers (Table 2). In both cases, most of the residents held low-paying unskilled jobs, working, for example, as domestics, porters, waiters, and parking attendants. A small minority were better-paid skilled workers—professionals, technicians, managers, and administrators. A larger proportion of Santurce's residents (nearly 22 percent) was engaged in craft and repair work as, for example, carpenters, mechanics, and seamstresses, than in Washington Heights (13 percent). On the other hand, the Washington Heights sample had proportionately more (17
TABLE 1

Characteristics of the Samples (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Santurce (N = 325)</th>
<th>Washington Heights (N = 352)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 and older</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulatto</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>63.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestizo</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some columns do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
a. The total number of cases varies between 296 and 307, due to missing information.
b. The total number of cases varies between 286 and 336, due to missing information.
c. Refers to national origin, regardless of place of birth.

percent) operators and laborers than the Santurce sample (7 percent). Overall, the Santurce residents—especially Puerto Ricans—are slightly better represented than the Washington Heights residents in the upper levels of the occupational structure.

The main socioeconomic contrast between the two communities is that a much larger proportion (18 percent) of Washington Heights residents worked in manufacturing than in Santurce (1 percent). Compared with those in New York, Dominicans in Puerto Rico were more likely to work in commerce, repair services, construction, and transportation. These findings coincide
TABLE 2
Occupational Distribution of Employed Residents (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Santurce (N = 107)</th>
<th>Washington Heights (N = 105)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals and technicians</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and administrators</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office workers</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salespersons</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and repair workers</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operators and laborers</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The first column does not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.*

with those of previous studies showing the importance of light manufacturing, especially the garment industry, for New York's Dominican community (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Hernández, Rivera-Batiz, and Agodini, 1995). The data also confirm the predominance of the service sector, including public administration and retail trade, in Santurce (Duany, 1990).

In short, the socioeconomic characteristics of the two samples for this study were predominantly those of a lower class population. The results suggest that most of the residents of Barrio Gandul and Washington Heights were employed in the secondary segment of the labor market, segregated by class, race, ethnicity, gender, and age. This segment is characterized by low wages, little prestige, poor working conditions, lack of occupational mobility, few fringe benefits, high turnover, and little employment security. The concentration of Dominican immigrants in the secondary segment of the labor market was even more pronounced than for other residents.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC SEGREGATION

Both the New York and San Juan sites represented multiracial and multiethnic samples. According to our estimate, Barrio Gandul was about evenly divided between white (45 percent) and "colored" residents (55 percent), including blacks and mulattos in the latter category. Most of the white residents of Barrio Gandul (87 percent) were Puerto Rican, whereas more than half of the blacks and mulattos were Dominican (52 percent). Thus, the color line reinforced ethnic divisions within Barrio Gandul. Although more than one-third of the Puerto Rican population of Barrio Gandul was not white in physical appearance, the influx of Dominican and other foreign immigrants
had increased the proportion of dark-skinned residents. However, the Santurce community did not separate blacks, whites, and mulattos or Dominicans and Puerto Ricans as strictly as in New York. This trend toward racial and ethnic integration was due partly to the neighborhood's historical background and partly to the way in which racial identity is constructed in Puerto Rico as opposed to the United States.

Barrio Gandul was established as a working-class community of Santurce between 1900 and 1930. The area's original inhabitants were former black slaves who leased the land of a wealthy landowner, Vicente Balbás Peña, whose heirs still own much of the property. Many of the older residents of Barrio Gandul were racially diverse immigrants from other parts of Puerto Rico. People of different color lived within the same streets, buildings, and even homes. Interracial relations tended to be cordial, friendly, and sometimes intimate. Married couples and some parents and children often had different phenotypes. Within the neighborhood, skin color was loosely correlated with socioeconomic status—for instance, whites tended to be homeowners, while blacks were usually tenants—but the two variables were not completely coterminous. Residents were sufficiently diverse in color and class to counter any one-to-one connection in the local stratification system. Since its inception, Barrio Gandul had been a multiracial lower class neighborhood.

With regard to ethnic composition, Barrio Gandul had one of the highest proportions of foreign immigrants in Santurce and probably in Puerto Rico. As a result, it had earned the sobriquet of "Little Quisqueya" (Quisqueya being the indigenous name of the island of Hispaniola, shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic). The 1990 Census found that almost 27 percent of the residents of Barrio Gandul had been born outside of Puerto Rico (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1994: Table 3). Our 1987 survey found that about 25 percent of the population of Barrio Gandul had been born in the Dominican Republic (Duany, 1990). Our most recent enumeration of the two census blocks found that a third of the residents were Dominican in origin. Apart from the Dominican Republic, foreign immigrants came from St. Kitts, Anguilla, Dominica, Cuba, and Colombia. Of the Puerto Rican residents, only a few had been born in the United States. Thus, Barrio Gandul was not a predominantly Dominican neighborhood like some parts of Washington Heights.

Santurce's Dominican community was concentrated in run-down apartment buildings and poorly maintained areas of the neighborhood. In Barrio Gandul, Dominicans clustered in the worst streets and quarters and Puerto Ricans in the better maintained areas. However, we did not find a single street or building in Barrio Gandul exclusively occupied by Dominican immi-
grants. Whether or not they liked it, Puerto Ricans lived side by side with Dominicans in most residential areas of Santurce. Despite their growing presence in some lower class neighborhoods, Dominican immigrants did not dominate any area of San Juan as completely as in Washington Heights. Again, this pattern of residential integration suggests that racial identity is constructed differently in the two places.

In Washington Heights, we classified three-fourths of the residents as black, mulatto, or mestizo. The vast majority of the mulattos were Dominican immigrants and their descendants (96 percent). Four out of five residents of Washington Heights were of Dominican origin, compared with one out of three in Barrio Gandul. The degree of separation between New York Dominicans and other ethnic and racial groups was striking. Washington Heights was fast becoming a Dominican enclave, increasingly segregated from native whites, African Americans, and other Hispanics such as Puerto Ricans. This trend is related to a long history of institutionalized housing discrimination against black immigrants in North American urban centers (Massey and Denton, 1993; Kasinitz, 1992). In less than 50 years, the ethnic and racial composition of the neighborhood had shifted dramatically, with white ethnic groups such as Irish Catholics and German Jews being replaced by nonwhite minorities such as African Americans and Latinos.

Since the 1950s, Washington Heights had deteriorated physically and socially. Real estate values had plummeted as many buildings, especially in the southeastern part of the neighborhood, had become dilapidated. The rapid increase in the number of Hispanic and black residents had accelerated the flight of white residents to the suburbs. After 1965, Dominicans arrived en masse, attracted by the neighborhood’s low rents, spacious apartments, and transportation facilities. Hispanics, especially Dominicans and to a lesser extent Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Ecuadorians, Salvadorans, and Mexicans, had replaced non-Hispanic whites as the leading sector of the population in Washington Heights.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

The United States, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico have all been dominated by an ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority since early colonial times, but this ideology is expressed in different ways, especially in popular attitudes and practices concerning racial mixture and intermarriage. In the Hispanic Caribbean, prejudice and discrimination are primarily targeted at blacks, not mulattos. In the United States, the two racial categories are usually lumped together. As a result, light-skinned Dominican mulattos have better prospects for social acceptance in Puerto Rico than in
the United States. For dark-skinned migrants, however, it is equally difficult to integrate into Puerto Rican society.

My fieldnotes for Barrio Gandul are full of references to the intermediate physical types of many residents, including mulato claro, mulato oscuro, moreno, trigueño, and prieto. For statistical purposes, all of these terms are usually grouped under the generic label “mulatto,” but Puerto Ricans and Dominicans make finer social distinctions in their daily lives. For instance, residents used the terms grifo, jabao, and colorao to refer to various combinations of hair types and skin tones. This fluid gradation of phenotypes makes it difficult to discriminate against intermediate groups exclusively on the basis of color and other physical attributes. In contrast, the dominant racial dichotomy in the United States between whites and nonwhites does not do justice to the vast majority of Dominicans, who have African as well as European backgrounds and range phenotypically across the entire color spectrum from black to brown to white. From a North American perspective, Washington Heights appears as an undifferentiated black neighborhood, albeit with a Hispanic cultural atmosphere. From a Dominican standpoint, the neighborhood is as racially diverse as the Dominican Republic.

Racial prejudice and discrimination have forced many Dominicans in New York to settle in areas adjacent to African American concentrations such as Hamilton Heights and Harlem. Despite physical proximity, most Dominicans strive to distance themselves culturally from African Americans by speaking Spanish, dancing the merengue, rejecting black hairstyles and speech patterns, and associating primarily with other Latinos. In the 1990 Census, only about 26 percent of New York’s Dominicans classified themselves as black (New York Newsday, 1993). However, younger members of the second generation often adopt the black dialect, hip-hop fashion, and rap music popular among African American teenagers. Some dark-skinned Dominicans are following the path of a segmented assimilation in which the main frame of reference is an adversarial African American culture rather than a mainstream white identity (see Portes, 1994). Slowly but surely, Dominican immigrants are developing an awareness of their black roots and reaching out to other Caribbean and Latino peoples—including the traditionally despised Haitians (see Torres-Saillant, 1992-1993).

In Puerto Rico, Dominicans encounter a system of racial classification and stratification similar to that of their home country. Thus, Barrio Gandul is not a black ghetto in the sense that it is not characterized exclusively by a black or even colored population; it is segregated primarily along class lines rather than in terms of skin color or national origin. However, to the extent that “money whitens,” residents' lower class status strengthens their public per-
ception as black and mulatto. Ethnicity, color, and class reinforce each other in Barrio Gandul.

Despite the undeniable presence of racial prejudice and discrimination in Puerto Rico, anti-Dominican sentiment has proven a more formidable barrier to interethnic relations. Many Puerto Rican residents harbor strong resentment against foreign newcomers to the island, especially Dominicans. Some Puerto Ricans openly call Dominicans dirty, loud, greasy, pigs, and other insulting epithets. An ever-expanding repertoire of ethnic jokes and folk stories perpetuates the myth of the dumb, ignorant country bumpkin from the Cibao (see Iturondo, 1994; Mejía Pardo, 1993). Local complaints of Dominican immigrants range from their playing music loud at night and throwing garbage in the streets to dominating the drug trafficking and prostitution businesses. According to one Puerto Rican resident of Santurce, “Dominicans have damaged the neighborhood.” Ironically, many Puerto Rican stereotypes of Dominican immigrants have earlier been applied to Haitians in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Ricans in the United States.

CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND IDENTITY

In both New York and Santurce, Dominican immigrants strongly resist assimilation into the dominant culture. This tendency is partly a response to racial and ethnic exclusion. Washington Heights has reproduced many aspects of the migrants’ traditional lifestyle and institutions, from their political parties and trade unions to their hometown clubs and religious practices. In the early 1980s, Eugenia Georges (1984) counted 125 voluntary associations, reaching about 8 percent of New York’s Dominican community, especially in Washington Heights. Some current observers even call the neighborhood “Quisqueya Heights” to emphasize its predominant cultural orientation toward the Dominican Republic.

Quisqueya Heights is an eminently appropriate term for this transnational space, characterized by the constant crossover of Dominican and North American identities, the selective re-creation of key elements of Dominican society, and the incorporation of new cultural traits from the United States. The combination of Spanish and English signs in many business establishments and the musical interpenetration of merengue and rap exemplify the transformation of the cultural landscape by Dominican immigrants. Most of my Dominican informants in Washington Heights ate mostly Dominican food, spoke mostly Spanish at home, shopped mostly at Dominican grocery stores, belonged to the Catholic church, listened mostly to Spanish radio, and watched mostly Spanish TV (Duany, 1994b). Many Dominican homes and
businesses had small shrines with images of their favorite Catholic saints and the Virgin Mary in a corner of the main hall or a private room. Moreover, most respondents (84 percent) identified themselves as Dominican, not American or even Dominican-American. None used the derogatory term "Dominican-York" popular in the Dominican Republic to refer to return migrants (Guarnizo, 1994). Most remained more firmly attached to Dominican rather than North American culture, although they increasingly mixed the two. The vast majority of the immigrants had not yet become U.S. citizens. Only 18 percent of the Dominicans legally admitted to the United States in 1977 were naturalized by 1989 (New York Times, 1993). Two out of three respondents said they would like to go back to live in the Dominican Republic. Many traveled back and forth between New York and Santo Domingo to visit relatives living in both places.

In Barrio Gandul, Dominicans had also re-created a large share of their cultural repertoires, although not as extensively as in Washington Heights. The smaller size of Santurce’s Dominican community, its greater geographic dispersion, and its stronger affinities with Puerto Rican culture help to explain this difference. For instance, about 40 Dominican associations of various sizes have been recorded in Puerto Rico (José Germán Gómez, personal communication, March 16, 1995) compared with the 125 counted by Georges in New York in 1984.

Dominicans in Barrio Gandul ate their traditional mangú, read their national newspapers, danced the merengue, and supported their Dominican political parties. They were not well integrated into Puerto Rican community institutions such as schools, churches, and voluntary associations. The area's two main formal organizations, the Residents' and Business Associations, excluded Dominicans, and most Dominicans in Barrio Gandul had married compatriots. The relations between the two groups were tinged with mutual suspicion and tension.

Despite their physical proximity, Dominican immigrants tend to be culturally isolated and socially distant from Puerto Rican residents. This insulation contributes to the popular stereotype of Dominicans as strange, alien, dangerous, and incomprehensible (Mejía Pardo, 1993). Like Haitians in the Dominican Republic, Dominicans in Puerto Rico are becoming scapegoats for underlying racial tensions. As a defensive strategy, many immigrants are reasserting their own cultural background. This move may be taken as an example of what has been called an oppositional or reactive identity (Portes, 1994; Waters, 1994). Cultural differences between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans are expressed both visually and musically. Symbolic icons such as the national flag and folk art of the Dominican Republic, as well as the merengue, are conspicuously displayed by Dominican homes and businesses. Dominican
cafeterias and bars are places not only to eat and drink but also to meet with one's compatriots to talk about Dominican politics, share important information about jobs and housing, and reaffirm one's cultural identity.

As in New York, few Dominican immigrants in Puerto Rico have become U.S. citizens. About 8 percent of the Dominicans legally admitted to Puerto Rico between 1966 and 1986 were naturalized (Duany, 1990: 30). Furthermore, a large proportion of the Dominican community in Santurce (about a third, in our conservative estimate) consists of undocumented immigrants who are not well integrated into the host society. Geographic proximity, cultural similarities, and circular migration between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico have given rise to a transnational circuit between the two islands.

CONCLUSION

Transnational migration often calls into question immigrants' conceptions of ethnic, racial, and national identities. In the Dominican Republic, most people perceive themselves as dark-skinned whites or light mulattos; only Haitians are considered black. The Dominican system of racial classification, labeling people along a wide color continuum ranging from black to white, clashes with the racial dualism prevalent in the United States. For most Dominican migrants, who have some degree of racial mixture, the rule of hypodescent means that they are considered black, nonwhite, or colored. Through a profound ideological transformation, the so-called indios suddenly become black, Hispanic, or "other." The data presented here suggest that most of the Dominicans who identify themselves as blacks in New York would probably call themselves indios in their home country. This process of self-redefinition is, in Frank Moya Pons's (1986: 247) graphic expression, a "traumatic racial experience."

Dominicans in Puerto Rico encounter less cognitive dissonance regarding their racial identity than in the United States. Immigrant Dominicans, like native Puerto Ricans, are classified in terms of a complex system that takes into account skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features, and social class. This cultural conception does not automatically assume that all Dominicans are black or that they can be divided neatly along color lines. Rather, Puerto Ricans traditionally adopt a flexible definition that recognizes multiple and heterogeneous racial groups, especially among intermediate types. Still, the dark skin color and other "African" features of most Dominican immigrants, together with their low occupational status, place them at the bottom of the Puerto Rican stratification system.
The racialization of Dominican immigrants has been a prime obstacle to their successful incorporation into the labor and housing markets of the United States and Puerto Rico. Although many Dominicans oppose their classification as colored, some have become increasingly aware of themselves as an Afro-Caribbean people. Migrants' general response to external labels has been to emphasize racial diversity within their community as well as the cultural bonds of solidarity among Dominicans of different skin colors. The persistence of a Dominican identity in the United States may be interpreted in part as resistance to the prevailing racial order.

The incorporation of Dominican immigrants into Puerto Rican society has been hampered by their class composition as well as their racial identity. Xenophobia and racism have increased with Dominican immigration over the past three decades. The age-old stereotypes of black Puerto Ricans are now extended to Dominican immigrants, who in turn attribute them to Haitians—for example, stupidity, uncleanliness, and ugliness (see Zenón Cruz, 1974, for a complete catalogue of racial infamies in Puerto Rico). The social construction of race and ethnicity in contemporary Puerto Rico increasingly conflates black with Dominican. Still, Puerto Rican society segregates Dominicans not primarily by skin color or national origin but by social class. Barrio Gandul is neither a black ghetto like Harlem nor an ethnic neighborhood like Washington Heights.

The theoretical implications of this comparative case study are numerous, but I can only underline three of them here. First, transnational migrants face different, often conflicting, definitions of their racial identity in the sending and receiving societies. This ideological discrepancy confirms the absence of any essential characteristics or fixed meanings in racial discourses and focuses attention on the socially constructed and invented nature of racial classification systems. Second, regardless of their imaginary and arbitrary character, cultural conceptions of racial identity have a practical and material impact when they are applied to concrete groups and individuals in social interaction. The racialization of Caribbean immigrants in the United States and elsewhere places them in a disadvantageous position in the labor and housing markets and excludes them from the hegemonic cultural practices of the receiving nation-states. Finally, the immigrants' lower-class standing reinforces their public perception as ethnic and racial outsiders. This intersection of ethnicity, color, and class makes it harder for Caribbean diaspora communities to shed their multiple stigmas.

At this point, it is difficult to assess the impact of the cultural redefinition of the migrants' racial identity on the Dominican Republic. A decade ago, the distinguished Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons (1986) claimed that massive migration had not eroded the island's sense of identity. More
recently, the New York-based Dominican literary critic Silvio Torres-Saillant (1992-1993) went beyond this to propose that Dominican identity is reasserted in the diaspora against a backdrop of ethnic and racial oppression. In my view, increasing numbers of Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico are being forced to confront racially exclusive conceptions and practices, framed in the language either of biological descent or of physical appearance.

By and large, the Dominican diaspora has actively resisted its subordination as a racialized other and attempted to redefine the terms of its incorporation into the host societies. Whether this effort results in asserting that Dominicans are part of a middle race such as Latinos or Hispanics (Dománguez, 1973), making common cause with African Americans on the basis of their colored status, or embracing a wider pan-Caribbean identity that includes Haitians has yet to be determined. For the moment, transnational migration has transformed the cultural conceptions of racial identity among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico. For many racially mixed immigrants, coming to America has meant coming to terms with their own, partially suppressed, sometimes painful, but always liberating sense of negritude.

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