Understanding the Diversity Of Atlanta's Latino Population: Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Class

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Abstract

The authors investigate how race is socially constructed among Latino immigrants. Drawing upon Omi and Winant's theory of "racialization," they call for a highly contextualized analysis that takes into account specific Latino groups and geographic locations. They develop their argument by investigating how Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants in Atlanta must negotiate their unique understandings of race with forces of racial homogenization that erase distinctions and characterize "all" Latinos as undocumented Mexican laborers. The authors explain how Guatemalans and Dominicans rely on different resources to challenge this racial construction and assert a distinct racial and ethnic identity.
Key words: immigration, Latinos, race

Resumen

Las autoras investigan cómo el concepto de raza es construido socialmente entre los inmigrantes latinos. A partir de la teoría de la "racialización" de Omi y Winant, ellas señalan la necesidad de emprender un análisis contextualizado que tome en cuenta a grupos específicos de latinos, así como diferentes regiones geográficas. Desarrollan su argumento al investigar cómo los inmigrantes guatemaltecos y dominicanos en Atlanta tienen que negociar su particular entendimiento de raza con fuerzas de homogeneización racial que borran cualquier distinción y caracterizan a todos los latinos como si fueran trabajadores mexicanos indocumentados. Las autoras explican cómo los guatemaltecos y los dominicanos manejan recursos diversos para desafiar esta construcción racial y afirmar sus identidades raciales y étnicas particulares.
Palabras clave: inmigración, latinos, raza

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INTRODUCTION

As the number of Latinos surpasses the African-American population in the U.S., scholars debate how the new largest race/ethnic minority will influence the traditional black/white color line (Frank, Akresh, and Lu, 2010; Winders, 2008). Some argue that Latinos will be subsumed into expanded categories of "black" or "white" based on skin tone, with dark-skinned Latinos considered "black" and lighter-skinned Latinos considered "white" (Feagin, 2001). Others argue that Latinos will forge a new, middle race category between "black" and "white" (Frank, Akresh, and Lu, 2010). We contend that none of these conceptualizations adequately capture the dynamics of race and racialization among Latinos. Instead, we argue for a highly contextualized analysis that takes into account specific Latino groups, specific geographic location, and intersections of class with race within specific groups (Winders, 2008).[1] In addition, we show that the categories of "race" involving Latinos move beyond a single dimension (whether it is with two or three categories) into multiple dimensions. That is, in *conjunction with* the black/white or black/brown/white axis, processes of racialization among Latinos create an "illegal/legal" axis. How these two axes work together varies for specific nationality groups, immigrant destinations, and class locations.

WHAT IS "RACIALIZATION"?

We rely on Omi and Winant's conception of "racialization" (1994) to inform our analyses. Rather than understanding race as a fixed characteristic of individuals, they argue that race is continually socially constructed at multiple levels of social life –from individual interactions to state policies. The social construction of race signifies social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. The content and importance of racial categories are determined by social, economic, and political forces. Omi and Winant locate forces of racialization within both social structure and cultural representations, so that race plays a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world (1994). Individuals reinforce and reproduce racial categories through social interaction, while institutions propel racialization through organizational structures and practices. Thus, in the U.S., "race"

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[1] We acknowledge that a full understanding of race and Latinos must also incorporate a consideration of gender and sexuality. Before delving into the three-dimensional and four-dimensional analyses that this entails, we focus on clarifying the relationship among race, ethnicity, and class in this article. See McCall (2005) for a discussion of the utility of looking at two dimensions of inequality to "contain" the complexity of intersectional analyses in empirical research.

suffuses access to the key resources that immigrants need to survive, including housing, schools, and the labor market (Rugh and Massey, 2010; López, 2002; Tomaskovic-Devey, Zimmer, Stainback, et al., 2006).

We contend that we are in the midst of a shift of social understanding and construction of race in the U.S. South. The shift has been impelled by global economic restructuring, which created high demand for low-wage workers in the South; mass immigration of Latinos; and immigration laws and policies at federal and local levels. With the rapid influx of Latinos to new destinations and their increasing visibility in the South, they challenge the established black/white racial binary (Winders, 2008). Yet, the precise direction of the reconfiguration of racial categories remains an empirical question. Are Latinos pushing the boundaries of existing categories to create new binaries –white/non-white or black/non-black– or are they forging new, multiple categories of race that place many of them in the middle between "white" and "black" (Frank, Akresh, and Lu, 2010)?

THE ATLANTA CONTEXT

History of Latino Immigration to Atlanta

With a population of more than four million, metro Atlanta is the business and financial capital as well as the main transportation hub for the southeastern United States. For most of its history, Atlanta, like the rest of the South, was a biracial society (after the expulsion and quarantine of indigenous peoples). African-Americans and whites constituted the vast majority of inhabitants in southern states, with the exceptions of Texas and Florida; and the black-white divide profoundly shaped the region's politics, social structure, and social geography. With the dramatic growth of its foreign-born population over the last quarter-century, the South became a major new immigration destination in the United States, home to millions of people originally from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Metro Atlanta experienced a period of robust economic growth in the 1990s, driven by the service and financial industries, and by construction, transportation, and public utilities. Economic expansion created a diverse range of job opportunities in white-collar and high-tech employment as well as for skilled and unskilled labor. As native-born blacks and whites took advantage of white-collar jobs, Latin American immigrants increasingly filled positions as laborers. A Brookings Institution study in 2000 defined Atlanta as "one of the nation's great metropolitan success stories." According to the report, "population and job growth show no sign of slowing in the Atlanta

area…. The region is a place of economic opportunities for both whites and African-Americans, and it is a magnet for new immigrants from Latin America and Asia" (Brookings Institution, 2000).

The total population of the Atlanta metro area grew rapidly, from 2.3 million in 1980, to 3 million in 1990, to 4.2 million in 2000. African-Americans composed 28 percent and whites 61 percent of the total population in 2000. Although native-born blacks and whites contributed significantly more to overall population growth, the foreign-born population grew rapidly, from 2 percent of the metro area population in 1980, to almost 4 percent in 1990, to 10 percent in 2000. In absolute numbers, it rose from 47 815 in 1980, to 117 253 in 1990, and to 424 519 in 2000, an increase of 262 percent from 1990 to 2000, and an amazing 788 percent from 1980 to 2000.

Diversity of Latino Immigrants in Atlanta

Immigrants in Atlanta come from hundreds of different countries and all regions of the world.[2] In 2005, the largest regional group came from Latin America (52 percent), followed by 25 percent from Asia, 11 percent from Europe, and 9 percent from Africa. The immigrants from Latin America are a diverse group in terms of nationality, race/ethnicity, class, and legal status. Unlike traditional Latino immigrant destinations, where one group initially dominated the immigrant community (such as Mexicans in Los Angeles and Cubans in Miami), Latino immigrants in Atlanta come from a variety of countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The largest national group by far is Mexican, but there are significant numbers of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, Colombians, and Venezuelans. The Latino immigrant population is further divided along lines of race and ethnicity and includes whites of European descent, mestizos (mixed race, usually of Spanish and Indian descent), Afro-Caribbeans, and indigenous peoples from Guatemala and Mexico.

Latino immigrants in Atlanta are diverse in socioeconomic status as well. There is a sizable group of Latino professionals in the region, many of whom serve the growing immigrant population as lawyers, accountants, dentists, and doctors. Other Latinos work as independent entrepreneurs, particularly in the urban and suburban South, where immigrants have opened bakeries, restaurants, contracting and landscaping companies, clothing and jewelry shops, cleaning and child-care businesses, and taxi companies.

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[2] The 10 countries of origin which accounted for the most immigrants in 2005 were Mexico (29.7 percent), India (6.8 percent), Korea (4.1 percent), Jamaica (3.9 percent), Vietnam (3.5 percent), China (2.6 percent), Colombia (2.4 percent), Brazil (2.2 percent), El Salvador (2.1 percent), and the United Kingdom (2 percent).

The largest number of Latino immigrants work as laborers, primarily in the service and construction industries. More than 60 percent of Latino workers were employed in these industries in metro Atlanta in 2000, with 30 percent in construction and 34.6 percent in services, including work in hotels, restaurants, landscaping, and other services to buildings and dwellings. (These figures include both immigrant and native-born Latinos.) Another 12 percent of Latino workers in Atlanta are employed in manufacturing, largely in carpet factories and poultry-processing plants (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya, 2005).

Differences in legal status also characterize Latino immigrants in the region. The population includes naturalized citizens, legal residents, temporary workers, and undocumented immigrants. A significant portion of Latino immigrants in the South are undocumented. A report by the Urban Institute estimated that in 2000, between 40 and 49 percent of all immigrants in Georgia, were undocumented (Passel, Capps, and Fix, 2004). The increase in unauthorized immigration in the South reflects national trends. As of 2005, 11 million undocumented immigrants resided in the United States, constituting fully one-third of all immigrants nationwide. Of the undocumented, 78 percent are from Mexico or other Latin American nations.

COMPARING GUATEMALANS AND DOMINICANS: DATA AND METHODS

Atlanta's economic, political, and demographic situation thus provides an important context in which the divergent groups of Latino immigrants experience processes of "racialization." Yet, as we demonstrate with a comparison of Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants there, different groups bring divergent resources and understandings of "race" with which to navigate racialization processes.

We combine quantitative and qualitative data on Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants in Atlanta to support our argument. First, we construct a demographic profile of the two groups through analyses of the 2007-2009 American Community Survey (Ruggles, Trent, Genadek et al., 2010). The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau every year and represents a probability sample of the population. Because the ACS sample of Dominicans is so small, we use the three-year combined ACS data from 2005, 2006, and 2007. Our demographic profile highlights the ways that the populations of Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants differ along key dimensions, including gender composition, educational attainment, and occupation.

Next, we explore how these demographic differences combine with divergent experiences and distinct understandings of race, drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Guatemalan and Dominican workers and community leaders in the Atlanta metro area. The qualitative research with Guatemalan immigrant workers and community leaders was conducted in two phases. From 2001 to 2003, Mary Odem interviewed 15 Guatemala immigrants in metro Atlanta and 8 social service professionals who work with Mayan immigrants. All of the immigrants interviewed are indigenous Maya, who make up the majority of all Guatemalans in Atlanta. She also attended community meetings and celebrations of Guatemala Mayan immigrants as well as several national-level meetings for community leaders involved in Maya Pastoral, a national organization with local branches supported by the U.S. Catholic Church. The second phase of the Guatemalan research was spearheaded by Irene Palma and Carol Girón, our collaborators at the Central American Institute for Economic and Social Studies (Incedes). In November 2009, Palma and Girón ran two focus groups and conducted seven individual interviews with Guatemalan community leaders in Cobb and Gwinnett Counties.

To obtain a social profile of the Dominican immigrant population in Atlanta comparable to our social profile of Guatemalans, two graduate students attended Dominican social events in Atlanta and interviewed seven Dominican community leaders during the summer of 2009. In the data collection, we used the same interview guide with the Dominican and Guatemalan community leaders. For the Dominican sample, we also drew upon 21 interviews conducted for another ongoing study of middle class Dominican (and Mexican) immigrants in Atlanta (see González and Browne, 2010).

COMPARING GUATEMALAN AND DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS IN ATLANTA: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

Looking at the disparities in gender composition, education, and occupation between Guatemalans and Dominicans highlights the extent to which these two groups inhabit different social and economic spaces in Atlanta. From Table 1, it is clear that gender is one of the most striking differences between the two groups. Approximately equal numbers of Dominican immigrants in Atlanta are male and female, while the majority (73 percent) of Guatemalan immigrants are male.

On average, Dominican immigrants in Atlanta are much more highly educated than Guatemalan immigrants. About 20 percent of Dominican immigrants in Atlanta hold a college degree, and another 50 percent completed high school (Table 1).

Guatemalans show a much more disadvantaged picture of educational attainment; almost half (47 percent) of Guatemalan immigrants did not attend school past the sixth grade, and an *additional* 22 percent did not graduate from high school. Only about 6 percent of Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta are college graduates, and only 24 percent graduated from high school. Thus, while the majority of the Dominican immigrants have a high school diploma or more, the majority of Atlanta's adult Guatemalan immigrants did not complete high school.

Table 1 SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GUATEMALAN AND DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE ATLANTA METRO AREA, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (2007-2009) (%)		
Gender	Guatemalan (n=296)	Dominican (n=117)
Male	77.20	50.00
Female	22.80	50.00
	100.00	100.00
Marital Status		
Married, Spouse Present	21.20	29.50
Married, Spouse Absent	18.60	13.30
Widowed, Divorced, Separated	5.70	24.00
Never Married	54.50	33.20
	100.00	100.00
Education		
6th Grade or Less	47.10	9.30
7th-12th Grade (no H.S. diploma)	22.50	18.30
H.S. Graduate	24.20	53.20
BA or Above	6.30	19.30
	100.00	100.00

The gender and educational differences between the two groups are reflected in the labor market sectors in which Atlanta's Dominican and Guatemalan immigrants are concentrated (Table 2). For instance, 11 percent of Dominican women are employed in management, business, and finance occupations compared to none of

the Guatemalan women in the ACS sample.[3] In contrast, more Guatemalan women are concentrated in jobs requiring low levels of education than Dominican women, such as food preparation (22 percent), factory production operatives (20 percent), and cleaning (23 percent). Male Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants in Atlanta most often work in construction, with rates of construction employment slightly higher for Dominican men (60 percent) than Guatemalan men (54 percent).

Table 2
PERCENT OF EMPLOYED GUATEMALAN AND DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS IN MAJOR INDUSTRIES BY GENDER, ATLANTA METRO AREA, ACS 2007-2009*

	Men		Women	
Occupation	Guatemalan	Dominican	Guatemalan	Dominican
Management, Business, Finance	6.70	2.80	0.00	10.90
Engineering, Computers, Science	0.20	1.60	0.00	3.50
Counseling, Legal, Education	0.10	0.80	2.00	7.20
Entertainment	0.30	1.00	0.00	0.00
Medicine, Health	1.00	3.70	2.00	0.10
Protection	0.00	3.40	0.00	1.30
Food preparation, Eating	5.90	3.80	22.35	1.00
Cleaning	9.40	2.00	23.00	17.50
Personal services	0.00	2.50	10.30	22.10
Sales	0.10	3.40	4.20	8.10
Office	2.20	0.70	5.40	15.00
Construction	53.80	60.10	0.00	0.00
Extraction, Repair	3.40	0.00	1.20	1.10
Production	5.30	6.60	19.60	2.70
Transportation	7.00	7.50	0.80	8.30

* Weighted percents using the combined 2007-2009 ACS files. Weights adjust for sampling design and non-response. Gender and poverty include all individuals. Marital status includes individuals age 18 and older. Education includes individuals age 25 and older. Occupation and industry includes individuals in the work force.

[3] When examined by gender, we see that, although Dominican women are more prominent in management, business, and finance (about 11 percent), a greater percent of Guatemalan men are employed in this area compared to Dominican men. Given the gap in educational achievement between the two national groups, this discrepancy seems puzzling. However, about 3 percent of the Guatemalan men in "management, business, and finance" are construction managers. Indeed, when we look at *industries* in which Guatemalans and Dominican immigrants are concentrated in Atlanta, we find that about 18 percent of Dominican men and 24 percent of Dominican women work in professions, compared with only 9 percent of Guatemalan men and 16 percent of Guatemalan women.

Reflecting the educational and occupational distribution of the two national groups, median wages for Dominican and Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta also diverge, with Guatemalans earning less than Dominicans (Table 3). Employed Dominican men earn approximately US$24 000 in median wages, compared to US$16 000 for Guatemalan men. The race/ethnic gap in wages is thus much larger than the gender gap for these two immigrant groups. With median wages of US$21 000, Dominican women earn more than both Guatemalan women *and* men. Guatemalan women appear to face a "double jeopardy" of gender and race/ethnicity when compared to Dominican women and Guatemalan men, earning just US$10 700 in median wages.

In addition to the wage data, poverty rates expose a wide difference in economic resources between Dominican and Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta. Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta are two-and-a-half times more likely to live in poverty compared to Dominican immigrants. About 11 percent of Atlanta's Dominican immigrants live in poverty. This is lower than the poverty rate for the general population living in the Atlanta metro area (13 percent). Almost 30 percent –29.6 percent, to be exact– of Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta are poor, a figure that *exceeds* the poverty rate for the general population in the Atlanta metro area.

Table 3
MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGES FOR EMPLOYED GUATEMALAN AND DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS, BY GENDER, ATLANTA METRO AREA, ACS 2007-2009*

	Guatemalan	Dominican
Men	US$16 000	US$24 000
Women	US$10 700	US$21 000

* Wages for 2007 and 2008 adjusted to 2009 US dollars.

It is clear from the American Community Survey census data that the Guatemalan and Dominican immigrants in Atlanta represent two very different populations. The resources and experiences that each of these groups bring to Atlanta are unique, and fail to be captured in aggregate statistics on "Latinos." Further, we argue that the process of racialization differs greatly for these two groups as well.

PROCESSES OF RACIALIZATION AMONG GUATEMALAN AND DOMINICAN IMMIGRANTS IN ATLANTA

Current processes of racialization among Latino immigrants in Atlanta occur within a history of white-run political and economic institutions that have been created to systematically oppress blacks, on the one hand, and stem African-American resistance and a growing, influential black elite on the other. Slavery, secession, and Civil War legalized racial segregation and repression in the late nineteenth century, and its undoing by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s all form part of the history of race relations in Atlanta and the U.S. South. Currently Atlanta presents a seeming "paradox": the existence of a large black middle class and significant black political influence, especially in the city of Atlanta, and the persistence of white-black racial inequality and high black poverty (Brookings Institution, 2000: 4-5).

When Dominicans and Guatemalans immigrate to Atlanta, they must negotiate the racial categories and meanings within their country of origin with the U.S. racial hierarchy in the South, on the one hand, and the ethnic category of "Latino" or "Hispanic" on the other; this negotiation occurs in a transnational space (Duany, 1998). Migrants often retain ties to their country of origin through traveling back and forth, communicating with family members via phone or the internet, and participating in events with co-ethnic family and friends (Smith, 2006).

One key point of difference in the process of racialization of Guatemalans and Dominicans involves their own racial and ethnic identity, constructed through the specific history and racial projects of their respective countries of origin. As noted earlier, the majority of Guatemalan immigrants in Atlanta are indigenous people, primarily Maya. With over four million people in Guatemala and Mexico, the Maya are one of the largest indigenous groups in the Americas. Most come from impoverished rural towns and villages in the western highlands of Guatemala where they speak one of more than 20 different Mayan languages and where families support themselves as small farmers, rural laborers, and market vendors. Centuries of discrimination and exploitation of their land and labor, first by Spanish colonizers and later the *Ladino* (European or mixed European-indigenous descendant) elite have left indigenous people impoverished and marginalized within their countries.[4] Pronouncements of Indian inferiority and backwardness by dominant groups have justified and reinforced the subordination of indigenous peoples in Central America and Mexico from the colonial era to the present.

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[4] Although in other countries, "*Ladino*" has another meaning, in Guatemala, the term refers to those of European or mixed European and indigenous ancestry.

In striking contrast to the Guatemalan racial project of constructing the "*indio*" category to signal exclusion, the racial category of "*indio*" involves a nationalist racial project in the Dominican Republic.[5] Dominicans hail from an island shaped by Spanish colonialism, the virtual elimination of the indigenous population (the Taíno), the African slave trade, and years of dictatorship. Dominicans represent a continuum of physical appearance, from dark skin and features that would be considered "black" in the U.S to individuals who would be considered "white" in the U.S. (Bailey, 2001; Duany, 1998; Itzigsohn, 2009). Individuals in the same Dominican family can vary greatly in their skin tone. Although light skin is accorded higher status in the Dominican Republic, race does not play a strong role in organizing social life. Dominicans draw their sharpest racial boundary to distinguish themselves from Haitians (Bailey, 2001; Candelario, 2001; Duany, 1998). According to Duany (1998), racial categorization is based upon physical appearance and social status rather than biological heritage. Part of the racial project of the Dominican state under Trujillo was to vilify Haitians, and reserve the racial category of "black" to connote Haitians. After Trujillo, the Dominican government officially adopted the category of "*indio*" (indigenous), to distinguish the Dominican Republic from Spain and from Haiti (Duany, 1998; Roberts, 2001). Thus, unlike Guatemala, the category of "*indio*" conveys a proud, nationalist connotation (Roberts, 2001). This racial project is reflected in racial identity among Dominicans living on the island; Dominicans most often refer to themselves as "*indio*," "*mulato*" (mixed) or "*trigueño*." Dark-skinned Dominicans may refer to themselves as "*indio oscuro*" (dark indigenous).

The negotiation of racial categories from their countries of origin with processes of racialization in Atlanta also involves federal and local policies that construct Latino immigrants as "unwanted foreigners." Although they contribute significantly to the country's economic well-being, U.S. immigration policies prohibit the legal entry of many Latin Americans and deny them a legitimate place in U.S. social and political life. In the words of David Bacon, the nation's immigration policies create a "special category of residents in the U.S. who have significantly fewer rights than the population as a whole; they cannot legally work or receive social benefits, and can be apprehended, incarcerated, and deported at any time" (1999).

In the last decade, state and local lawmakers have taken an increasingly aggressive stance toward unauthorized Latino immigration, convinced that federal authorities were not doing enough to address the problem. Charging that "illegals" burden taxpayers and increase crime rates, state and local legislators have enacted laws

[5] See Wade's discussion of the *mestizaje* ideology in Latin America for a similar argument about national inclusion and exclusion associated with a racial category (2005).

and ordinances that restrict or deny Latino immigrants' access to healthcare, housing, education, and transportation. Together, federal and local immigration policies have marginalized Latino immigrants and categorized them as a foreign race that poses a danger to U.S. society and is not suitable for full membership in the nation.

For Guatemalan Mayan immigrants in the United States, their indigenousness is not the central mark of difference and subordination, as it is in Guatemala, but rather their status as brown-skinned immigrants from south of the border. For the most part, U.S. authorities and citizens do not recognize ethnic distinctions among Latino immigrants; the Maya are lumped together with other Latino immigrants, and more often than not are perceived as Mexicans. They face the same epithets as millions of other immigrant workers: "illegals," "criminals," and "dirty Mexicans." Yet within the population of Latin American immigrants, the Maya encounter particular forms of discrimination as indigenous people. They are looked down on by other Latino immigrants who make fun of the way they speak Spanish and refer to them disparagingly as "*indios*" (Burns, 1993; Odem, 2003b; Popkin, 1999).

Some Mayan immigrants have challenged the status of "illegal Latino" and backward "*indio*" by organizing along ethnic lines to build solidarity among themselves and to gain access to needed social and material resources. The collective identity they claim connects them to the Mayan people and homeland rather than the nation state of Guatemala. The celebration of Mayan cultural and religious traditions emphasizes the common history and culture of indigenous migrants *and* marks their difference from other (non-indigenous) Latino immigrants.

For Dominicans in Atlanta, the racial category of "*indio*" does not carry the invidious weight that it does for Guatemalans, nor does the *indio* identity "mark" Dominicans among other Latin Americans in the same way that it "marks" Guatemalans. Although the Dominican-Haitian tension persists in New York, Atlanta's Dominican and Haitian populations remain too small to fuel their rivalry (Candelario, 2001).

Dominicans, like Guatemalans, do not identify with the pan-ethnic category of "Hispanic" or "Latino. Instead, they identify more strongly with the regional distinction of "Caribbean." Dominicans especially aim to distance themselves from the stereotype of "illegal Latino" in which race, ethnicity, and legal status are inextricably fused. But unlike the Maya, Dominicans have not organized collectively, but rather pursue individual-level strategies to distance themselves spatially and discursively from the "illegal Latino" category (Feagin and Cobas, 2008; González and Browne, 2010; Ono, 2002). As one Dominican respondent explained,

> When we talk to people, we immediately clarify that we're Dominican. I'm being very
> honest; we don't like to be confused with Mexicans. We make very clear that, no, we're

not Mexican. Because of the negative connotations that we have seen here in the Atlanta area, about being, you know, Mexican. Because they immediately think that you might be illegal, that you might not speak English, or that you might not be educated. Or that you eat spicy food.…That's not the case. You know. I don't eat tortillas. (González and Browne, 2010).

In their study of professional Dominican immigrant parents in Atlanta, González and Browne found that many respondents echoed this perception that the label of "illegal Latino immigrant" became synonymous with "Mexican." This example highlights the theoretical and empirical challenges posed by investigating the process of racialization among Latinos immigrants in Atlanta. As we have shown, there are different ways of defining race, and different understandings of race within specific national contexts. In addition, the distinction between the concept of "race" as a system of difference based on physical characteristics and "ethnicity" as group traditions, customs, and language does not reflect the experience of Latino immigrants in Atlanta (Alba, 2009; Hollinger, 1995).

INTERSECTIONS OF CLASS WITH RACE

Duany argues that "the racialization of Dominican immigrants in the U.S. … 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" (1998). We agree that racialization involves ethnic identity, but we contend that position in the racial hierarchy and access to housing and economic resources vary by class. Class intersects with processes of racialization in at least two ways. First, Spanish colonization in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic linked social class with race, so that the elite were white. The correlation between class and skin color still holds, so that currently, wealthy and professional Guatemalans and Dominicans tend to be lighter-skinned. Darker-skinned individuals are over-represented among the poor. In Guatemala, the Maya are at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy. Processes of racialization will thus vary depending on social class *and* national origin. This is not only due to skin color, but also the resources available to migrants to counter discrimination and prejudice.

In addition, for dark-skinned Dominicans who are members of the middle class, being perceived as black does not *necessarily* entail a process of marginalization, given Atlanta's large African-American elite (González, 2006). As far as Dominicans and other Afro-Latino immigrants are concerned, "black" in Atlanta is no longer the

lowest racial category, associated only with poverty, something to avoid. For Dominicans, association with the African-American group can facilitate process of integration in positive ways.

CONCLUSION

Within Atlanta and throughout the U.S., "illegal Mexican" is being forged as a new racial category, constructing Latinos as unwelcome foreigners and rendering them suspect of draining social welfare programs and stealing jobs. Yet, how this homogenizing force of racialization plays out is context- and group-specific.

As Jamie Winders asserts, "Latino migration to Southern cities, through their historical riveting to America's history of race, creates a new *racial* context for immigrant politics that merits more critical attention" (2008: 248). We have shown that an understanding of these racial politics must incorporate the distinctiveness of particular locales, such as Atlanta, as well as the diversity of the Latino population within those locales. Comparing Guatemalans and Dominicans in Atlanta highlights the important ways that these two groups bring very different understandings of "race" to the U.S. from their respective countries of origin, and how they possess different social, economic, and cultural resources with which to negotiate the U.S. racial hierarchy.

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APPENDIX A
TECHNICAL DETAILS FOR THE SAMPLE

Source of Data

To construct a profile of the characteristics of Atlanta's Dominican and Guatemalan populations, we use the PUMS files from the American Community Survey (ACS), which provide the most recent data. The ACS is administered every year to a probability sample of U.S. households. Given that the number of Dominicans and Guatemalans in a single year of the ACS is quite small, we combine ACS files for 2007, 2008, and 2009. Unless otherwise specified, the data include all individuals in the ACS sample (children as well as adults). We analyze ACS provided by the IPUMS project at the University of Minnesota (Ruggles,Trent, Genadek et al., 2010).

Geography

We use the Atlanta Regional Commission's 10-county definition of the Atlanta Metro Area. The ACS does not provide county codes. Instead, a "PUMA" is the smallest geographic unit available in the ACS PUMS file. A PUMA contains approximately 100 000 residents. Therefore, large counties (such as Fulton) span several PUMAs. Small counties (such as Douglas) are combined with adjacent small counties within a single PUMA. All of the Georgia PUMA containing one of the 10 counties in the ARC definition for the Atlanta Metro Area are included in our sample.

Weighting

The tables present the unweighted sample sizes and the weighted percentages. Data are weighted to account for sampling design and non-response.